

Roger Zion

January 30, 1973

I went to organization meeting of Committee on Internal Security. I asked if it was an important committee for constituency. "No, not except for a little group of John Birchers. My big committee is Public Works. I have more floods than any other district in the United States--at least it's possible. I have the Ohio River, the Wabash River, the Poteka River and Pigeon Creek. My district is a potential swamp. The Corps of Engineers just published figures showing that there is \$30 million worth of projects in my district. That's a lot of money. Some of it would have gone in anyway, but I know of at least 3 projects that wouldn't have been there except for me. I like the committee. Jerry Ford's office called to ask if I'd like to go on Ways and Means this year. But I said no." He was a little confused as to what committee it was and said he was asked to go on Appropriations first. Then he corrected it. Not a very salient thing to him.

I asked him about district opinion on the war. "The election showed that. One man was for surrender and the other was for peace with honor, and the peace with honor man won. Actually, I think the congressman can have a great deal of influence on opinion in the district. It would be possible for an anti war candidate to win in my district. I believe that the congressman's opinion makes the difference. I have to believe that. Why I defeated as big a left-winger as there was--he was for more government spending for everything. If you speak <sup>out</sup> ~~at~~ and are active with the media as

I am, you can influence the thinking of your constituents. Then again, they probably aren't as interested in issues as you would think. In my poll I wasn't identified as a hawk (and 80% of the people knew me--very high for a three term congressman) or a dove or a liberal or a conservative. The image was that I worked hard. That's what came through. A person could have the same district as I have and hold very different views. It happens. Look at Lee Hamilton. His district and mine are the same--rural. Both our constituencies are against government control. I vote against it; he votes for it. He's still there, because he's a nice looking guy, he pushes his public relations, he's articulate and he's honest. People believe him--and they should. We both won by wide margins. ✓ It's an individual franchise you have, not a political franchise."

"The big news in this campaign was that I carried Dubois County for the first time. It's German-Catholic and Democratic, my toughest territory."

"It wasn't a balanced campaign. They ran a complete unknown against me, and he was incompetent. Normally I spend 60,000 and win by 55%. This time I won by 65% and only spent 30,000. Most of that was for radio and TV spots in support of the Governor. I spent all my time campaigning for the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor. The Democratic District chairman has been fired because they did so poorly against me."

"I go home every weekend. They expect it. I see people and cut ribbons. There's always some request. I get in Friday morning and come back Monday morning."

Scott is doing a paper on campaign. I'd like to see it.

Re Nader report. "They gave the left-wingers a chance to change theirs. They asked me if I wanted to see mine; but I said I didn't have time. And I didn't." "I read two <sup>pages</sup> ~~papers~~ and found 12 mistakes, little mistakes---they said my father was a boy scout executive in Southern Illinois and it was Southern Indiana, that I represented the southeastern district, when it was southwestern, that I defeated Winfield G <sup>when it was Winfield K. Denton.</sup> Denton, I told the papers that they made so many mistakes it proved it wasn't a research paper but a partisan paper to smear members of Congress. And I just said it was wrong. Even my opponents couldn't use it. It was completely ineffectual in the district."

Talked about a meeting to which he and his opponent went at a catholic seminary--I think he called it a left-wing group. Said "All the students jumped on me and didn't pay any attention to him. I tried to get them to give him some hell too and I kept introducing him to them. But they weren't interested and he just walked around by himself."

Re one conversation he had. "I tried to answer their questions as reasonably and as rationally as I could. But I almost took a poke at one guy. He was talking about the war and he said 'the so-called invasion of the South was the figment of the imagination of the military industrial complex.'" I said, "Our conversation has just ended. You're stupid!" An indicator of the hardness underneath Rogers' <sup>hard</sup> fellow well met appearance.

Banter at Int. Security meeting--and repeated picture taking.

*Ashbrook*: It's like taking a Wasserman test for second time.

Zion: Better to have flunked your Wasserman than never to have loved at all.

*He's writing an article for Saturday Evening Post on energy crisis. Said that when he was asked, he looked back over his newsletters and found he had written nine letters on the subject. He's been preoccupied with it & it's his primary issue interest.*