

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
Sec. WILLIAM E. "BILL" BROCK III

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Interviewer
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Jack Kemp Foundation
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Kondracke: This is a [Jack] Kemp Foundation Oral History Project interview with former Senator, Cabinet Secretary, and Republican National Chairman Bill Brock. Today is June 23, 2011, and I'm Morton Kondracke.

Senator Brock, when you think about Jack Kemp, what immediately comes to mind?

Brock: Energy, excitement, passion, everything that makes you interested in and fascinated with a human being who is willing to stick his neck out.

Kondracke: One of his former assistants wrote an obituary when he died, saying that "Jack Kemp was the most influential politician of the twentieth century who was not president." Down at the Miller Center, when you participated in the Kemp Oral History Project, you said, "I don't know how you say anybody's the best congressman in a century, but I know in my lifetime he had greater impact than anybody else that I can think of." You were talking about particularly the tax issues. Where do you put Kemp in history of our time?

Brock: I think the contribution that Jack made was in shifting the normal conversation away from the mechanics of economics, away from people who say, "Well, we've got to have more revenue," same kind of debate we've got in this country today, or less spending. He shifted the debate by saying you can reduce the rate of taxation and, in the process, increase incentives, increase growth, increase employment, and thereby produce more revenues. I think there were people who thought that before, but he was able to articulate that with more passion and more clarity than any other person in that particular time period. It shifted the conversation into one of a more positive look at economic policy in terms of could it be instead of the dismal sense, perhaps it could be the more optimistic sense, and that sense of optimism did have an enormous impact.

I knew an awful lot of people who had an awful lot of impact—Hubert [H.] Humphrey, George [S.] McGovern in his different way, not on my side. But people who make a contribution are people who get engaged and who are not afraid to put their name on the line and their passion on the line. Jack was a star in that regard.

Kondracke: When did you first hear about him?

Brock: I'm not quite sure what year he came to the House.

Kondracke: 1970, the '70 election.

Brock: It was the same year that I was going to the Senate. I was probably focused more on myself that first year in the Senate than anything else, trying to figure out what I could do to get things going on my own behalf. But it couldn't have been very long after that before you began to sense that in that freshman class in the House, which I had just left, there were some really exciting new people that were hard-chargers and that were going to change the conversation. Jack was probably foremost among those. So my guess is that I began to pay attention to him certainly in the first couple of years of my time in the Senate.

Kondracke: When did you first actually meet him?

Brock: Couldn't have been long after that, because we were working in similar areas. I had some pretty strong feelings on the absence of a good economic policy on the part of the president. I'm a Republican. I supported [Richard M.] Nixon, but Nixon was driving me crazy; wage and price controls, abandoning the gold standard. I didn't mind abandoning the gold standard; I minded doing it without any

seemingly alternative conversation about what that meant. Jack Kemp began to take on the issue of getting away from the gold standard, so my guess is that we would have had some conversations as a part of a group. I'm not sure that we had one-on-one conversations that early, but it was clear to me that we were going to move to more contact as that time went on.

That was before Jack began to pick up on this idea of shifting the conversation to one of increased growth. He was talking more about maintaining economic stability. The gold standard, in his mind, was a real anchor to keep this country from becoming irresponsible and spending our way to success. I didn't agree that that was the right anchor, but I certainly agreed with that goal, and I particularly felt that we were way off track in trying to control wage and price assembly, because the Arabs were embargoing oil and running the price of oil up.

Kondracke: My recollection is that you and he co-sponsored some sort of bill to rein in the Fed [Federal Reserve Board] or control the Fed, limit the Fed's authority.

Brock: You'll have to give me a bit more than that.

Kondracke: I'm afraid I can't. [laughter]

Talking about your House districts, you had a working-class House district.

Brock: Yes.

Kondracke: He had a working-class House district.

Brock: Right.

Kondracke: What was the key to Republicans winning working-class districts, and was there any similarity between yours and his?

Brock: Yes, I think there was. I don't think either one of us was afraid to talk to people in labor. I had the support of organizations like the Teamsters Union because I went over there and met and said, "Look. You guys are the front lines of our economy." Jack was doing exactly the same thing in that Buffalo area.

When you look at a district like his, like mine, that had a tradition of being more Democratic, there was no way you're going to change that district by talking to the powers that be, because the powers that be were either Democrats or were people who said, "The

only way I'm going to do business is by dealing with the extant political system." So we had to get outside of the normal political system. I had opposition within the Republican Party because that was during the [unclear]—I bet you he did the same thing. So you had to get out and find out where in the neighborhoods you had people who were worried sick about their kids, about their jobs, about things that were going on in the country that they felt were out of control, that they didn't have any voice.

Both of us, I think, felt and demonstrated by our actions that maybe the most important thing we could do in politics was to give people a sense that they really did have a voice and that we could be that voice because we were out there listening, knocking on doors, talking to people one-on-one, and expressing real outrage when we saw things that we didn't like.

I'm a pretty passionate guy, and Jack was, and I think maybe that was one of the reasons I was so comfortable with him, because I felt like he had his heart on his sleeve and he was never afraid to get into it and fight for what he believed in. Too many people are just sort of there because it's a good job. They love to get elected and they love all the praise, but getting out and really fighting for something was not in their DNA.

Kondracke: You were both members of the Chowder and Marching Society. Would Jack have been admitted to the Chowder and Marching Society as a freshman?

Brock: Very quickly. If no more than the first term, my guess is it was probably the second year that he was in Congress. I'd have to check the record. But the thing about Chowder and Marching, it really is an organization of Republican active members and they want somebody from every committee so that you can talk about, every Wednesday night, what's going on in the different committees, so we can be sure that we knew what was going on, and that way we could reinforce each other and work together. Jack moved into that conversation, I won't say like a tornado, but he brought some energy to it. [laughs] And caused a bit of a problem for a couple of the older members who said, "Slow down. Slow down. Let's make sure that we're all listening to each other." And Jack was better talking sometimes. When people didn't agree with him, he pushed. So, to me, that showed that he was brash. It took me a while to make sure that I agreed with what he was saying, so much so that I said, "Yes, we need this."

Kondracke: During the Nixon days, was Chowder and Marching a place that you recall him ever saying anything about wage and price controls or Watergate or any of the big issues of the time, or in any other context, for that matter?

Brock: Yes, we certainly talked about wage and price controls. There were not a lot of us in that group that found that a comfortable policy. I simply was flabbergasted that any Republican would do something like that. I hadn't had a lot of respect for the president. I thought he had proven his mark by hanging into politics after some very tough times. I supported him in '68 and supported him in '72. And here comes this guy who is supposed to be the leader of our party, saying that government should be intervening in every aspect of the economy, and I exploded, but I did so probably pretty quietly on the outside. It was inside that we were talking, and there was a lot of anger. I have no doubt that Jack was a part of that, just because that was so alien to what he believed in.

Kondracke: Did you ever talk to him about Watergate?

Brock: I don't remember talking to him about Watergate. We in our conversations in those days were so stunned at this, and, frankly,

nobody in that group, Jack, me, nobody else thought that Nixon had anything to do with it. We honestly and truly said, "Nobody can be that stupid. Nobody in his position could do it." I'm not sure yet whether he had anything to do with the event, but having those people do it and then denying it, as we found out in the tapes, was inexcusable and unforgivable. So I am quite sure that there was some angst over the event and what it was doing to us in the party. I don't think I heard anybody, Jack or anybody else, say that we were quite sure that Nixon was the one, as they said, until the tapes came out.

Kondracke: Moving to the [Gerald R.] Ford administration, Ford was combating inflation with the Whip Inflation Now program pins, Clean Your Plate, all that stuff, did you and Jack have any conversations about that?

Brock: I don't remember that. I don't remember any specific development there. Ford won and I lost, so there was a bit of a disconnect at that point. My time was totally devoted to rebuilding the party as chairman, and I don't think Jack and I would have had much of a conversation until he began to move into the idea that became Kemp-Roth. When he came to see me, it was on that issue, and I was

national chairman, about convincing me that we needed to get the party out front.

Kondracke: Let me just go back one step. In 1974, he was the sponsor of something called Kemp-McClure, which was the Republican alternative or a Republican alternative to the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill.

Brock: That's correct.

Kondracke: Do you remember what you did about Kemp-McClure? That was a capital formation business test.

Brock: Yes, I was pretty aggressive. I thought Humphrey-Hawkins was an outrageously stupid approach. Jack, [James A.] Jim McClure, a lot of us were very energized on that subject. Frankly, I'd forgotten Humphrey-Hawkins. Now thinking about it, that really got our attention, and that was a really fundamental debate between the two parties and the two ideologies. Jack was a critical leader in putting that fight together, and obviously we talked about how to make sure that we got every one of our colleagues, but also as many Democrats as we could. All of us knew some Democrats that we could talk to. So we would have been sharing those names.

Kondracke: So is it in that period that people in Chowder and Marching started ragging on him because he was exceeding his authority? What was the problem?

Brock: There was a little bit of that. Here's a guy that's not the chairman of the committee, not the chairman of the subcommittee, and he's out leading the charge on something like Kemp-McClure. He didn't go through Ways and Means. That's the standard place where you go. So you've got people leading the Ways and Means Committee who felt like they should have been carrying that flag. But the problem is, they weren't. Jack, again, the reason you had to at least love him, if not agree with him, and I happened to agree, he was willing to say, "I cannot wait for the Republicans to do it." Barber [B.] Conable [Jr.] was the chairman. Barber at least gave the impression that he was really uncomfortable with Jack getting that aggressive.

The old boys' club, it's real. When you've been there for ten, fifteen years—I never had that experience. [laughs] But when you've been there for ten or fifteen years and you're the ranking member of a committee, and your buddy that you work with on the other side of the aisle is the chairman, you sort of have a *modus vivendi* that says, "I'll take care of things so that we can work together to reach a resolution.

We may disagree, but we'll do it in ways that don't make each other uncomfortable, but we're not going to undercut each other. We're not going to come in and surprise each other." That's a good thing, by the way. It makes the system work. And when you have somebody like Jack, who comes in and says, "I haven't got time for this. We've got to get out there and beat the drums and go after this," it makes people nervous.

I wasn't in the House at that time, but I was on the Chowder and Marching, and that's really where these conversations would take place, and they could get pretty vigorous.

Kondracke: As in what? Did he get dressed down?

Brock: Well, it was probably a little bit more gracious than that, but the conversations about Jack doing it were probably more vigorous when he wasn't there than when he was. "What is this guy doing? Who gave him the right to carry the flag?" kind of thing. It wasn't mean-spirited; it was just, "Come on. Let's work with the system." And we were a minority and we had a system that we needed to be careful in. So he would catch the dickens.

In the Chowder and Marching, it was more of a conversation, "Okay, Jack, how are you going to deal with the Democrats when they do this or that?"

And he would pretty much say, "I don't have to deal with that. We've got an issue. It is too important to lay on the side of the road. We've got to get in there and fight. Period. And I don't have to make compromises. I don't have to deal with the politics. The politics are always on our side because we're doing the right thing."

Kondracke: Describe the surroundings of the Chowder and Marching Society. Where did you meet? How many people would show up?

Brock: We would meet in one of the sort of mini conference rooms on the House side. Once in a while we'd go on the Senate side.

Kondracke: In the Capitol?

Brock: In the Capitol, yes. Always in the Capitol.

[recorder turned off]

Kondracke: Describe the Chowder and Marching Society. What was it? Where did it meet? How many people showed up?

Brock: The meetings occurred every Wednesday afternoon at five, when the Congress was in session, and the composition was designed basically to have at least one member from each substantial committee and some from particularly important subcommittees. There probably would be, on average, twenty of us at a given occasion. If the meetings were on a day when there was really a lot of fervor going on in the Congress, you could have probably maybe, at most, usually twenty-five to twenty-six, and almost never less than eighteen, seventeen or eighteen.

The idea was that having somebody from each of the major subject-matter areas or jurisdictional areas, that each of us would go around the room and say, "This is what's happening in my area," so that I could know, when I was on Government Operations [Committee] or Banking [Committee], whatever, what was happening in Ways and Means or in Veterans Affairs [Committee], because all of these things, we tend to operate in silos in Washington [D.C.], and it's a reason the government doesn't work very well. "I take care of my turf. I don't worry about yours." But all of these areas interact, and

what happens in one area will inevitably have a lap-over affect on any number of other areas.

So Chowder and Marching was set up as a group of people who really got to know each other and were close enough that we could be totally open, totally honest, and share not only what's happening in the committee, but what we thought about what was happening in the larger world, and how could we work more effectively together. It was, and is, I think, a terrifically important organization, and there are a couple of others. I don't think that anybody has achieved quite the degree of unanimity and effective communication that C&M has done, but there may be some now that I'm not aware of. But it was a terrific place to get somebody engaged, a Jack Kemp, a Bill Brock, early on. Frankly, I think we were looking for people with leadership potential. I have to say that because I was one of the chosen, I guess. [laughs]

Kondracke: Well, it was sort of like the popular kids' fraternity, wasn't it, within the Congress?

Brock: I'm not sure popular, but those who were seen to have more influence than the norm in their particular class or in their particular area of competence. Obviously you wanted the most senior person if you could get them, a Barber Conable from Ways and Means,

whatever. You wanted the leadership of the House, [Robert H.] Bob Michel or Jerry Ford, but you also wanted people who would be around for a while and would make a difference.

Kondracke: Did you meet in the same room?

Brock: Yes, almost always in the same room. We had it reserved every Wednesday afternoon.

Kondracke: First floor of the Capitol?

Brock: Second.

Kondracke: Did you eat, drink?

Brock: No. We'd have snacks. Sometimes if we knew it was going to be a long meeting, maybe a few sandwiches, but mostly it was a few soft drinks and some sandwiches at most.

Kondracke: How did somebody like Jack Kemp get admitted? Was there a nomination system?

Brock: Yes. Actually, there was no formal system. There was no subcommittee that nominated. In the first few months, certainly in the first year, somebody would begin to stand out, and that name would be presented to the body. "What do y'all think about bringing Jack in? What do you think about so-and-so?" We'd talk about it, maybe not make a decision for a couple of meetings, maybe more, watch what they're doing, how they're doing. But it was really interesting. I don't remember any serious debate when somebody's name was brought up where people just half are for and half against. It became pretty much a consensus operation.

Kondracke: He was the freshman class president and he was a football player. Richard Nixon at one point, toasted him, when one of his kids was born, said, "The son of the future Vice President of the United States," or something. So he was a figure of some stature.

Brock: Absolutely.

Kondracke: Coming in. So he would have been admitted reasonably early?

Brock: Pretty quickly, yes.

Kondracke: Going back now to the times when he was going out of his area of expertise and sort of shaking things up, besides Barber Conable, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, who else thought that he was getting out of line?

Brock: I shouldn't have put Barber Conable's name out there as the only one. I'm reluctant to add many others, because I don't think that's entirely fair. There were a couple of people in the New York delegation, for example, that would tend to think, "Here's a guy that's grabbing the headlines and maybe he ought to stick to his knitting and earn his spurs before he got out to tell the rest of us how to think."

Kondracke: Barber Conable was New York, so who else was there?

Brock: My guess is that maybe [Charles E.] Charlie Goodell and some others. I wish I hadn't started the naming, because I think that you can't stop, and it's certainly unfair to single out a couple of people.

Kondracke: So was it a widespread feeling in Chowder and Marching?

Brock: There were enough there to make it on occasion a little bit uncomfortable, and it was, frankly, the older guys. But we had that conversation constantly in Chowder and Marching. I mean, frankly, I was a young Turk when I came in in 1962, started in '63, and some of us, including the Charlie Goodells and others, decided that we didn't like the Republican leadership, and we took on [Charles A.] Charlie Halleck. Charlie was the Leader of the House, from Indiana, and he was, in our view, a lovely man who was past his prime and was not giving aggressive leadership to these young guys who wanted to take on the world. We put together the group that elected Jerry Ford to replace Charlie Halleck. Well, we took on the old guard when we did that, and there's always tension in these things. So that was not entirely the same thing with Jack, but there was a division. Some of the guys that had been around for a while thought that Jack was moving a little too fast.

Kondracke: I've heard the name [Melvin R.] Mel Laird as being one of the people who—

Brock: That's probably a pretty good—yes.

Kondracke: What was Mel Laird's position in those days?

Brock: I'm not sure what the title was, but Mel was arguably the second most consequential guy in the House membership. He was a very, very smart, very able, very tough politician, and Mel was one who wanted the party to hew a consistent line, so he would have been a little bit cautious about somebody getting out in front of the troops.

Kondracke: Did you share these feelings that Kemp was too brash?

Brock: No, because I was not entirely in the same area, but I was charging a lot of areas myself. I have, I think for the entire time I was in the House and the Senate, felt like we needed to be a little more aggressive. We were fighting hard. I'm not saying we weren't aggressive. But maybe the word is we needed to be more creative. We needed to grab some issues that were not in the normal category of things being debated. We were debating mundane things, in our view, and we needed to get out front in some issues and say, "This is not enough. We're going to get some more excitement going."

Kondracke: So in 1976, the Republicans get . . .

Brock: Clobbered.

Kondracke: . . . clobbered. Then you become Republican National Chairman, and eventually you see to it that Kemp-Roth, the across-the-board tax cuts, become Republican Party policy, but previous to that, in 1976 you supported Jerry Ford, and Kemp supported Ronald Reagan in the Republican primaries. Did you have any discussions about that, about who you were for? Did you have any thoughts about why Kemp was supporting Reagan?

Brock: I think, again, Jack was going to grab Reagan because Reagan was new, he was different, and he was an energizing candidate. I had been for Jerry Ford when we overthrew the House leadership in the early sixties. I was there when he was named vice president and then when he assumed the office of the presidency, and I felt that the party owed him the right to stay on and complete the work, and I did not like the fact that Jack and others supported Reagan against an incumbent Republican president. I don't know whether we had any overt disagreements of any fervor, but it was pretty clear that I thought the party owed Jerry Ford support, and I did not feel that it was right and fair to turn on him, and I felt that Jack and others were not doing the right thing as party loyalists.

Kondracke: Did you yourself have a conversion to supply-side economics?

Brock: Probably. It was not actually on the road to Damascus. But looking at my economic philosophy over the years, I was a fairly classic Republican in the worry that government was becoming an overweening influence and that that was distorting the economy and causing us slow growth. We were too interventionist on the wrong things, wage and price controls and things like that, and not enough supportive of those things that would add energy to the private sector, where the jobs were.

But I was sort of a classic economist at that time. For example, [Edmund S.] Muskie and I wrote the bill that passed the Senate to create the congressional budget process, because I didn't think that Congress was in any way responsible enough to deal with these issues without any coherent format and plan. All of those are more on the traditional side.

When you saw some pretty good arguments coming from the Kemps, [Arthur B.] Art Laffers, and others, that said we can grow this economy by reducing the drain that government imposes on the private sector, and thereby solve both problems, get more energy, reduce taxes, get more growth, it was intuitively logical. We just

hadn't thought about it in that creative a way up until that time. I do think that they made an enormous difference in giving us a new focus on how to get energy going.

I should add one thing. One of the people that I loved as a human being was [William A.] Bill Steiger, terrific young member of Congress from Wisconsin. In the late sixties when the campuses were going to hell in a hand basket, we had tear gas and all of the rest of the misery that the Vietnam War had engendered, Bill and I put together a group—this is before Jack came to Congress—to go out, all of us as young Republicans, and visit fifty college campuses. We came back, and out of that we presented to the president and the White House, with Nixon there, the eighteen-year-old vote so that these kids could be given a voice before they were drafted, and the all-volunteer army.

So Steiger and I had gotten very close, and Bill Steiger just adopted as his primary fight in life a reduction of the capital gains tax. We were taxing capital and taxing the energy of this country. So I had gotten on that side of the equation very aggressively and was supporting it both in Congress, House and Senate, and then again when I was National Chairman.

What Jack brought to it was something that went beyond capital gains. He talked about the income tax as something that affected

every individual and therefore was draining resources away from our energy base, personal energy base. So that became really, really interesting and attractive to me. I was looking, by the way. I was trying to transform the Republican Party. We were, at least in perception, anti-women, anti-minority, anti-union, anti-poor. Every negative you could put on the Republican Party had been done because of Vietnam, it was civil rights, Nixon, Watergate, the whole thing. I was trying to create a different kind of party, and it was a deliberate public objective of getting women elected, minorities elected, young people elected, blue-collar, union, and we needed a catalytic agent. We needed something that would go beyond my efforts to go out and recruit candidates in all those communities to elect people who looked like the community instead of looked like us.

And here comes this guy Kemp, who says, "Here's an issue that really is out of the norm. It's exciting. It can pull people together who are not traditional Republicans, and around them we can gather and create a new party." So the issue fit beautifully in what I was trying to do in the organizational side and the recruitment side.

I'm giving you way too long an answer, and I apologize for that. But the point is that where I was moving in terms of the party and where Jack was moving in terms of creating an issue that would energize people in every walk of life, began to fold into a common

purpose, and that got really exciting, because up until that time we still were fighting the old battles, the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill, all of that kind of stuff. The one thing was Steiger with capital gains, but we did not have a bill that applied across the board to every person, every individual. Jack and Laffer were the guys that came up with this and were able to put it in words that people could understand. It was fun.

Kondracke: Did Jack come to you? Did you go to Jack? How did this thing get concocted?

Brock: Jack gets all the credit. He came to me. He came over to the office at the RNC and he says, "We have got to create an issue for the party, and this is it. There's nothing like this that is nearly as exciting."

Remember at the time we had come out of Watergate, we had come out of a really horribly miserable experience, we'd elected this peanut farmer from Georgia that was driving everybody crazy because there was no definition to Jimmy Carter. You didn't know what he was going to do other than he was going to sit and opine on how we ought to be nicer. I'm being totally unfair. But we were in the middle of horrible economic times. The Arab embargoes, we had three different embargoes in a period of about six or seven years. It was running the

price of fuel up through the roof. The economy was just sloughing along, could not get going at all. We had things going wrong internationally where we were getting embarrassed, the Iranian Hostage Crisis, all these things were piling up, and we were still fighting the old battles because we and the Democrats had sort of set our pattern and our pace, and it was just easy to keep making the same arguments, and all we were doing is boring people to death.

And here comes the guy who says, "Let me tell you how we can change the equation. We need something that will really shake the place up. It'll get a lot of people angry. It'll get a lot of people against us because it'll sound like we're trying to come up with simplistic answers, but this is how it works."

So we talked about it. "Okay," I said, "I'm with you. I love this idea." Then we talked about how could we make it a party position. We'd created a couple of publications as a committee. We could come up with some endorsements, things like that. But we needed something that would dramatize it, and over the course of two or three conversations, one of us—I give him credit; I don't know which one it was—said, "Let's put all of our really creative people on a plane and fly them to every media market in the United States. I'll pay for it. We'll get [William E.] Bill Simon and everybody else that's willing to talk about creating this new approach to economic growth, and we'll go out

and we'll take our message to people. (A), we'll be in Oklahoma City or in Atlanta or in Chicago, so we'll get all the local press, but (B), this will become a story in itself, that the Republicans are going out with a whole new real way of talking to people."

I don't think I'd ever seen anybody do a tax blitz before with a plane with all the top people we had going out and beating the drums for a particular approach. But that really made a difference and it got a lot of excitement going in the party. All of a sudden we had a focus. It wasn't entirely supported by a lot of people in the Republican Party, but I told the committee, I said, "Look, this party is moribund." We were down to 22, 23 percent of public support. The Democrats weren't a hell of a lot better. But people were turned off. I said, "We've got to shake this thing up. So we've got to establish the issue foundation for our campaign in 1980, and we can't trust the politicians to do it." It was almost that blunt. Otherwise, we'll keep doing the same thing we've been doing. We'll fight the same battles we've been fighting.

We consciously—I brought in a media guy from the [Margaret H.] Thatcher campaign in England, and we said, "Let's find a way to add new ads, do [unclear] blitzes, do communication, all of which will shift this conversation entirely, so that when we get a candidate,

whether it was [George H.W.] Bush or Reagan or whoever, they're going to run on our issues."

Kondracke: So is this the period when you got close to Jack?

Brock: Yes.

Kondracke: How much time did you spend with him?

Brock: I don't know. Both of us were on the road trying to prove how smart we were. [laughs] Or selling the message, whichever you want to put it. Quite a bit, I guess. Quite a bit, because we'd also meet in the venue of things like Chowder and Marching, but were we meeting weekly? Not at all. Was it at least eight, ten, twelve times in a year, which means averaging once a month, at least, yes. But somewhere in that range.

Kondracke: Let me reconstruct the process here. He comes to your office at the Republican National Committee probably in 1977?

Brock: Probably '78, but I wouldn't swear to that.

Kondracke: Going into the '78 congressional campaign.

Brock: Yes.

Kondracke: And you knew about Kemp-Roth already, the across-the-board tax cuts. So did you instantly say, "Jack, yes," or did it take you a couple of conversations?

Brock: I think it was pretty quick. I think it was probably the first meeting. I probably said, "I like it. I'm going to run it by some people," because I had some really good people with good brains, political brains on my staff that I trusted. But I said, "We need something like this, and you make it fun."

Going back to Jack the human being, Jack would bowl you over, he was so passionate, so excited, so, [imitating Kemp] "Brock, you've got to do it. Come on. We've got to do it now! I don't need to talk to anybody. Look at what we can do." That was Jack Kemp. And you caught the fever. It was contagious.

Kondracke: You had been previous to that a sort of [Robert J.] Bob Dole kind of deficit-cutting Republican.

Brock: Right. That's what I was talking about, my old-guard way of saying, "We've got to deal with the problem." The problem was deficits, excessive spending, spending in areas that were stupid, things that were tamping down on growth. I had not moved to the idea that really significant change in the quality of the way we tax could create an energy, because I almost came to the position—and both parties have a tendency to do this, both parties have a tendency to say, "If we can define the problem and we address that problem, things would get better." I think what we were realizing in those days was even if we solve the problem, things weren't going to get any better because we were not doing some things that we hadn't even thought about.

We were taxing our way to deficit reduction. We had a top rate of 70 percentile marginal rate, 50 percent, if I remember, something like that on capital gains. There was a time when we were taxing capital gains as regular income. But we were simply stopping the creation of capital formation in the United States. There was just no growth, particularly in the small-business area, where most jobs are created. So it was easy to get in that rut. "We've got to do a better job at deficit reduction. We've got to do a better job of accusing the other party of making it impossible for us to grow," and not moving to the more affirmative approach that Kemp-Roth brought to the equation. We could do it with capital gains with Bill Steiger, I had no

doubt about that. I was very aggressive in that area. But Kemp-Roth did something across the board. Capital gains addressed a part of the problem.

Kondracke: Yet in the 1978 New Jersey primary, you had Clifford [P.] Case, who was a conventional incumbent Republican senator, and Jeff Bell, who was running on Kemp-Roth, and you supported Clifford Case. Was that simply because he was an incumbent?

Brock: Yes. I, frankly, didn't think Jeff Bell was a good candidate. I didn't think he was grabbing the kind of constituency we needed. I don't know how active I was for Clifford Case. We may have had some people up there, but I don't remember endorsing him. I didn't ever do that, as far as I know, except for [Jacob K.] Jack Javits, and I got really angry at the campaign that was run against him, because it was grossly irresponsible. He still lost. The guy beat him, still won the general election, and he proved I was right. [laughs]

Kondracke: Go back to your trip to England. When did that take place and what did you learn there? What did you do?

Brock: Margaret Thatcher was elected, I think, was it 1979?

Kondracke: So this is after the '78 election, you think.

Brock: Yes. The story is, I kept hearing about this crazy woman that was just driving the Labour government crazy in England, and it was pretty exciting. She was talking about the same kind of issues that I found exciting: growth, jobs, lower taxes, getting the government out of everything. Labour had made government into the most intrusive of all places, as only the Brits can do when they become Socialist. So I called the Conservative Party headquarters and said, "I want to come over and spend some time with you guys."

They said, "Come." They put me out in some routings, listening to candidates. I worked through their entire advertising program met with their ad people, spent time with Margaret and Dennis Thatcher, spent the last day of the campaign on the bus with them, and just got blown away. I mean, they were just driving the Labour people crazy. I loved their commercials. I loved the fact that they were running things. They were so much better than anything I'd ever seen in the United States. It's like British movies today. They're always better than American movies. Hollywood is so incompetent, and the Brits are so much better. They really have got some class. So the campaign was just magnificent.

I came back and called and said, "Who's the ad person that did the campaign?" They said it was an American named [James] Jim Killough. I called him and said, "How fast can you get to Washington? I want to hire you to do media for the Republican National Committee. We've never done advertising for our party, neither party, and I want to take that message that you did in ten-minute spots and put it into thirty-second, one-minute spots and start running them, to talk about what the Republican Party stands for." He came, and we put them together and they got sort of exciting.

The timing was fabulous because all of this fit. The Thatcher campaign was such a positive, upbeat, exciting campaign, that's what we were trying to generate here. By changing the composition of the party, by creating an opening for people to feel like we were them again, and by having an issue that people could say, "Oh, this really means we can get incomes up and jobs up again and become America again," it was just a great combination. Of course, we had a fabulous asset named Jimmy Carter in the White House, who was talking about malaise and how America was just sort of slumping along.

Kondracke: What was your favorite ad?

Brock: The one we won the CLIO [Awards] with. [Thomas P.] Tip O'Neill was the Democrat Leader in the House. He was a big old really nice guy, classic overweight Irish pol out of Boston and well known, very publicly recognized figure. Jim came up with this ad where you had a look-alike with Tip O'Neill driving a car and an obvious aide sitting on the right seat. They're driving along, and the assistant says, "Mr. Speaker, we're running out of gas."

"[Demonstrates]" Sort of classic.

In a little bit, "Mr. Speaker, we are running out of gas."

"[Demonstrates]. Crazy."

"Mr. Speaker, we are running out of—."

[Demonstrates sound of car] The car sort of clumps down.

O'Neill gets out of the car, kicks the tire, and the line was "The Democrats are out of gas. Vote Republican for a change."

We didn't have enough money to run that with a thousand gross rating points everywhere, but the press loved it, so they kept running it on the nightly news. [laughs] So we got a whole lot more than we could possibly have afforded, because we were doing things that no party had done. Again, you could build around the energy that it was creating with our issues side, our recruitment side, and it all fit.

Kondracke: So going back to the '78 campaign and Kemp-Roth, what part of the Republican Party were you able to convince to make this your key message for the '78 congressional campaign? And who were you not able to convince?

Brock: It sounds like I'm blowing smoke, but the truth is that when the party is as down as it was, and it was down on itself, I decided—and I had very strong support within the committee and obviously my staff—that we didn't have to talk to anybody about what we were going to do. The party didn't have a message, so we said, "We have to create one." They didn't have a campaign. We have to create one. They didn't have any development program for getting young people, minorities, women. We had to create our own. So it never occurred to me to go to anybody in the House or the Senate and say, "We're going to endorse this issue." I said, "We're going to do it and apologize for not consulting, not for the issue." I don't ever remember having a meeting with the Republican Leader in the House or the Senate, saying, "We're going to do this." I didn't have time and, frankly, I didn't want to convince anybody. We were going to get into the wrong argument if we were trying to convince Republicans to do something different.

That's why Jack was fun. Jack wasn't convincing anybody. He was trying to get the American people ginned up.

Kondracke: What role specifically did Jack play in that '78 campaign?

Brock: He was on the road. Sure. Absolutely.

Kondracke: Who else was on that plane?

Brock: I'd have to get out the list. Bill Simon was obvious. Laffer, I think, was on the plane. I don't know if [Alan] Greenspan was. I think he may have been.

Kondracke: Was the plane the key thing that you used for the '78 campaign or were there ads?

Brock: No, we didn't do ads until the '80 campaign. We started running ads in '79 and '80.

Kondracke: At the Miller Center session, I think it was [J.] David Hoppe who said that there wasn't even a majority of Republican senators who supported Kemp-Roth. When the Nunn Amendment got

passed, actually, by 62 to 28 or something like that, in the Senate, that it was just people wanting to say that they were against raising taxes. So I gather that means that your message was catching on, that raising taxes was a bad idea.

Brock: Oh, yes.

Kondracke: Remember that?

Brock: Oh, yes, I sure do. One of the things that was so hard about what we were trying to do was that the Republican Party was in a rut. I'm not sure that I had not been in that same rut a few years earlier. But what we figured out, when I took over as chairman, we said, "We need to define who we are." We asked Republicans to say, "What do you look like if you're a Republican?" And I used to use this in my speech, I said, "We're white, Anglo-Saxon, largely Protestant, middle-aged, middle-income, Buick-driving people who live in the Northeast. That's Republican." I used to end that by saying, "I need to find a statistician to show how to compose a majority out of that group," because if you don't have a majority you can't win elections. "If we can't do that, then we've got to find out why we don't have women and young people and minorities, and blue-collar and so forth."

So all of those things were sort of fitting into a normal pattern for me and the committee and for the younger guys, the Kemps of the world, and we were asking a lot of very good, very talented, very caring Republican leaders to shift spots, to shift gears, and to adopt something that they weren't quite sure they were for. It was out of the norm. It was out of the pattern. So we said, "We've got to do it for them, and we're going to make it impossible for—." The conscious decision was to make it a Republican issue, party issue for the entire Republican Party, and the person who was going to articulate that vision was going to be the president or the president nominee, whoever the party nominated.

So we had to create a situation where that nominee had his issues already precooked before he got the nomination or she got the nomination. Then they couldn't not endorse that position because it was the party's position. Nobody's going to take on his own party after winning the nomination or even in the process of running for it. So we were trying to precook the deal. That's where Jack really got the things moving. I was lucky to be in the right place. He was lucky to be in the right place, but he made it the right place.

Kondracke: So how did you do in '78?

Brock: We picked up a lot of members of Congress, over twenty-odd number. I've forgotten. We picked up some governors. We picked up a bunch of legislators. Part of our goal that had nothing to do with issues was we had to get control of enough state legislative bodies or governorships to have a voice in the redistricting that was going to come after the decennial census in 1980. So we put a huge amount of energy into local elections. Again, the party had never—well, I guess they did with Ray [C.] Bliss. We put more focus there than I think has ever been done, and we were consciously recruiting people from within the committee that looked like the committee—that was our mantra—in order to get people to realize that Republicans looked like them. So we made a good start in legislative elections in '78.

Kondracke: Did you think of Jack Kemp as a potential president or vice president in those days?

Brock: I thought it was very possible he could be a vice presidential selection by the nominee. I did not see him as—

[telephone interruption]

Kondracke: Going into the 1980 campaign, did you know about this plan that Arthur Laffer and Jude [T.] Wanniski had to try to get Reagan's vice presidential nomination for Kemp?

Brock: I didn't know about the plan. I knew that those two were conspiring always, and that there would be an effort on Jack's part, which was not illogical. He was a young firebrand, exciting. Would have been an asset.

Kondracke: There was a big demonstration on his behalf at the convention.

Brock: That's correct.

Kondracke: Did you think it was going to go anywhere?

Brock: Mort, you remember the conversations that were really going on behind the scenes were the conversations about getting Jerry Ford to be on the ticket, so I really didn't think anything would go on Jack. I thought that there could have been a deal to get Ford and Reagan paired. [Henry A.] Kissinger was really pushing that. But I guess I didn't know what Reagan thought of Kemp. I thought obviously they

were close, because Kemp was supporting him, stuck his neck out earlier, four years earlier. I just didn't know where that might lead. He was a player. He could have been. But Reagan got so mad at what Kissinger was doing, anything could have happened. I think he was looking for someone who could pick up the traditional Republican base, and that was the logic of George Bush, the Connecticut middle-income, white, Buick drivers. [laughter]

Kondracke: Reagan gets elected, and from '81 to '87, you're U.S. Trade Representative and then Secretary of Labor. How much contact did you have with Kemp in those days, the passage of the Kemp-Roth Bill and so on?

Brock: A lot less, because my focus was entirely on international trade for those first four-plus years, and I was traveling a lot. I was overseas trying to kick start the U.S. Free Trade Agreement with Israel, then Canada, the Uruguay Round. So I was out of that circle.

Kondracke: Was there any chatter in the cabinet, [David A.] Stockman, [James A.] Baker, [Donald T.] Regan, or the president himself, about Kemp?

Brock: I'm sure there was a good deal. I just don't remember anything that sticks out, to be honest.

Kondracke: So you were much less close to him in this period than you were in the previous period.

Brock: Yes. I moved into such a different area.

Kondracke: What about the gold standard? He was an advocate of the gold standard, which sort of has something to do with international trade. Was it ever on the agenda of the Reagan administration?

Brock: No. I did talk to Jack about that, and I'm not sure I said he was smoking something illegal, but I said he was simply wrong.

[laughs]

Kondracke: Why?

Brock: Because I thought we had moved beyond that. He and I had different views on the Federal Reserve System, and my sense was that the Fed was an incredibly important institution that performed a much more positive function or role in the economy, and I felt like the gold

standard would tie our hands. He and I just simply had a pretty vigorous disagreement in at least two or three conversations in that regard. It was not anything that was going to affect the relationship. It wasn't anything that I was going to go out and campaign on. I had my problems and he was off on that.

I never got the passion about the gold standard issue that I did about Kemp-Roth. He felt strongly about it. He would argue about it. He was vehement on the subject. He was a little too dismissive of those who disagreed. But I didn't feel that that was as much of a core of Jack as the other.

Kondracke: I take it you're still against going back to the gold standard.

Brock: It's a dumb idea.

Kondracke: Why is it such a dumb idea? Those who argue for it say that the Federal Reserve System has not been good for the dollar, the dollar is too weak or too strong, depending on what their policy is, and that if there was an exchange with gold, that it would stabilize things and prevent inflation and so on. What's wrong with the gold standard?

Brock: Well, if the world were on a gold standard, it is conceivable it would provide some stability, but doing it unilaterally ties your hands. This is not a world where we are the only source of power and strength and economic coherence. This is a global economy. Other people can game it, as the Greeks had done in the Euro. It might be almost a comparable example, where they've got one standard for the European Community and here's one country that says, "Oh, look at what this did, let me be irresponsible for a while." I think the same thing could happen with the gold standard if you aren't careful, and that creates a whole different set of problems.

We've got to be able to compete. We've got to do so by maintaining economic stability at home. That means we've got to deal with our own problems. Gold doesn't deal with deficits. Gold doesn't deal with spending. Gold is a currency. That's not the same thing.

Kondracke: On another issue that he was involved with, when you were Secretary of Labor, did you have anything to do with the Enterprise Zone?

Brock: Yes. Just that it was an exciting idea that I could say I think made a whole lot of sense and good support. It was not anything that we would engage in in terms of the Department of Labor, its

functioning operations. When I was out making a speech, I could say, "This is a terrific idea. We need to show the example of what works. We need to get some energy going again."

Kondracke: You've told me about an incident when you and Jack were going to a Super Bowl.

Brock: We're not going to get too far into this.

Kondracke: Okay. But this was the issue of HIV/AIDS, right?

Brock: Yes.

Kondracke: The Surgeon General, [C.] Everett Koop, had reported that this was going to devastate Africa, and you're flying to the Super Bowl. Say what happened.

Brock: Jack thought it was more of an issue that was generated by—I'm sure he was overstating his views in order to get my juices flowing, which he did, by the way, but that it was something that was overemphasized by some doctors and some drug companies to get more research money, whatever. I just sort of exploded. I had heard

Dr. Koop talking about the explosion in AIDS, how it was simply something we couldn't deal with, we didn't have any answers to, and it was not going to be an African problem for long; it would spread quickly. We had a thoroughly strong, vigorous debate in which the intensity translated into probably some flushed faces and so forth.

Kondracke: Shoving match?

Brock: Well, I'm not sure I'd go that far. I didn't want to get in a shoving match with Jack Kemp. Might lead to something worse.

[laughter]

Kondracke: So that strikes me as being out of character for somebody who was usually compassionate about one issue, immigrants, whatever.

Brock: Jack and I agreed on so many things, and I would completely take your point. I can't think of anything we would disagree with in terms of compassion or immigration or any of the issues relating to minorities, or poverty. In thinking about it, I wonder if he was just pulling my chain, but if he was, he did it. [laughs] But he was pretty vigorous in his response. Somebody must have said something to him

that made him think that Dr. Koop had been led down the primrose path into something that was being overblown.

Kondracke: Do you think that this has anything to do with his Christian Science background, that he sort of thought that all disease was kind of spiritual or something like that?

Brock: That never occurred to me. I have no idea. I don't know. That doesn't make sense to me.

Kondracke: Going into 1988, you are Bob Dole's campaign manager, chairman, and Kemp is running for president. Talk about the Kemp campaign as you saw it from the Dole perspective.

Brock: I didn't take Jack's campaign seriously. I didn't think it was well put together. I thought it was a little bit too chaotic. I thought the opposition was almost entirely, as it turned out to be, George Bush. I didn't see Kemp raising the kind of money that was necessary, and I'm sensitive to that because when I came to the Dole campaign, it had been going on for about three months and they'd already spent a substantial amount of money that we're allowed to spend under the campaign finance reform laws. So I was desperately

looking for how I could save money and spend less and still win some primaries. So those were the issues I was concerned with. Jack was not posing any problems for us. George Bush was.

Kondracke: And he didn't last very long.

Brock: No.

Kondracke: Did you talk to him at all during this period?

Brock: Not that I recall.

Kondracke: Do you know how he took his loss?

Brock: I don't, other than knowing him, he was moving on the next day.

Kondracke: What did Dole think about Kemp?

Brock: [laughs] You should ask Bob. I think Dole was more on the classic Republican side. Dole would have viewed Jack almost from the

outset of his early days as someone that was a little too brash, a little too active on issues that were not consistently in the mainstream.

I got caught in a trap, and it was my fault entirely.

Kondracke: How so?

Brock: I had tried to convince the vice president to make human development the core of his campaign—education, skill development, workforce development—and had failed. I had an unpleasant conversation with his campaign manager about how they were going to respond to Iran Contra, which I didn't agree with what they were doing. Dole, Elizabeth [Dole] and Bob, asked me in a moment of weakness, and I decided that Bob might not have been the strongest candidate in the world. As it turned out, I was understating the problem. But he was a good man and a friend and a colleague that I'd worked with, and I agreed to support him. Not the wrong decision; wrong outcome.

Kondracke: It was a messy campaign, wasn't it?

Brock: Yes, it was a messy campaign. And I had an internal conflict, overall consequence, with the people that had been running it up until

the time I came on board. There was no agreement on how to run the campaign, and I finally had to let them go. It was just too little too late. And sometimes you have to look back and say I wish I had done something different, not in terms of supporting him. I still think he's an incredible human being. I think he would have been a good president, but the campaign was a horrible experience. [laughs]

Kondracke: So then Bush wins, he becomes President of the United States, and then Kemp becomes HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] Secretary. What contact, if any, did you have with him during that time?

Brock: Nothing in substantive terms. We would run into each other in different events. I thought Jack was doing a terrific job, told him so, and it was the kind of a conversation you'd have anytime, "Any way I can help? You're doing great. Keep it up," kind of stuff.

Kondracke: Was this just at social events or did you and your family gather with his family?

Brock: Probably largely social events, yes.

Kondracke: How often would you see him, would you say, in those days?

Brock: Several times a year, but, again, nothing like weekly or anything like that. Nothing formal.

Kondracke: Moving on to 1996, do you have any idea why Kemp decided not to run?

Brock: I do not.

Kondracke: Who did you support that year? Dole obviously won.

Brock: I can't imagine moving off of my horse. [laughs]

Kondracke: Were you surprised that Dole picked Kemp?

Brock: Yes, I was. He didn't ask me about it, for sure. I would have said, "Great idea. Great combination." It wasn't. I don't think Jack really got into that one.

Kondracke: Talk about that.

Brock: Well, I'm viewing from afar. We didn't have a conversation. I thought Jack—honestly, I think he took it too lightly. I think he went into that first debate confident that he could just chew his opponent up out of just sheer joy of his experience and his love of the debate, and I think he went in totally unprepared. I think he got his hat handed to him. I was very, very surprised and it was disappointing, because Jack was a lot better than that. I don't know if he was tired or just overly confident, but it was not Jack's best moment, and he was better than that.

Kondracke: So you think [Albert] Gore [Jr.] won. You think Gore won that debate?

Brock: Yes, I certainly do, and I'm the last person to give him a lot of praise. But, yes, I think he ate Jack up, and that's just crazy to me, because Jack is so much better than that.

Kondracke: Do you have any idea why it happened?

Brock: I do not. I'm assuming that, as I said earlier, that I think he took it too lightly. I think he thought Gore was sort of deadly dull,

which he is, and a one-note Johnny, which he can be, and that Jack could come in with all of his energy and excitement and creativity and own it. Gore was much better than he expected him to be, much better prepared, and Jack was caught off balance on any number of questions that he simply hadn't thought about and wasn't ready for.

Kondracke: What about Jack's other campaigning activities? What did you think about them?

Brock: I didn't see enough of him. I never felt that he was as engaged as I would have expected. I would have thought Jack would have been the flamethrower, he'd bring out the spear, the guy with a javelin in his hand, going for it big time, and I didn't see that.

Kondracke: So what's the period when you and Jack were closest?

Brock: I don't know how to answer that. We had the most contact and I think the most fun conversations in that early period from his first or second term through the time when I was National Chairman through '80. We had a common vision, we had a common sense that the party had to get energized, off its duff, into some areas that were more fun, more exciting, and that would get people back to believing

in government and politics again. The American people were not unlike they are today; they were really, really down on the system. That's a really, really dangerous thing to happen in this country, and both of us felt that we could change that, and I think we did for a while.

Kondracke: So describe his style as a person. Would you say that he was warm? Did he confide in people? Were you friends, I mean real close friends or not?

Brock: Yes, I think we were pretty good friends. I'm not sure that we confided that much. We shared so many interests and concerns and beliefs, that that was almost the essence of the conversation. We could get into talking about other individuals, "What did you think? How do we get so-and-so involved? What do we need to do about her or him?" We were both spiritually grounded, and I'm sure we had some conversations along that line, mostly because of not just the two of us, but because of Joanne [Kemp] and my wife, [Laura Brock] Muffit. It was fun to be with him, and I think he may have felt somewhat the same way.

Kondracke: Do you think he had any particular weaknesses or flaws?

Brock: Yes. He was not the world's greatest listener. That's probably true of most of us at one time or another. But Jack, when he got on a path, he was on it, and it was devil take the hindmost. That's good. Nothing wrong with it. But it could have been maybe even better had he sought the advice, participation of a broader range of people. He really believed in the force of ideas, and he had the personality that would say, "You gotta do it. You gotta do it. This is going to change the world." And that excitement is productive and it's contagious and it's wonderful. It probably could have been even better if he had engaged some—he had a closed circle of people in the Laffer type, Jude Wanniski and those. I didn't sense how far it went beyond that. At a point he would lose people, Dave Stockman being an example, that had been with him.

Kondracke: Do you think that in the case of Dave Stockman, that Kemp lost Stockman, or was Stockman ever really in the supply-side system?

Brock: That's a fair question, and I think maybe more the latter. I don't know that, but I tend to think that Stockman was a bit less of a totally committed supply-sider.

Kondracke: You were in the cabinet with him.

Brock: Yes.

Kondracke: Were you surprised that Stockman basically turned against Reagan?

Brock: I was, very much so. I saw it beginning to slide that way, because David would ask me to come in and sit with him a couple of times when he was getting ready to put the budget together. "What do you think? Can we get away with this? What do you think about that? How will the Congress react? How will the president react? What do you think about this or that?"

We were beginning to get into the old argument about deficits and whether or not the tax changes that Reagan would, in fact, create the revenue growth that would offset the increase in expenditures, and Dave, I think rightly, said he didn't think they would. Well, that went against dogma in the White House, and that just sort of slid into an increasingly frustrating difference between him and the Don Regans, the Jim Bakers, and the Ronald Reagans.

Kondracke: And the Jack Kemps.

Brock: Of course.

Kondracke: So did Jack Kemp say anything negative about Stockman or, for that matter, about anybody?

Brock: I don't remember that. I know he was disappointed, because he felt like Stockman was part of the team, but I don't remember Jack Kemp saying really negative things about anybody particularly. That was not where he was. He was going to talk issues, not personalities. He could get people into uncivil conversations because he was aggressive and so active and so passionate. That's different.

Kondracke: Other than your AIDS conversation, do you have an example?

Brock: No, but people reacted to Jack, as we were talking much earlier back in the days of Chowder and Marching, those conversations, because he was just too passionate about things and they were not ready for that. Part of that was he had not courted them. He didn't do that. He didn't go and work them and say, "What

do you think?" That was not his approach in many of these cases. But in terms of him saying, "This guy's a bum," "This guy's a crook," I don't think I ever heard that, anything like that out of him. He just didn't judge people like that. He was all issues. They could be wrong, but he didn't challenge integrity.

Kondracke: We're almost done. What do you think is the continuing relevance of supply-side economics? Do you think that it has sort of taken over the party at all, that it's become a religion, or not? Do you think the tax cuts are the answer anytime, any place, as seems to be Republican policy now?

Brock: I think dogma is always wrong, and I guess I wouldn't blame supply-side so much as the theology of tax cuts per se. They don't even make the argument anymore that it's essential to growth. Why don't we have zero taxes? Do you have any growth? No. You'd have chaos. So the dogma has led us as a party and too much of the country into this sense that a tax is a tax is a tax, and that makes it evil, evil, evil. I've seen people in state legislatures voting against cigarette taxes because they're a tax. Well, why don't they grow up? We've got a tax system that is not coherent. It is counterproductive. By saying all taxes are bad, it keeps you from looking at the core of

the issue, is that are some good and some bad and what's the right combination.

To have a trillion, 200 billion dollars in tax expenditures today when we've got the deficits we have is just the most outrageously inexcusable absence of a personal responsibility or corporate responsibility I can imagine, and here the Grover [G.] Norquists of the world are out there asking people to sign a tax pledge saying no tax, no tax, no tax, ever, ever, ever, and then they pervert that into saying that even a removal of a tax expenditure that is a responsible, to wit, on ethanol, much less some of these other jerk head things, that are benefiting special interests because they had some damn good special lobbyist, it keeps you from doing what we desperately need to do, which is come up with a better system of producing revenue to finance some things in government that really need to be funded. You can be as absolutist as you want to and say all we need is the FBI and the CIA and the military and the police department, but the world doesn't work that way.

I really and truly do worry that we've got ourselves in a bind, and the Democrats have themselves in a bind. They say that it doesn't matter, we can afford anything because it's the right thing to do, and they absolutely lack any sense of responsibility for the consequence of their actions, what they're doing to the poor people of

this country. But that's a debate we're not even having because we argue absolutes. Spend more on entitlements, spend less on taxes, get more revenue, and we're not discussing the real problem. So I resent the slide into dogma, demagoguery, and I think both parties are abundantly guilty.

Kondracke: Can you speculate as to where Kemp would be in current political terms?

Brock: Jack Kemp would be right on path with me. I am absolutely positive about that. He would be saying of course tax cuts can generate revenue, but when you get to the point where they're generating more deficits than there is any conceivable revenue opportunity, there's something wrong. He would be saying nobody can justify spending 25 percent of the American people's GDP on expenditures, which is what we're doing today. But neither can anybody say we ought to be spending 16 percent or spend revenue at 16 percent of GDP when it's creating the collapse of the dollar, which means inflation, which means low growth, which means poor people get hurt worse. He was smart enough to know that there is some competent resolution, and he'd be looking at tax expenditures. He'd be saying how in the hell can you justify not means-testing Medicare

or Social Security. We're all talking about anybody with a quarter of a million—I'm venting. I apologize.

I don't have any doubt that we would be having a different conversation if he were here than either side right now. That's almost what we did in the 1970s, Mort. We had two parties frozen in their style and in their approach. May have been fine for the fifties and sixties. It was not fine for the seventies. By moving entirely away from that, and that's where supply-side did make a difference, we change the quality of the debate, we changed the attitude of the country, we got the country energized, and not just economically, in terms of people believing again, getting involved again, getting excited again. We got our spirits back. And so much of government is a matter of attitude. If you believe, it'll work. If you don't, forget it.

Kondracke: So, final question. What does the Jack Kemp career teach the Republican Party and the country?

Brock: Wow. Quit acting like accountants. Get passionate. Forgive me if you want to be an accountant [remark made to Kemp Foundation interns sitting in on the interview]. Believe enough in something to get excited about it, and get excited enough about it to

engage and fight for what you believe in. But in the process, listen and bring others in, because none of us can do it by ourselves.

The reason for a political party is not to tell people how to think; the reason for a political party is to give people access to the process so they feel like they've got a voice. That's more important than any single issue we can come up with. Jack believed that people in this country deserved a voice. They also deserved opportunity. He put more opportunity in front of voice, and I think was, in the final analysis, as helpful as it could have been if we could have gotten more people involved. I don't think we'd have the Grover Norquist with our absolute dogma running things now. But we've moved so far down the paths of absolutes that people are incapable of listening right now, and that's something that is really, really, really scary to me.

Kondracke: Thank you so much.

[End of interview]