

*Benjamin press here  
that grew gradually  
his self concerns and  
changes*

Ben Rosenthal

October 17-19, 1974

The first night, we campaigned in 4 different clubs--where Ben went and made a short speech. Mostly he spoke about Carey and the ticket, how the county had come through a bad year still intact, and how a dictatorial congress might be the best thing for the country after a royalist president.

"This is pro forma campaigning. It's necessary. But I'm not breaking any new ground. I'm just making routine stops and massaging the club members. You wouldn't see this kind of campaigning where you didn't have party organizations. You wouldn't have this in Wisconsin or Minnesota. These people are--I can't think of the word for it--not mummies, but party automatons. They aren't the thinking man's filter--let's put it that way. It's not like the League of Women Voters or some objective organization like that. These people vote for me because I come and say hello to them or do them a service or just smile. I stop by just to show them I'm alive and breathing. Some of these old ladies have been doing this for 20 years, 40 years. You don't need them in the general election. But they are the foot soldiers of the organization--circulating the petitions to get you on the ballot. Even Ramsey Clark feels he has to tip his hat to the clubs."

We met Ramsey Clark at the first club. "The Manes Club." The clubs are not known by their name--but by their leader in the "Metzger Club," "the Marvin Cohn Club." This latter was the last one we went to, and it was the one that gave Ben the most trouble over the Forest Hills housing project. And one woman was irate with him (to me and Rachael). It's the club whose

see p 2

dinner dance I attended in 1970. Ben says there are probably 24 clubs in his district or relevant to his district. At one club "Cooperman's Club" he answered some questions. Otherwise, he spoke no more than 4 minutes--once for only 1 minute. It was late, and he was the last speaker at nearly every club. He said the reform clubs aren't doing so well. "They have no issue; and they backed Samuels in the governor's primary."

The pace of New York is most evident driving around and listening to Ben give Mike Lucey commands--turn here, watch the car on your left, stay in the left lane, baby, slow down, don't turn here, etc., etc. constantly. At one point he said "Do other Congressmen tell their drivers how to drive or are they calm and collected? Is this like driving from Rochester to Syracuse?" At another point he said, "If it weren't for the driving, this campaign would be a pretty boring operation."

"I'll bet there isn't another district as hard to get around in as this one. It's so cut up that I can't deal with any single community as a whole. I'd rather take the political disadvantages of a redistricting if I could deal with whole communities. The way it is now, it's bad for them and it's bad for me. This district is an outrage." We were in and out of the district--it's lobster shaped--all right.

"This isn't an urban district like some. It's New York City, but it's the outskirts. It's not like downtown Newark. It's the second stage."

Rachael Gordon and I had dinner, Mike Lucey joined us and Ben came in fresh from his drive from Washington and his victory on the Turkish aid bill--after 2 vetoes. The first thing he said was "I spent 15 minutes on the telephone with the President this afternoon. He had a plaintive tone

in his voice and he pleaded with me. I suppose he figured he could win if he broke me away from the Greeks<sup>1</sup>. (Brademas and Sarbanes) But I knew more about it than he did--more than anyone. I've been there and I've lived with this problem for years. We won--and we ended up with a stronger resolution than we had three days ago. They knew that the next time around we would override the veto."

Said it was interesting to student of Congress, because some were for it because of Greek community in USA, some for policy reasons, some didn't want to go home, some did want to go home, some wanted Congress to assert itself. Said he was in all camps.

Rachael says he gets standing ovations in Greek community, now--he is their hero. And he talked about how there is to be a 25th anniversary dinner for the most important Rabbi in his district on Sunday. "1000 people, 800 of them from my district, and she wants me to stay only two hours." He was much concerned over whether he would be introduced or not--wants very much to be introduced with such a large number there. I asked, wouldn't they all know him anyway. He said he didn't know; but Rachael said yes.

When we got into the car with the shopping bags, he heaved a sigh, smiled feebly and said "Back to this again." The decompression from the long, victorious battle with Ford to shopping bags was too much.

He has no opposition. "He's a fool. What's his name, Rachael?"

There was <sup>a</sup>the preoccupation with the papers - he bought 2 just before we went to bed, Mike showed him a Daily News story with his picture as soon as he got into the car, Rachael said he'd been in the New York Times for

5 days straight--a new record for him. She talked a lot about press relations, releases, etc., getting to know newspapermen.

*a seg way to get*  
She also talked about the beefed up office operation as Ben comes home less and less. I think the papers are a substitute for coming home. Rachael notes that more and more press work is done in the district--all but foreign affairs.

"I want to put it all into perspective. First of all, I'm lazy. Second, I want to have a personal life. I don't want to put too much of myself into the job. Let me give you a contrast. Eddie <sup>sch</sup>Kan every Friday night between 5 and 7 he stands out in front of a different subway stop handing out literature. That's been going on for 6 or 8 years. He has incredible name and face recognition in his district. And he's absolutely unbelievable. He's a bachelor and it's his whole life. But he won't abide Friday night dinners and testimonials. He wants the time free to go to the movies or a museum. I tolerate the dinners but I wouldn't make a fool of myself and put the energy into standing in the rain handing out stuff at the subways. That's the fascinating thing about the Congress. Each one of us makes his own personal adjustment to the job."

"The idea that the last two weeks is the campaign is nonsense. We are campaigning all the time for two years. Maybe in a 50-50 district, it's different. But my name is in the Long Island Press several times a week and I get good coverage in the Times and the News."

I asked whether he hadn't substituted press relations for lots of visits.  
"Yes, I have willfully and consciously done that. Some congressmen tell me their papers are Republican, that they can't get their name in the papers



and they have to compensate in other ways. I don't have that trouble. The Long Island News, The New York Times--I'm in the paper all the time. American society is a society of name recognition. That's why Ramsey Clark with a Texas drawl, can do so well in New York. But I like to do the things that produce news. I like to deal with the issues. My practice does not go against my instincts. It follows my instincts--you do have to supplement it with face to face contact so people know you're alive. Also, the press emphasis suits my personality because I'm lazy. Lee Hamilton goes to hundreds of picnics and parades and what not. When he shows me his weekend schedule, it makes me tired just to look at it. When I tell him that from January to June there's not a whisper in my district and nobody wants to see me, he can't believe it."

We discussed difference between himself and Corman and we decided Corman might campaign because he has to--he can't get name in papers and he has organization that pushes him to campaign. Re the latter, Ben said "That's the missing link in my operation." He does not have an organization. At breakfast we talked about this fact in context of a primary contest--which is what will defeat him if and when he is defeated. "I could mobilize 500 people in six days--from the Queens community, some inside and some outside the district. I hate to call on them if they aren't needed. But will they ~~atrophy~~ if you don't use them. I don't know."

*a change for 1974*

A thread that runs through the entire trip, and one which is of special importance to understanding Ben's 'home style' is his relations with the press and TV. Half the things he does are measured by their potential for press or TV coverage--especially the press. Which means the New York Times, The New York Daily News, the Long Island Press and the New York Post.

*Can't get the  
word*

At dinner on Friday night at the Charcoal Grill in Long Island City he said. "I'm a student of the press--of the mechanics of the press. One half of the stories I get happen because we make them happen. It's the mechanics--who you call, when the deadlines are. If you take a press release to the gallery after 3:30 in the afternoon, forget it. The Times sets up a preliminary front page in the early afternoon and a final page at 5:30. Unless the president shoots the president's wife, you can't get a story in after 3:30. But you stand a chance of getting only a pretty good story in if you get it in by 10:00 a.m. Another thing, a lot of reporters are lazy. You have to help them do their job if you want a story. I'll give you another example. A few days ago, the Walter Cronkite Show called and wanted to do an interview on reaction to the President's veto of the bill cutting aid to Turkey. They said they would come here. I knew that if they came out here, the crew might not get back in time to make the program. So I said, 'We'll come right in.' We hopped in the car, Rachael, John and me and went to the studio. At the same time they interviewed us, they interviewed John Brademas in a downtown restaurant on the same thing. He's more articulate than I. But I told my stuff, 'they won't use his interview, they'll use mine.' I knew the technical quality of my interview would be better than that of his,--the lighting was better, sound, etc. They used mine and I was on the Walter Cronkite Show. If I hadn't understood the mechanics of TV news broadcasting, that would never have happend."

Other examples:

1. Thursday night as we were going home from the round of clubs, he stopped off to buy the Times and News to see how they had played up the

Turkish aid story. (He thought the Times was too mild--he got no play particularly--that's my comment.)

2. When he got to the office Saturday morning, he asked his staff to call Washington to see how the Washington Post played up the story.

3. When we went to the Methadone hearings in the Federal Building and we walked in, he said "The Times and the Post are here" (so did Rachael say that). When the hearings were over, he talked with the Times guy who said "That was much better than I thought it was going to be." Ben liked that comment, because it suggested he might get a story the next day. (~~He didn't.~~) On the way out he gave a quick interview to the Post guy telling him that as a result of the hearings "I'm ranking members of the subcommittee that oversees FDA activity, and we're going to call them in to explain why they aren't doing their job. If we don't get satisfaction, we'll call a public hearing." Then, later that night at dinner when I asked him to rank the day's activities, he said, "If we get a story in the Times on the methadone hearings, that will have been the most profitable thing politically." After the hearing, he said a couple of times, "The Times guy sat through the whole thing." As if that alone made it worthwhile.

4. When we walked into the SSI hearings (he was late and intended to stay only a few minutes) there was an ABC-TV cameraman coming out the door. He was taking pictures of some of the elderly people coming out. Ben stepped right in and started shaking hands and Rachael asked the guy if he'd take picture of Ben. He did and shot quite a bit of footage. They told me the cameraman was a good friend of theirs--that they had done him a favor of some kind.

5. Back in the office on Friday, there was a discussion as to whether Ben should go on Monday morning at 9:00 to an 8th grade social studies class at some parochial school. He didn't want to go--decided to, because (he said) he probably couldn't have slept anyhow. But felt used by his staff a little. "The nun has talked Rachael into taking her side. Rachael has become convinced that these 8th grade's should see a congressman. It is of absolutely no benefit to me in any way. And Rachael is not looking out for my interest in pushing me." Anyhow, as he was making up his mind he asked John Rowan. "See if the Press can use the story." The class had been studying jet noise (a pet of Ben's) and they tried that angle. John called the Press and they said no. But point was that it was Ben's reflex to try to milk it.

6. Sitting in the office Saturday, Ben talked about 2 NYT reporters-- Dick Madden and Martin Tolchin. What he said was not all that important, but the fact is that he knows and differentiates among reporters. "Madden reports what happens, very straight and without much color. Tolchin creates news by digging. He thinks of his role as a journalist to write exposés. Sometimes he doesn't write an article for days. He attacks the institutions of Congress with all the ~~prerequis~~ prerequisites we have. He doesn't have anything against me personally, but he tries to make the establishment uncomfortable. You have to play by very special rules when you talk to him. Don't ~~every~~ say anything you wouldn't want to see in print. He'll use anything you say. You can't ask him for advice or talk to him confidentially. That's just the way he sees his job. Both he and Madden are highly regarded by their superiors and both are very bright." He told story of how he once told

Tolchin that he gets special rates on hotel and Tolchin went off to write an expose about it. He decided not to. But Ben spontaneously drew a more sophisticated picture of newsmen than most anyone I've heard.

7. Talk at dinner about getting new mimeograph machine so they could do more press releases from the district office.

8. On Saturday, when we left the ILGWU meeting, he bought a New York Post to see whether the methadone story had made it (it hadn't). He told me there was a small story on it in the City edition of the Times. I said there wasn't in my paper and he then leafed through New York Times on the stand to see if they had taken it out (they had). When we were having lunch in the Deli with Mike Goldenthal and Rachael, he asked her how the Press had played it up. It had.

9. He later said the Daily News had ~~of~~ Queens-Brooklyn page and that they could do a lot better <sup>as a story or a lead</sup> ~~with that~~ if they tried harder.

I think the press emphasis ties in with issue orientation, lack of handshaking (Addabbo ~~like~~) activity, problem of being blanketed by so many other political figures, the great competition for publicity, lack of groups in his district to mesh with (but <sup>he</sup> ~~declined~~ to do it anyway), the decision <sup>to accept a ceiling on his vote total</sup> not to be popular with everybody, and hence willingness to escalate issues.

After I had written the above, I thought I'd see if Ben had any very strong idea about who read the papers. Since he tries so hard, I wondered if he had any clear idea about who he was communicating with. His answer was "I don't know who reads the papers. The district I had before was one of the top twenty in the nation in income and education. The average was of high school education. Then I had a high percentage of newspaper readers.

Now, the income and educational level has declined. I'm not sure how much. Probably I don't have as many newspaper readers now."

He went on to say that he doesn't do much with TV or radio. "There's too much competition among all the New York Congressmen, so we don't do as much with TV or radio as some of them do. It's hopeless."

On our way to hand out shopping bags at the A & P on Rossevelt and 51st Street, Ben stopped the car. "I don't know whether this area is in my district or not. It's a nice area, very stable." Let me pull over to the curb and look at the map. I can't tell whether this is in the district. It could be, but I'm not sure. That must have been some redistricting when the Congressman who represents the district can't even tell whether he's in it or not. What a mess!" All the streets look the same at any one point where the demarcation line runs. So how could anyone know where it began and where it ended.

As we went to hand out shopping bags near "The Big Six" apartment houses at Queen's Boulevard and 61st Street, he showed me how they gave him this area--it's a little bump on the map. "They gave me this in the redistricting--this little bump on the map. That's crazy. I was the gainer because it's solid middle income Jewish. But I ~~got~~ it because Delaney didn't want it."

Shortly afterward, I suggested he had a "residual district" and he agreed vigorously. "The first time they were trying to save Halpern. This time they were trying to help Delaney and hurt Wolff--so they squeezed me on both ends of the district. I've always had a residual district."

In this kind of district there are no communities and geographical boundaries do not mean anything to the congressman. I don't think geographical boundaries mean anything to Stokes either. Blacks are his constituents and he doesn't really care where the geographical district ends and begins. And he doesn't know. He knows far less about it than Ben does about his. But geographical boundaries do not approximate socio-ethnic boundaries with Ben. When you move fairly sizeable distances, OK-- In Jamaica, they called it "the other Queens." They knew they were in a very different area from Ben's. But the gradations are tough to see. Sometimes you can, i.e. "This is like the Mason Dixon line--Junction Boulevard --on one side is Jackson Heights whites, on the other Corona black."

Underlying much of the conversation about the neighborhoods was basic idea Ben first expressed to me when I met him in 1970--stability. Comments about that came out all the time. In John Rowan's sweep from the east to the west of the district, he stressed lower income east and higher income as you got to west. Less stability in east--with lots of South Americans and Orientals coming in--Blacks and Puerto Ricans too--then to the western, more affluent areas that were more stable--Whitestone on top, Jamaica Estates on south and others.

Ben put the stability problem most starkly as we were having our last malted at Johns. "What worries me is not that I will neglect my district and lose it. That's just not in my schedule. What worries me is that the district will change. How long that will take, I don't know. Maybe 10, maybe not for 20 years. Maybe by that time I'll be ready to leave and I should. I hope I'll know when to quit. No one should stay in this job for



very long. But the system keepssyou in. You lose your law practice and you gain in seniority and you don't want to leave. I'm one of them, I know. Thirty-five years ago this neighborhood was developed by the Queensborough Corporation and a Jew could not buy a house here. My father tried and couldn't." That was a measure of its change, for now it's old, middle income Jewish and beginning to build up with South Americans "who are spilling over from Elmhurst." (Lots of illegal aliens in this area and that's a problem.) But there, on 37th Avenue & 74th Street, the place was bulging with shoppers, mostly Jewish but many other ethnic groups too. Ben said they were trying to keep in touch with new groups. But it's clear they were something of a mystery to him and sense that he couldn't hold district if it became minority Jewish was what I think he had in mind.

He sees the change in the neighborhoods as inevitable, repetitive, changeless, traditional and a kind of force against which politician cannot defend. Present district, he says often, is a less economically well off district than previous one. There are two instabilities. First, his district changes. Second within whatever district he has there are changes. That's a big problem. He says the Jewish population in the district is declining overall. And, the Jews that are there are middle-to-lower instead of middle-to-upper as they were in old district. Jewish migration patterns are almost parallel to district problems and prototypical and central to the district problem. The loss of Forest Hills, he felt, made a big difference. (And he expressed it to me vividly in earlier interview.) "The thing that intrigues me about George Mahon, Chet Holifield and Manny Celler is that all their contemporaries have died or are too old. Where are their friends,



now? What can they use as their base of support? There just isn't anyone left, and they have completely lost touch with the district. Manny Celler didn't even have a district office. It wasn't that he didn't care about people. It's just that no one was there to tell him to do it. He and his friends come from another generation."

Ben spoke to ILGWU group. "I don't know whether there were 25 (out of about 200) people there from my district. But they have given me good support, and they are strong Democrats. They are the people."

In his talk, he spoke of their "moral enthusiasm, that's contagious." He gave them a big-guy-little guy speech. Said Rocky paid no income tax in 1970 and they all gasped. Talked against the "special interest forces"--about how big contributors to Nixon "all expected something in return." "Every airline, contracting company, agricultural business was for sale." "We have to disassemble the giant corporations in America and make the anti trust laws work." How McDonalds was refused a price hike, contributed 250,000 to Nixon and got price hike. A anti special interest (corporations) speech.--Big hand.

When I met him Saturday to start the shopping bag campaigning he was ecstatic about shopping bags. "Those shopping bags are great. If I were in a really tight race, I think I'd go all the way with shopping bags. At 10¢ a piece, I could get 100,000 for \$10,000. That's a bargain. They are perfect for a district like this where people walk from their homes to the store to shop. They wouldn't work in Bethesda--everybody has a car. But for this district they are the best thing there is. I'm convinced of it."

I asked him how he could be sure people yesterday at the Carey Valley in Flushing were in his district. "There's a 50-50 chance they were in my district. In some places there's an 80% chance they are in my district. But even if they aren't, they are a walking advertisement while they are in the district." And it's true that they are the greatest political thing I've seen in sense that everyone wants one. (Ben's literature is inside. His picture is on the cover of this one. He says "My mother likes the picture" or "My mother paid for the bags.) People come up to you and ask for them. Often you can help people put their bundles in them. And the density of shoppers makes it a real hand over fist operation. We used up 2000 on Saturday, a lovely crisp clear day and could have easily used another 2000. We ran out and had to go home.

He spoke again Saturday a.m. about how he was only worried about primary and how he gets complete sets of addresses of everyone in his district from some company that gets 'em from election board and keeps 'em till threat of primary is over and throws 'em away--just in case. He thinks that best thing to do in tough race is to send out 4 mailings, two weeks apart, ~~for~~ last 8 weeks to everyone--each one similar but different from previous one and growing out of it. A kind of 4 mailing sequence. In primary, that's what he would do.

Me to BR. "I'm having a lot of trouble getting a fix on your district." BR to me: "So do I." (As we drove around it.)

On way to Methadone hearing. "Are you going to classify this as congressional performance or politics? I'd classify it as a waste of time--file it under W."

On the way out of the hearing, after he'd gotten interested in the unregulated private practice he said, "That went better than I thought it would. I guess we'll have to reclassify that from W to a little bit of congressional work."

BR to me re going to the hearing. "A lot of the things I do, I do because my staff wants me to, not because I want to."

Rachael to me re Ben and the methadone hearings--(whispered as Ben got interested in Carter Burden's testimony). "Between you and me, it's hard to get Ben stirred up on an issue. You have to hit him in the face with it." (At this point Ben was telling Burden he would hold hearings, do something, etc.

Rachael said she had idea that staffs of N.Y. Congressmen should meet and work up some issues. She said that reaction was very negative. They met and most of offices were strictly case work. They wanted to discuss who to contact on such and such a problem. She said only Rosenthal, Koch, Holtzman and Abzug had district staffs, interested in, competent in and authorized to deal with issues. A nice test of orientation toward district staffs.

He discussed trip to Greece as emotional experience--he was a hero--people recognized him in restaurants--Karamanlis said "You need no introduction to us." Everyday he was on front page of paper. "All people I dealt with when I opposed the Junta were now in power. Even the people who had been in prison knew me. It was a very emotional experience." Cliff Hackett a hero too, since he had gone to Greece and talked with the underground at great risk. Said he was going to a dinner Sunday for the Archbishop and

said it will be "a glory role." "They will stand up and cheer. I'm one of the main speakers and I'll sit on the dias." Rachael says with Ben and the Greeks now, it's wierd--like movie "Z." They are so emotionally in favor of him.

He talked of Nixon in harshest possible terms "most evil man ever in American politics." Thought Ford not capable. Almost wanted Ford to crack his knuckles over Turkey and thought it kind of pathetic that Ford would plead with him. But he called the Turkish thing "a great victory." "The New York Times didn't play it up, but my colleagues know it was a great victory."

At the SSI hearing he was seated at end of table with other congressmen. They had to sit and listen to lots of speakers complain about SSI. And there were many (see list) ~~of~~ other public officials listed as responding after the speeches. Nothing brought home to me anymore vividly the terrifically competitive climate Ben lives in. No wonder he calculates constantly whether he should go to meeting, make appearances, etc. He was blanketed by these many officials and will be almost everywhere he goes in Queens. He didn't stay long.

His reaction was great: "Some fool set that meeting up. They put the congressmen way down at the end of the table. That pissed me off. I stayed too long--for fifteen minutes, when I should have stayed two. In Queens they treat the congressman like shit. And they do it because we let them. Charlie Vanik has an ironclad rule. He won't attend any meeting when he's not the speaker. If he goes and finds out he's not speaking, he leaves and goes to a movie or goes home. I go to everything where I'm asked to

speaking about something of importance to my district. I have plenty of things to keep me visible. But I don't go to every meeting and I don't think I should have to. I happen to believe the office of United States Congressman is really something. Personally I live modestly and my family lives modestly. But the office carries great prestige and we shouldn't let people demean it. As soon as I saw where they sat me at that SSI meeting, I was ready to leave."

*any of  
Malted's  
started  
but for  
fall*

He opened his date book (we were having a malted by this time) to show me that he was going to two important things after election: to get a Consumer of Year Award and the anniversary of Kissena II. Where he was speaker. His idea for Rowan is that he should go to community meetings. Ben says often that "I don't like to go to every American Legion meeting." He contrasted himself again with ~~Adabbo~~. And he was tickled that he ducked out of the SSI meeting before ~~Adabbo~~, a real feat. (Though it was in ~~Adabbo~~'s district.)

"I'm torn by an emotional conflict. I want to have a good district staff to generate business and come up with good ideas. Then they start pushing me to do something I don't want to do, and I resist. Like handing out shopping bags on every fucking street corner in Queens! I have to calculate the benefits of what everything I do against the danger to my sanity and my personal life style. I also think it's important that the candidate stay healthy and not look tired all the time." He was constantly arguing with staff to make them convince him he should do such and such.

After this (still at John's <sup>(motel)</sup> on Friday) I asked him whether or not he didn't have to appear at things so local politicians who want his job and are eyeing him will get the idea he's tending his job and, hence, is not vulnerable. Re. those who want his job, he said. "I could blow them all right over. They mean as much to me as those two kids over there eating ice cream. I could blow them over. They aren't important to me. And the reason they aren't is because they don't think they are. Anyway, their opinion is that I'm all over the place." There was real bite to way he put down the local politicians. But he later said he was glad he went to the Carey Street rally because "I was seen by the kinds of people we talked about and they know I'm <sup>friend</sup> afraid of Carey's."

Other comments about the changing neighborhoods: Ben said that the district was less Jewish and more Spanish--though he had no idea of the numbers. Also, in comparing his operation with that of Joe Adabbo, he said he and Adabbo started with different types of districts. Adabbo's was compact and conservative (and hence Adabbo started as a fairly conservative congressman), Ben said his was "more elitist" and that he could maneuver more. When we went from Kew Gardens Hills into Flushing, he noted that that area had gone from "middle-upper-Jewish" to "middle-lower-Jewish" and hence "more conservative." Here's part of the problem he talked about in Washington--the light fall off in Jewish support. It hasn't changed his electoral situation. Has it changed his Washington performance?

He talked, in connection with his discussion of Martin Tolchin of psychological problem created by fact that congressmen are so protected from real people. "I can get in my car at home in the garage, get to

congress and drive in the garage and never even have to put on a coat. I don't have to ride on the bus or go outdoors or mingle with people. We have our own doctors here. I don't have to sit in the doctor's office or stand in line at the ticket counter. We have staffs to run errands and staffs that fawn over us. We don't come in touch with ordinary people and their problems. Psychologically we are isolated from the problems of ordinary people so how can we understand them? I don't even own a winter coat. I call it the 'winter coat syndrome.'" I said that congressmen mingled with their constituents but he said that staff isolated them and fawned over them and he didn't really do what ordinary people do--get driven around, etc.

Interesting reaction to Liz Holzman's questioning of Ford at pardon hearing. I thought it was politicking, but Ben's wife told him she did great and when I described what she did, they all seemed pleased. And the N. Y. Times pictured her as the hero--because she had been the toughest on him. Ben said "It isn't very often that a little girl from Brooklyn gets to lecture a President of the United States." She represents their sense of powerlessness. And the context of Holzman's comments were really irrelevant. It was their tone that was important. And, on reflection, her tone was the tone of the New York streets. The harshness that grates on me is normal discourse in New York City--where life is loud and harsh.

At lunch at Longchamps, Ben rolled over in his mind the schedule for Sunday "the two big spots" as he later called them. The Moskowitz anniversary "the most important synagogue in my district." He wanted to go

but he wanted to know exactly what he was going to do (he ended up in the receiving line, which pleased him. "Am I doing to be introduced?" "Do you suppose they'll ask me to say something?" "How will I meet 800 people. At the cocktail hour? Should we go early?"

c/b During the discussion, he said, "Who was that kid who arranged the thing last weekend. I never want to see him again. He said there would be 1000 people there. One hundred showed up and only twenty of those spoke English. How come we make such mistakes as that?"

The other discussion that raged all weekend concerned a Bnai Brith breakfast at 9:00 in Brooklyn where he was to speak for Hugh Carey (pronounced Karry). It came up several times and Ben was very grumpy about it. Rachael finally just ignored him. BR: "Why did I ever agree to do it? It's an insane thing to do? Rachael: "It's the largest Bnai Brith in New York City. They say 300 people will be there." BR: "I'll tell you how many people will be there--46! I can't believe I ever agreed to go." R: "You said yes because you had refused so many other requests from them." BR: "Oh, well I shouldn't have."

The next day, he started the whole thing over again--why did I accept; who accepted for me; I don't believe I ever did, etc. BR: "Joe Adabbo would never have agreed. He won't go outside his district. He's smart." R: "Joe Adabbo is a lousy Congressman." BR: "It was his amendment that stopped the bombing of Cambodia. It was his amendment that cut the Nixon allowance." That seemed conclusive to Ben, that a man should get his name on a key amendment. It would not matter what happened in the committee or whether



Adabbo was the leader. If he got credit for being the leader, that means he's a good congressman.

"My situation is the opposite from the Barber Conable syndrome. In addition to the fact that this is a Democratic year, and in addition to the fact that we have a strong state ticket that will win, I have the dumbest opponent I have ever had in my life! So I'm having trouble getting myself energized to do anything. I could disappear for 6 weeks and nothing would change. It's a non-campaign. I can't call on my organization when there's nothing for them to do. Does that mean my organization will atrophy. I don't know. My only worry is a primary--from a Liz Holtzman type 6 or 8 years from now. I think I'll be ready then--I hope so, but I don't know."

Ben on the whole problem of constituency relations. "I'm very interested in the subject. I spend a lot of time scrutinizing my operation to make it work better for me. I keep trying to improve. I talk to other people about it a lot. You've got to change with the times." The theme of self scrutiny and self improvement is strong with Ben. At one time or another he discussed Lee Hamilton who works the schools heavily and has from the start. "The kids he talked to when he started are old enough to vote for him now." John Culver had 6 people in his local office mailing out stuff. "He used the frank like nobody ever used it before." Koch: "Everything he sends out asks for a response from the recipient. If you have an idea or any comments, let me know." Waldie has some computerized operation. Reuss saves press releases for Saturday and Sunday, etc., etc. A couple of times he spoke of his desire to get most up-to-date office machines in Washington district. And he talked about some of them.

As we drove from the Carey rally to Ben's apartment, he talked very interestingly and in economic language about the use of time. Lester Wolff had showed up at the street rally. "Lester Wolff was a fool to come to that rally. It wasn't anywhere near his district and was of no benefit whatever to him. It was utter stupidity. This is a business and like any business you have to do time and motion studies. All we have is time, and ourselves so you have to calculate carefully to use your time productively. If I had been Lester Wolff I would have gone home and rested to be ready for tonight's things instead of running all the way over here to ~~the~~ rally. One reason I wouldn't do that is because I'm lazy. [Dave Obey goes to plant gates at 6:00. I couldn't do that.] Maybe Wolff has to do that--his race is closer than mine. If my race were 50-50, I don't think the job would be worth all the running around I would have to do. Each person has to adjust his activity to his own metabolism. But the point I'm leading up to is that you have to budget your time and weigh the costs and benefits of everything you do. You do the same with money. If my staff think I ought to go to something back home, I make them justify the cost. The airline ticket costs \$ \_\_\_\_\_. Why is it worth that much to me?"

"If I completely disappeared for 6 months, that would hurt me. But there's no chance of that."

"The town meetings are the most successful things we do. We send out 15,000 invitations. Only about 150 come, but the others know I am there."

He has, in addition to his 2 postal patron letters, an "insiders newsletter" which goes to 9,000 people--everyone who has ever helped him

in any way or anyone who asks to be put on. These generate about "50 positive response" each time.

"There are some groups I'm just not popular with. And I don't try to be. I accept that. It's the way I am. I can't be all things to all men. That's the Muskie phenomenon. Everybody needs some group who is strongly for him--especially in the primary. You can win a primary with 25,000 zealots."

"Tomorrow I'm going to a meeting of 12 Catholic parishes. You would find that interesting. I'm not going to be able to agree with them on a lot of issues. I'll just have to stand there and take it. I won't be very popular."

While waiting for Carey to appear at the opening of his Queens headquarters Ben took me in with Jimmy Breslin to have a couple of drinks and we talked about Jimmy's book about impeachment and politics generally.

"Jimmy wants me to run for the Senate. But it's impossible--the money. Do you think Hugh Carey would be running for governor if his brother hadn't given him a million dollars?"

Tidbits on N.Y. politics: I had trouble walking in N.Y. I stepped on people in elevators, bumped into old lady going into restaurant. The rhythm is different. I try to hurry like everyone else and just get out of phase!

The amount of time and effort spent finding a parking place and how defeated Ben felt when we parked further away from something than we had to. "There's a good spot, we should have taken that spot." Just the incredible difficulty navigating by car. "Did you ever take a ride like the one last night?" (re. Friday night) "We got two parking tickets in 3 days. And at

one point, Ben said "We'd better go easy on the brochures. We need to save some money for parking tickets."

\*A methodological note of some importance is that I may not get things verbatim, but by going back more than once and talking in-between, I do get the picture. Prolonged and repeated soaking helps me finally "get it."

An interesting change in tone occurred in one comment, as compared with 1970--the voting of aid to Israel. Now, in the wake of the Yom Kippur War, he's not confident. "If I voted against aid to Israel, that would be it! If I did something absurd like that and voted counter to a massive opinion in my district, I would lose."

We distributed shopping bags at the Carey rally. "Those shopping bags multiplied themselves. You would see them everywhere up and down the streets. And I was seen by all the people we were talking about--the local politicians. I had to be there. It was the heart of my district." (Then he went on to say what a fool Wolff was for coming.)

When he evaluated the day Saturday he said "Handing out shopping bags was most important politically. We gave them/a lot of people. I wish we'd had more. Of course, if the Times prints a story on the metha-done hearings that would be the best. Of what we've done so far, the four clubs last night were probably the most important. They are the workers, and you've got to hold them. Everything we did today together equals about one-quarter of what people do in a tough race."

"All the publicity and newsletters and horse shit isn't enough. You have to service your people. I had six or seven people come up to me at

the rally and thank me for something I'd done for them. I ~~id~~ didn't go it, my staff did."

"Fraser lets his staff schedule him all they want. We tell him not to, but it suits his metabolism."

"Dave Obey campaigns at plant gates at 6 o'clock in the morning. I could never get up that early and do that. But it depends on each person's metabolism."

In Jamaica Rachael said, "The more black faces you see, the more you know you're in Jamaica." And, in a run down area under the subway, Ben said, "This was once a showcase area--upper upper." Always the theme of migration waves, deterioration and then urban renewal--moving east to west mostly across Queens.

I recall handing out shopping bags at Roosevelt Avenue and 51st Street as the subway rattled overhead on its way to the City.

I also recall the very narrow store fronts piled up against each other into avenues of little shops all over Queens.

Ben calls 164th Street and 70th Avenue "the geographical heart of the district."

"I'd have another district office if I thought it would do any good." He just doesn't think it would help anymore.

There's a great harshness and hardness about New York life. People shout at each other, speak sharply, demand this or that, argue--and it's natural. Hard to get used to. The amenities are just not observed--impersonal collision with other people takes place all the time.

*g. Rosney  
TV 90*

Ben has parts of 4 State Senate Districts, 6 City Council Districts, and 10 State Assembly Districts.

To give an idea of how he divides up the neighborhoods, he held town meetings on the following places: Bayside, Corona, Elmhurst, Flushing, Jamaica Estates, Kew Garden Hills, Queensboro Hill, Fresh Meadows, Jackson Heights, Whitestone, Woodside, Rego Park, Utopia. He keeps records of what happened at each meeting, follow ups, problems, along with John Rowan's accounts of meetings he goes to in the neighborhoods. This is their black book, which I looked at.

Ben often ended speech for Carey "Incidentally, I'm running too. I hope you'll vote for me. Frankly, the way things are going now, I need the job." Big laugh. But it wouldn't go over in other places.