

DAVID PRYOR

March 12, 1980

I came in and Ray and I talked about the summer work days of the staff in Arkansas. "It came about in a funny way. A friend of mine who owns gas stations called me about all the problems he has with DOE regulations. He said to me "Scott you ought to get off your butt and come down here and work and see for yourself what a small businessman has to go through." So I said to him "By god, I will--this summer." I had lunch with Pryor the next day and told him that I was going to go down to Malvern and work during the summer. He picked it up and said he thought the rest of the staff ought to do the same thing. The next I heard he had made a speech down in Arkansas--podium policy I call it--saying that his staff would be down in Arkansas doing odd jobs in the summertime. That's a slow period up here and it was picked up all over the county. The PR was great. And we learned something--even though the main thing we all noticed was how hard we worked."

On DP and trips home. He goes home every other week. We looked back over 1979 and there wasn't one two week period that he wasn't home at least once. In 1980, he was home 2 weekends in January, 3 weekends in February, 2 weekends in March and I can see at least two weekends in April. I'd say his stock is very high down there now. One newspaper said the other day that if he keeps on the course he's taken so far, he'll be unbeatable in 1984. But I don't believe the newspaper."

Re media. "Pryor's attitudes is you can't win with the press. You can't buy enough ink to control your own press."

What triggered this comment was Ray's discussion of DP's bill to cut food stamps. "In the conservative community that was a very popular vote. Among the child welfare groups and the special interest groups it wasn't. The Arkansas Gazeette played it as though he had voted to take food out of the mouths of

starving children. Actually what he did was vote to eliminate duplication where the same family gets school lunch and food stamps. That was in the next to last paragraph. We can't do much about the Arkansas Gazette. But he writes a weekly column that goes out to all the little weekly small town papers. The subject of this week's column will be his food stamp vote, explaining why he did it from his perspective. It was a hard vote for him. He's a very humanitarian guy. He anguished over it and woke up in the middle of the night sweating. But he believes that *we've got* job to balance the budget and that every program must be cut. It's the same situation we got into when he was governor. Our slogan for the second campaign was "tough times, tough decisions," and he had to cut programs. I tell him that if he believes in the balanced budget, he has to be consistent and cut all programs. The tough test will come on defense. But I argue that he has to cut that too. If he cuts some and not others, then he's injecting his values into it. And people will be upset because he chose one over another. If he cuts them all, then the arguments will have to be about economics not politics. And I think he can explain the economics of the situation to people. But he can't explain the politics of why he cut some and not others."

Idea was that going down home often was keeping him in good shape. Idea also was that Gazette is not their friend.

I waited around a long time to talk with David and finally got a "visit" of maybe 10 minutes in his office while he telephoned and then a ride to the airport during which he was preoccupied.

The first thing he said to me was "I'm going home to Arkansas for the swearing in of a judge--with all the politicians. This one is actually Bumpers appointment. We rotate; the next one is mine. I've already picked him-- a black. He'll be the first black federal judge in Arkansas."

Would they mind if you didn't come to this function? "Last week, there was another swearing in. I didn't go. I wrote a letter which was read--telling them that I was tied up in the Agriculture Committee, with votes that were important to the state of Arkansas. They understood."

Would they notice if you missed two in a row? "Well, they might say Dale Bumpers has been here two weeks in a row but Ole David wasn't here last week either. I wonder what's happened to ole David.' They might say that. But probably they wouldn't even miss me." (he laughed). The Bumpers reference was interesting.

The very first thing he said to me after greeting me with "Are you all right?" was "I'm writing a letter to the majority leader? Do you teach that in your class? You call him Dear Mr. Leader." Some of the older Senators write "Dear Leader"" That's a funny quirk. I'm writing him to thank him for inserting a speech of mine in the record. I made a speech on Abscam--I'm a member of the Ethics Committee--to a group in Arkansas. Several newspapers--and Editor and Publisher picked it up. I don't know where he picked it up."

How are you doing? "It's a great institution. I like it. There are several stages you go through. The first is Potomac Fever. The second is marble fever, where you get taken in by all this marble and granite around here. And the third stage is marbleosis when you actually inhale the marble and the rigors set in." Then he laughed and said "It's a great institution and I like it."

"But it's frustrating--particularly frustrating for a former governor. It's a consensus operation. If you want to appoint an FHA Director for Arkansas, you have to get the two senators together. You have to decide which room you are going to meet in, then you have to get all the Democrats from the House delegation. By the time you get around to opportunity the Director, the Republicans have won the election and you lose the position anyway."

But, I asked, isn't the six year term a compensation on the other side. He nodded. "Yes, it is. I wouldn't have made a speech on Abscam if I had to run next year. I wouldn't have voted against food stamps as I did last Saturday if I had to run in a year. The 6-year term gives you insurance. Well, not exactly. It gives you a cushion; it gives you some squirming room."

He was on the phone personally thanking people for helping him to arrange his Brazil trip for April, which had been cancelled. "I know how much you worked on it and I want to tell you how much I appreciated it. We wouldn't have gotten as far as we did if you hadn't done so much work."

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Then he calls to tell Lester Hyman that he took up a matter satisfactorily with Scotty Campbell. Hyman was obviously thanking him. "I was glad to help. But I didn't do much. You did it. All I did was lick the stamp."

He talked with Ed Bethune and got off the phone. "I get along better with the Republicans in the ^{delegation} ~~election~~ that I do with the Democrats."

As we started off for the airport he said "I've got 'em all mad at me now. Yesterday I got up in the Democratic caucus and said I thought we ought to freeze the legislative appropriations at the 1980 levels. I said we ought to auction off all these big limousines up behind the Capitol on Saturday morning and cut out all junkets for the rest of the year. No--I didn't say those last things but I did call for a freeze on appropriations totals. I think the American people feel we'll cut everyone else's part of the budget except our own and that if we don't hold our expenses down we won't be creditable with the public. They received it with modified rapture. No--they were pretty cool."

Are you comfortable in the Senate? "I'm not as comfortable as I hope I will be some day. I'm still a little hesitant about things."

How are you doing in the Senate? "I can't tell. I can't answer that

question, because I don't know the answer. I wish I did. Or maybe I don't wish."

"The Senate is a lonely place. It's a body of loners. They are great guys. You see them but you only see them in a way. You see them for a couple of minutes on the floor, for a handshake--once in a while at a dinner. Sometimes at a luncheon, but not very often and not for long. There's a distance. We don't know much about each other. Staff's deal directly with staffs, but Senators don't deal directly with Senators. There was more direct dealing between members in the House. That was my impression. Maybe Paul Tsongas feels differently. (No, he feels the same.) Paul has carved out a little niche for himself. He's doing very well."

How are you doing at home? "I think we're doing OK. We're doing well." (How do you know?) Polls. That's the only evidence I have--polls comparing me to others. I'm neck and neck with Bumpers in most polls. I saw one that had me ahead by one point and one that had him ahead of me by 5 points."

Do you take polls--no. Does Bumpers--no. They are taken by a TV station.

"This session is a funny one. We aren't doing anything. I'll bet we haven't had 20 votes this year. And I'll bet we had 60 votes at this time last year. We had set aside January and February for the SALT debate. The committees didn't work hard to push things through because they thought they would have plenty of time. Now there's no SALT and there's nothing to do--empty space." A comment on the rhythm. But it was good for my interest in ebb and flow of business.

Ought to chart that somehow.

It's interesting to note that the office style in Pryor's office reflects the person to person style of Pryor--while I sat there he called Lester Hyman to tell him Scotty Campbell would do something he wanted, he called the lady who helped arrange his Brazil trip and he wanted to call his former staffer

who just got a new job to congratulate him. Well, this is all typical Pryor. And, as I sit in the office, Ray keeps asking me if I've met each staff member. Twice in two days he asked me if I had met Will Feland. As each person passed through, he wanted to introduce me to him or her. That would never happen in Tsongas' office. Indeed, when Rich and I met Mary Helen at elevator going down to lunch, he did ask me if we had met, but we rode down in elevator without speaking and she walked ahead of us to the cafeteria. No conversation, no human warmth. Ray Scott would never have done that. And I'm being invited to the Pryor office's beer and pizza party. Recall that Ray Scott chose the staff for personal compatibility in the first place. The Tsongas staff emphasizes credentials and background more than personality. I can't imagine that they give a damn about personality. At least Dennis is the coldest of fishes. Paul Tsongas is, of course, aloof as David Pryor is not. There are patterns that run to the office ambience. Then there is Pell's AA whom everybody says I must have an appointment to talk to.

On my last afternoon I spent an hour or so in the cafeteria talking to Ray Scott about his dilemma. He wants to establish his own identity. Doesn't want to stay with Pryor for much longer. He thinks he's learned all he can and doesn't want to make Pryor his career.

In course of it, he painted himself as non-political. "Some politicians run to run and others run to serve," was one thing he quoted to characterize his own motives as helping people and not getting ahead politically.

Re himself and Pryor. "We have a funny relationship really. He never asks me for political advice, never. We don't see each other outside the office, we don't socialize, we don't do things together. He never tells me how I stand with him or whether I'm doing a good job. He keeps me on, so I assume I'm a help to him. He needs me to provide stability, to make sure the roof won't cave in on him or the floor buckle underneath him. He knows I won't do anything to get him into trouble. The greatest truth I've learned in politics

is that it's not your enemies that will hurt you, it's your friends. Without even knowing it, they will put your head in a noose and throw the ~~rope~~ over the tree. When he was campaigning he left me to run the state because he knew I would keep it going without causing him problems. I'm happy to say I did, and that the one thing that got him into trouble during the campaign came from the political side, not my side. I assume that's why he brought me with him to the Senate. But he has never told me why--not to this day."

He said Bruce Lindsay had more personal relationship with David, because they were political. Bruce loves politics, the game, the polls, etc. says Ray.

Ray says he's grooming Skip Rutherford for his job in D.C. He sounds pretty serious about leaving. That will be tough on me.