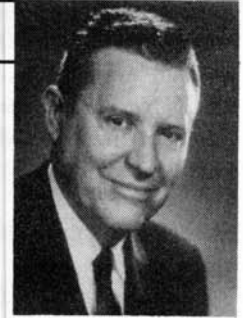


Interview: Ralph Yarborough



If they can't kill Clinton, they want to break his spirit

Ralph Yarborough was elected to the U.S. Senate from Texas in a special election in April 1957. He won reelection in 1958 and 1964. His 1964 election campaign, in which he defeated his Republican opponent, then-U.S. Rep. George Bush, is the subject of Chapter 9 in the influential book, George Bush: The Unauthorized Biography, which was published by EIR in 1992.

During his years in the U.S. Senate, Yarborough passed more legislation than any other Texas senator, before or after him. He was especially effective in passing legislation affecting education, health care, and veterans affairs. Still active today at 91 years old, he lives with his wife Opal in Austin. This interview was conducted in their home on Dec. 17 by Harley Schlanger.

EIR: We are speaking within several weeks of the November 1994 election, in which the Republicans won control of the House and Senate for the first time in 40 years. What are your thoughts on where the Democratic Party has to go in the period ahead to return to majority status?

Yarborough: I think it has to go back to Democratic principles. I don't think it should veer toward being pro-Republican, to try to sound like Republicans. If it returns to strong Democratic principles, then the voters will come back to it.

EIR: When you were in the United States Senate, there was a different orientation for the party.

Yarborough: There was an emphasis on education, on jobs, on economic growth, on the government improving conditions for the people. That's the right direction for today. If the Democratic Party abandons those [principles], the Democratic Party has lost its soul.

EIR: You were one of the initiators of the National Defense Education Act, which provided a college education for thousands of people in the sciences. The NDEA was discontinued after 1972. Do you think it is still necessary today to continue to place an emphasis on the sciences and technology in education, and should the government play a role in it?

Yarborough: I surely do. It is a serious problem that we are moving away from that, the Republicans are trying to pull us away from that. These are sound principles that are more than party matters, it's more than Republican or Democratic

Party; it's the principles upon which government is founded. Among other things, government should take care of the poor, and give them a chance in life.

EIR: Recently, the Speaker-to-be of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, said that he believes that the government must change its approach to those in need, going so far as to suggest that children of indigent mothers should be taken away from their mothers and placed in orphanages. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Yarborough: I oppose that. There's no better custodian for children than their mothers, and to take them away and put them in public or private orphanages is a disastrous proposal.

EIR: When you were in the Senate, you served on the Education and Labor Committee with Sen. John F. Kennedy. When he became President, he emphasized the importance of science to the nation's well-being, especially the space program, with NASA. Today, there is talk of privatizing NASA, taking the government out completely. What do you think about that?

Yarborough: That would be a mistake, a big mistake. NASA helped push ahead progress in technology. The country's schools should be oriented toward developing technology, teaching science.

EIR: Recently, President Clinton has come under attack, especially over his foreign policy. What do you think about the media coverage, which has been saying that he is incompetent on matters of foreign policy?

Yarborough: Clinton is very bright, he's so bright he's scared the socks off the people that are lying about him and attacking his character and all. He's a very bright guy, you can tell that. How can you explain that he was elected to five terms as governor of Arkansas? It takes a smart guy in this rugged political territory in the Southwest to do that.

EIR: As we are talking today, we just got word that there were shots fired at the White House last night. As a collaborator and close friend of President Kennedy, you know well how damaging to the nation his assassination was. Are you concerned for the safety of President Clinton, given the climate of both verbal and physical attacks against him?

Yarborough: I certainly have high concern—high concern—that the White House has been fired on twice in five weeks. Never before has the White House been fired on like that. Never. They're trying to break Clinton's spirit, is what they're trying to do, they're shooting at Clinton's spirit. If they can't kill him, they want to make him afraid.

EIR: Do you think the press attacks on him are part of the same process?

Yarborough: I do, I think it's the same process, to weaken him, to weaken his spirit.

EIR: I know that over the years, and more recently in our discussions, that you follow very keenly developments in Europe. President Clinton has given his strong support to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to expand development projects into eastern Europe and Russia, especially transportation projects to connect Germany with eastern Europe and Russia. What do you see as the role the President should play in this?

Yarborough: I think it's a strong policy, very strong policy, a good one for the President to follow. It will pay off in the future if he follows it. And Clinton has kept on following it, in spite of the attacks on the White House, attacks on him personally, attacking the White House with a plane—no oth-

er President has had the White House attacked as he has. But he's still sticking to his foreign policy.

EIR: The President was unable to get his health care bill through in his first attempt. Do you think that health care reform should still be a national priority?

Yarborough: He should continue to push health care reform. He has gotten a lot of other major bills done, but the press doesn't give him credit for anything. He's passed some bills by one vote, or two votes. . . .

I think he's making one mistake, he's going back to cut the taxes; if he does that, he's not going to reduce any budget deficit. I think he's just trying to make up for the election losses, but this is not the right way.

EIR: What, then, would be your advice to the Democratic Party and the President, after the recent election losses?

Yarborough: Don't try to follow the Republicans, stick to strong Democratic principles. And take the case to the people. Go on the stump, go out and talk up what you're doing. Don't depend on high-priced TV, take it directly to the people. When you're dependent on the big money for TV, who can raise the most money for TV advertising, you're tearing up the basis of the strength of a democracy, and losing contact with the hopes and needs of the average voter.

Bridge Across Jordan

by Amelia Platts Boynton Robinson

From the civil rights struggle in the South in the 1930s, to the Edmund Pettus Bridge at Selma, Alabama in 1965, to the liberation of East Germany in 1989-90: the new edition of the classic account by an American heroine who struggled at the side of Dr. Martin Luther King and today is fighting for the cause of Lyndon LaRouche.

"an inspiring, eloquent memoir of her more than five decades on the front lines . . . I wholeheartedly recommend it to everyone who cares about human rights in America." —Coretta Scott King

Order from:

Schiller Institute, Inc.

P.O. Box 20244 Washington, D.C. 20041-0244

(202) 544-7018

Mastercard and Visa accepted.

\$10 plus postage and handling (\$3.50 for the first book, \$.50 for each additional book). Virginia residents add 4.5% sales tax.

