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The Axe Files - Ep. 165: Gary Hart

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Axelrod: [00:00:00] Gary Hart always a pleasure to be with you. You know my strong feeling has been that biography is important because biography tells you essentially where people's convictions and world view come from and I know you have been famously uncomfortable with the notion of biography maybe that plays too large a role in politics but I'm interested just in talking to you a little bit about your true upbringing in Kansas--in rural Kansas and how that helped shape who you are.

Hart: [00:00:46] I grew up in a small farming town in eastern Kansas, Ottawa. About 10,000 people, then and now. My parents were working people from large families both of them and neither of them had the chance because of all of the financial burdens their families were under to even finish high school. So they were insistent that I go to college. And also we found it necessary at an early age that I would began to work in the summers. I had my first paying job. I was 11 years old and I was what was then called a car hop. Your audience they won't know have a clue what that was but I was delivering hamburgers from a little diner into people's cars at a drive and drive up and then I had I have worked every year of my life since then and that's quite a few years. And I didn't think at the age of 11 there was anything extraordinary about earning 25 cents an hour which is what I earn. So I went on to college and boy.

Axelrod: [00:01:59] Let me stop for a second so that faith played a big role.

Hart: [00:02:03] Yes.

Axelrod: [00:02:03] In your upbringing.

Hart: [00:02:04] Well my mother particularly was of the two. They were both both churchgoing people but my mother particularly and characteristically was more devout. I would say that my father who's an outdoorsman. He taught me to hunting and fishing. Great great down to earth salt of the earth man and values too by the way. But my mom was very much into the church an evangelical church. So we went to Sunday Sunday school and Sunday morning service and Sunday night service and often to mid-week prayer meetings. And I just took it for granted. It was a I'm trying to think how you would characterize it. I would suspect that virtually everybody in high school we went to some church. So it was just kind of part of the I wasn't unique in that respect.

Axelrod: [00:03:02] But at church in the Nezarene was a pretty abstemious kind of very very strict.

Hart: [00:03:13] It was strict and that's a good word for. Because they were not fundamentalists. I don't remember anyone saying that the earth was only 4000 years old. I mean no we didn't have that kind of challenge to science at that time but they were strict on personal behavior and during high school and then onto the college that at the church college I attended in Oklahoma. We could not we were not supposed to dance go to movies. The ladies couldn't wear weren't supposed to wear makeup and jewelry. No gambling. Obviously it was. It was pretty strict. But again I think oddly enough when you're in that environment you don't think all that much about. Well we made some jokes about it but that was it.

Axelrod: [00:04:05] And it impressed you enough that you went when you left college you pursued at first a degree in divinity.

Hart: [00:04:15] I did. I went on divinity school but people assume that means you're headed for the pastoral ministry. My goal was an academic one more than a theological one. I wanted to teach in college. My major in college was philosophy with courses in religion and so on obviously. But if I had it in

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mind to get a Ph.D. in philosophy and religion and spend my life teaching and along came among other things the 60 Kennedy campaign and I was at that time feeling less and less strongly about teaching an academic career in the sense that it seemed.

Axelrod: [00:05:07] Too disengaged.

Hart: [00:05:08] Too remote too detached if you will. Worthy for sure but not act not active enough. So all of a sudden that there was a new possibility not not get involved in politics that was not John Kennedy's message or Robert Kennedy's ear it was a public service and people almost never make that distinction including people in the media. But there's a big difference. Do what you do what you can for the country. I don't think John Kerry ever said to my generation go out and run for office. He didn't say that. Find a way to give something back to your country your community your state whatever. So that opened up a new vista for me which I'd never thought of.

Axelrod: [00:05:57] Well let me interrupt you for a second because I I think a lot about this you know my my political awareness began at a very early age when John F. Kennedy came in campaigned in 1960 metal community housing development and in New York and well I can't recite his speech from my memory of as a 5 year old. I did recover it years later. And the essence of it was what that whole campaign was about. You know it was the it was sort of the predecessor to ask not what your country can do for you ask what you can do for your country. And it was all about the things that people were going to need to do to secure the future in a very perilous and both perilous and and promising time. And it struck me in thinking back that the whole audience that they were it was mostly women because it was in the middle of the day and children and they were mostly the wives of returning war veterans because that's where that's what my housing development was built for. And there was this ethic that you know you might be called upon to serve everybody in some form or fashion had during the war. So it seemed like a natural message that kind of message is a harder message in this day and age because people haven't gone through a depression haven't gone through a war in which there was universal service.

Hart: [00:07:33] Well also because I don't want to pin the tail on the media donkey but there is much more cynicism about politics today. Look we had Watergate. We've had the Vietnam War which was not. Was not honestly portrayed to the American people. There have been a lot of bad things happen and instead of having a kind of instinctive trust in a new candidate a young John Kennedy or some There's almost there's almost an immediate skepticism if that goes into a cynicism later about almost everybody in politics. That's the big change. But you know about the service public service whether he realized it or not that message came from ancient Athens 800 B.C. and it is the centerpiece of the republic. Now we salute the flag of the Republic of the United States. You could go outside the room and ask 10 people what is their republic and they couldn't tell you. We talk about ourselves being a democracy but we salute the flag of our republic. Central to the republic is citizen participation. So I think I choose to believe John Kennedy knew there was. This was the essence of of classical republicanism small R and portrayed that message which by the way we haven't heard since and for the last 25 years I've made it a study of Republican theory. I wrote a Ph.D. thesis on the theory of the Republic in modern day America and it doesn't work if citizens don't participate and they are not.

Axelrod: [00:09:29] I want to get back to this and where we are today but just to pick up your journey you went to law school at Yale and you think you served in the Justice Department.

Hart: [00:09:43] Yes.

Axelrod: [00:09:43] At the at the outset and by 1968 you were Vietnam War was raging we had this tumultuous convention gets elected. Yeah civil rights. By the way you you were as engaged as you are you were not one of those students who went down south. Why was that.

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Hart: [00:10:11] That's a good question. Many of my friends did from the law school it was a notoriously active law school and I can account for it. I probably should have but I certainly was wholly in sympathy with Martin Luther King and the whole movement. It didn't work for Robert Kennedy here in Colorado in 68 the following year. Because of Vietnam but also civil rights

Axelrod: [00:10:44] And then after that election George McGovern who was a center then a senator and an avid Kennedy supporter was appointed to look at party rules because you had this tumultuous convention Democrat convention at which the party bosses were thought to have.

Hart: [00:11:04] In Chicago.

Axelrod: [00:11:05] In Chicago yes. Well there's a history there but. And you went about the business of rewriting party rules. First of all how did you get chosen for that assignment to lead that effort. As a staffer.

Hart: [00:11:19] I really wasn't involved in that in the so-called McGovern commission. I worked as a local volunteer and they held hearings around the country and I helped organize the hearings. I see here in Colorado that I was nationally involved but I strongly believed after 68 that the rules had to change and they did.

Axelrod: [00:11:41] Yeah know they did in a in a major way and in fact you ended up managing George McGovern's campaign in 72 probably your familiarity with those rules was a tremendous advantage to him. But here's my question yes because I was a young person at the time deeply supportive of all of those rules changes. Is it possible that those rules changes when the subsequent rules changes went too far that the process so boxed out party leaders that that the process suffered for it.

Hart: [00:12:17] Well that's certainly a theory among political scientists and political journalists but let's take the Illinois delegation for example. The rules were established two years ahead of the delegate selection process we're going about this is 1972 when you 71 leading up to 72. And every state Democratic Party every city knew what the rules were certain proportion had to be women certain proportion had to be minorities. The process had to be open to young people. Delegates were not going to be selected in backrooms by party bosses. It had to be open and transparent and everybody knew it right. So guess what happens. A reform Margaret McGovern group led by young Jesse Jackson women bill a central singer and a young black activist Jesse Jackson followed the rules and elected delegates. The mayor of Chicago the original Mayor Daley did not do so. He picked the delegates. So we get to the convention in Miami and we had to decide who who is seated. Well this is a terrible. We needed Mayor Daley clearly and yet.

Axelrod: [00:13:35] By now McGovern's the nominee the nominee or will be at the end of that convention.

Hart: [00:13:39] Well that is a very long story. It wasn't a slam dunk. It could have gone the other way with a shift of delegations. So we offered I was involved in this. We offered half delegate seats to the daily delegation and to the singer Jackson delegation and the daily delegation turned them down.

Hart: [00:13:59] So who's fault it's a.

Axelrod: [00:14:00] No no. And I'm steeped in that history being a Chicago in and and many of the people who are surviving on both sides are friends of mine but my question is different which is Is there something to having sort of statesmen who participate in that process and whose voices carry a lot of weight in that process and can you over democratize the process to the point where you squeeze those

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people out of the process.

Hart: [00:14:34] Well they weren't squeezed out. They just they're just.

Axelrod: [00:14:37] Over time. I'm not saying even about 72 but over time.

Hart: [00:14:40] Right. Well I'm going to I'm going to talk about over time. There was nothing in the rules new rules that prevented a Edley Stevenson or senior Democratic officials from trying to become delegates. They weren't shut out. They were just used to being handpicked by the machine in various states New York Illinois and elsewhere what the correction was since what. Your question assumes. How do we get the party regulars elected officials and party officials back into the process. And there was a counter reform four years later because of the law. McGovern's big loss and the question you ask and we got something called superdelegates and they were automatic delegates because of their position in the party or in as elected officials. And they they made the difference. Jumping ahead in 84.

Axelrod: [00:15:43] For Walter Mondale when you were going when you were running. There's a big debate as you know in this last election the Bernie Sanders folks were very much angered about superdelegates saying that if that superdelegates should not have had the influence they had. What was your view of that as the as an original participant in this reform process.

Hart: [00:16:10] I think there's a way. I'm not I'm not intelligent enough to figure it out. To have it both ways to have. Automatic delegates. But I think the solution may be they have to pledge that they will make their own independent decision as to who they want to vote for. Because if you're a senator or congressman or mayor or the party chairman in a state you're under enormous pressure from a party establishment to go along with the establishment candidate and that's what Senator Sanders was saying. What I said in years before and if you can find a way to make those people make honest decisions and not make if you will political decisions fine. They ought to be in the convention but they shouldn't be lockstep. I called it a lot of superdelegates when I was a national candidate over and over again. They said I was pledged by the frontrunner. Months and months and months ago and I was urged to support him. But that's before you won the New Hampshire primary. And I would think differently now. So that's the problem.

Axelrod: [00:17:28] The 72 campaign that's ultimately gave rise to Watergate a break in that took place in June of 72. That ultimately would topple a president. Were you aware when you were running the McGovern campaign of the. Or did you suspect the scope of some of the activities that the Nixon campaign ultimately was exposed as having engaged in.

Hart: [00:17:52] For two reasons. Yes. We had a wonderfully colorful senior manager of the campaign named Frank Mankowitz former RFK Robert Kennedy press. Yes. RFK press secretary very funny man Hollywood background and so on. And he had known Nixon to or about Nixon for decades from the very beginning in California and his attitude was. Don't be surprised by anything. So it's that kind of raised a red flag but then minor stuff. I had a little bump. My wife and children are back in Colorado by them because I was on the road all the time. I had a little one bedroom flat pretty primitive near our headquarters and two guys showed up one day. They wanted to inspect my apartment and the building managers said well who are you. And they said we're at the Labor Department and that kind of flashed upon the that it was creepy. It was Nixonian. They were up to that kind of stuff.

Axelrod: [00:19:03] You ironically Watergate and all of those activities they may not have been decisive in an election that was very lopsided. But it also probably made your election possible in 1974 you came back. You ran for the Senate in Colorado and in the midst of the of the Watergate. Hearings the resignation of the president and you unseated a three term incumbent. So Watergate played a big role on

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both on both ends.

Hart: [00:19:48] Yes.

Axelrod: [00:19:48] In your journey.

Hart: [00:19:50] Well I think my class in the Senate particularly new ones but more in the house was called the Watergate class of Democrats. And there were dozens and dozens of new new people who came in. I don't know the numbers or re-election of incumbents that resulted from that but it was an enormous democratic way it and the president resigned August 9th 10th and I ended up winning the Senate seat against it to what the two term incumbent 60-40. So sure.

Axelrod: [00:20:27] What did Watergate do to our politics what did Watergate do to our political culture.

Hart: [00:20:34] Open the door as I said before to release skepticism but it quickly became cynicism and there's a big difference. I think people should be skeptical about politics and politicians. It was the founders of the country wanted them to be not to just take. Whole cloth everything that came out of Washington and ask questions. But when it's Sade's over into cynicism and the assumption how do you define it that there's something wrong with this person unless proven otherwise. That's when it's dangerous. And that was the beginning. And as I indicated earlier on top of that came assassinations and what preceded that assassinations then of course Vietnam and a whole series of things scandals here and there that just. Created a. Skeptical if not cynical electorate.

Axelrod: [00:21:39] We going to take a short break we'll be right back with Senator Gary Hart.

Axelrod: [00:21:44] What about the media environment that what Watergate created. I know that you were you're very friendly we're very friendly with Bob Woodward who was very instrumental at the Washington Post in exposing the Watergate story with Carl Bernstein but they also spawned a whole generation of journalists who saw that as their mission to expose wrongdoing yes in government which on the one hand is a healthy thing because that's the role of the media is to shine a bright light and dark corners on the other hand. It became sort of the definition of what reporting right should be.

Hart: [00:22:25] Right. And it's shaded over predictably into invasion of. Political figures private lives which is not in my judgment what the First Amendment is about. There's a point where shining light on public performance. Is not only a gentleman but necessary. But when you begin to try to sell newspapers by exposé and scandal. And invasion of privacy that I'm not trying to protect anyone but I am saying what the net effect of that is to drive good people out of politics. There are just high caliber high quality people that don't want reporters going through their trash or finding out what movies they watch or looking for who they're having dinner with or anything like that. They just say it's not worth it. So that's the price that's paid for that kind of journalism.

Axelrod: [00:23:28] Well I want to get more deeply into that because you're out there in certain ways a poster child for that change in the way politics was covered. But talk to me a little bit about the Senate that you arrived in in 1975 and the difference between the Senate then and the Congress now is.

Hart: [00:23:47] World of difference.

Hart: [00:23:48] DAVID It's this simple answer as to how it was then was we cooperated and we got along with each other. Now were there hardliners on both sides. Yes. Republicans had a man from North Carolina called Jesse Helms and Strom Thurman and people like that are issues of race. They were right out of the 19th or even 18th century on things like that. But there were also then what were called

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moderate Republicans and the very few people would remember them now. But Jacob Javits New Yorker Chuck Percy from Illinois Mac Mathias from Maryland. Clifford Case in that jersey. These were mainstream traditional Republicans but they were not. Rupert Murdoch Limbaugh radical right people. They would compromise. And now that's something at least on the right is not permitted. There is no compromise. And that's why we're stuck where we are. And by the way all those people are gone. And every one of them was replaced by someone who was harder line. So there's been a systematic purge on that side led by big money and influence. I don't think I know everybody is. There's a theory of equivalence well that nothing has happened on the Republican side hasn't happened on the Democratic side. I disagree with that. My party has its faults and it exposes them every day. But I don't think we've had a litmus test ideological purge in the last 30 years of this sort that's happened on the Republican side.

Axelrod: [00:25:41] There is a sort of intolerance for compromise in portions of the Democratic Party as well now as a reaction to what we've seen so there is there is a there is some fear on both part of members of both parties about primary challenges and stepping out stepping outside the kind of partisan lines in terms of legislation. What about that. In addition to sort of partisanship there and maybe it's just everything looks bigger in the gauzy kind of reminiscences of history but it feels like there were a lot of big figures in the United States Senate when you arrived there and you don't really you wouldn't say that today necessarily.

Hart: [00:26:27] No. Caliber and quality has gone down. I'm very reluctant to say things like that because it's has a tone of arrogance to it. But they are they really are not across the board the same size and caliber of the men and women that I served with mostly men but few women. Thank goodness the number of women has has risen. And some very high quality ones across the board. But in those days they were mostly men and they were. Part of what was the greatest generation. Many of these the Stuart Symingtons and Mac and and. And several others had served in World War II as young men and they that made a difference. It really really made a difference in kind of their their sense of national the national interest and I don't see it today. There is is too much partisanship. But let me come in on the on the equivalence issue. I know that the theory is that the Republicans have moved farther to the right which is clearly demonstrably true. But the idea that the Democratic Party has become more liberal and I think is patent nonsense. Jimmy Carter wasn't a liberal in any Rooseveltian sense. And I don't think Bill Clinton was either the whatever that centrism was. And I never quite figured that out. It certainly wasn't Rooseveltian liberalism or even Harry Truman liberalism. And so we've got a Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. But I don't think Barack Obama was notoriously liberal. He found for example a national catastrophe called health care and tried to do something about it using as you well know many Republican ideas. And yet he was he's defamed today by the other side as being ultra liberal. That's just patent nonsense. [125.8]

Axelrod: [00:28:33] When you went to the Senate you you went on the Armed Services Committee and you very quickly became a leader of a military reform movement. First of all why did you choose to do that. And secondly what are the principles that you believed then and how do they apply today.

Hart: [00:28:52] It's a very good question and I thought a lot about it myself. I had pragmatic and idealistic reasons pragmatic reasons why I was. Having been through the McGovern campaign were a decorated combat. Air Force pilot of 29 missions. Was running for president and was derided by his opposition as being anti-military is just again Nancy because of his opposition to the war. He had been elected twice in South Dakota not a far left state. And he understood the military. And yet he got trounced. I decided that I did know something about the military and I'd read military history. Most of my life off and on but. I thought a lot about committee assignments. And it seemed to me. That the two best for international purposes were Foreign Relations and Armed Services. And I felt much more interested it was much more interested in the uniform military than it was in diplomacy. But I also was interested in the diplomatic side. So I signed up for Armed Services and got on there. The idealistic side was the military the the

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management of the military from congressional legislative point of view shouldn't be all in the hands of conservative people. That's not healthy. So I thought a young progressive Democrat. Could make a difference there. So there was a generational transition but also that an attempt to not permit. A huge part of what governing is about defending the country and its security from being in the hands of one party or one ideology.

Axelrod: [00:30:42] And what did you discover what did you learn what did you come to believe.

Hart: [00:30:46] What I found out very simply in two years was that the committee was asking all the wrong questions. They were all money questions. Why is this torpedo costing so much. Or let's put more money into this tank and that made no sense to me just from a objective point of view. So I began to study it and talked to thoughtful reform minded people and came up with a formula not on my own but from others that the first thing that defends the country or people. So if you don't have your people recruitment training and retention right you're going to be weak regardless of the weapons. That was the other thing. All the focus was on weapons. So I put a lot of effort into those issues of retention training and recruitment. The second thing was. Your strategy. You can have the best people. Maybe even the best weapons but if you have the wrong strategy you're going to lose. So we ought to spend more time thinking about our strategy and our tactics and our doctrine and only after those first two. Do you build the weapons. Do you hire the weapons and and figure out how many of each of these you need.

Axelrod: [00:32:06] And your conclusion was that in the world that was emerging that we needed a different kind of yes force and a different kind of array of weaponry that was more mobile more agile.

Hart: [00:32:20] We have to say that we overpowered the Vietnam North Vietnamese is an understatement. We had ten times the military power. Than they did. But they had motivation. They were they were fighting for what they perceived to be unification of their country. So are. We are focused on getting all this weaponry over there. But our troops lost faith in their leadership and our strategy was all wrong changed three or four times. But it was wrong all along.

Axelrod: [00:33:00] And where where do you think we are today. As a student and I know you've continued through the years to write about this and to study it you've been on various commissions to rethink the military we we're in a different world today the Soviet Union is gone. Yes. What do we need because this is now we now President Trump is saying you know speaking about massive new investments in the military. People seem to agree we need some. But what what what do we what should we be doing that we're not doing.

Hart: [00:33:37] Well I'm not sure your podcast has enough time. It's a book like question. We made the transition painfully September the 11th 2000 and one when. It a decade it had transpired since the end of the Cold War and everything having to do with our security for 47 years had been focused on the Cold War the Soviet threat that in 72 hours at the end of 91 the Soviet Union dissolved. So we drifted for 10 years with no real definition of our role in the world militarily and we maintained continue to maintain year after year. A cold war military. Big bomber fleets bigger craft carrier task forces and big army divisions. All of a sudden. 9/11 happened. And by the way I co-chaired the commission.

Hart: [00:34:45] Predicted it.

Axelrod: [00:34:46] Exactly you. You issued a report in January of 2001.

Hart: [00:34:51] Yes.

Axelrod: [00:34:51] That essentially predicted that there would be an attack at some point.

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Hart: [00:34:57] Yes. Well I'll quote the report actually the first iteration of it was an interim report. Ninety nine and the language in the final report to the new president George W. Bush was America will be attacked by terrorists using weapons of mass destruction and Americans will die on American soil. In large numbers that's as clear as you can make it. And if you think they pay no attention so. Bracket the fall of 91 with the fall of 2001 10 years we didn't think about the world of the 21st century. And that's what are our two and a half year commission tried to do lay out a blueprint. Pay no. No one paid attention in the first in the in the second Bush administration anyway. So the new Soviet Union if you put it that way either the single enemy is terrorism and President Bush declared war on terrorism. As it's been repeatedly pointed out that's that's declaring war on a method of terrorism as a method for people who want to undermine Western democracy. So is there a military solution to that. Partly but not totally.

Axelrod: [00:36:21] And do you think the adjustments have been made since that time do you think that the military is is is better equipped to deal with the military side of those challenge.

Hart: [00:36:32] Well the services finally came around to Special Forces which our commission advocated I mean we had Army Rangers at the time and a Delta Force and so forth but they had never been the centerpiece of those services. They were kind of adjunct guys that you sent to rescue hostages or something like that. But we recommended and people like me have been consistently recommending they become the centerpiece of our military because you're fighting indigenous forces in local communities and big army divisions aren't going to defeat them. So expand the Special Forces integrate them. I'm in favor of a fifth military service called Special Forces. And you put the Delta Force and the Rangers and this Air Force Special Forces and all them together and they're a fifth service. To fight terrorism.

Axelrod: [00:37:25] You wrote a book in the early 80s called a new democracy and you talked about three things you talked about technology you talked about globalization you talked about polarization growing polarization within our political system this was in 1983. All of those things now have come to the fore. And where do you think we are today relative to those things to those forces. And how do we cope with them. What is the what if you were writing that book today. Why what should we be doing as a country.

Hart: [00:38:07] I think the better question is what should we have done then if in fact we were entering. And I was giving speeches about this book before that book came out in the 70s in my first term in the Senate saying the revolutions are globalization and information and they are going to force us into a transformation economically equal to the transition and the early first half the 19th century from agrarian economy to a manufacturing economy. Now think about that. And if and I know you've read about that period it hugely dislocated. I mean farmers lost their farms. If they didn't move to Detroit to work in a factory. They lost their farms or the. Farms were consolidated by wealthier farmers. But it was a it was a huge shift to the base of our economy if you will from Kansas to. I don't know Detroit I guess. And we all know what that has done in terms of race and urbanization. Over the next century.

Axelrod: [00:39:20] It seems like these changes are even more rapid now and with a more pervasive.

Hart: [00:39:24] The acceleration is incredible. And what we could have done then is begin developing educate a a an education system that didn't end with in the 12th grade that offered dislocated steel autoworkers training. To make the transition to the new jobs. Now is a 55 year old steel worker going to learn computers. Probably not. But he could be put he could be put to work doing other things. We just in here this country has been against centralized centralized planning. And any time you begin to talk about national programs to make this transition the conservatives say that central planning the market will take care of it. Well the market didn't take care of it and we're still are suffering because 30 years ago we didn't begin to prepare for this transformation.

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Axelrod: [00:40:20] Take a short break we'll be right back with Senator Gary Hart.

Axelrod: [00:40:25] We didn't do that. Now we see massive disruption in our economy relative to the people who are caught in the switches of these changes. A lot of it is fueling some of the political alienation that the president has seized on. Presumably you don't think that he has the answers to this problem. Let let's stipulate that you said to me earlier before we started recording that you is to say we're going to go back to the manufacturing age as it would be like saying in the early 20th century we're going to go back to the agrarian age. But if you were advising the Democratic Party right now what are the three or four things that you would do to deal with this massive dislocation growing alienation and diminishing faith in our institutions to respond to it.

Hart: [00:41:24] Well it's a big agenda. And it has to happen pretty quickly to counteract the current policy. I'd like to depersonalize and I'll talk about this president but this administration what they're what they're proposing to make America great again. If you use the the industrial revolution is to say we're going to not be an industrial nation we're going to be an agrarian nation that is to say we're going to go from the present to the past. And that's what he's advocating. Never going to work. We can't build. We can't fabricate steel and build automobiles cheaper than our foreign competitors. Now his answer to that is will not fix it. We will not bring. Let them bring their goods into our market he says because they are cheating. Well you can either believe that or you're not. Most trade officials say the cheating is marginal at best and it doesn't amount to the stealing of the entire U.S. market but you can't turn your back on reality and history and even though they're trying to do it on climate science and a whole bunch of other things. So what should we be doing. I said the two revolutions were globalization information. Guess what we are the world leaders in the second one. So we're trying to fight a rear guard action on globalization when we could have and should have started 30 years ago made. Except the fact that the center of gravity in our economy now is Silicon Valley. Metaphorically that is to say not five square miles but everybody involved in transformational technologies information and we see it exploding all around us so training young people for jobs in this market. I think we've got to have a generation that just has to be taken care of with 55 and above that we haven't taken care of. And they're the ones that have elected this president. Mostly white. And you keep coming back and I think Vice President Gore and a whole bunch of other people would say the same thing. It's it's education and training and it's life long. It's not getting a high school diploma or getting a college degree. It is having a system in community colleges. Training programs and so forth to keep people who are technological or on the margins of it. A step ahead or at least current with developments. And there's no magic formula to this but it's saying make America great again. Isn't the right answer.

Axelrod: [00:44:13] Let me return to something that you raised earlier and to your own story. You ran for president in 1984 I covered that as a young reporter for The Chicago Tribune. I remember reading a story out of Iowa saying the guy to watch is Gary Hart now was ridiculed in my newsroom for that piece. But you finished second in Iowa and won the New Hampshire primary very nearly won the nomination Walter Mondale former vice president was the sort of establishment choice in that campaign former colleague of yours. You interestingly noted that you each one 25 states he won the nomination but there was a real there was an obvious differentiation between those states and they were the states that were on the winning end of these changes and the states that were on the losing end. These changes actually talk about that.

Hart: [00:45:11] Well this story and again maybe somebody out there wrote the story in your former profession but the story of the 84 Democratic nomination was really the story of this transformation. I think it's true. I've never done the research but I believe it's true that every state that we're just talking about the Democratic Party here. But it did reflect the mood of the people in this state. Every state that was benefiting from trade. Global trade supported me. Every state that was losing supported by Mondale they

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supported him. Frankly I don't want to hang this round his neck because he is a good friend. He had a protectionist policy and our current president is talking the same way. Vice President Mondale wanted to put a tariff on cars brought into the country and insist that 60 percent of every car sold in America be built in America and never figured out how you. Calculated a percent of a car. But nevertheless I'm sure somebody could have figured it out. So those who were losing in this new economy wanted that kind. Wanted to make America great again by keeping the competition out it was not going to happen. And that really was I think I won every new England state including Massachusetts I won almost all the southern states including Florida almost won Georgia by missed by 4000 votes and by surprise. Mondale said if he had lost Georgia he would have lost women. So that's how close it came. But then but then we headed west and I think I won all the western states.

Axelrod: [00:46:58] You came back in and you were the frontrunner in two in 1987.

Hart: [00:47:04] Whatever that means.

Axelrod: [00:47:06] Well it means that you many people believed you to be the person who can be the nominee. I met with you at that time I'd left the newspaper business. We met I remember at a little pub at the University of Chicago and you told me something that always stuck with me which is always remember that Washington's last always the last to get the news which I think was one of the wisest things anybody's ever told me about politics. But you became the news in a way that you obviously didn't want and it destroyed your political career.

Hart: [00:47:40] Well I did. I'm going to push back against that word. I left the race seven days after the publication of the original story which was wrong factual.

Axelrod: [00:47:52] And we should say not. I don't want to belabor the point but you were seen in the company of a woman who was your wife and this was at that time considered.

Hart: [00:48:03] You know what. I doubt there's a I think the vice president has said he will never go to dinner with a woman who's not his wife unless his wife is there. Now I think he's probably the only man in America if not the world who.

Axelrod: [00:48:17] I understand [crosstalk]

Hart: [00:48:20] But I I'm going to have to push back because I've had to live with this.

Axelrod: [00:48:23] Yeah.

Hart: [00:48:24] OK. The original story was false then some senior journalists in America whose names were well known decided well even if the story is wrong. There must be something there. And we're going to explore every aspect of this man's personal life. When that. Was That's a fact. That's a fact when that paper made that decision. I knew there was no hope of conducting any kind of thoughtful campaign. This Think about it just think about that. A very famous editor of one of the largest newspapers in America put his entire news. Room. On exploring every aspect of my life. So. When that happened I said to myself and others. I don't want to do this anymore. This isn't what I got in to public service. I've got nothing to hide. But I'm not going to have every rock every aspect of my life explored starting. Day one. It's just not worth it. And that's what I said. On the following Friday when I chose not to continue to run. OK. Well that's OK. If you've lived with this.

Axelrod: [00:49:48] I know. Senator I.

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Hart: [00:49:50] My campaign was not destroyed. I made a conscious solid decision that I wasn't going to put up with this.

Axelrod: [00:49:56] Well let me push back on you. I've been around politics for 40 years. I don't think I've ever met a brighter more incisive mind than yours in politics. And from that moment on though you made many contributions at the margins and commissions that were important as you point out you spoke to one of them and so on. You were lost to the country. You did not you were not available. Your leadership was not available. I don't think that was. That was not merely a matter of choice on your part. That you that you were in you it seems to you on the hinge of history because there were presidents going back generations and for centuries who if aspects of their life had been examined as yours was they they could have said of John F. Kennedy was one of them Franklin Roosevelt was another Abraham Lincoln struggle with depression would not have been elected president if his history had been recorded. They went on to become the among the greatest presidents in history. Four years after you got elected four years after you got out of the race Bill Clinton got elected whose foibles were there for everyone to see famously. And now we have Donald Trump who whose whose escapades have been recorded in his own voice. It seems to me you were right in the hinge of history Matt Bai has written a book about this journalist and says and argues that this is when our politics took a very negative turn it. But. But you are the one who sort of was lost to the country why and what was it about that moment and has it changed politics in our country.

Hart: [00:51:52] Well I think you'd have to ask your former profession what happened in American journalism to decide that in a competitive journalistic environment where newspapers are beginning to lose readers to what was increasingly tabloid television that they had to become tabloid themselves. I think historically if you put the pieces together man called Rupert Murdoch showed up on our shores in 1985 and went into the news business by 87 for sure. And then started Fox News a whole bunch of other things created partisan media in America and. There was a rush to sell newspapers. Now there was.

Axelrod: [00:52:45] Technology [crosstalk]

Hart: [00:52:48] I had to live for 30 years with journalists saying we did this because he dared us to. That is totally absolutely false. But every story I read about myself started with that we wouldn't have done it if he hadn't dared us or challenged us.

[00:53:07] [crosstalk]

Hart: [00:53:12] Matt Bai killed that myth. You have not read it since his book came out and I had to live with it for 30 years. So we're paying the price. We're paying the price. And I said if you go back you go back and and listen to the five minute six minute talk I gave two blocks away when I said I was getting out of this. I put here in Denver we should point out I predicted I predicted that policy that I said if if we turn the press into hunters and political figures into the hunted we are going to. Destroy the leadership of this country.

Axelrod: [00:53:50] There's a movie going to be made called The frontrunner.

Hart: [00:53:54] That's what I hear.

Axelrod: [00:53:55] Hugh Jackman playing you. I I I have to say I admire you for having Hugh Jackman play you. If they did a movie about me Rob Reiner would be the the star of the movie. But how do you feel about having all of this revisited in a film and bringing all of this back well.

Hart: [00:54:18] I'm going to answer that. But circle back to one thing you said earlier that I was lost to

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service I was available to Bill Clinton for eight years and never was asked to do anything. And I could have been of service to him. I wasn't looking for a Cabinet position but I'd let him know through mutual friends that I could help in Russia and in a number of other places arms control and right things with one important exception. I was not asked to do anything in eight years of the Obama administration. And you had to do with that and that was to cherish them a committee at the Defense Department so I was available. I just I just would not do what's fashionable in Washington has lobby for a job. But in terms of the movie or you know the movie I don't know. First of all it to be very honest I think it's bizarre. If anyone had said to me any time in my life some amazing movie out of you if I'd been president maybe but I wasn't present so why. And then I mean it could have been of not very reputable actor but then they said Hugh Jackman I really didn't believe it. I seriously didn't believe it. Now I'm in communication with him and it sounds by e-mail like an absolute wonderful human being.

Axelrod: [00:55:39] He's great actor. You know.

Hart: [00:55:41] He is a great actor. I loved Les Miserables. I didn't watch the Wolverine.

Axelrod: [00:55:47] Let me let me. Yeah. Well having sharp having sharp claws may be the appropriate role for someone who's doing a film about politics. I don't know although maybe not when portraying you. Let me ask you finally about where we are today relative to Russia. You're one of the great experts on Russia in the country you had relationships with Mikhail Gorbachev in the 80s and you've been going to Russia steadily over decades. What do you make of our relationship with Russia and what do you make of this story about the president and Russia.

Hart: [00:56:27] You know I think we missed a huge opportunity. I'm in a minority on this. Back in the 1990s of how we could develop a a better U.S.-Russian relationship post Cold War. And it was really in the area of institution building. They needed legal systems they needed banking systems. They needed assistance in setting up political parties really basic. Democracy building democracy and capitalism in a way. I think there was a little bit of that going on. In fact I'd I led a 12 year program to modernize Russian telephone company and with a U.S. telephone system Gorbachev sent that project to me. And that had more to do with the modernization of the Russian economy than any other single event. Now we should have been doing more of that and we didn't. The president at the time thought his personal relationship with President Yeltsin was what the what the bilateral relationship was all about. That's that's that's not serious. And now we're in a mess. And. I guess your question asked what I think about an ice. I think all the indicators. Are to the fact that there is something in the current president's background in Russia that he is trying desperately to prevent coming out. I don't know why and I don't know what.

Axelrod: [00:58:06] What do you think the implications of that are for the country.

Hart: [00:58:10] Well depends on.

Axelrod: [00:58:11] Ours not there's.

Hart: [00:58:12] Depends on what that is. You know if it's a it's a personal misbehavior that's one thing. If it's something systematic I having to do with money and lots of money and where the money came from and where it went and where it ends up and what ends up where the Trump empire ends up in Russia 20 years from now. That's something else So you think there's some there there.

Hart: [00:58:45] Yes but. Yes but on circumstantial evidence I don't I don't have any hard evidence but I do know that if you set up an administration with Mr. Flynn, Senator Sessions and Comey being asked to be loyal what you're doing is trying to set up protection against an investigation. Now that might have worked had it not been for the solid evidence from across the U.S. intelligence community that they

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dabbled in our campaign. So that's the Achilles heel when the Russians did that hacked into our. Political system that they had anything going on in the Trump World in Russia becomes fair game. [190.7]

Axelrod: [00:59:39] Finally what. What about what about the health of our own political system our own institutions our own democracy. Where do you think we are today.

Hart: [00:59:49] We'll be talking about books. The last book I wrote two or three years ago is called a republic of conscience. I think our system is corrupt. And. But I use the classic. Small R republican definition of corruption in ancient Athens. And since then and including Thomas Jefferson and his colleagues they didn't define corruption as money under the table which is what most Americans think of. They said corruption which will destroy a republic is putting special interests and narrow interests ahead of the common good. What today we would call the national interest. And you well know. As much as anyone what Washington is like. When I was. In office. I'm told in the. Late 70s early 80s there were 146 registered lobbyists in Washington. Today there are over 13000. And that's the registered lobbyists not all those people who list themselves as strategic advisers. Whatever that means and 400 of them into unregistered lobbyists 400 to 500 of those are former members of Congress an equal amount former members of both administrations. So it is a revolving door. And to a degree the American people are angry that's what they're angry about. And I join them in that anger.

Axelrod: [01:01:19] And what's the answer. Because you know President Trump campaigned against that or at least he spoke against it draining the swamp and so on.

Hart: [01:01:28] Well if you can define that any way you want to. But all you have to look at that last six months he wasn't serious about whatever that any definition you give on the swamp and draining it. He's he's lost. I think you know the history of American politics is reform. Adlai Stevenson, not Adlai Stevenson but. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote a book on the cycles of reform and what he called consolidation. And usually you have a cycle of reform after a real scandal not what we call scandal today but a real corruption scandal and. Rules change financing of campaigns change and then that settles in. We saw some of that after Watergate. Yeah exactly. And then you have a period of what he called consolidation which is basically conservatism. Here's a new system and we're all going to play by the system. You know I don't think you know this is not this is a populist era but it is yet to produce. Maybe Senator Warren is an exception. Real the kind of real progressive reformers that the last populous hundred years ago or more produced. And that's what we're looking for. But political parties also have to reform themselves and that's where we're really up against it because the political parties and their candidates are so dependent on special interests to get elected that they're not about to reform the system that they're dependent on. So we're stuck we're stuck. And until another Watergate.

Axelrod: [01:03:21] And do you think that there may be at hand.

Hart: [01:03:24] I think it could be. I don't know. We'll see what Mr. Mueller comes up with or whether Mr. Mueller fired.

Axelrod: [01:03:33] Which would be an igniting the event.

Hart: [01:03:38] Yes. [130.6]

Axelrod: [01:03:39] Gary Hart I could talk to you for a very long time. You have great wisdom. Thank you. And and I appreciate all your elective and selective service to this country.

Hart: [01:03:50] Thank you. Great pleasure always great to see you. Thank you.

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