

Events leading up to so-called "break" made by Senator McCarthy with the President, December 7th, 1954.

Late in the afternoon of December 1st Governor Adams called me, said that he had been talking to Prescott Bush, who had said that Arthur Watkins had taken a beating on the recent censure move, had been pushed around, had handled a difficult job superbly, and that he thought it would be nice for the President to give him sort of nod of recognition. Governor Adams asked me what I thought; I suggested President invite him to stag dinner planned for December sixth. Governor Adams indicated that, or something similar, would meet with his approval.

I suggested the idea to the President, who liked it, but asked Jim Hagerty to check with Herbert Brownell. Brownell thought some sort of a move should be made, but felt that the suggestion (inviting him to a stag dinner) would spotlight the thing too much. Alternatively President suggested having Watkins come to his office Saturday morning, to which Brownell agreed.

Tom Stephens set up the appointment for Saturday morning.



In talking to Jim Hagerty, either before or immediately after he saw Watkins, President said he wanted to see him to tell him how superbly he had handled a difficult job. President thought he was talking to Jim confidentially, Jim thought it was what the President wanted him to say to the press boys after Watkins came in.

Interview was on most of front pages of Sunday newspapers, with Jim's comments, and with picture of Watkins at White House.

Monday morning President early called Jim in, told him that he had not expected his remarks to be made public. Jim explained that he had thought President had made them to be repeated. President had had breakfast with Knowland that morning, which may explained why he felt he had to speak to Jim. On the other hand, it is difficult for me to know why Jim made the remarks he did, in view of Brownell's feeling that meeting should not be spotlighted -- certainly the way Jim handled the thing gave it far more publicity than if the Senator's name had appeared on a guest list for a dinner.

At any rate, Jim had the feeling that the President was not at all displeased, despite his remarks, that the meeting received the publicity it did, and only talked to Jim for the record.

There the matter stood until the 7th, when McCarthy made his famous "break."