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MEET THE PRESS

America's Press Conference of the Air

Produced by LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK

Guest: DR. ROBERT C. WEAVER
Administrator
Housing and Home Finance Agency

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MEET THE PRESS

Panel: PETER BRAESTRUP, *The New York Times*
MAY CRAIG, *Portland (Maine) Press Herald*
RAY SCHERER, *NBC News*
LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK, *Regular Panel Member*

Moderator: NED BROOKS

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MR. BROOKS: The Administration this past week opened its drive for legislation to stimulate the building industry and to provide more homes, especially for families with moderate incomes. The leadoff witness before the Senate Banking Committee was Dr. Robert Weaver, the new Administrator of the Housing Agency, who is our guest today. Dr. Weaver occupies the highest administrative position in the government ever held by a Negro. He has had long experience in housing administration in New York City and State. He is a graduate of Harvard with a degree of Doctor of Philosophy. For some 30 years he has been a crusader for civil rights both as a writer and as a consultant to government agencies.

MR. SPIVAK: Dr. Weaver, many people expected an Administration housing program that was new, bold, imaginative, massive. Would you say your program was any of those things?

DR. WEAVER: I think it is bold; I think it is massive in the sense that the problem is massive, and, therefore, we have to have massive tools to deal with it. As far as its being new is concerned, I think that any legislation in this field has to build upon the past. I think it would be rather foolish to throw out all of the experience of the past and not build on that—and try to bring in new elements but based upon experience that has proven to be successful.

MR. SPIVAK: Actually in terms of money is it much larger than the Eisenhower program?

DR. WEAVER: It is somewhat larger, yes.

MR. SPIVAK: I said "much."

DR. WEAVER: This is a very difficult term to define. It is sizeably larger. It is not, I suppose, as large as some people would want to have it, but I think it is large enough to do the job that we need to do at this time and are prepared to do at this time.

MR. SPIVAK: Is this just a beginning, and is your program going to get bolder as you go along? I mean, is this a first step to make sure that there will be other steps?

DR. WEAVER: Yes, I think there will be other steps. There are certainly some elements in this picture for which we were not able to come up with proposals at this time. We didn't have time enough to do it.

MR. SPIVAK: The Democratic Platform, for example, spoke of two million housing starts. You are not going to be able to do anything like that very soon, are you?

DR. WEAVER: Not next year, no, but we expect to have two million housing starts within the next four or five years.

MR. SPIVAK: In terms of money, I have seen varying estimates on how much this is going to increase the budget. I think your figures were something like \$138 million, and I believe there have been other figures of \$149 million and some of \$315 million. How much is this going to increase the budget of Fiscal '62?

DR. WEAVER: There will be somewhere in the area of \$108 million increased expenditures as a result of this program, and let me say the reason for that is that it takes a long time to tool up many of these programs—so that you can not get the money out immediately.

MR. SPIVAK: You say 108?

DR. WEAVER: Yes.

MR. SPIVAK: Then you have cut it down from 138? Wasn't that your original figure?

DR. WEAVER: I don't know exactly which figure you refer to. This is very difficult. Let me try to break this down: If you take the loans and the mortgage purchases which are under this program, they amount to roughly \$100 million in Fiscal '62. Then if you take the grants largely to urban renewal—I am speaking of the extra money that the Kennedy program would involve over what the Eisenhower program involved—you will have some \$8 million. And then, of course, there will be yearly contributions of some \$78 million a year for public housing. Therefore, these composite figures are very difficult to come by and to be understandable. But the figure which we now think is the accurate one would total around \$140-some million, with \$100 million in these two items of the loans which are the big new part.

MR. SPIVAK: Did the Budget [Bureau] arrange that with you—the Budget Director, I think, spoke of about \$149 million.

DR. WEAVER: Yes.

MR. SPIVAK: There were many people who thought you were going to have \$315 million.

DR. WEAVER: Yes.

MR. SPIVAK: Was this a directed budget, to you?

DR. WEAVER: No, this was a matter of making estimates of our new programs and how fast we could tool into them. This was an estimate which we made jointly with the Budget—

MR. BRAESTRUP: A good many of the features in the new housing bill seem to me to be clearly aimed at giving private enterprise a last chance to do the job with a little government help. I talk here of the home improvement loans, the no down-payment, 40-year mortgage program and similar programs of this nature. Is this in your opinion the last chance for the building industry to accomplish the job of building housing for low-income families and modest-income families in our cities and our suburbs?

DR. WEAVER: Our philosophy in all of this is that to the maximum degree possible private enterprise should do as much of the job as it possibly can, and what we have attempted to do here is to give private enterprise some additional tools to do a

larger sector of the job. I wouldn't like to talk in terms of a last chance because this sounds as though you are threatening somebody, but certainly this is an additional chance to have private enterprise do an additional part of the job.

MR. BRAESTRUP: Do you think that over the long run, given the present practices—there have been accusations of feather-bedding, and so on, small building, lack of mass production—that the building industry will ever get to the point where it can do the job without government help?

DR. WEAVER: I think that this is a partnership. I think you do have to have governmental help in this particular area, and I think there is much that needs to be done both on the part of getting better tools from government and on the part of getting the home building industry itself to be a more efficient industry than it has been in the past. Here again I think we need to help them.

MR. BRAESTRUP: Have you gotten any indications of support from the home building industry for this program? In the past, the real estate lobby and many builders have been against housing programs under both Eisenhower and Truman. Have you gotten any indications of new support for these new programs to help them?

DR. WEAVER: I think the indications that we have are those that have come forth in the hearings. Here the home building industry has supported our two major innovations—that is, the no down-payment, 40-year loan and, also, the rehabilitation program which we propose. They have come out against public housing. They have always been against public housing, and we expect them to continue to be against public housing, so I would say to that degree we have had some support.

MRS. CRAIG: Dr. Weaver, there is money in the proposed bill for housing for the elderly, and you have been very sympathetic with that. Do you think it is socially a good thing to separate the generations and herd the old people off by themselves away from their families?

DR. WEAVER: Because the money is separate, doesn't mean the programs will be separate. There is nothing in the law, there is nothing in the administration that we contemplate that will prevent integrated housing with the elderly with existing housing. In some instances it may be rehabilitated housing. In other instances it may be a few units here in a larger project. I may say this whole area is one, as you know, in which people are not too well of one opinion as to whether it is more desirable to have integration in the sense of having them all in one project or having them near to other people. Certainly most people feel it isn't good to have them all off by themselves, away from other people.

MRS. CRAIG: I have seen plans of small houses where there would be no stairs and very special things for them. Would you

think of small, separate houses or apartments or sort of hotels, or what do you think of for the elderly?

DR. WEAVER: I think of all of these things, Mrs. Craig. I think that we have to have in many instances, particularly in our large cities, these small units which will be a part of a larger program and a larger development. I think there will be some places where you may have a complete building by itself for the elderly, but we will have to experiment, we will have to try these out, and we will have to learn as we do. But we will certainly not start out with an idea of putting them all off to themselves.

MRS. CRAIG: There is a series running in "Life" about the plight of the working woman, the mother, who couldn't get a baby sitter and couldn't get a servant. Aunt Susie and Grandma used to do that. If you mixed them up, maybe you could get baby sitters in the same building with the elderly, do you think?

DR. WEAVER: This would certainly make it attractive to the young married families. I don't know how attractive to the elderly it might be. But there is this fact that the elderly do like to be near where younger people are. They do like to be near children. They don't necessarily want to be living in the same building with them, and there is this proximity which I think is a very important thing both from the point of view of the baby-sitting and making the elderly feel important and from the point of view of their own happiness.

MRS. CRAIG: I ask you this, because you have testified as to the contribution that the elderly make in their mature views of things and that they shouldn't be put on the shelf—I know you have said that.

DR. WEAVER: I agree.

MR. SCHERER: Doctor, I wonder if we could move on from baby sitters to civil rights for a moment. The President has announced that he plans to take some executive action in the field of civil rights in housing. Am I right in surmising that he is delaying action on this so as not to jeopardize the passage of his housing program through Congress?

DR. WEAVER: This I couldn't answer. I couldn't speak for the President. I don't know what is in his mind on this.

MR. SCHERER: You certainly must have talked to him on this subject. When would you look for some action in this field?

DR. WEAVER: I can't speak for him on this. I think that this is his time table, and what he does will be determined by him in this.

MR. SCHERER: Do you think it is unwise to work for immediate integration in housing?

DR. WEAVER: I don't know whether I understand your question.

MR. SCHERER: How fast do you think this thing should be brought along?

DR. WEAVER: I think that the matter of the policy here is crystal clear. If it is a correct policy—and I think it is—then

the time to do it, to get started on it, is as soon as possible.

MR. SCHERER: Back to the Housing Bill. On the 40-year, no down-payment \$10,000-\$15,000 bracket, how are you going to make sure that you have a house standing after 40 years? Isn't there a great policing job involved there?

DR. WEAVER: Yes, this is one of the hazards. We recognize this. We have been very honest about it all along. We believe that a house can be built to last for forty years, and it is going to be our responsibility to see that these houses are built so that they will last for forty years.

MR. SCHERER: How would you do that? Is that a policing job?

DR. WEAVER: That is a job of inspection, it is a job of design, it is a job of being concerned with the quality of building and the type of materials, et cetera.

MR. SCHERER: If I may pursue that a little bit more, what effect on housing programs do the many variations in building standards and codes and lack of enforcement have?

DR. WEAVER: There is no question that the diversity of standards, the diversity of codes is one of the complicated factors and a factor that is very important in the cost of the house. It is a long-range problem. It has been with us from the very beginning of this program and all these activities are something that we are going to have to come to grips with, but it is something we have to study and analyze before we can make recommendations.

MR. SCHERER: You would like to pull them together, these standards?

DR. WEAVER: Yes.

MR. BROOKS: Dr. Weaver, on these 40-year loans with no down payment, presumably, as I understand it, a person with no money could theoretically buy a home. Do you think it is wise to encourage people with no money to assume a debt that will not be paid off until the year 2,000?

DR. WEAVER: I think this involves two things. First, the whole mores and the whole folk ways of our society now are that this is the way people spend money. It is not the way I was brought up, probably not the way most of us were brought up, but this is the way people operate today.

Secondly, you have to look at the alternatives. These people are currently paying very often for substandard housing, an equal amount of money. This is the only way many of these families with children can find housing. They can't rent it. They can't rent decent housing. And finally, although these are 40-year loans, I might say that our experience has shown on our 20-year loans that the average length of the loan is only 10 years. On the 30-year loans the average length of the loan is only 12 years. So that many of these people will not be buying over a 40-year period.

MR. SPIVAK: Dr. Weaver, The New York Times a short

while ago reported that you would not urge a speedy Executive Order banning racial discrimination in housing. I gather that report is correct. Will you tell us why, since you have always been very clear on the subject, you are not urging a speedy end to it?

DR. WEAVER: I don't know what the source of that report was. I have made no statement concerning that.

MR. SPIVAK: Let me ask the question then: Is it true that you are not urging a speedy end of it? Are you?

DR. WEAVER: I am in favor of action to make all housing open to everyone where there is any federal form of assistance involved. As to the timing of this, I think this is the responsibility of the President and the Congress.

MR. SPIVAK: You yourself feel then that the time is not right at the present time or you would be urging it, I gather, since you have always been for it.

DR. WEAVER: I am still for it. I am not, however, in the position and I am not assuming the position of determining the timetable.

MR. SPIVAK: On that, at your confirmation hearing I think you were asked a question on integrated housing, and according to *The Times*, again, this was your answer: "I don't think I could if I wanted to, and I don't think I should if I could." Is that a correct quotation, and if it is would you explain that tongue-twister to us?

DR. WEAVER: That was an answer to a particular question. The question was, as I recall it, "Would you immediately end all segregation, and would you immediately affect complete integration." That was my answer to that question.

MR. SPIVAK: Then it is a question of immediacy. And not a question of substance?

DR. WEAVER: No.

MR. SPIVAK: Do you think it is going to be possible to end housing segregation by law or Executive Order as long as people have the right to move away?

DR. WEAVER: Remember what I am talking about—I said this at the hearing and I repeat it again—is equal opportunity. I am talking about a legal system and a system of operations where nobody is denied participation on account of his race, creed or color in housing which gets public benefits. As to whether or not he avails himself of that or whether or not somebody else lives there or does not live there, that is something that law cannot and should not control. This is a matter of equal opportunity.

MR. SPIVAK: And not an attempt on your part or anybody else's part to end segregation by law or Executive Order?

DR. WEAVER: Ultimately one would hope that this would result in that. But I don't think you can legally change social patterns over-night, but you can take a legal step which is in that direction and facilitate the end objective that you have in mind.

MR. BRAESTRUP: Under previous administrations, the Housing program was criticized on two counts, especially in the slum clearance field. One, that the slums were torn down or bulldozed down before housing was ready for the poor families that lived there. And second, that the slums were torn down so that housing for the well-to-do could be put up in their place. What changes, if any, are you going to make in this area?

DR. WEAVER: I think this is one area in which, to get back to Mr. Spivak's earlier question, we do have a big, bold program. In the first place, we are going to be very much concerned with stressing and pushing that type of urban renewal which does not involve the bulldozer approach primarily. Stressing as we are rehabilitation, setting up as we have set up the first real program that will make rehabilitation, I think, feasible by having financial assistance for it, and, thirdly, setting up in our own operations in FHA, a more direct, a more sympathetic and a more efficient type of administration to deal with these problems. At the same time, we are having another new program which will for the first time give federal assistance to a program for middle-income housing. This will be particularly effective in urban renewal areas, and it will enable us to build not only for the luxury market but also for the middle-income market so we will have less displacement, and we will have more housing for the people of the same incomes or near the same incomes as are now living in these areas.

MR. BRAESTRUP: The Labor Department has under consideration proposals to create a Youth Corps to work in urban projects. It has been brought up on the Hill, and the President himself mentioned this on a television broadcast with Mrs. Roosevelt a few weeks ago. Have you discussed this within the administration?

DR. WEAVER: We have discussed it within our own agency. We see great potentialities here, and we also see the great need for a very carefully supervised and thought-out program so that these people if they are working will be able to work effectively and will not cause confusion or cause resentment on the part of the people with whom they are working.

MR. BRAESTRUP: Are you going to propose such a program to the President?

DR. WEAVER: We are watching the way this develops, and as this develops, we will be prepared to come in with our recommendations at the appropriate time.

MRS. CRAIG: Dr. Weaver, except for crusaders, pioneers, high-income, intellectual non-whites, do you think they are happy, particularly the Negroes who are average, who move in with white people when they don't want them to come? Are they happy? Do they like it? Is it good, now?

DR. WEAVER: I think this. I think the average Negro who moves doesn't move in to move by this neighbor or that neighbor, but he moves to get the type of house he wants to get. This type of house may be in a neighborhood which is all Negro; it may be

in a neighborhood which is so-called mixed, and it may be in a neighborhood in which there are few Negroes. I think that what he is concerned with is not living next door to somebody but living in a house that is the house he wants, located where he wants it, just like every other American is interested in the same thing.

MRS. CRAIG: Dr. Weaver, let me ask you this: I know that you are opposed, outspokenly, to what are known as Negro ghettos—large aggregations of Negroes, but is it not true that it is through those large aggregations of Negroes that you have four Congressmen?

DR. WEAVER: Yes, and I think if you had a wider dispersion you might have more Congressmen, because instead of having votes only in four Congressional districts, you might have them in eight. With a greater dispersion, particularly at the local governmental level, you would have more political influence than you have by being concentrated into a small area.

MRS. CRAIG: Did not all these four come from highly concentrated districts?

DR. WEAVER: If those neighborhoods had been 60 or 70 percent instead of 100 percent, you still probably would have had your four Congressmen, and you might have had other Congressmen from other neighborhoods where the other would be living.

MRS. CRAIG: Then would you like a semi-ghetto?

DR. WEAVER: I don't like any kind of ghetto.

MR. SCHERER: Dr. Weaver, since the big cities are turning more and more Democratic, wouldn't you expect to find a certain Republican lack of enthusiasm for creating a Cabinet level post of Department of Urban Affairs?

DR. WEAVER: I don't know. I think that the problems of the central city are really the problems of the whole metropolitan area. When we are talking about these problems it is more than housing, it is more than urban renewal. It is mass transportation, it is adequate community facilities, it is planning for the total metropolitan area. Let me say, I think, sir, that many people are coming to understand that unless the heart of the metropolitan area, the central city, is healthy the whole metropolitan area suffers, so this is not something of only central cities.

MR. SCHERER: Would you look for a Cabinet level Department of Urban Affairs this year?

DR. WEAVER: I think many people who are more knowledgeable than I expect it.

MR. SPIVAK: The President said in his recent message that it is the responsibility of the Federal government to provide decent housing for all of our people.

Do you think that is the responsibility of the Federal government?

DR. WEAVER: I think that I may paraphrase that. I think that the meaning there is that it is the responsibility of the Federal government to provide such tools as will permit the fam-

ily, by doing something itself and not waiting for it to come to it with a special delivery stamp and deliver it.

MR. SPIVAK: The President's words were in the message: "Our policy for housing and community development must be directed toward the accomplishment of three basic, national objectives: . . . to provide decent housing for all of our people . . ."

DR. WEAVER: Yes.

MR. SPIVAK: You think that does not mean that the Federal government is to provide but to give the opportunity for others to provide it?

DR. WEAVER: I think the rest of the speech talks of the partnership between private industry and government. Obviously this is the intent, I think.

MR. SPIVAK: One question on Washington. I have been told that Washington is one of the worst slum areas in the country. This is a city that the federal government really runs. Why don't you do something massive here and clean up the slums in Washington?

DR. WEAVER: Let me say that all of these programs have to be by their very nature of local origin, and we do not run in our agency the local government in Washington, although the local government in Washington is very close to the Federal government. So any program of this type would have to be originated in the local government of Washington.

MR. SPIVAK: How do you feel about that, though? Would you like to see that done?

DR. WEAVER: As a native Washingtonian, I would be delighted.

MR. BRAESTRUP: I have one question bearing on what Ray asked you: Have you heard of any other candidates to head the new Cabinet level Department of Urban Affairs besides yourself?

DR. WEAVER: Oh, Heavens, yes.

MR. BRAESTRUP: Have you gotten any commitment yourself to be the head of the new Cabinet post?

DR. WEAVER: I don't think that one asks the President to commit himself to a position that is not yet created, so the answer is, No.

MR. BRAESTRUP: Do you expect to head it?

DR. WEAVER: I don't know.

MR. SCHERER: A lot of Republicans are saying this Administration has made a lot of noise but has really accomplished very little so far. What would your response be to that?

DR. WEAVER: I think that is wrong, and I think it is the usual thing that you expect when a new Administration comes in. The old Administration inevitably says this. It is almost standard for the course.

MR. BROOKS: I think at that point I will have to interrupt. I see our time is running out. Thank you very much, Dr. Weaver, for being with us.

