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## Moakley, Conyers Interview Transcript (MS100/09.01#11)

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**Program Title:** "Representative Moakley with Representative John Conyers"

**Program Participants:** Congressman John Joseph Moakley and Congressman John Conyers

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**Recording Overview:** Representative Joe Moakley and Representative John Conyers discuss controversial aspects of President Nixon's administration and his possible impeachment. They also discuss issues facing the nation including healthcare, employment rates, and poverty. 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

**JOE MOAKLEY:** My guest today is one of the senior members of the Congressional Black Caucus,<sup>1</sup> Representative John Conyers of Michigan. Congressman Conyers, who represents the First Congressional District of Michigan, is now in his fifth term in the House of Representatives. John is a lawyer and now serving as chairman of the Crime Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee and also serves on the Government Operations Committee. A man in the forefront of the fight to retain the Office of Economic Opportunity, John has been very busy lately working with the other members of the Judiciary Committee on a possible impeachment of President Nixon.

John, it's very good having you on the show today.

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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.



**JOHN CONYERS:** Well, I'm happy to be with you and chat with you about some of the frustrations that we share serving in the Congress. As you know, the Congress was intended to be one of the three co-equal branches of government, but something happened somewhere along the way.

**MOAKLEY:** Well, there's one very obvious thing that happened. Nobody told President Nixon.

**CONYERS:** Well, it's been in a state of disintegration before Nixon, in all fairness to him. But no one has ever used impoundment, executive privilege and other precedence in the executive branch to the extent that he has with the full intention of diminishing the stature of the Congress. Now, of course, he's going to pay dearly for that because now we in turn consider his impeachment. And with seventy-five members already on some form of impeachment resolution or the other, I think it looks very ominous for him.

**MOAKLEY:** There are many things that happened under President Nixon's administration. We can go through them; the whole litany of the ITT [International Telephone Telegraph], the Vesco, the milk, the oil and on and on. But I think the thing that will probably be the straw that broke the camel's back is the energy crisis to show the very poor planning.<sup>2</sup> And when you disturb the creature comforts, I think, then is when the man on the street is going to get up on his legs and say, "Let's go. Let's get them." And I think that that's what is happening now.

**CONYERS:** I don't know if this is different in your area, Joe, or not, but in mine, the people who supported Mr. Nixon only a year ago are more vindictive toward him and are urging his removal from office more vociferously than those of us who did not support him. Have you noticed that?

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<sup>2</sup> Conyers refers to several controversies involving President Nixon, including the 1973 oil crisis and purported campaign finance irregularities related to federal milk price supports, his involvement with financier and convicted felon Robert Vesco and his intervention in the ITT anti-trust case.



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**MOAKLEY:** Well, we in Massachusetts, we're the only state that went for George McGovern. And it's much more difficult in our state to find people who did support President Nixon. But I agree with you. I feel that they felt that they'd been had and that the Republican Party has really suffered as a result of his actions.

**CONYERS:** Let me ask how you would react to the feelings that I have of frustration in the Congress with regard to four very basic issues that I have not really been able to say that we've solved as a Congress or as an executive branch. The whole question of health, of developing a set of medical delivery systems so that everybody in this country can receive the healthcare that we know we've developed scientifically to the point it should be made available to everybody.

**MOAKLEY:** I agree. I think that we need something very similar, if not the Kennedy-Griffith Bill so it gives everybody good health distribution. People in foreign countries laugh at this country with our gross national product we're supposed to be the leaders and everything. We're leaders in many things, but we're not the leaders in medical care.

**CONYERS:** Well, we're trailing, as a matter of fact. We're going further and further down the list. Now, let's take the question of housing, low income housing, federally assisted mortgage payments in some form subsidization, the questions of just creating full employment in this country and the general question of poverty. These are the issues to me that the Congress has failed to deal with. I have criticized the leadership. And to me I feel badly that we haven't made more progress in these areas.

**MOAKLEY:** Well, I think Congress has made a little progress. But I think that these are just the areas that the President has been pounding all funds. So, what little progress Congress has made, the President has done away with by just doing away with the funds.

**CONYERS:** Well, Nixon has never said that he was in support of any of these kinds of fundamental people type programs.



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**MOAKLEY:** Well, that's because you won't find anybody in the forefront of any of these programs high on his contribution list.

**CONYERS:** Right.

**MOAKLEY:** John, it's very nice to have you on the program again, and you've really helped explain a lot of things to our Boston audience. It's been a pleasure working with you in the Congress.

**CONYERS:** Well, I'll be looking forward to seeing you next term so we can get back to these kinds of issues.

**MOAKLEY:** Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW