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## Moakley, Stokes Interview Transcript (MS100/09.01#12)

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**Program Title:** "Representative Moakley with Representative Louis Stokes," (WILD)

**Program Participants:** Congressman John Joseph Moakley and Congresswoman Louis Stokes.

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**Recording Overview:** Representative Joe Moakley and Representative Louis Stokes discuss the legislative priorities of the Congressional Black Caucus, the energy crisis and the affect on the socio-economic class of America. The discussion was broadcast on WILD as an episode of a radio show featuring Congressman Moakley and other members of Congress talking about issues concerning the community.

### Transcript Begins

**ANNOUNCER:** From the Nation's Capitol, here is our Congressman Joe Moakley. Joe represents Roxbury and other sections of the Boston community. Today, Joe will be discussing the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress with a guest.

**JOE MOAKLEY:** My guest today is the Chairman of the sixteen-member Congressional Black Caucus,<sup>1</sup> Congressman Louis Stokes. Representative Stokes, now in his third term of the House of Representatives, has led the Black Caucus for close to two years now in its ambitious legislative program. Composed of the black members of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress, the caucus has already earned the respect of all of the members of Congress, and I'm especially pleased to have the guiding figure of that group today. Congressman Stokes, it's nice to have you with me.

**LOUIS STOKES:** Thank you, Congressman Moakley. It's a real pleasure to be here and participate in your program this afternoon.

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<sup>1</sup> The Congressional Black Caucus, formed in 1969, is a coalition of African-American members of Congress working to address the legislative concerns of black and minority citizens.



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**MOAKLEY:** In fact, I met your brother at the Democratic Convention back in 1968. My wife and I were in a haberdashery store and we walked over and I recognized him from television. He was buying a tie and we had a little conversation. And I never thought that many years later that I would be serving with his brother in the House of Representatives.

**STOKES:** Right.

**MOAKLEY:** Lou, when the session began, the Black Caucus detailed a number of legislative priorities for the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress. And I wonder if you'd tell our listening audience about some of them and just how successful some of them were?

**STOKES:** Well, what we actually did at the beginning of this session was to take a special order on the floor of the House in which we gave our own impression of the State of the Nation. We were sort of disappointed as it related to the State of the Nation sections that the president sent over to the Congress. We did not feel that his messages reflected the problems of black and poor and disadvantaged people in this country. And so for that reason, all sixteen of us participated in that particular special order in which we tried to assess the past programs of the Congress and the state of the entire nation, and to address ourselves in a very serious manner to those concerns. But we also realized at the same time that any ambitious legislative program on our part probably would not be able to get through this particular administration.

And so, we were faced realistically with just trying to hold on to some of the gains and some of the programs that had inured to the benefit of black, poor and disadvantaged people under the great society programs. For instance, we knew that we'd have to engage in a real fight and struggle just to try and save OEO [Office of Enforcement Operations], which is so vital to black and poor people in this country. And we did find ourselves absorbed in a real struggle to save it. And fortunately, I think due to the leadership provided by the Congressional Black Caucus and their alliance with other members of the Congress, such as yourself who gave us good, strong support, we were able to save important programs of this type. So, for us in this Congress, it has



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been a matter of just trying in this session to hold on to many of the legislative gains that were made in the past.

**MOAKLEY:** I know that the Black Caucus was very instrumental and they did a great job in talking with the members on a personal basis. I can remember yourself and Congressman Hawkins going. He held meetings up in Boston and had community groups come in and he really did a wonderful job working in concert with your organization, the Black Caucus. I think that you all deserve a lot of recognition and a lot of merit for the job that you did restoring this program.

**STOKES:** Thank you. But we could not have done it without the help of many of our colleagues, such as yourself, who helped give us the kind of leadership we needed on the floor and the kind of support we needed to garner the necessary votes to defeat the crippling amendments that would have just gutted the entire program. So, it was sort of a collective job that all of us did.

**MOAKLEY:** The leadership was very important in that place. Lou, one of the biggest problems facing our nation or at least the one that's talked about most today is the energy crisis. And surely it will affect the lifestyle of middle America, and I know it will have a great affect on poor America and have a greater affect on poor, black America. I was just wondering what the Black Caucus proposes or what you feel will be the result of this energy crisis we find ourselves in?

**STOKES:** Firstly, I have some very serious reservations about the energy crisis itself. When you look at the fact that America only imports approximately 6 percent of its oil from the Arab states and the rest of it coming from Venezuela, Canada and other places, and you add to this fact the fact that we're now removed from the Vietnam War where a large and inordinate amount of the oil supply was being utilized, some very serious questions in my mind about whether or not there is, in effect, a real crisis or whether it has been to some degree contrived. This of course, I think remains to be seen. But insofar as the way that it's going to affect Americans, I think it's



going to affect Americans straight across the board, notwithstanding racial or ethnic lines. It's going to affect poor people and it's going to affect the middle class. It's going to affect that American that's in the ten, fifteen, eighteen thousand dollar category just as much as it's going to affect that poor American.

You can look over at England today and see what has happened over there. Already they are down to a three-day work week. And as a consequence of it now, there's a food shortage in their nation and a very serious shortage in many other areas. And we're going to have that same kind of situation here. A fellow who is now paying \$300 a year for his heating bill can look to start paying \$600 to \$800 per year. It's going to double. At the same time, we see the food costs going up, clothing costs going up as a result of it. So, it's going to very seriously affect both poor and middle America.

**MOAKLEY:** Well, I agree completely with you on the contrivance. It's very difficult to explain to a constituent why the price of gasoline is going up. Why the price of home heating fuel is going up. At the same time, look at the profits that the companies are making over last year, some of them as high as eighty and 90 percent. When you realize that twenty major firms control 94 percent of our resources, 86 percent of our refining capacities, and 79 percent of our retail sales, you could see that it wouldn't take too much for some sort of conspiracy to go on there. And someone once said that if you gave them the incentive, which means raising the price at the well head, or giving them more of an oil depletion allowance that there would be no shortage. And I kind of believe that's so, if you gave them the incentive. But I feel that since they operated in a monopolistic society that they should have more than just a profit motive. They should be able to supply this country and make sure that we're not on our back and we're facing a huge unemployment situation, a huge lack of heating and electrical power. And I just think that they owe us more than just making money and writing with black ink. I think they owe us the responsibility of keeping us secure in the style that we've been living in the past few years.



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**STOKES:** I agree with you wholeheartedly. And there is another dimension we might throw in, and that is the evidence that there is stockpiling going on in the industry. Also, when we watch what's happening to the little dealer and how he is being squeezed out of the picture. Then it's interesting to me to learn that at the same time we're talking about our shortage of oil for our own people, it comes to our attention that the United States is supplying Portugal with a certain amount of oil. So, this kind of thing really disturbs me in being able to say to my constituents that there is a real energy crisis. And I know that you feel the same way.

**MOAKLEY:** I think that's something that Congress is addressing itself to now, and I think that there might be some very strict regulations put on the oil industry. And I could foresee something like a TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority] authority where you'd have a public corporation that would drill for oil on public and federal lands, which would do many things. It would, first of all, find out exactly what the cost of drilling and what the cost of processing the fuel is. It would bring more oil into our supply. And it wouldn't have a profit motive so that they'd still be drilling even if the demand was caught up with. And I think that that's something that we have to do so that we don't go through a crisis situation like this today where our unemployment rate may very well double in certain areas.

I know in the New England area we use 90 percent of the residual oil. 70 percent of the electricity is generated as a result of this residual oil. And it's going to be a great hardship. I can foresee the unemployment rate going probably from 7.5 in the Greater Boston area, probably up to 8.5 or maybe even 9, and that's a terrible situation we have to face.

**STOKES:** That's right. I agree with you.

**MOAKLEY:** Congressman Stokes, I know the caucus has long maintained that the country's priorities were out of balance. And during the first session of this Congress, I believe we have made some real gains, though I'm sure they might be regarded as minimal. To re-order our



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nation's priorities, what progress have we made in this area and do you feel we can do more in the next session?

**STOKES:** Yes, I do think so. I think, frankly, that this Congress has tried to make some progress. I was particularly impressed with the way that the Congress accepted including domestics in the Minimum Wage Bill this year, for instance, which was another one of the specific goals of the Congressional Black Caucus. And then, of course, the way that many members of Congress rallied around the oil program and tried to save those. And all of this in light of an administration which was impounding funds and attempting to destroy programs that were people oriented and that had social service goals. And I think to the credit of the Congress that the Congress has tried to act responsibly in some of these areas. So, I've been impressed by that.

But I think what we have to do is really reassess our priorities in terms of our more serious domestic problems. And what this country really has to do is exactly what it did when they decided to go to the moon. We have a country that's capable of saying that in ten years we're going to put a man on the moon, and we did it. But we did it by not withholding resources or money or personnel and devoting our time and energy and our finances to achieving that goal. And what we really need to do if we are serious about the human misery that we see in this country, the poverty which exists and the poor housing and the inadequate schooling, if we're really serious about these concerns in our country, then what we must do is say that in ten years we're going to ensure that every American does have a decent place in which to sleep every night, a decent home in which to get up and be able to feed our children in the morning. We're just going to have to face these kinds of goals. And this country has the capacity in which to do it.

**MOAKLEY:** Lou, I know you recently returned from Addis Ababa, where you chaired, and I congratulate you chaired and I congratulate you for being the chairman of the African-American



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Dialogue Conference. I wondered if you could, quickly, because we're running out of time, do you feel it was a fruitful dialogue? Was anything accomplished that we can talk about here?

**STOKES:** This was the fourth African-American Dialogue Conference. I've had the honor of participating in three of them now. And in my opinion, this was our best conference. The conference basically, is between American leaders and African leaders where they sit down in a dialogue conference and try to discuss some of the issues that vitally affect the two countries, and particularly, in light of our foreign relations program and our very poor record at the United Nations on African issues.

**MOAKLEY:** Great. My guest today was Congressman Lou Stokes of Ohio. As you know, Congressman Stokes is now the Chairman of the sixteen-member Congressional Black Caucus and one of our great leaders here in Washington. Congressman Stokes, it's a pleasure to have you on the show.

**STOKES:** Thank you, Congressman Moakley. I enjoyed being with you.

**ANNOUNCER:** Thank you very much, Congressman Joe Moakley and Congressman Louis Stokes of Ohio for your informative views on the first session of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress. Be sure to tune in next week at this time to WILD Radio when our Joe Moakley reports on issues of concern to our community.

END OF INTERVIEW