

**Interview with Rep. Gerald R. Ford, Jr. (R-MI)**

April 1964

“I always considered John Taber [R-NY] a tower of strength on the [Appropriations] Committee, and he was. He commanded a great deal of respect. For that reason, Cannon [Appropriations Committee Chairman Clarence Cannon (D-MO)] had to be careful in what he did. If he tried to do anything shady, John Taber would get mad and put up an awful stink about it. And if Taber did that, Cannon knew he would lose, because Taber would get support from some of the Democrats. Ben Jensen [R-IA] doesn't have that standing in the Committee. That's the only difference I can think of.”

Regarding the removal as an ex officio: “That's an example of the arbitrariness I mentioned before. Whatever their differences, Cannon and Taber had good rapport. Cannon and Jensen didn't have that relationship. I guess Cannon thought this was a good time to break the precedent. Cannon could do that to Jensen. No Democrats would take up the cudgels for Ben Jensen. But if Cannon had ever tried to do that to John Taber, he never would have gotten away with it. The Democrats would have supported Taber.” The subcommittees go on the same as ever. No Republicans feel a loss of strength via the loss of Jensen in the markup.

Regarding the conference committee dispute: “I never did know why Cannon initiated it. But once it got started, our problem was how to get out of it.” Independent Offices Subcommittee Chairman Albert Thomas (D-TX) was the head of a “negotiating committee.” The committee made three agreements. One was regarding the meeting place – “nonpartisan as between the two houses.” The second was the conference chairman, which was not made in writing but which provided that one-half of the House members and one-half of the Senate members be chairman each year, and vice versa the next year. The third was to propose “a study group to permanently resolve this dispute.” Ford was a member of this, and it never met (he smiled), and he thinks it never will.

Does the conference chairman make a difference? “It makes some difference – psychologically, if in no other way. He bangs the gavel. You have to address him in order to be recognized. He's the major domo in there. But it doesn't make a difference to the extent that the chairmanship of a standing committee does.”

Republicans meet two or three times a year: “once at the beginning of the year to discuss the budget in general,” and other times when “something critical” comes up. He couldn't think of any examples, though, except for meetings at the beginning of last year with the Bow task force report. [See discussion in Fenno's *Power of the Purse*, 257-258.] They had had none this year since the first one, but he said they might get together before a critical full Committee as a possibility. (They did on foreign aid in '64.) Still, he could remember none. He said, “no more than three times a year.”

The minority on the subcommittees caucused all the time – especially before the markup.

Bow task force produced no increase in partisanship. "The Democrats recognize it as legitimate," he said. Jensen "authored" the idea, he thought. It got "refinements" in the policy committee. Activities tailing off in 1964. The 1963 budget was "more vulnerable" and the 1964 budget "not as juicy a victim." Also, politically since defense will be a campaign issue, the Defense Subcommittee can't go around cutting the defense budget.

Relations with the leadership are "very good." "No trouble whatsoever." Minority Leader Charles Halleck (R-IN), Republican Whip Leslie Arends (R-IL) and Bynes have good relationships with him. No communications problems at all. He doesn't know how it is with Jensen, but he is on the policy committee, and they were very helpful with the Bow task force report. Any time the leadership wants to know what's going on in the Appropriations Committee they can. "At least, that's true of my two subcommittees. That's maybe an unusual situation, but I don't think it is."