

LARRY EIKAL  
Philadelphia Inquirer

March 18, 1982

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I had a talk with Larry Eikal of the Philadelphia Inquirer who has been here for a day and a half covering Arlen for a piece he's doing for the Inquirer.

"The story line on Arlen back home is that he went down to Washington to be a Senator and disappeared."

"Our paper has a policy, mistaken in my opinion, of not paying any attention to U.S. Senators. I'm trying to remedy that." He's new to the job.

He revealed to me an outside view of Arlen. He said his reputation back home was as "The Sammy Glick of Pennsylvania politics." Then later he said, he thought this earlier image had been superseded by the loser image. He said "Paul Taylor (his predecessor) tells me that the people at the Inquirer think Arlen's a jerk. It's a combination of the Sammy Glick image and the loser image."

In Philly politics, he was known as someone who thought he had all the answers, knew more than anyone else etc. He was politically aggressive and personally anxious - nearly the first thing he said was that he thought Arlen had gotten less intense and more relaxed. He said that, with regard to the last witness this morning, that "the old Arlen Specter would have torn the guy apart. But instead he explained to him and tried to put things in perspective till, at the end there was a very small disagreement." I asked him if he thought maybe Arlen acted that way because he, Larry, was there. He said only that he thought several times during the last day or so that "Arlen was speaking directly to me," when making a public statement.

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He said that Rendell told him that the DA's respect Arlen and are glad that he's there and glad that he's taken criminal justice as his area but that they consider Arlen's support of 4481 as a test of whether Arlen "matters." I

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asked if they thought saving Office of Juvenile Justice mattered. Larry said no, that when Arlen explained what he had done on that, his reaction was "So what." I, then, commented that when you consider how much time it takes to get a small thing like that done, how much energy it takes, that it's interesting that no one knows about it back home or, if they did, wouldn't care. It's another aspect of the home-Washington problem. Herculean effort here may mean nothing there. The transmission belt breaks down, the picture gets distorted or something. A communication-perception-technology metaphor is needed for this. It's the problem of the last speaker today and his perspective vs. Arlen's perspective. Maybe it's like a set of gears, where it takes great effort in Washington to turn a little gear to get a little motion back home. There is no one-to-one translation. Maybe that's the generalization.

He said he was more impressed with Arlen than not. He was impressed with his pace of activity. He thought he was well briefed. He thought he had found the best job for himself--legislative more than executive. He said he thought Arlen was learning his job and concentrating on narrow sphere.

*Smart*

He told how Arlen said he started looking at defense because on Appropriations, unless you understood defense, you didn't understand anything. It was a Washington reaction on Arlen's part, that he wanted to get ahead on the Appropriations Committee and be well regarded there. It's not a Pennsylvania concern.

He noted that Arlen told someone "I'm hardly ever in Philadelphia." and that he thought Arlen separated his Washington and Philadelphia lines now and concentrated on Washington.

He also said an interesting thing--revealing about reporters--saying that "while he is posing as a great friend of law enforcement, he's lobbying harder than he is for anything else, to get an appointment as U.S. Attorney for Philadelphia for a man who is, all the people I respect tell me, absolutely

unqualified, and even dangerously unqualified, for the job. So while he pretended to be a saint, he isn't." The idea that Arlen is pretending to be "a saint" in pushing 1688 would never occur to me. It's a very shallow view of a person. Larry used it to show that Arlen has "drawn a line" between his Washington and his home activity and does not think of them in same light. He sees Arlen as a product of Republican party politics back home and his lobbying for this guy (a black) is part of the home, party side." The Republican party has been good to him 'says Larry. Well--maybe. But Arlen doesn't see it that way.

Arlen told him there had been stories about newcomers that placed him as doing well and not known and that while he liked first best, he would rather be unknown than be known for having made a mistake. A good description of his view I think. I described Arlen as "developing" and as having potential to be good Senator.

He says that because of his loer image, everyone wants to run against him next time--he sees Green or Edgas as possible.

He said criticism from outside says staff is disorganized and Arlen doesn't delegate. That was early book anyway. Larry says that's changed now. But he was quite uncomplementary about Dan. Says Dan has checkered reputation in Philly and that he doesn't seem to know what's going on in Washington or the Senate. "He's not much help to a reporter. He doesn't seem to know what the Senate is doing. He has a poor reputation back home, and seems like an odd choice for the job. Our editor says, "That silly Dan McKenna is always calling and trying to get me to put something about Arlen in the paper. My job is to run a newspaper, not reelect Arlent Specter.'" He said Jonathan tells him what's going on.

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Maybe I should think of press coverage as representation or part of representative process anyway. To some degree perceptions are what newspapers say they are.

Larry says he'll write a soft piece, describing what Arlen does. A hard piece would evaluate what he was doing. Is it worthwhile? Is he doing a good job? He agreed that a non puff piece must be critical. He has gone to several sources to get critical quotes. "I'll use them to mute the piece and to cover myself." he said. He wouldn't want people to come back in 6 months and say that he'd been "taken in" by Specter. So he "covers himself," by digging for criticisms.