

DAVID PRYOR

June 22, 1982

In mid afternoon, I was heading to the floor. As I was walking to the trolley, David and Carl Levin "the best man in the U.S. Senate" came the other way. David said he wanted to talk to me about something and I went with him to his office. On the way he regaled me with the confrontation between Begin and the Senators--Joe Biden. It was head on. "We give you billions. And now we can't get 51 votes for Israel." "Don't you blackmail me," etc. "When I was in there, I got a note that some constituents from Pine Bluff were waiting to see me. I wrote on the paper 'Screw them.' But I didn't want to leave, I was so intent on what was going on." He exaggerated some--said 50-60 were there. Paper next day said 35. All storytellers exaggerate!

Anyway we get to his office. He shows me a card with my name on it, which he had propped up on his desk, to show me he was really looking for me.

He was scheduled to have his picture taken with 2 students from Arkansas who were going to Japan. One was his selection. "I don't have to visit with them do I? I want to talk to Dick Fenno" He said somewhat plaintively--as if he's always got to visit with people to keep up his regular routine and that it's tiresome. But he perked up when the young man and woman came in. "Haven't I met you before?" he said to the boy. "Yes at Boy's State last year." "I thought so" said David. And as they had their picture taken He said, "I met Billy at Boy's State las year." He shook their hands three times, introduced them to me, wished them well several times and they left. MA and PD do this, too--but none of the others, as a regular matter.

As we waited for them to come in, he showed me a cartoon drawn by an intern. "I said the other day that have done nothing for a month except hang wallpaper. Here's a cartoon--David Pryor hanging wallpaper." He laughed.

But it related to what he wanted to talk about. "You know more about these things than anyone else."

He got Dan, Knox and an intern Ann (who was working on the timing of votes so far in the session) and we talked for a half hour.

He began "I'm just about as frustrated right now as I was when I left the House of Representatives to make that crazy race for the Senate... I never get frustrated as Governor because somebody was shouting at me all the time.. I'm so frustrated that I've begun to think about not running again... Mmmmm, let's see, there are only two offices left." He smiled. I said "You mean if you're elected President, you'll never ask for another office?" Everybody laughed. He laughed and said "I'll never ask for another office." It's an 'in joke' now.

"For the last month we have done nothing in the Senate but hang wallpaper. The Senate is not working well. I'm in the process of getting together a group of eight <sup>Senators</sup> leaders, all of whom came to the Senate in 1979, to come out to my house to talk about how we could reform the Senate. We'll cook some steaks and sit around and talk about what can be done-- things like the budget process, the filibuster rule, the germaneness rule. What other reforms could we look at? Where should we begin?"

I said the budget process was the ripest one. I said the filibuster was the one that touched the whole nature of the Senate. Did they want Senate to be like the House, etc. The conversation went back and forth.

Don, Knox and David all uttered a variety of complaints. The budget process takes too long, nothing was done in early part of year except bussing and TV, the defense bill was taken up late at night and important amendments got 15 minutes to aside. Baker went to China and nothing happened. Their complaint is that nothing is happening, Senate is moving slowly, people are beginning to get upset at government and taking it out on officials, problems are piling up and Senate is not responding.

I said that we had something like a parliamentary system now and that the majority was in control, that Ronald Reagan didn't want Congress to do anything and that he was in the minority and that was his problem.

We kicked around a lot of ideas, but staged none. Knox wants to get a hold of scheduling somehow, and tends to see Baker as a problem. The intern works for him, I think and she reported that not many votes were held on Mon., Tuesday and Friday--thus "confirming" idea that Senate really only works two days. "What about committees" asks Knox.

I said the way you make Congress work is by imposing deadlines. And David added "or straight jackets". "That's why I'm for the balanced budget amendment. It puts us in a straight jacket." Then he waxed about some other straight jackets. Let's say budget has to be passed by a certain date and no votes can take place till the budget is passed. He chuckled and suggested that no Senate get paid till the budget passes. The one that intrigued him the most was putting a limit on the amount of time Congress could be in session. "In one (Ark?) state it is 60 days every two years. Some say it ought to be 2 days every 60 years."

When, later, I said it would be better if he could find one "strategic" reform to center on rather than a laundry list, he agreed. "Maybe the one should be a limit on the length of sessions. But I suppose you'd have to have a constitutional amendment."

After we had kicked around a number of these ideas, I asked David "What is that really frustrates you?" He answered, "When I go home and talk to my constituents, they are in horrible trouble. They ask me what the government is doing about it and I can't give them an answer. What is the Senate doing about it? That's what they ask me. And I have to tell them, 'not much!' The Senate is just not performing well. It isn't doing anything. They are getting angry at all of us. I ran into Geroge Rollins the other day. He's been in the Arkansas House of Representatives for years, and he just lost in the primary. It was the only opponent he had in years. He told me that he was outside the supermarket one day campaigning and a man came by. 'I'm Representative Rollins and I hope you'll vote for me on election day.' He said the man said he was for him, and walked away with a grocery wagon. Then a couple of minutes later, he came back and asked 'Did you say you were Representative Rollin?' "Yes." "Then I'm against you." George said when he heard that he knew he was in big trouble."

The story is typical Pryor--illustrate a large point with a human scale story.

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The session was pure Pryor, too. He is both/ambitious politician and a restless human being. He ~~gloms~~ onto reform easily, but does not think them through or stay with them. He's been shunted off to the side right now and doesn't know what to do with himself. He jumps around. When I left, I said to Knox, 'We need him in the Senate, Knox, for God sake keep him busy.' Knox laughed and said "Do you know any groups he can talk to?" We both laughed and I left. He's got to be hard to work for. He doesn't stay with a thing. Even when he's doing well, on consultants or nerve gas, he's always afraid he'll get too identified with that one issue. He gets interested and loses interest

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equally fast. But he wants to be interested in something all the time. He needs to be "fed." But it's not clear what will capture his fancy. He wanted Government Affairs because it was this kind of committee you can jump around, hit and run. If he were on Finance, he would be busy now. But I think he'd be happiest with a big staff of investigators digging out some kind of continuously stimulating information. Maybe his newspaper past plays some role here.

I made my greatest impression when I made the pitch that the source of his frustration is that RR doesn't want to do anything and that the Republicans are all having to battle the administration when it comes to money. I mentioned PD, DQ, AS and what they were trying to do. But when it became obvious that they were at least battling, he said "You haven't finished with me have you?" I said "Absolutely not I'm over talking to Jackie Parker, looking at you through the eyes of Jackie Parker." It seemed a little plaintive to me, that he thought he wasn't doing anything and that I, therefore, had lost interest in him. I went back to idea that his frustrations came largely from being in the minority. "You sound like Paul Tsongas." I said--hoping that he wouldn't feel alone in my stable. He made me go through the people I was following.

Maybe the best way to put it is that he's in the doldrums now and is looking for a cause. He has a cause--his anti defense department attitude--but he's not palced on the right committee for that. That's why Carl Levin can take away that role from him - he's on AS.

Next day - Tolchin to Ehrenbalt when I mention Pryor.

T: What's Pryor doing these days?

E: Telling stories.

T: He's a great story teller but what's he doing?

E: He is not as visible as he used to be.