

PAUL TSONGAS

December 4, 1981

I met PT at his car to drive to his new house where we left his car and joined Don Schweiker a union guy (Railway and Airline Clerks Union), who then drove us to Democratic National Committee Eastern Regional Conference where he was to be evening speaker. It was 7:00 Friday night.

"I'm not looking forward to this. I don't mean just the speech but another weekend away from home. This has got to stop." I reminded him that he once said same thing about 14 commencements in 1979. It's not the same. I'm out of that. But I'm losing my tolerance for time spent away from my family." I suggested that it was the natural consequence of the book. He nodded. "But it's very wearying when you constantly have to tell people what they don't want to hear." I asked him 'Are the liberal Democrats listening to what you have to say?' He said, "Do you consider Richard Bolling a liberal?" I said 'yes.' He said "The other day he wrote me a letter saying that the book was the best book written in a long time. It made my day. I need things like that once in a while to keep my spirits up." I said that he should be pleased, because Dick Bolling reads and thinks about such problems and has for a long time. He nodded. And he said. "The non-ideological groups I talk to are very receptive to what I have to say. But things like the review in the New Republic

✓ "Reaganism with a Human Face," I find very disturbing. And I don't think it's fair. But it shows how large the gap still is." I said I thought the author of the review had unrealistic expectations in terms of wanting a full blown philosophy. He did not reply; and he changed the subject.

Later as we got to hotel, he said "Did you see the letter Pat Moynihan wrote to the New Republic about that review? I not only am grateful for the fact that he did it, but I admire the way he did it. What a mind!" This was

triggered by Don's recitation to Paul of how Moynihan (excellent, fresh ideas) and Kennedy ("the same old bullshit") had done in their speech to the groups. When Don described Moynihan's thrust "Dems have to have an agenda", Paul turned to me and said "There goes my speech. Poor Doug".

For most of the trip we chatted about his new home, how he liked Washington, etc. He said he and Niki had not had any dinner parties, because she didn't want to entertain in their old house and that he was looking forward to "bringing interesting people into the House, not just for me, but for her."

When Paul, back in the office had come in to where Missy, Chris, Bob Rubello and I were talking and complained about how tired he was and how full his schedule was, they mocked him after he left." He's just like a little boy stamping his foot to get attention. I'm going to hold my breath," said one. And another said "I'm not going to eat my spinach." Their reaction to his schedule was very different from that of Chris and Marsha who said "Poor thing." He's been up every night this week." One of the LAs had said "Don't feel sorry for him. He missed the all night session here. "They had different perspectives on him. Those who superintend his personal life see the human side of it. Those who superintend his issue life have a more detached, even more cynical view--a sort of 'he asked for it, what's he complaining about" view. They are not as close to Paul on a day to day basis. They don't see him as much. They compete for his time.

He did not follow his printed speech very closely. He was introduced as someone who showed Dems could reaffirm their past and reevaluate their present. Larry Davis, who introduced him said "Democrats are longing for both reaffirmation and reappraisal" and that PT is man to do it.

His speech was interesting in that it was funny. He had lots of one liners that provoked laughter, after which he would jerk the audience back to to sobriety. He seemed to be sugar-coating his message. Can it be done that way?

PT - "It's an exciting time to be in Washington, more exciting than when we were in the majority. We are insurgents; that's very different from being responsible. Now I can do some of the things Jesse Helms used to do. In fact one day Jesse said to me I'm finding it's easier to throw than to catch."

Then he more or less went into first couple of pages of speech.

How many of you know who Dick Radatz was? (One person knew<sup>1/2</sup>) He was a relief pitcher from the Boston Red Sox. He had only one pitch--a fast ball. And when he lost his fast ball and the opponents started hitting the ball over the left field wall there was nothing he could do. Who knows what happened to Dick Radatz. The Democrats are like that. We only had one pitch. We did not change. To the problems of the 1980s we offered the solutions of the 1960s."

"All public opinion polls now show that the American people see the Republican party as best able to manage the economy. Yet here we are the party of FDR and they are the party of Herbert Hoover. What a turnaround! How did we do it? With hard work!"

Then he mentioned polls that show sharply increased support for military spending, implication being that Democrats missed public perception of Soviet buildup and concern for it.

"I am a product of Richard Nixon. (Not directly, of course.) When I ran in 1974, all I had to do was disclose my tax returns. There was no substance to the campaign. Why should there be. I was against Richard Nixon. I was swept in with the Watergate class of 1974. Without Watergate I would still be a city councillor in Lowell. Well probably not that; but I would



never have gotten into Congress."

He then launched his main theme--that the pendulum is swinging toward the Democrats and that, sensing victory, the Dems will do nothing and let the pendulum carry them in. That, he thinks, will be a disaster. They must use the opportunity to rethink their approach.

✓ "My state is dependent on high technology. We must compete with the Japanese. If we cannot compete with the Japanese in high technology, I will lose my state. We are building MX missiles and the Japanese are building Hondas. Unfortunately, not many consumers are in the market for MX missiles." Good on the Mass. basis for his concern over trade.

Tsongas to Bumpers. "If they pass the legislation regarding the deductibility of interest on home mortgages, I'll have to sell my house." Bumpers to Tsongas: "To whom?" Then PT to audience, "Anyone who wants a house, meet me outside."

"The question is "When the pendulum swings our way where will we be?" He is effective with this formulation, i.e., "The question is..."

"If we don't evolve, we face extinction. From my travels for my book, I can tell you. The constituency is there. People don't like the Democrats and they tremble at Ronald Reagan... Not to give them what they want is irresponsible... I frankly get tired of being a pulpit scale<sup>1</sup>. I'd like to say keep on going as you are. But if we do that, we hand it back to Reagan."

✓ Closing story--guy goes to doctor's office. "I've got the shingles." Got sit in that room. Waits two hours and Dr. finally comes in. "What's the trouble." "I've got the shingles." "Where?" "In the truck." (laughter) And he said, aside, "I'll take you with me next time" (More laughter).

"The moral of the story, assuming there is one, is that we've been brought up to think patience is a virtue. But in a nuclear world, patience makes no sense."

He closed with a peroration re. Democratic party and survival that ended with plea to act "so that our children can sit here 50 years from now and talk about the Democratic party?" The generational theme again.

Question: What programs of 60s should we move away from? Answer: "In a declining economy, we can't have every program funded to the maximum. Some programs are more important than others and we will have to let some go. I make a distinction between development programs where money spent comes back to you--Head Start, child nutrition, college loans, UDAG. And I would forgo sustenance programs--trade assistance, the public jobs part of CETA and extended unemployment. In a thriving economy we can have all of them. In a declining economy, we must make choices. Those are the ones I would make.

At the risk of offending some of you I think one group that has some rethinking to do is the unions--44% of union members voted for Ronald Reagan. They have declining membership and declining public support. They need to present a new face to the public, one that concerns itself with productivity quality control, meeting the Japanese threat--or the decline will continue. We have to get the American people to favor unionism again.

"I see my job as trying to provide some ferment in the party."

Talked about need for R & D. "We have our golden fleece awards. They are silly. They scare people out of being creative, trying out new ideas, support for NSF, etc.

Don't be clone of Japanese model but realize that "The threat to the U.S. is not just the Soviets. The threat to our economy is the Japanese."