

Roger Zion

December 20, 1974

*Interpretation
very difficult for RZ
to PH*

"Have you come to pick the bones?"

Talk began with his efforts to find consultantships to do political action seminars - went to election and ended with him on telephone to Gulf Oil and then leafing through a pile of letters telling him no thanks. "It's the most uncertain time I've ever been through."

What happened? "The most important thing was the national situation. My district was invaded by every outside group in the country. The NEA came in and wrote a letter to every teacher (I find out afterward) and Environmental Action and the AFL-CIO came in. The whole thing was master-minded by Phil Burton. People who know him say he's the most effective politician in the country. I took him 3 years to take over the Democratic Caucus and in another few years he'll take over the country. He and Mo Udall looked around to see where they had the best chance and went after those districts. Where they had the best chance. And they targeted Indiana and New Jersey. They did the same thing in every Indiana district they did in mine, and 5 of us lost. When they defeat Bill Bray, congressman for 22 years, who is Mr. Indiana, it can't be anything having to do with any single campaign. Would I have run the campaign in any different way if I could start fresh? I would have had to have started 3 years ago to do it. I would have had to have said that Nixon was involved in Watergate and should resign. And I would have been proven right. But how could I have known that. And I would have had to have started in a lot earlier tying Hayes to Unigay. Unigay was defeated 2-1 in Vanderburgh

He believed there was no way he could have done that clearly in context, giving failed his "We would have participated in the last two years and it would have been made a difference"

County and Hayes sponsored it. Marge and I went to the polls and saw people with Hayes buttons on saying vote against Unigay. People blamed mayor Lloyd for it but not Hayes, who sponsored it. I don't understand how they could do that. But if I had known that, I would have started early and talked about the Hayes-Unigay bill. And I would have started earlier on him as pro-abortion and pro-bussing. I wanted to, but others wouldn't let me. So if I could have gone back 3 years and attacked Republican president on Watergate and opposed my Republican mayor on Unigay, maybe things would have been different. But who could have foreseen those things. And maybe I wouldn't have changed my position anyway. Who knows? If I had lost by 5,000 votes, I'd be kicking every ass in the district. But when you lose by 13,000, it looks like there wasn't a thing in the world that I could have done differently and won."

I then tried to zero in on Watergate. "We had 3 polls done by Bucci and everyone of them said I was ahead. I kept saying it would be close, because I wanted to make my supporters work harder, but I didn't think it would be that close. There was evidently an anti-Nixon feeling that the polls never picked up. They showed that the President still had considerable support--and other guys, Ben Blackburn, in Georgia had polls that looked the same as mine. I knew I was losing some support but not that much. Some of my friends--like the President of Mead Johnson--were writing to me that he was guilty as guts and that I should disassociate myself from him. I had been getting a lot of mail like that for quite awhile. But a sample of 300 letters showed my mail was running in favor of the President--so I guess the word is not to trust your mail. I said

all along that I would lose 10% of the vote because of Nixon. But I thought I'd lose 10% no matter what I did--10% if I supported him, 10% if I didn't. And don't forget, the 10% I would lose if I didn't were loyal republicans who would attack me for deserting the standard bearer of the party. I only have 22% Republicans in my district and without them I'm nowhere. So I knew I would lose 10%. I just didn't know it would be so much worse than that."

He's trying to line up consultantships--especially to put on political action seminars. He's trying to convince "every trade organization" that they need grass roots work and not by Washington offices--National Federation of Business, Chamber of Commerce, NAM, right to work group, George Murphy's American Cause, a group that is fighting against public employee unions, group that has 130 largest corporations in it, etc. He's going to all groups he defended and trying to convince them on the basis of his energy task force and prior consulting work that he did that he can help. Will open DC, Evansville and Indianapolis offices --when he gets clients. Has a couple--says he needs 80,000 in contracts to get started. He's out hustling--Republican National Committee is possibility; so is Administration. "I was the logical choice to head the Energy Office, but the administration said that after the Senate got through with me--with the dirty dozen thing--they'd have to start all over again."

Said that 54 Republicans got National Federation of Business awards and "21 of us got beat" and he'd like to start trying to get those district's back. Would he run? "I'm out. My family is unanimously opposed to it and when 4 of them agree, they must have their reasons. The kids don't want me to do it, for my sake. They say it's too hard work,

that I take too much abuse--all politicians are dirty, etc. I wouldn't bother me, but it would bother them. I'm competitive and I'm going to be more competitive than ever in what I'm going to do. My whole family is competitive. But I don't like to start at the bottom. I wouldn't want to be a salesman again at Mead Johnson after I had been at the top of Sales Training. I wouldn't want to go back to being an Ensign in the Navy. And I wouldn't want to be a Freshman Congressman again."

Later he said that he was going to store stuff in Bob Junk's basement and that it would be the head of the "Zion underground movement." Junk said they'd be back and said he hoped the events hadn't spoiled the term paper or book or whatever you are writing. (Nor much ID there!)

When he asked me what I thought of his campaign I said I thought he'd get 52% and take off as soon as Washington closed up shop. "I'd have bet a lot of money that that's exactly what was going to happen."