

*Foreign Policy is FABRICA  
necessary - see us / great info  
ethics - see us / great info  
RR manufacturing on  
domestic side  
who are interested { friends  
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in House?  
xhr*

Ben Rosenthal - December 9, 1970

Re the election. "I'm not unhappy about the election. I got 93,000 votes. Mike is worried because it's the first time I haven't gone over 100,000 votes. He thinks that if I'd campaigned harder or done things differently I could have gotten 100,000. But I don't think those other 7,000 votes were there. If I had spent \$100,000 I couldn't have gotten 7,000 more votes. I don't claim that I wrung every last vote out of the district. You know I'm not that kind of a campaigner. But there weren't 7,000 votes there this time. I ran as well as every assemblyman in my district except one (Stavisky), and he exploited a local issue. If I had run behind the assemblymen, I would agree with Mike that some extra campaigning would have done some good.

"The top of the ticket set the tone all down the line, and people didn't have confidence in Goldberg as an administrator. He hurt the whole ticket. On the other hand the conservatives reached their peak with Buckley and they did very well in Queens. Kastenmaier ran better than I did for the first time. But the Democrats swept Wisconsin and that helped him. All over the Midwest, the Democrats ran strong-- Hamilton and Culver ran strong this time. What Hamilton and Fraser and Kastenmaier don't understand is that my district is polarized to an unbelievable extent. Where people are opposed to me politically and ethnically there's little I can do except to win them through service in

the long run. But in the short run the vote has nothing to do with dedication, service, competence or community responsibility--nothing at all. It's not right but I don't know what to do about it."

"I'm not excited about the election. But you do have to take stock and make changes. You grow flabby down here; the Farbstein syndrome sets in. You can't be content with what you did before. I've done some specific things--like asking each member of the staff independent of one another to analyze the situation and make suggestions for improvement. And I have some ideas--maybe including personnel. We're always concerned about the next primary."

*Self criticism  
marked  
characteristic  
of BR -  
not of JF,  
or BC*

Mary Davis said that, as a rule of thumb in Ben's district, the people who live in high-rise apartments (coming from the Bronx and Brooklyn) stay Democratic while people who buy houses grow conservative.

He discussed at great length the 69 homeowner problem which has "caused me a lot of worry". He doesn't know how to handle it or how he should have. "How involved should the Congressman get in community affairs? I'm tending toward the view that whenever anyone is being screwed by the system that the congressman should use the prestige of his office to interpose himself between the people being screwed and the system. Others say that once you get involved in local controversies you get quagmired in the city councilman role and neglect the congressman role. Should you get involved in garbage collection problems or not--the problem runs all the way to that. Mike says I didn't make any mistakes. He says, there's a city councilman, an assemblyman, a state senator and a borough

*Special  
Leahy  
NY*

president there and it's their job. Of course, I did work privately. to negotiate with Aurelio. I used all my chips to get them to rescind that order. But I did it privately. I know one thing. Private diplomacy is absolutely useless politically. What I think I should have done instead of going with my hat in my hand to Aurelio was to write a long letter and make it public. But that wouldn't have satisfied the homeowners. Once you're with them they want you there for every meeting-- Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. I don't suppose they would ask me to come back from Washington for every meeting. But they want to know, not where you were last week or last month, but where were you when we needed you last night. Vito Batista denounced me at one of their meetings. He said, where are all your representatives? Where is Rosenthal? Well, I could tell them that I was back here fighting aid to Cambodia, working on Viet Nam and the SALT talks. But for the little old Italian Lady who is being dispossessed and thrown out of the home she built and lived in, does she give a shit about the SALT talks? These people were screwed--and they were part of the screwing. The city wanted to scatter some low income housing in the area and the people were afraid of Blacks coming in. So they bargained to have a school put in there instead. And the homeowners were being dispossessed by the ball field-- not the school, the ball field. What difference did it make that the ball field should be two blocks away. The people thought the school would take up five acres and it turned out to be nine acres. Maybe in the back of my mind, I had the feeling "they asked for it, so let it be." But Jimmy Breslin had a line on that: He said, "You don't have to be a

Saint to own a home in N. Y. City." A person is entitled to his prejudices. But his point was that no homeowner should be displaced for a ball field. That should be an article of faith in America. Once Jimmy Breslin got on their side, he got Jack Newfield of the Village Voice, \_\_\_\_\_ of the N. Y. Post and (one other) and at that point everything changed. He saw it as little people being screwed by the system. He said the ball field was big enough for the Green Bay Packers to play on and the only athlete ever produced in Corona was Art Buchwald. It was quite an argument. The whole thing cost me 500-700 votes. The other day when Mrs. [Marchiperi] listed the people they thanked, my name was there. They knew I was working privately. But the job of congressman is a political job. You're not an administrative bureaucrat completely. Everything you do is political and has political consequences. And I didn't do enough. It's an important, political science question and I'm convinced there's no satisfactory answer to it. A lawyer came in the other day and asked me, "What if the homeowners were Jewish?" That's an unfair question and I don't think it would have made any difference. Then I would be as prejudiced as the rest."

We agreed that there were two equally valid principles, "Do congressman's job"; "Help people in trouble with system" to be decided on case to case basis. "Lindsay gambled that the 4,000 people who wanted the school would outweigh the 69 homeowners whose homes would be destroyed. Where he miscalculated was that the 4,000 who wanted the school did not want it emotionally whereas the 69 Italians were hysterical about it. They used every kind of public pressure there is--they conducted vigils on the

streets, they threatened to shoot any real estate man who came into the area. The 69 had the weight of 690 and then 6,900 and eventually 69,000, to the point where the original 4,000 were completely forgotten.

"I have the reputation of being an effective congressman and most of my colleagues would probably agree. But that doesn't do you any good at election time. Oh, that's not true really, there's a residual effect. People think I'm a fighting Congressman and that helps. But most people want to know what have you done for me lately." *image*

He's going to try to send out a newsletter fairly often to 3,000-5,000 people in addition to his big mailing.

He talked about whether he should canvass for votes in his weak area or strong. He thinks not--that there's nothing he can do about it.

"What Kastenmeier and Lee Hamilton and \_\_\_\_\_ don't understand is how I can win by 500-15 in one election district and then, just 20 blocks away lose in another election district by 500-15. We are so polarized in my district. My image is that of a red hot liberal in Queens. and I'm Jewish. Some parts of my district are totally the opposite of me politically and ethnically. Other congressmen can't understand that. They have rolling differences across the district, a little bit up here and a little bit down there. It's not like the left side of Queens Boulevard *and the right side of Queens Boulevard,* They are two completely different worlds. I don't like it, but I don't know how to change it. If I worked in Glendale and <sup>Glendale</sup> Richmond for 10 years I could win some of them over by personal favors--raise my vote from 2,500 to 2,900. But that's a long-term project. Joe Addabbo told

Bolling

me that he wooed that area for 8 years--got Steuben Boulevards named and things like that. Finally he got it up to the point where he lost by only 3-2. He wants them back, because he's worried about a primary challenge from the reform groups. And even though Glendale and <sup>Ridgewood</sup> Richmond would make his general election fight more difficult, he would trade that for getting rid of the reform groups in Forest Hills. On the other hand, I can handle the Forest Hills group all right. I can't see campaigning in <sup>dell</sup> Glenwood and <sup>Ridgewood</sup> Richmond. There's nothing I can do there. If they gave me all of Glendale and <sup>dell</sup> Richmond, they could defeat me. They don't know it but they probably could. Then I might just stay home and save my money--save \$50,000 of campaign losses. I hope they take away those sections--take 'em all away from me--("all the yellow sections in the book--take away those yellow sections.")

Said that 1st redistricting (last one) hurt him so <sup>much</sup> that he thought of running in the Halpern district. He doesn't think they can draw any seat in Queens that would finish him off.

Re Homeowners. "I'm sure of only one thing. Dick Bolling was not responsible for the 69 homeowners."

On the way out to go to reception for King Hussein--"Do you suppose Dick Bolling will be there?"

Discussed the loss of the consumer bill at hands of the Rules Committee and Dick Bolling--how Bolling absolutely refused to budge when one of Ben's men called and offered him a plane. He thinks Bolling should have come back and fought even after the Rules vote, to win back some credibility. What Ben can't understand is how any politician would allow himself

to get into the position he did and get so much unrelieved bad publicity. Said that someone told him that, at a meeting of Illinois State Legislators all they talked about was Bolling and how he could take such an "I don't give a dam" attitude.

"It's taken us years to build the coalition and this year we finally got everyone in line. Now, I'm afraid it will take us years to bring the coalition back together. The Senate says they won't touch it again until it passes the House. Chet <sup>oli</sup>Hatfield was the biggest problem we had. He served on two Hoover Commissions, and it was an article of faith with them that independent agencies were bad. We couldn't get it out of Subcommittee over his opposition. This year <sup>oli</sup>Hatfield folded and agreed to support the bill. As soon as he did, the bill went through subcommittee and full committee. The time was ripe; who knows about next year." But then he said he was going over to talk to John Young--who is friendly--to soften him up for next year.

"It hasn't hurt me at home. I'm the good guy and Bolling's the bad guy. All my mail (10 letters, I think) tells me that."

*Ben was not as mad as I thought he'd be. Q with cerebral about it + not in keeping with his image.*