

**Interview with Rep. Hale Boggs (D-LA), Democratic Whip**

March 1963

With regard to his trouble on the foreign aid appropriation: “Otto Passman [D-LA, chairman of Foreign Operations Subcommittee] is crazy as a loon. I can’t find out what he’s doing. He doesn’t know himself. He’s a psychopath. I can’t stand being around him for long. He reminds me of a psychiatrist and I want to say, don’t bring your troubles to me. That’s the democratic process. You can’t have all bright and shining coins. You get some pretty dim ones sometimes.”

“On foreign aid, you get tied up, then we [the majority leadership] have to call some of the fellows in here and talk to them. On big things like that the leadership may get involved. But on a day-to-day dollars-and-cents basis for each department, we don’t get involved. When you get on the floor and the Republicans are going to cut the appropriations we have to do everything we can to help. Next Thursday, the interior bill will come in and the Republicans will be in there chopping away at the recommendations. So we’re sending out a message to all the Democrats to be there [on the floor]. Our job is get ‘em there and keep them there and defend the Committee. The leadership hopes that the Committee will do the best they can in meeting the administration request. Sometimes if the Committee cuts too much we may have to fight with it on the floor. Or in the conference committee, sometimes, you get into a jam there and the leadership will get involved.”

He stressed area in selection—he stressed “popularity” a good deal. He said there was no emphasis on spending. He said the leadership may have suggestions. In general, however, he would not differentiate the Appropriations Committee from any committee and was not very helpful.

“There’s a feeling that Clarence Cannon [D-MO, Appropriations Committee Chairman] is getting old and cantankerous and pretty arbitrary sometimes. And there’s some justification for it.”

“The reason why the Committee has been so much in the limelight lately is because Cannon on this side and [Carl] Hayden [D-AZ, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman] on that side have grown old beyond their time. This business of which side of the Capitol you [the conference committee] are going to meet on and getting exactly in the center is just foolishness.”

He does not think that members expect the Committee to cut. “They don’t cut so very much anyway. They go over on the floor and have a big fight over a couple of million dollars—and when the conference is all over most of it is back in there. They work very hard at their jobs, most of them. Men like George Mahan [D-TX, Defense Subcommittee Chairman]—he knows as much about the Defense Department as [Carl] Vinson [D-GA, Armed Services Committee Chairman]—maybe more. And Albert Thomas [D-TX, Deficiencies Subcommittee Chairman]. These are very capable men. George Mahan would make an excellent chairman of that committee.”

Again, with him the reality of subcommittees is very great. He sees the Committee as separate subcommittees with different personalities with which the leadership must deal. Leadership influence will vary with subcommittees. This accords very closely with the way in which various other members see the Committee structure. And it accords with what Speaker John W. McCormack (D-MA) said. There is a major generalization here, that the leadership does not have much influence with Clarence Cannon, a very minor influence here but within this outside limitation they have differing degrees of access to the various subcommittees.

It may very well be that access to either Committee or subcommittee is governed primarily by personality. With access to the chairman being the main limiting factor. Cannon's power over his subcommittees limits the access of the leadership to all subcommittees presumably.

With regard to executive pressure in the selection process, "only very indirectly. It's an internal organization matter."