

LOUIS STOKES

September 17-19, 1976

Friday - 17th

7:00 - 11:00 Community Guidance and Human Services, Inc.
Park Plaza, 9600 Carnegie

Saturday - 18th

9:45 - 1:00 Democratic State Convention
Central High School, Columbus

Sunday - 19th

4:00 Liberty Hill Baptist Church
8200 Euclid

Edith Benson (AA), Creed Williams, Jack Cross

nc "Congress did something this afternoon that made me proud. It isn't often that Congress acts in ways that make me proud." Re Commission to re-open investigation into death of J. F. Kennedy and M. L. King.

A recitation of problems of health care for "minority poor"--in a nation that can go "to" the moon for rocks and to Mars for dust." (applause--only time)
Plea at end for national health insurance--to end a medical care system in which "the poor get sicker and the sick get poorer."

"The Cleveland Press doesn't cover black affairs"--re fact that he had no press coverage.

While LS seemed to know some of the people at the community guidance, it was clear these people were not his closest supporters. The Director of the group had never met him before--though the office had dealt with her problems. (LS - "I had a good time sitting beside Barbara --a lot better time than I have sitting beside my colleagues in Congress." - said humorously in public). When he came in, I thought people would crowd around him outside the door. They didn't. But they clapped when he walked into the dining room and up to the dais. And some asked for his autograph afterward.

spend my time working for you in Washington. If I stay here all week, the way my opponent wants, I'd blow it for you in Washington."

He talked at great length and in great detail about the primary. "I don't mind telling you because you knew him."

"The thing that hurt me more than anything that has happened to me in public life was Owen's campaign against me. It wasn't so much that he did it--although that bothered me--but it was the way he did it." After about 30 minutes of description of it, he summed it all up "He's a vicious little bastard!" He said that with lots of emotion--bitterness, a sense of being betrayed, and now enmity even.

The most interesting part of the labyrinthine story was his statement of strategy once the rumors of Owen's filing proved accurate.

"I set my strategy. He figured if he got the whole 35% of the white vote, he would need only 16% of the black vote to win. So I was determined to hold my strength in the black community. I knew I would get about half the vote in the white community no matter what, so I worked for solid support in the black community. The first thing I did was get the ministers. I called a breakfast meeting and 125 ministers came. That's all of them! Then there is a group of ministers who have to work at other jobs, because their parishioners are too poor to pay them--some of the store fronts for instance. Fifty of them came. Once I had the ministers cemented in, I called a similar meeting of all the black elected officials. 23 of the 24 showed up for that. Then I had it all. When you have the ministers and the black elected officials, you have the black community... In every black ward, I won by at least ^{twelve to one} 12-1 and I got nearly half of the white vote. Overall, I beat him ^{four to one} 4-to-1." Arnold Pinckney summed it up best. He said my opponent had "a promising career which began and ended with this election."

I'll fill in some of the detail later. But I want to go on to the other interesting topic he discussed--the caucus and his role in it.

During one point in the discussion of the primary against Owen, he said that Forbes and Pinkney had agreed to join with Stokes to defeat Heggs and preserve "the unity of the black community, if the campaign were not run by the 21st District Caucus but by a larger Stokes for Congress Committee." He said he, Stokes, had taken the first unity step by supporting Pinkney in the mayor's race. Therefore, Pinkney was replying in kind and further in the healing process. "We came back together." But he spoke of the Caucus as being "submissive to the campaign committee--even though caucus people were running it." Also said the Caucus was "subsumed" under the Stokes for Congress Committee.

This arrangement then gave me an opening to pose the question about the Caucus and its present state. After all, I said, in 1970 you were endorsing Republicans in order to demonstrate black power to the Democratic party and in 1976 I come and find him addressing the Democratic State Convention. What has happened, I asked. And he agreed that things had changed in that Forbes and Pinkney and others "could not understand that you could work in the Democratic Party and in the caucus at the same time, that you can render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's."

"We still need the caucus to give the blacks leverage on the Democratic party," he believes. But most of black elected officials do not^{belong}. A few (Franklin) drift in and out of Caucus but most are out.

He said Arnold was coming around a little more to his (LS) view because, "he thought that the whites would vote for all Democrats if the blacks would, but he learned when he ran for mayor that the white Democrats don't give when it comes time to vote for black Democrats."

"George Forbes is tied to the white community and the Democratic party through business connections and business transactions. He isn't a free agent."

Again, as he has in the past, he told me he was trying to cut his local involvement but.... "I can't stay involved in all these local problems. I haven't the time. I'm constantly on the telephone tending to all the little crises that come up when I'm in Washington. I'm relying more on Ann Chatman ^(Calhoun) to run the day to day affairs of the Caucus. And I'm trying to strengthen my Washington office to take care of more of these problems on that end. But I've got to protect myself. And all these guys that sit back home have a big advantage over me. They know everything that's going on and can take advantage of me. I've got to protect my back. It's my biggest dilemma. I have to strike a balance."

The sense is strong that he can't let go because he's afraid someone will run against him--that once you are king of the hill, you must prove you are king of the hill and not take chances because people will get you and your job if they can. I wondered whether there is anything about black politics that makes this fear justified. Perhaps it is that at an early stage when there is not much to go around for an emergent ethnic group, the competition is fiercer for what few top jobs there are. The outlets for ambition are just less numerous. And a job that is ascriptively black looks very tempting.

He agreed that the caucus was, now, his political lifeline and he said, "After the ^{W76} primary when I showed such great strength in the community, I toyed with the idea of giving up my leadership of the caucus and my reliance on it. But I decided against it. The caucus people were upset when they had to be submissive to the campaign committee. They want their identity. They are very loyal to me personally and take pride in working for me. And they want to work within the Caucus. My workers tell me they can get more cooperation in the black community for Caucus events than party events. We had 3000 people at the Caucus picnic last week. Yet if I stay with the Caucus I don't have the control over

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finances and over the jobs that the guys in ward politics have. But I decided that if I disbanded the caucus a lot of people would think I'd weakened myself and might decide to run against me. I'd look just like everybody else in the -wide black community, without any district/organization. No, I've got to keep caucus leadership. They will do anything I tell them to do. And they are my political strength." (That's a rough paraphrase.)

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The other time when he showed the same fear of losing his king of the hill position was when I asked re presidential primary. Why did he run delegates committed to him." "To get the black community to pull together. I'm the leader and when you are the leader people expect you to lead. As the highest elected official in the district I can't let anyone lower in the hierarchy get the idea that I'm not the leader. That's why I always run for state committee membership. I don't want anyone to demonstrate more political clout than I do in any district-wide contest. If someone does better than I do in any congressional district election, they'll want to run against me. I can't let it happen. The ministers agreed with me that we should keep the unity of the black community by running delegates pledged to me for president. My name was on the primary ballot eleven times--beside the name of 6 delegates and 3 alternates, for state committeeman and for Congress. It was such a confusing ballot we had a job of educating to do. So we told them, whenever you see the name Stokes, pull the lever! That's what we taught them.... When I introduced myself to Carter for the first time, later, he said "I know you, you beat me bad in your district." I said to him "It was just a skirmish; you won the war."

But his idea that he must show more power than anyone else displays again, the fact that he feels the need to stay on top of everything at home lest he get cut down. I don't know who he really fears, if he does fear anyone in particular. But he's less of a local leader in the sense of a community architect than he is a local leader who is, as he says, "protecting my back."

"I've got to meet sometime with George and Arnold and _____ to get something going ~~win~~ in the community for Carter and Metzenbaum. It's pretty late already. But if I don't do it, nothing will get done. No one can move till I move." Again the sense of leadership of the community that he has. Here, he seems to be doing more than protecting himself. But maybe what he's doing is acting before someone else might. A kind of pre-emptive thought on his part. A lot of his talk this time seems to boil down to "leaders lead"--which means that when you stop acting like a leader you aren't one anymore--people notice it and take you on. I think maybe he's feeling a bit feisty after his primary win; since he did beat a qualified opponent.

The emerging sense of opportunity structure and LS place "at the top" comes through in the long description of Owen's effort to solicit support in the community. Forbes told him that "If you run against Lou we're gonna whip your ass." But all the others--ministers, pols, Chas. Lucas said "What do you want to do that for, run against Lou Stokes.. You should run for something else--county commissioner, city council. In the first place, you can't beat Lou Stokes. In the second place, you're going to ruin a bright future for yourself."

I could use Dante Fascell quote to lead into "King of the Hill" vignette.

Re speaking engagements. "I try to speak everywhere I'm asked in the district--unless I'm not home or just too jammed up. I tell people "I'll go anywhere I'm asked." Outside the district, I only speak if there's an honorarium.

He said the Democratic convention was an exception. That it was "an honor" to be asked. That "The state party has never had a black official as their keynoter, so it was another first." (He thinks it important to engage in such symbolic "firsts") And, finally, he noted, he'd been trying to run a black person statewide and he thought his presence indicated perhaps he was getting through and that perhaps the Party Chairman was trying to move that way by inviting him and that he should accept to keep momentum up.

As part of his discussion of the caucus, he said he was trying to decide whether or not to endorse Republican George Voinovich for County Commissioner against Tony Garafoli, the Democrat. He told long story of how Garafoli "stripped" George Forbes of his power by making him head of Executive Committee of the Party--a non-functioning post--while he, Garafoli kept the Party leadership job for himself. Thus--the end of the troika--since Corrigan had already left to take different job. Lou related his conversation with Garafoli over this move, in which Lou says G. never paid off as he said he would in jobs, etc. and how, "I will not participate in the diminishment of George Forbes." But Forbes apparently says it's OK and then papers say Stokes (who has issued statement in support of Forbes) is jealous of Forbes. Much byzantine maneuvering. Anyhow, he said he would not support Garafoli but didn't know whether an endorsement of Voinovich wouldn't hurt the Carter-Metzenbaum effort in the district. "You've got to pick your spots (to endorse Republicans) but he said that in principle he's ready to endorse Republicans still. Though, the caucus seems more of a personal organization now than it used to be.

He seems to be perfectly confident that he can endorse people and carry caucus people with him. At one point in his story with Garafoli he said to him "If you do that I'm going to tear up the party" as if he could do it with a flick of the hand. More than anyone else I've travelled with he can. Remember, he said this to the Party Chairman!

"A fellow asked me the other day, "Lou, what bugs you the most about being in politics?" He said "The reason I asked you was because another politician told me the other day that what bugged him the most was the women kissin' on him." Well, I said "Women kissin' on me doesn't bother me one bit. In fact, I kinda like it. What bugs me is the guy who comes up to you and says "What's my name? Like the fella just now who said "I'll bet you don't know who I am." I said "Yes I do." And he said "What's my name?" Great doublin up laughter--every congressman's peeve.

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When I asked him whether all Cong. black Caucus members would run equally well in his district he was intrigued "a cute question" but not responsive. He said yes, they all would with possible exception of Nix who was old. And he wondered about Metcalf. When Jack mentioned Hawkins, Lou said, "No he's a strong legislator." I didn't go through the list but it didn't pan out as well as I thought it might.

Appropos of how little people knew of how hard he worked, he noted that he introduced a bill to ease unemployment among teenage blacks (now running at 40%!) and one to deal with FHA foreclosures and they got a few lines in paper. "On substantive stuff, nobody cares. I work on bills and get two lines. But let me get into trouble of some personal sort and it would get a whole page.... It makes you paranoid. You get so you're afraid to sleep with your own wife."

At several points, he mentioned W. O. Walker. Said it was at a meeting of people at WO's house that he last talked to Owen in friendly fashion and that the next week at a meeting at WO's that he had first brusque encounter with Owen. (Lou first heard rumor re. Owen filing vs. him from his mother!) He said he was going to drop by at WO's house Sunday on his birthday.

Much of the lengthy, blow by blow discussion of Owen concerned his campaign tactics--which LS deplored. He "surfaced" with a full page "report card" on Louis Stokes in paper (\$5,000 worth) in which he misrepresented his trips homes. He also taped a Carl Stokes criticism of Lou and played it on radio. He also taped Lou praising him at a meeting and played it. He also planted rumors that he was being bribed to get out of the race. (When the press asked Lou about this "I was pissed off. I told them I wasn't going to answer any attack on my integrity. I practiced law for 14 years in this community without a black mark and I've been in Congress for 8 years without a black mark. Everyone in this community knows me, and I'm not going to defend my integrity to you.)

He spoke of how he had helped Owen all along - got him job with Bustamonte, helped him get business when he was having trouble "holding up his end" in his 2nd law firm when he was about to be ^{fixed} ~~fixed~~. He had pushed Owen forward and in a sense made him. They had been "close friends". Owen was 1972 campaign manager. Said Owen had a fixation on a strategy letter he sent Lous some years ago to which Lou had not replied. Apparently, Owen was both measuring Lou in the analysis of the letter and expecting Lou to take him seriously and consult with him.

What he said during campaign--his "pitch". "I told them that I have been in Congress for eight years, that it takes time to develop your influence there and that I'm becoming more important to them. I talked about watching over 414 billion dollars in the Appropriations Committee and about the 40 billion dollar budget I cover on the Budget Committee. I said to them, 'You have an investment in me. It's just like putting money in the bank. If you leave it there it gathers interest and it grows. If you take it out, you have to start in all over again. Our people have just gotten started and we're too far behind to start over so soon. I've been in Congress 8 years, but we waited 180 years before we even got started."

He also said he would say how intelligent Owen was and what a bright future he had and then he would say "We've got to find a place for Owen" and everyone would break up.

He also told several stories about how in interests of democracy, some clubs would let him come talk, but when he talked against Stokes they would stop him and tell him to stick to talking about himself. And, when he wouldn't stop talking down Stokes "they picked him up and escorted him out of the club." Some clubs wouldn't even let him in. LS is of the opinion that Owen gradually dug himself a hole by being so negative and just plain anti-Stokes. Said he got so mad ~~at~~ at "the report card" that he made a big mistake by answering the charges. "I shouldn't have done it. I legitimized him. But I was so darn mad."

He said "Owen's money (save for a couple of checks from the black community) came from the white community. A lot of it from out of the district, and some of it from out of the state. The whites downtown wanted to buy themselves a boy--in every sense of the word--that they could control." Said Ohio Bell had a lot to do with it.

When we stopped at a light and the guy in the next car waved, I said I'd seen that before. And he said it happens every night he drives through the district."

"They did a survey at Case Western and found that my name recognition was 99%. I'll bet face recognition is almost that high." Very unusual and part of the King of the Hill.

He said it was the Republicans under the leadership of W. O. Walker that got the 21st district created as a black district in the first place. That, appropos of Garafoli's assertion--during the long argument about who had or had not done what for whom--that the Democrats got the district ^{for} from the blacks.

In talking about Owen, he said that Owen wanted to "start at the top" rather than work up. Lou sees the Congressmen's job as the "top" job in the district, the most important. You got a little sense of this when he presented "a special congressional award, for service beyond the ordinary" to Barbara Brown the Executive Director of the Community guidance etc. groups. He was saying that this award comes from highest level of political structure and I represent that level and only I can give you that kind of an award. The recipient was ~~was~~ appropriately speechless. Now, most congressmen don't go around giving out "special congressional awards". I don't even know what the hell they are. But such an award is a symbolic accoutrement of his position. As it glorifies the recipient, it glorifies him. It lets people know that he does hold "the top job" (his words) of any elected official in the district. It is in that symbolic sense perhaps, most of all that he is "the leader"--plus his enormous capacity to make trouble for any local official. But the party guys seem to run Cleveland without him. Maybe all I'm

saying is that he's not Mayor Daley--which is not taking much away from him, since no one else anywhere is Daley. Lou evinced admiration for Daley and asked me how I evaluated him. Said he didn't agree with his "politics" but that he worked for good of community and that "Chicago is a booming city" because of Daley. Lou knows how to wield power and has admiration for those who do.

I took a cab to the Liberty Hill Baptist Church to meet Lou there Sunday afternoon. I arranged earlier, when he called, to ride down town with him to get in a few questions. Actually, he didn't have to come down town since he decided not to go to the Jewish affairs at the Sheraton ("If I go there, I'll be stuck till 10:00. I'm going back to W. O. Walker's house for dinner and then go home.") He would have been content if I'd gone to hear him at the church and then gotten to the airport by myself. But he got Creed to pick me up at Hollenden and take me to the airport and he (Henry Ross driving) took me downtown. He is very nice and very cooperative when I'm with him, but it is a continual hassle to actually get time with him. No one on his staff helps me--mostly because they aren't supposed to do such things. And he doesn't "take me in" in any way to his more private political meetings. He met with Forbes and Pinkney today and with W. O. Walker. It wouldn't occur to him to let me go with him. That's not my place. So I'm always on the outside trying to get to him--even when I'm in the district and he knows it. It's a difficult one to crack and, therefore, hard to understand. If I could listen to him talking to his political allies about political things I'd have a better feel for him and for his local role. Maybe it would be mostly personality talk--of the sort most people like to keep from other people. But I'd like to know what it's like. But I've done all I can do here. I could come back 50 times and I'd never get to W. O. Walker's home.

One possible explanation for Lou's behavior toward me and his political behavior is that he feels quite insecure generally. But I don't see that particularly. It's just an inference.

After Liberty Hill I asked him to rank the three events in terms of his comfortableness or at homeness. He ranked them: (1) Liberty Hill (2) Mental health group (3) Democratic State Convention.

When I asked him to rank the same three in terms of their political importance to him, he said "the same order".

Then I asked him what he enjoyed doing the most when he came home and he answered as, in the context, as if I were asking him about the three events. (That was natural. I couldn't decide which question to ask first and decided to go with the ranking questions since it flowed best from what he'd been doing. But I lost any general thoughts on constituency activity which might have come from the general "What do you enjoy" question).

"I get the greatest enjoyment out of something like this. I like the church. I enjoy the ministers. They have been so important to the whole black experience. And they are my strength. I enjoy being around them and with them. And the people there are people of warmth, sincerity and appreciation."

"I get some enjoyment out of the people at the Mental Health group. Some enjoyment there too." Said without enthusiasm.

"At Columbus I know some of the people there appreciate what I have to say. But I know many of them do not appreciate what I say. I know it. I can feel it. I can feel the prejudice; and I don't enjoy that."

Re. his relation to ward clubs. "The ward clubs are controlled by the councilment. Sometimes the councilman is the ward leader; or the leader is someone controlled by the councilman. During the campaign, the councilmen invited me to speak to their clubs. But other than campaign time, I don't bother them and they don't bother me."

How explain trust? "That's a hard question. To answer that, I have to go way back. I was a lawyer in the community for 14 years. People knew who I was

and knew I was involved in the community--the NAACP, the YMCA, the boy scouts, you name it. People know you. You aren't an isolated name. They know you from the personal relationships they had with you. If you were their lawyer, they know you are an able lawyer and that you didn't pull any deals on them. I don't always tell them what they want to hear. I try not to promise things I can't deliver. So I'll say to people "I don't want to mislead you," I try to be sincere and dedicated, I guess that's it.

Then I said something like "it goes back to your life in the community," and he started in again. "Of course in this case you have the unique situation of Carl and myself. People in the community feel a kinship to us. They know where we came from. They know what our circumstances were. We're like part of the family; and people take pride in our accomplishments. They like the things we've stood for and they know what abuse we've taken when we stood up for the black community. My people don't read the Congressional Record like you do. They don't know what the Congressional Record is. They just know that I will vote right for them and say the right things for them. When people come up to me they say "You're doin a good job" or "I like what you're doin'" or "keep up that good work"--things like that. And when they are reading the paper and they see the name Stokes they'll stop and read the whole article."

Method with speech
It really is different from the sophisticated suburbs! And you can see why Lou stressed their investment in him when he campaigned. But he sees it as an emotional investment more even than a seniority investment. When the ladies walked by me as I stood in the sanctuary, they all said "write something good about him". And when the minister told the congregation about me and made me stand up he said "Now you write good things about our Congressmen" and then to the audience. "As you can see, I'm trying to persuade him." Everyone laughed. But these people have a heavy investment in his and they read about him like they

read about sports heros I think--at least the middle aged do. And the church group was 40-70^{years old} (about 60 people in all I counted). They discussed his family when they introduced him and said what a fine family man he is. He's an exemplary figure for them and he knows it. He says they are proud of him--uses "proud" a lot, just like a parent would be proud of a child. He tells them of his "accomplishments" and it doesn't sound like bragging.

Re W. O. Walker. "I didn't know him till I ran for office because I hadn't been in politics. It was Carl who had the close relationship. But since I've been in office, we've had a very close relationship and we've been together on every issue, every issue."

When he began his talk at the Liberty Hill Baptist Church, he said "Liberty Hill is like home for me. I know so many of the people here. My roots go back so far. I look out and see Ruth and Rose Collins with whom I went to Central High School and whose mother was a mother to me, too. And Reverend Wilson married me. He has been an inspiration in my life. And I'm pleased to see so many members of the 21st Congressional District Caucus here. We had 3000 people at the picnic two weeks ago. These are the people who make it worth while for me to go through what I go through day after day. If it were not for you people who are behind me, I wouldn't do it. I am blessed that you are back here."

"When my office talked with your program chairman Sister Bertha Banks--who has been such a help to me in the 21st District Caucus--they asked her what you wanted me to talk about. And Bertha Banks said "He's been raised in the church. He'll know what to say." "I consider that statement a great honor. I assume you don't want a political speech. (laughter). So I guess you must want me to preach. (laughter). Well, that's one way of insuring that I won't talk too long. (laughter)."

He said prior to that how honored he was to be invited and how he had given two speeches that weekend, how he keynoted Democratic Convention. And they all kept saying how honored they were that he would take time out of his busy schedule, etc.

± don't put up cynicism here I might be a subscriber

"Whatever I have achieved, it's because of my church background. You know, sometimes people forget from whence they came. They reach the heights and they think they did it all by themselves. Men like Reverend Wilson have been my inspiration. Many black folks have felt they should be in the white church, in the integrated church. When I rassled with that question, I decided that my roots are in the black church. I decided that I had to stay there where I had been given my start." ~~Lost~~ of ID.

In his speech he said that church people should be concerned about problems in the world and he tied it to his participation as a delegate to World Council of Churches conference in Nairobi, Kenya--"perhaps, the greatest experience of my life."

He talked about South Africa's apartheid and he said "Three hundred people have been killed, shot--men, women and children--in Soweto. And you know, those people look just like you do, just like you. Our roots are in that part of the world. And we, as church people, have an obligation to be concerned about our brothers and sisters in that part of the world."

He then went on to say that there were 23 congressional districts in Ohio and that the 21st district "has a concentration of the greatest social problems. In many areas, we rank 23rd in Ohio--in education, health care, housing."

He noted that whereas Cleveland suburbs had one doctor per 800 people, the 21st district area had one doctor per 3000 people. He said it was a "right" of every human being to have free medical care" from the time they are brought squealing into the world until the time they are laid to rest in a casket."

He said 21st district had largest % of people with less than an 8th grade education of all Ohio's congressional districts. With regard to housing, he noted that 28 homes burned in the district recently. He talked a little about abortion and how we had to be concerned not just about the unborn but the living as well. And he told story of woman who left the house and the dog ate the baby. He ended his talk by saying that story brought home better than anything the plight of the living. He closed saying that "We, as church people, have to be concerned for our brothers and our sisters."

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After he spoke, he was lavishly praised by the President of the group. "With all the things we hear about Congress these days, it's an honor to have as unselfish and as dedicated a Congressman as Honorable Louis Stokes, who is doing so much for people in the 21st district and for people all over the country."

When Reverend Wilson (he introduced himself to me as "the pastor") came to give the benediction, he gave a rambling talk about the importance of the church as a guide in a "collapsed society" and then he ended saying--"Well, may God bless you and may Congressman Stokes keep getting elected to Congress. May you continue your unselfish work. I'm proud of you and I'm pullin' for you." It was done naturally, but it's obvious why he calls the minister "my greatest strength!"

Lou is the only guy who keeps 2 drivers on his payroll. Creed Williams and Henry Ross take turns driving Lou when he's in the district. One drives a Cadillac and the other a Continental, so he goes in style. I think he would want to go in style and I also think his people would expect him to.

He has an apartment now in Warrensville. A couple of people said he did this because an opponent (one said Heggs, the other said Bill Mack) raised the issue in a campaign. He used to use his sister's address. This has been a financial hardship for him and both people who told me the story considered it a dirty trick on the part of his opponent to force him into that kind of