

Claiborne Pell

November 23, 1981

I went to Tom Hughes to tell him I didn't think I could do the biography of Pell. I said I didn't feel competent to do a biography and he said he understood that--that my work was different. I also said I was plugging away at my own work. He wanted to know if I was going to publish parts of it before the book came out and I told him about the AEI paper. I said I'd send him one.

He said that Pell's request was "an intensely personal request" and thought I should not communicate my decision through him--but should do it by letter or directly. He did not think a personal meeting would be an intrusion on Pell's time and so I said I'd do that. He suggested I do it that PM and I did.

Pat Ploufee - (3 months with Pell, from Labor Department in RI) took me to his hideaway. Bill Bryant and I went in together and Bill had a 30 second statement for Pell to read condemning the President's veto as "theatrics". Pell told each of us where to sit and stood up at his desk to record the spot. He stumbled once, restarted it, then was interrupted by a knock on the door and restarted and then went through it in a fairly strident tone. When he finished he said to Pat and me "It's very hard for me to do this with you here. Would you mind stepping outside." We left while he did it over. Pat said "I was surprised when he let us come in in the first place." She said he doesn't like people around when he does that. I said I could see that it was an artificial situation with no live audience there and that he was talking to an unseen audience while we sat and scrutinized. But I was amazed that a senior senator of 19 years experience could not get through a 30 second spot with two people watching him. He was clearly nervous.

Anyhow, when I told him that, while I was flattered and tempted and honored, I didn't think I could do a biography, he was very cordial. "I understand

perfectly. I just thought it might work out since you had been following a cast of characters." He thanked me for my "early decision," and reiterated that he thought the Kelley thing would fall through. He also said he could see that I wasn't used to writing "a popular book", which shows what he wants.

He reached over and tapped me on the foot in a gesture of friendliness and when we shook hands he put his hand on my shoulder and said "we'll keep in touch." So I think it went off well. I was relieved and pleased when I left.