

ORIGINAL

ADDRESS

OF

THE HONORABLE GRIFFIN B. BELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE
WASHINGTON PRESS CLUB

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P R O C E E D I N G S

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: * * * being employed by these outside law firms. They are constantly hiring my lawyers away from me.

But we are running the Trial Advocacy School down here. They go to school for three weeks.

COMMENT: [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Yes, we're doing that. We are -- one of the things that we're getting ready to start is a Seminar on Ethics. I am going to attend the first Seminar myself. In the future we're going to require every lawyer that we employ, as they come on board, to sign a statement that they have studied the canons of ethics and are familiar with them. That's something that we're doing.

And then another thing we've done, I've required all the U.S. Attorneys to try cases. We had some U.S. Attorneys who were press agents. And I didn't want any press agents, you know, we have them at the Justice Department.

[Laughter.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: And I got a -- if they can't try a case, they have to get out. I told a U.S. Attorney about a month ago if he didn't start trying cases he'd be fired. And he changed his mind, now he's trying some. I don't know how well he's doing it, but --

[Laughter.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: But they have to try cases.

In Chicago we put a trial lawyer there and within a month he tried a case, and the FBI agents there, I happened to be passing through Chicago, and they told me that they did more for their morale than anything that had happened in a long time. They said, "Can you believe that the United States Attorney actually tried a case?"

I said, "Yeah, I can believe it; he was a fine trial lawyer before we appointed him. He's supposed to do that."

That's something we're doing. Leadership. I go to court myself sometimes. I haven't had a great success at it. I argued the snail darter case, which lost, but --

[Laughter.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: However, we are giving leadership, that's the way I'm doing it.

And you saw where the Deputy was in court yesterday, Ben Civiletti. John Shenefield has been in the Supreme Court twice. We are just sending our top people to court. If the top people can't go, they're in the wrong place. We are lawyers for the people of the United States. We can't -- if we can't cut it, we ought to get out.

QUESTION: But it did worry you, this -- [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Oh, it worries me now, to be certain that they're doing a good job. And I don't want any

of them persecuting any American people by bringing suits that they ought not to bring, and that sort of thing. That was the thing I was aiming at.

QUESTION: Mr. Attorney General --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: And I was also trying to make it clear that all lawyers ought to do that, not just government lawyers. I believe that the government lawyers stand up as well -- stand up maybe better than the whole bar, the entire bar. That's what I'm trying to do.

QUESTION: Why are you all continuing to pursue the _____ case, since it appears that much of that material was in the public domain?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, in my judgment, after having made a careful study of the matter, and I don't wish to -- I hate to -- I'm lucky to discuss a case pending in court. But I have to say, as Attorney General of the United States, that I authorized it to go forward. I believe that was the thing to do.

And the judge would know that, so he knows I'm not commenting on the merits of the case. I can't say anything about the merits of the case. But I personally authorized it to continue.

QUESTION: What was your reason?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I can't tell you that, because I'd be commenting on the case. But when the case is

over I'll be glad to discuss it in detail.

The judge has told everyone -- you know, they're having an in camera hearing -- and he told the lawyers not to be talking about it. So I can't talk about it.

QUESTION: How can you bring suit --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: But I'm under oath, as Attorney General of the United States, and I had to make the judgment and I made it.

QUESTION: Do you think it's still a viable case?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I'm not going to say anything about it at all, but obviously I think there I'd be violating a rule that I observed even in Georgia. I can't bring a frivolous case. I can't bring up one that doesn't have a ground for it. I can't be bringing a grounds case. I couldn't do that anyway on account of ethics.

QUESTION: Could you comment on the reports that both of the lawyers working on the case recommended it be dropped?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, I'm not commenting on that. You have already -- [inaudible] -- about four times, so why do you want me to comment on it?

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: Let's go at it generically. Maybe we can get a generic answer if we have to. How is it that the Justice Department might want to pursue a case for publishing

classified information when it turns out the information is declassified and available for --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, see, you've already answered the question. Why would you want to ask it? That's the whole issue; has it all been disclosed.

QUESTION: General Bell, --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Then if it goes to full disclosure, I guess we wouldn't have anything to argue about.

But that's the issue: How much disclosure has there been? In World War III, I'm told that the Chicago Tribune printed a story that we had broken the Japanese code. But the Japanese never saw it. Fortunately.

QUESTION: General Bell, I wanted to ask you, in connection with the screening of prospective judicial nominees, you now send to the American bar and to the National bar, and there's a third panel, the Federation of Women Lawyers.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: We send them to the Women Lawyers.

QUESTION: -- judicial screening panel, and you send the prospective nominees to them for rating. But they say they are then ignored, and there's no request, but they do send them to the Division.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I don't know. I didn't know they had been ignored; we send them. We run an open

place -- we'd send them to you if you want to see them.

QUESTION: They get the nominees, but they said you're not interested in their rating.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, I've never asked them to rate. How many people are going to rate these judges? I mean, I ask the American bar to rate them, they've been rating them since the Truman Administration. I've never asked any women's group to rate lawyers.

QUESTION: Well, you didn't agree to this panel?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I not only didn't agree, I've not asked them. I don't wish them to rate them. I don't need any help in rating these people.

I ask them to tell us if they think they are biased against women. That's the question I ask them. I ask the black bar -- that's the National bar -- to tell us if they are biased against blacks. And if anybody else wants to do that, I'll be glad to cut them in on the process.

I have never asked anyone -- this is news to me -- to rate any prospects for me. God knows, I get all the rating men I can do.

QUESTION: That's what this professional staff does.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, I've not asked them to do that. That's the reason I don't pay any attention to it. I mean, I didn't know they ever rated anybody. Have they rated someone?

QUESTION: Well, they have a rating committee to serve --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: All right. No, I have not asked them to do that. I want to know if the judge is biased. That's what I want to know.

So I read the FBI file on all these nominees, Mike Egan reads the files, Phil M _____ reads the files, and if there's anything wrong with a person we usually find out about it. But, to be careful, to be certain that they are not biased against womens or blacks, we take these extra measures which, incidentally, have never been taken before, so we can help.

QUESTION: Judge Bell, Senator Gordon Humphrey testified against Pat Wald, because he thinks that her views on the family are, quote, "whacko" --

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: -- and the National Rifle Association has taken up the _____ against Congressman Mikva (?) on his appointment to the bench. Do you consider those threats -- from your observations on the Hill, are those serious threats to their confirmation?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, I certainly hope not. I recommended both those people to the President. Now, as you know, I know Pat Wald well, she's an Assistant Attorney General in the Department of Justice. She's a very skilled,

balanced lawyer. And I don't know Congressman Mikva that well, but I read all the files on him, and it struck me he was a very distinguished lawyer with an educational background, law clerking and that sort of thing, as well as being a lawyer, that would make him well qualified to be on the Court of Appeals.

And so I recommended him to the President. And he went through this whole process, ABA, the women's group, the black bar, and I never found any reason not to nominate him. The same with Pat Wald.

QUESTION: Have you taken any soundings at all about whether these nominations are threatened seriously?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, not with Congressman Mikva. I'm not a -- I've not heard anything more than that the National Rifle Association was against him. I have talked with Pat Wald about the -- what the people have said to her. And I've talked to one Senator, and I probably will talk to some more. And I'm going to help all I can.

And I think she's well qualified and will make a fine judge.

QUESTION: I'm trying to find out from you whether you think this is a serious campaign against her, or whether it's just a --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, you know, you can't -- you know I can't answer a question like that.

[Laughter.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I hold the Senate in very high regard, they were most kind to me for two weeks over there.

[Laughter.] [Applause.]

QUESTION: There was a suggestion in the early part of your speech that Congress may at times be irresponsible. I wonder if --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I didn't say that. I said there's a danger they are becoming too much of a critic.

QUESTION: That it's easy to criticize if you don't have to actually --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Yes. They have both roles.

QUESTION: I wonder if you would comment on the tendency of Congress to pass a law that need not apply to Congress itself. What is the reason for striking down or saying you can't sue a Congressman or -- [inaudible]

Do we have to test this out case by case, or is Congress expected to hold back to prove itself -- [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, I wouldn't comment on the Congress, but I will say this. You would know this, without my saying it, that for someone who has devoted more than ten years of their life to seeing that the Equal Protection Clause meant something in the South, it grieves me to come here to Washington, on the national scene, and not

see that the Equal Protection Clause operates everywhere, and against all people.

That's all I have to say about it.

I think we've got one country -- I don't think we could have a great country if we didn't have an Equal Protection Clause. I think there ought to be a presumption that everyone is bound to observe the Equal Protection Clause. And there ought to be some strong reason why you're exempt or excepted. That would be my philosophy as a citizen.

QUESTION: So you don't think Congress should -- [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I didn't say that. I'm not going to -- you know, they are a separate branch of the government, and I can't tell them how to run their business. But I'm just saying as a citizen, and as a citizen I bring a certain philosophy to the Justice Department, so long as I'm the Attorney General, and that is that I believe in equal protection of the law, that everyone is equal before the law. And that you ought not to except out people unless there's some strong reason to except them out.

And I think the Equal Protection Clause ought to operate somewhere/other than in the Southern Region of our country. And I see signs sometimes that it diminishes as it goes north and west. Particularly here on the banks of the Potomac.

QUESTION: I believe you sat on the Fifth Circuit

Court of Appeals for 12 or --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Fourteen years.

QUESTION: -- 14 years. In a recent study by the Southern Regional Council, endorsed by a number of other civil rights groups, found that the federal courts and particularly the federal courts in the South were among the worst offenders of discrimination against both minorities and women, and they petitioned the U. S. Judicial Conference to do something about it.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Yes.

QUESTION: Is there anything to be done about that?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Oh, I think something is being done. I thought it was a singular thing that that group, the Southern Regional -- what is it -- Southern Regional Council only studied the South. That's exactly the point I'm trying to make. Why don't we study the whole country sometimes? You'd find that maybe the South is doing better than other places. I'm sure you read the newspapers, and there was a story in the paper this week about the Supreme Court of the United States, even, -- but this one you refer to, and which gets all the coverage, just happened to be an attack on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the district courts in the South.

And the reason for it is that that was the only one

that was studied. We are one nation, why don't we study the whole nation sometimes?

QUESTION: Well, their charge was that the entire federal judiciary discriminates in its employment throughout the country.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, you didn't ask that.

QUESTION: Well, I just --

QUESTION: Sir, why has the South done so poorly in -- [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Are they doing poorly?

QUESTION: Well, to some extent -- [inaudible.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I didn't know that.

I haven't kept up with, you know, State by State. Is the South doing poorly?

QUESTION: [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I don't know, but I notice the President has been working trying to get those States, some of them, to ratify. But I didn't know that the South was different.

QUESTION: Mr. Attorney General.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: The Western States -- apparently there's a number that haven't ratified it.

Yes?

QUESTION: How do you feel that some of the Southern States are doing, particularly, say, Texas for example, in the

area of stopping police brutality relative to other areas of the country. Is there any progress being made? I understand there are a lot of complaints still being filed, particularly in Houston and --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: They are. This is, in a sense, a national problem, but it doesn't involve many cities. So it's a national problem of -- I guess if we had one city it would be a national problem. But it's not widespread, I don't want to give that impression; but I have talked with groups who represent those against whom abuse has been practiced. I have talked with the LEAA. We are working on some programs to train people in sensitivity, police officers. We are looking at some -- looking at the idea of filing a suit, with the Justice Department. It would be an unprecedented suit. You know, in a city where there has been a good deal of police brutality. At least that's what -- we've been studying that. That's one thing we're doing.

QUESTION: What kind of suit are you talking about?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, it would be a suit for an injunction.

QUESTION: Which city?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I didn't say.

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: An injunction against what?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I said we're looking into

it, I didn't say any particular city.

QUESTION: An injunction against what? I'm sorry, I just --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Against the practices that they engage in. And the system that they have in effect, which allows it to go unchecked. That's the sort of thing we're looking at. It's a system that we're looking at.

QUESTION: And you say it's a northern city?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I wouldn't say where it was.

COMMENT: Western, a western city.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, I wouldn't say that. You'll have to wait on some news.

QUESTION: General, I just wanted to follow up on my question, I didn't get a chance to follow up.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Just don't get on the South again!

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: I mean about judges in general.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: As you know I've got to go back there pretty soon.

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: You earlier said they were completely in contempt of the law, and we ought not to except people unless there's a reason to except them.

Do you think that the Federal Judiciary should be excepted --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: They're not excepted.

QUESTION: -- from the -- they are right now.

From the --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Not from the Supreme Court opinion.

QUESTION: From the discrimination provisions of the civil rights laws.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, the Supreme Court of the United States, the people you're complaining about, are the ones that made the ruling, saying that the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment contained an equal protection of the law clause, and they said it was applicable against the Federal Government.

We have engaged for two generations in going against States because they have an Equal Protection Clause in the Fourteenth Amendment. Only one time did the Supreme Court ever find an Equal Protection Clause in the Fifth Amendment and that was in the City of Washington School case, which was the Brown decision.

After all these years, now, they have now discovered that the Equal Protection Clause gunes against employment practices; sex discrimination. So I think that the hope came from the Supreme Court and the help came from the Supreme

Court.

Now, at the same time you could criticize the Supreme Court because they have not had many -- but black law clerks, have not so many women law clerks. And, you know, this is sort of the thing I was trying to capture in that thing I said about it's easier to be a critic. We want everyone to have one person/one vote. We didn't have it ourselves until the Sixties.

We want everyone to instantaneously divide all the jobs between male and female. When the women just moved into the labor market -- say, it started in World War I, there's been a long delay. But the first woman went to the Harvard Law School in 1950. I don't know if they kept women out, or just how it happened, but the first one went there then.

So we're going through something that's evolutionary and is moving rather fast. So I don't think we ought to get to doing what we do to FBI and the CIA in recent years, and that is, we ought to go back and start beating dead horses, where changes have already been made, and just said, "My gracious, how bad it was back at that time".

Look to the future. Hold everybody to the future, and we'll do a lot better in this country. I think what we need to do in this country is have a good spirit about the country.

QUESTION: General, let's talk about something simple.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Good! Let's do that.

QUESTION: It's gasoline.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Yes.

QUESTION: The Department of Justice is about halfway through the report that it's supposed to submit to the President around the end of the month.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Thirty days it is.

QUESTION: And since then, the two weeks in the past probably has been a lot worse. What kind of preliminary data are you seeing, and what kind of difficulties do you foresee?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I haven't seen any yet. And I had an immediate complaint that we couldn't get the job done in thirty days. But I told them to do it, you know, do it anyway. We've got to do our best.

But they have not given me a preliminary report yet.

QUESTION: And because of what's happened just within the past week or two, have you strengthened that effort to get more people on it, to get anything differently, or what?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, this just happened in the last week that I know anything about, except that we had an announcement here that there would be a gas shortage, and

where everyone rushed to get their tank filled.

QUESTION: Who do you get your gas from?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I don't get any. I ride in the government car.

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: Does that car get any --

[Laughter.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: They get it here in town at a gas station.

QUESTION: Any gas station?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL; Yes, sir, just go to a gas station and pay a high price for it.

QUESTION: Are you going to prosecute that gas station?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I don't think that -- I hope they're not violating the guidelines, I'll have to ask my driver about that.

QUESTION: Something else that you haven't seen yet, the House Assassination Committee report.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Right.

QUESTION: Can you say, since that is going to be a sensitive matter, what consideration should be applied in updating and evaluating the issue, authorize a reopening of either or both of those investigations?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I have said that we would

look at that report, when and if they ever filed a report and give us a copy of it. It's my understanding that they never have written the report, but it's in process.

When we get the full report, we will have someone in the Criminal Division study it. At that time, it will be just like any other matter, they will make a recommendation up the line as to what ought to be done, and if it warrants it, they will finally probably get up to me -- and it may not even get to me because the line of authority will be through the Criminal Division at least to the Deputy.

QUESTION: Well, that line, that phrase "if it warrants it" is the one that worries me.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, even that will be a subject of review. No one person can make that decision. They can make a recommendation.

QUESTION: Does it depend on the question of the likelihood that there be a fruitful investigation, or is that irrelevant?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, that would be relevant. Whether or not there's anything else to be done.

The House just spent \$7 million investigating it. I would think they had probably investigated it out. But the men I have, if we study it and see something there that needs looking into, we'll do it; after all, we went back and restudied the King assassination, and issued a report of

our own, since I've been Attorney General.

General Levi started it, had it done, but it was finished after I got here. And we look at it, we're just as interested in law violations, apprehending law violations as anyone. More so; that's our job.

So we'll look at it. And we'll take a careful look at it.

QUESTION: Mr. Attorney General, you mentioned in your remarks bringing the INS into the Twentieth century.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Right.

QUESTION: By computer and so forth. What other changes need to be made? You mentioned ; what else would you like to see done?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: The INS?

QUESTION: Yes.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, INS was still operating on a system that would fit the steamship age, when most visitors came to our country on boats. And you fill out a form when you come, and you turn in one copy as you land. You keep the other copy, and when you leave the country, you turn that in.

So I went down to the INS, to the headquarters down there, and I saw papers everywhere. There's millions of these papers. Now, of course, we have airplanes. And they had people sitting down there trying to match these receipts,

like being in a card game. Hundreds of people matching papers. And that was what we had, what we have now, right now. And it struck me that in an age where we have data retrievable systems and computers and all, we might be able to do better. And we are, we're getting that straightened out.

QUESTION: Judge Bell --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I regret that I did not go down, though, before, I hate to say, until January. When I came here, there was -- you know, there are 26 or 27 parts of the Department of Justice, and you just can't look after everything instantaneously; and it was then January of this year before I got there, and it was exacerbated by the fact that I told them to let me know one day, it was about a week later, I said, "Let me know how many Iranian students there are in the country." I found out they couldn't tell me. They don't know how many students there are in the country.

I finally had them call colleges, every college that had a pre-med would take students. And we found a number in school, but we couldn't find out how many were out of school, still here. And then when I ran into these papers that you have to match, I then realized that there must be millions of people in this country who came legally as visitors and just never left. And they will admit at INS that it will be at least six months before they -- after you're supposed to leave, before they could ever match those

papers.

So the Congress asked, the House Appropriations Committee asked me why didn't they ask for any more money. I said I wouldn't know what to do with it. I first want to get the system straightened out, and then we'll get what we need.

Now we're going back and to completely automate, electronically. It's going to cost between five and six million dollars. At that time then we'll start getting this thing under control and we will then find out how many inspectors we need, how many border patrolmen.

But this will tell you that not all the illegal aliens in this country come across the border, a lot of them just come and stay. And that's what I meant by bringing the system into the Twentieth Century. If we could get it up to the last half of the Twentieth Century, you know, like at the end of World War II, we'd be doing pretty well.

But I think within two years, on the course we're on, we'll have really a modern system, something that Americans can be proud of.

QUESTION: Judge, you said earlier that the Supreme Court could be criticized about hiring more female law clerks, more black law clerks --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I didn't say that. I said they could be.

QUESTION: Yes, that's exactly what I --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Oh, I thought you said "should". There's a big difference.

QUESTION: Well, that gets around to my question then. Because since Brown vs. Board of Education, out of 500 law clerks, only one has been black.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Yes.

QUESTION: Are you criticizing the Supreme Court?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I thought there were two. There's just one since then? There was Coleman earlier.

No, I'm not criticizing. They criticized me for the way the Fifth Circuit operates. There's enough blame to go around.

QUESTION: You don't think they deserve some --
[inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: What was that?

QUESTION: You don't think the Justices deserve some -- [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Tim, you know I'm not going to answer that in the affirmative. After all, I'm just a poor struggling lawyer.

[Laughter.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: How in God's name can I go around criticizing the Supreme Court?

QUESTION: I'm not asking you to criticize the --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, you know I can't do it.

QUESTION: But do you think the Supreme Court ought to have a little affirmative action program for law clerks?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I can't say anything about that; that's a separate branch of the government.

QUESTION: Well, do you think a lot of --

[inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I imagine they might have. You know, for all I know, they may try to find a black, a minority, or women law clerks. I don't know that. I'd be speculating to answer that. I better stay out of that area.

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: With all these problems, why are you resigning?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, because the problems are so great.

QUESTION: Judge Bell --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, I just feel like I've been here about long enough. I don't know when I'm going to leave, but I don't want to get another story going about when I'm leaving, because I've never been released, and I sometimes think -- I've been thinking about getting a lawyer, I asked Phil Heymann yesterday if he'd represent me for a violation of the Thirteenth Amendment. He said he wouldn't represent me, he'd represent the President. So I lost out

there.

QUESTION: Judge Bell, --

QUESTION: Judge Bell, you were previously quoted that you thought you'd be too controversial to remain for a second term. Is that why you're leaving before the campaign? You were quoted that --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: That I said that? -- I saw that in a magazine that I had become so controversial that I wanted to leave.

I think that I'm not too controversial, although I don't make any effort not to be controversial. That has nothing to do with my leaving. The President has never mentioned anything to me about me being controversial.

QUESTION: Judge Bell, would you be active in the President's campaign, re-election campaign next year?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No. No, I wouldn't.

QUESTION: What would your plans be, to go into private practice?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I'm just going to go practice law, yes.

But I'd be a, you know, I'd be a citizen, if I if was --/somebody asked me if I thought the President was a good man, I wouldn't stand mute.

QUESTION: Judge Bell, --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, on something like that.

I don't want to give the impression that I -- I told somebody the other day, -- am going to a monastery. I don't plan to do that. I plan to recover my rights as an American citizen, including the right of privacy, the right of speech, and all those things.

QUESTION: Judge Bell, my question relates to the business of insurance and the possible repeal of the _____ Act -- [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Yes.

QUESTION: John Shenefield was quoted today as saying the Department would have a bill to repeal the _____ Act ready in a few weeks. Could you comment on that? And also, whether the Administration is planning to recommend repeal?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I think -- the only comment I can make is I think that's a recommendation of the President's antitrust study commission, and those recommendations go from the Justice Department, or from the Antitrust Division, through me, to the White House and to the OMB. Somewhere along the line it could be stopped, but I don't know of any plan to stop it. I don't know that much about it.

But we are trying to implement the President's Antitrust Study Commission -- that doesn't mean everything will be implemented, but we're trying to.

QUESTION: That was one of the recommendations.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Yes.

QUESTION: Are you working on a bill to repeal that?
This applies to -- [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I don't know. We might be. If they are, then they're doing it in the antitrust and maybe in the Office of Legal Counsel. It hasn't reached my desk yet.

QUESTION: Judge Bell --

QUESTION: Mr. Attorney General --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Wait a minute. Let's get a new person. Well, you're the second person, all right.

QUESTION: I understand that you have some leads in the Wood case. What I'm wondering have there -- and that the judges that were placed under protection are still under protection now. Have there been any serious threats against any of these judges that are now under protection since the Wood assassination?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, if I say I don't want to comment on that, people would draw the inference that there have been, and I'd rather not comment on it, but I must say something since you've posed the question as you did.

I'd have to say if there have been any serious since, it has not come to my attention; and I think it would have. It would have come to my attention.

QUESTION: Judge Bell, do you favor softening, rolling back, or eliminating the tough anti-bribe laws that were passed in 1977, because of the balance of payments? (?)

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I do not. I never have favored bribery.

QUESTION: Do you see the White House going for that?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, I saw the Study Commission making some recommendations to us, and I have said that to the extent we could, we would not mind giving some sort of guidance, like having hypothetical questions and answers, something like that.

We would try to do something like that. But, no, I don't favor repealing the bribery laws, at all. I know the argument and all that going on.

QUESTION: Judge Bell, some months ago, sir, when President Carter was at a low ebb on the polls, you --
[inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I made it in Kansas.
Go ahead, anyway.

QUESTION: and I wondered, had you discussed that with the President or -- [inaudible]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I did not discuss it with him. The President told me that he would exempt me from all politics. And, in an effort to depoliticize the Justice

Department, I never discuss anything like that with him. I made that speech -- I was invited to give a political science lecture at the University of Kansas, and I probably got far afield when I was giving my views as an American citizen on the political system. And I said something that I favored, I have long favored, and I think my father before me favored it, that the President ought to serve one six-year term, and not be able to run for re-election.

You'd have your whole six years then to devote to dunning the office of the presidency. And I said that. As you know, there's been bills introduced something like 160 times to do that, it's been debated at the Constitutional Convention and since, constantly.

My idea is that we should do that now, we need it more than ever, because the government is so complex. It's so big. It takes you -- you're in your third year before you ever even get your own budget into place. And there's a lot of reasons for doing it.

The argument against it is that you wouldn't have as much accountability over the President, because you can influence him as he tries to run for re-election. My answer to that would be you'd never get me to run for re-election. I'd do whatever I thought I had to do the first four years and go home. But, it sustains that argument that everybody makes against me, you have to assume that the President is going

to always run for re-election. I think six years would be a reasonable compromise, but I did not talk to the President.

I was somewhere in Florida not long ago and I bought a paper on a Sunday morning and I saw where the President came out in favor of it. At the time I made the speech, he said he was not in favor of it.

But I had looked back at most all the Presidents in recent, modern times, they came to favor that. I think it has something to do with what you find after you've been there for a while, maybe.

But I really -- you understand, it's not an open-and-shut question, I don't mean to propose it that way, but it's really a gray area question.

But I believe if you put it on balance, that the nation would be better off if we went to one six-year term.

QUESTION: Is there a possibility that the President might not run for re-election?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Not that I know of.

QUESTION: Judge Bell, since --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: As near as I can tell, he's gearing up, to run. But he's never told me he was running.

He's never told me he's not running. He just -- all I can do is, by logic, I see activities going on that would make it appear that somebody over there in the White

House is going to run.

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: Since it's been some time since you announced your resignation is impending, and your claim of who you'd like to see as your successor, can you tell us if President Carter has asked you to stay on to a particular date? And, if so, why?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, the President has not asked me to stay on until a particular date. He has said to me that he has never released me, and that he has intimated that he will decide when I'll be released.

QUESTION: Has he told you why --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Which is worse than setting a date!

[Laughter.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I'd be relieved if I could get a date.

QUESTION: Has he given you any specific reasons why he has not released you yet?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, he hasn't given me any.

QUESTION: Judge Bell, is the Department --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I guess he feels like he's not called on, under our constitutional system, to justify his actions to one of his subordinates.

QUESTION: If he asked you to stay, would you stay?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, I would not. But that sort of begs the question. I mean, I'm just here now. You're looking at me!

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: What if you're getting ready to leave and he says, "Well, Griffin, how about another year? We need you." "The country needs you."

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Well, I've already been down that road. Several times.

No, I mean, I hope to leave. You know, I never did plan to stay any longer than I've been here.

QUESTION: But you feel that --

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: But I would not leave so long as there was some grave problem around. I'm not a person to leave my post.

A woman in south Georgia asked me a few months ago -- she saw in the paper that I was going to leave, and she was a person who's known me since I was a child -- and she said, "Griffin, how could you leave your post?" You know, my God, I thought I had deserted the military!

[Laughter.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I wouldn't leave if I didn't think it was -- would not harm the country. Yes, I mean it won't harm the country for me to leave. The Justice Department, I think, is running well. And I think there's some

real advantage to bringing in a new broom. In addition to that, you get tired. You know, if somebody could examine me, get a group psychiatrist, they might say I was losing my edge.

[Laughter.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: I haven't suggested that to the President yet, but --

QUESTION: General Bell, is the Justice Department -- is the Department or specifically the FBI investigating anti-nuclear groups? And do you consider them in any way a terrorist threat to the United States?

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: No, I have not heard about any investigation.

And I do not want to leave here with you having any idea that I don't understand the First Amendment, that I don't strongly believe in the right to assemble and petition for your grievances. That is the greatest right we have. That's greater than freedom of the press, to me, and it's greater than the freedom of speech, the freedom of worship; because that's the only way the governed can have any control over the governors.

So I don't object, I don't care how many people want to march, demonstrate, as long as they're orderly. I fix the place for them, give them police protection.

I've been through this many times in the South.

Thank you.

VOICES: Thank you.

[Applause.]

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