

ARLEN SPECTER

July 29, 1982

86 - votes -
majority!
1423

I waited around and had a chat with Arlen in his office at 7:30 in the evening after the voting had ended.

I asked him to reflect on what he had learned in his 18 months in office-- that his prior jobs had been different.

"It's answer off the top of my head. It has been a lesson in the intricacies of the legislative process. There are so many currents. There are the main currents that flow from the administration. There are the main currents that flow from the committees--Pete Domenici and the budget for example. And there are so many tributaries off that mainstream--amendments to the budget. Then you have smaller streams--1688 is one of those. And then you have lots of trickles--bills put in that aren't serious and aren't going anyplace. It has been quite an experience to watch Pete Domenici and the budget process and Bob Dole with the tax bill. Dole's performance was absolutely masterful. It is a complex process; which makes it very difficult to get anything passed. That's especially true in this congress because spending is so tight. Maybe that's always been the case. But I have felt it, as you know in all my dealings with OMB, with all those guys whose name/^Ican't remember anymore. It has been fascinating to watch individual performances. Some--like Domenici and Dole--have been extraordinary. Some have been very weak.

He's half learner, half spectator here and he lapses from one to the other pretty easily. But watching is, of course, how he learns. He's no spectator in Barber's sense.

He swings from Budget to Baker, without prompting from me. "I had some

budget
battles with Howard Baker over the ~~bridges~~. He would not schedule a party conference to talk about the budget. I wanted him to do that so that we could talk it out. He was afraid we would take positions, get ourselves cast in stone and then he would lose all freedom to maneuver. When we met for lunch on Tuesday the week the budget came up, he put the question 'How many people will not go along with the leadership?' I thought that was an undesirable formulation of the question. But I did not put my hand up. The meeting was adjourned in total confusion; and we agreed to have a second meeting later that afternoon. At that meeting I said 'no,' that I couldn't go along with the leadership on all votes. The issue as I saw it, was not cutting the budget; the issue was where was the money going to go. The westerners were getting ~~there~~ money for water; the wheat farmers were getting their subsidies. There was money being spent. But it was not coming to us. The question was where is the money going to be spent? I don't speak up very often because of my short tenure. But I said I thought it was inappropriate to ask for a count without a caucus. I said it was not appropriate either to bind people by majority rule and that I would not be so bound. The next day I went and complained to Baker. I made a pointed complaint and he gave me a pointed answer. He said there was no time to hold a caucus. He said that the way he did it was the way it had to be done and the way it was going to be done. It was a hunt exchange on both ends. I have made very few complaints around here, and I had no repercussions over this one. I told Baker I had a very serious state interests to protect. He understood. Howard Baker is a very square shooter. There was never a problem afterwards. I voted for unemployment compensation and railroad retirement and maybe one other. I could not see why railroad retirees should

not have the same 7.4% increase as people on social security got. Those people made a contribution. They are a big part of my state. Pennsylvania has lots of railroad retirees. We are the biggest state for Conrail. Baker talked to me about it. He said they might lose the whole budget if I didn't go along. But I didn't think the world would end if I voted for it."

He told me not to take notes (and I didn't) on this next item, to wit:

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"I accommodated Baker last year on a very important vote. It was an Eagleton Amendment cutting tobacco subsidies. I knew exactly how I was going to vote on that--for the amendment. Baker lobbied me very hard on that. He told me that there was a very shaky coalition supporting the farm bill--the wheat farmers, the sugar boys, the others--and that if the tobacco people lost the farm bill would be defeated and we would have no farm bill. He said he had brought all the other people he needed on board (he listed 3 or 4) and that I was the last one he needed. He did not ask me to change my vote. He asked me to take a live pair with John Stennis, who opposed Eagleton but couldn't be there. I agreed to do it. I was the deciding vote--it was 49-48. And the bill won by only two votes in the House. So you can see how shaky the whole thing was. I accommodated Baker on a vote that had real meaning to me and, maybe, real costs to me. I don't know whether Baker credited me with that or not. But it's a vote that meant a lot to me, because it was a very hard vote."

I asked him to explain Republican cohesion, but he did not respond very well. "A lot of it has to be credited to Howard Baker." He stalled out and so I said that one would have expected him to be off the reservation more. "Congressional Quarterly says I have opposed the President more than any other Republican--23%. The headline in the Philadelphia Inquirer(?) says

'Specter Most *Obstinate* of all Republicans.' A lot of the guys were elected by Reagan and they feel that. I was not, as you and I have discussed. But I wanted to make the program work. It was a new program and to the extent that I could, I have cooperated with the administration. (On the interpretation of the CQ score, I said it's a matter of whether you see bottle as half full or half empty.) It's three quarters full. 77% support is pretty high." And, if he is the low man, it sure is high as a group.

1688 to end reflects report

We shifted to 1688. "1688 is going fine. I'm distressed that I'm having so much trouble getting it up for a vote. We can't get a quorum. And it has taken time to get the report written. It took time to get it polled out. It's been a good learning experience. I have kept it separate from the big crime bill. I have taken it very carefully every step of the way."

Hughes

"Bill Hughes and I have struck up a more expansive relationship. He laid out a whole group of bills and asked me to support them. I found that I could vote for every one of them. He has not supported 1688 flat out and I haven't asked him to do that. Maybe that's a mistake. But I think he will support it when the time comes... I went over and testified on the insanity problem before John Conyers subcommittee, trying to establish a relationship there, in case my bill came before his subcommittee. But 1688 has just been introduced in the House, and it has been assigned to Bill Hughes' subcommittee. That's a big break for us." ('Who introduced it?' 'I don't know'!!!)

1688 ref. 11

"Bker says he will put it on the calendar when it is ready. If I can get it up Tuesday, I can pass it out of the committee. I'm going to try to get Baker to schedule it as a non-controversial bill. The problem is: can we get a quorum next Tuesday. Last year, I was interviewed by a reporter from

the Washington Post. She had been a member of Javits' staff and she knew Sylvia. She was interested in 1688 and she said 'how long do you think it will take to get it passed. I said we'll get it passed by the end of this Congress. She said, you will never do that. It usually takes 5 or 6 years to pass a bill like this through Congress. I won't be heartbroken if it is not passed and signed this year. We have the momentum now; and we can attack it again next year."

*reflections
1688
copy*

"It has been quite an experience to talk and negotiate with everyone. I don't have a position of strength. I don't have the right/^{subcommittee}chairmanship to move it through the committee. It really belongs to the subcommittee in criminal law. The administration isn't going to do anything special for me. I'm a little too independent in their eyes. It was an experience to talk to all those characters in OMB, whose names I have completely forgotten now." The idea was that he has had to push without much formal clout.

I asked if all his other interests might not have detracted from his shepherding of 1688. He picked up on a phrase in the question re. keeping all the bills in the air. "Can I keep a lot of bills in the air? I haven't answered that question. I'm experimenting with it. The afternoon, for example, a group from Bell Labs(?) came in with an idea. It sounded good to me and I said I'd see see what we could do about it. This afternoon I met Gary Hart in the gym. He said they had come to see him, too. I asked him 'Are you going to do anything about it?' He said 'I don't know. I don't think so. Are you going to do anything about it?' Now, as I think about it--it's not something I have expected. It's not particularly in my area; and I'm not really interested. So I don't know if it comes within my parameter. For me, crime is in category one. Category Two is my state. I do a lot of

state staff. And (Category Three) I have a strong interest in foreign relations. I met Chuck Percy in the gym. He said 'Mac Mathias and I were talking about you today. You are the most regular attendee of the North Atlantic Assembly." I was the only Senator to go to the meeting in Germany. I even went before I was elected, in 1980 as part of my pre-training. I paid my own expenses. To me, all foreign policy concerns treaties, nuclear control, armaments, defense, are very important. It's a big part of every guy's job to know about them. I can get into it through my membership of the Foreign Operations Subcommittees. It's almost a must category for all of us. Can I keep all these bills in the air? I don't know. But I'm satisfied there is nothing more to do a 1688 and there is nothing more I could have done!"

*Summit
E. Keel*

When I left, he said again, "It won't be the worst thing that could happen if the bill doesn't pass this year. I have time." I said "It would be a nice cap for the first two years." He said "yes it would be. I still think I can get it passed in the Senate. I don't know about the House. There may not be any time. But getting it passed in the Senate will count." I agreed and left.

1688

Altogether one sense I get is that he's not in as big a hurry as he was. He knows it will take time. He seems not to be impatient. "I have time." was a major tune I got from the interview. I don't think he has done all he can; but he seems not to be pushing in a way that you might expect, given his intensity. He's alot more composed, maybe fatalistic about it all. Nothing hyper. He's not really a terribly reflective person about politics. But he is living within himself rather nicely, I think. His staff said he was tired. Paul to Sylvia "How are his spirits?" "He's tired, very tired." "Yes, I thought he looked tired last night, too."

When I took the committee roster over to him, he checked off people who were with him and commented on them. "Since you're not taking notes, I don't have to ask you not to take notes."

"How many have you talked?" "All of them--except Robert Byrd. He never comes."

Thurmond - "He may be a problem. He won't like federal jurisdiction. It's a matter of state rights."

Laxalt - "He'll say, I don't know about federal jurisdiction. But crime is a problem. The states haven't done all that good a job. The administration does support it. Arlen Specter is no flaming liberal. He's a team player. He understands crime. Besides we've got to give these younger guys a chance to make a contribution, too."

Hatch - "He may be a problem, but I think he'll go for it. I've helped Orrin on a couple of things. He's been pressing me hard to co-sponsor the balanced budget. But I tel him I can't and he understands. On one of the amendments the other day, I voted against him. He asked if I would wait around in case he needed my vote. I said I would. I hung around. When the vote got to be 66-30, I said 'Orrin, may I go to lunch now?' He said OK, but those kinds of things help you around here. If you extend yourself a little for others, they will do the same for you. In a close call that counts."

Dole - "He is an anti crime person and he's not a state's rights person. He likes the idea. He'll make up his mind quickly--not like Kennedy--and that's that."

Simpson - "He's OK. He looks upon the two of us as the swing men in the committee. The other day, he said to me 'You and I are the only two people on the committee who listen to the arguments and make up our own minds. No one can figure out how we will vote.'"

East ' "He hasn't focused on it, but he'll be troubled by state's rights..."

Whereas Laxalt will buy the argument that Specter needs the bill, with East it may work in reverse--sibling rivalry... But I've established a relationship with John. He lobbied me on the tobacco vote this year. We've got to have you. I told him John I'm going to vote against the bill. But on the amendments, I'll hold off and let you give me an argument. I was presiding. And I said to him I won't vote till you've had a chance to talk to me. You may remember, they held that vote open for 17 minutes waiting for Brady. I was the last to vote. And that caused some of the others to think about it. John appreciated that."

Grassley "He's a funny guy. A little while ago, he was trying to pass the Federal Torts Claims Act out of his subcommittee. He was having trouble getting a quorum, so I went. As it turned out I made a series of serious objections that torpedoed the bill. He got flustered and adjourned the meeting. I went to him and said 'Chuck, I think we can work this thing out. I think we can compromise. I want to help you out.. We met in my office with staff and worked it out. I went 3/4 of the way with him. That has given me a good working relationship with Grassley. That sort of thing will help a great deal on the bill."

Denton "He has given me a flat commitment in support of it. But he may go south on ^{me} ~~on~~ despite that commitment, when he hears all the arguments. I have told everyone why it's a good bill. But I haven't given them the opposing argument.

Biden "He has complete confidence in anything I say in the criminal area. He'll sign off on everything I say, no problem."

Metzenbaum ("Will he go as far as Biden?") "Metzenbaum wouldn't go that far with his mother! He'll say. 'All this crime control stuff is just a code word for anti-black. But Specter isn't anti black. Specter is a pretty

liberal fellow. Crime is a real problem. He'll be convinced on the merits.

Kennedy - "I hate to say this but Kennedy is all over the place on this bill. He has absolutely no confidence in his own judgment on this matter. I don't understand it."

DeConcini "He's hard to figure out. He was a former prosecutor and he's quite conservative. But he's worried about jurisdictional problems. I think he'll come around. If he does, he'll be a good person to have on our side. So will Heflin, if he comes along."

I got the sense that altho he had talked to each one, he had few solid commitments and that he had not tried to persuade anyone very hard.

"I've got this big thick report. I wanted it to have weight so that when they saw it they would know the subject has been thoroughly researched."

He, as well as Bruce, may be in position of hoping it doesn't go from personal relations to argument. If it gets to argument stage, they may have more trouble.

AS said he'd helped Murkowski out on loan guarantee on pipeline. "If you extend yourself for somebody, they appreciate it. That's the way you build personal relationships. There's a lot of that here. "How do you learn whom to trust?" You trust everybody. Everybody is trustworthy."

Re Heinz. "We are very conscience^{ed} of each other's votes. Ohhh yes. I always check to see how he votes. And it strengthens both of us a great deal. If we vote together, we please the people who agree with us. And those who disagree will say Specter voted against us, there must be a reason because Heinz did too. Or vice versa. If we voted differently they'd say Heinz voted with us, you have the same constituency he did, what's the matter with you. Heinz never wants to cast a more conservative vote than I do. So he watches that. We don't collaborate. x Maybe we should. But we usually vote together, just the same."