

Mark Andrews

March 9, 1981

Gwen Larsen, Marj Walpole, Chip Hardin.

I went to the office at 3:30 to accompany Mark over to the Hyatt Regency for a 4:00 speech to the American Public Transit Association. We were accompanied by Chip Hardin(?) who is staffing the Subcommittee on Transportation of the Appropriation Committee--of which Mark is Chairman. (He's on 5 Appropriations Subcommittees!)

He was just getting the pictures put up in his new office and was buried under a stack of mail. (Does he sign all mail?) Later, he noted that he was "backed up" because of moving and could see me later in the week. He mentioned the mail in that respect.

As we walked out of the office, the conversation concerned what elevator to take and where to get off in order to meet a car that was to pick us up. "If I were still in the House, this would be easier," he said. We emerged at the wrong corner of the building and had to walk one length of the building outdoors to get to the right corner. All the way on that walk, he mentioned how I had been with them and how "You should have stayed with us in Tioga and for the rally in Lehr. That's when the guy introduced the opera singer by saying that he had just come "from the place where people had been agitating all them niggers." He lowered his voice and shook his head. It was the same story he told me when I saw him November after the election. The fact that I was with him still bulks large. But it is awfully hard to get him to say anything very general about anything. In the car on the way over, he asked the women escort how "a nice young woman like you from South Dakota ended up in a place like Washington, D.C.? Of course South Dakota is made

up of all the people who moved south because they couldn't stand the winters in N.D." She talked about family background. He said "When we moved to Washington, my daughter was a pre-kindergartener. So she's always thought of herself as a first generation Washingtonian."

He gave a short speech to about 250 APTA delegates. (It's their annual convention; but they are very concerned about cuts in the public transportation budget.)

In the speech, there was a very pronounced tendency to use North Dakotan examples. He's very close to North Dakota and it comes through a lot. He was introduced by a man from Moorhead, Minnesota and Mark noted when he began that " Fargo, N.D. and Moorhead, Minnesota share the same bus system. I live closer to Moorhead than I do to 95% of my constituents."

He got his one big laugh when he said "North Dakotans worry about transportation, too, because of the great distances we have to travel. But it's different from the problem of the urban areas. In North Dakota a toboggan is mass transit and a snowmobile is rapid transit." (laughter)

"In North Dakota we have no alternative to the automobile. I can't get a bus that will take me from my farm to church."

He said that "mass transit in cities would conserve energy to be used in places like N.D., where they needed automobiles. He also said N.D. very concerned about transportation systems to move grain.

His theme was that there would be budget cuts, but that they could keep spending at this year's level and shift money around in the budget to meet key needs. (Suggested taking Coast Guard out of Transportation budget and giving it to Defense.)

"I'm one of those Republicans who voted against the President on one of his early programs because I thought there was a better way... I don't think

people should lock into a mind set that says because the President says that's the way it will be, that's it... The job of our subcommittee is to shuffle priorities if necessary."

He got his only applause when he attacked the regulations requiring busses to install systems for the handicapped. "My wife is in a wheel chair now, so no one could be more biased toward helping the handicapped than I am. But it is absolutely idiotic to have these \$35,000 lift systems installed in busses when they can't even work in conditions of 20° below zero and two feet of snow. People just can't get in a wheelchair and trundle two blocks to the bus stop when it's 20° below zero, and the wind chill factor is 50° below zero and there's a foot and a half of snow where the sidewalk is supposed to be. The great white Father in Washington doesn't know what's going on in Fargo, N.D. and Moorhead, Minnesota. We have van system for the handicapped there--which is less expensive and which works. It's a matter of common sense. And when we throw common sense out the window, we are in real trouble. That's what the people of the country feel government has done... This thing has gone on too long and it's time to turn it around."

He talked about "We have to go back in history. Some pretty remarkable people set up this government, etc. etc.

My main impression was that his themes were very much the same as the ones he struck in the campaign, common sense--turn it around--people fed up--go back in history, etc. So here's a continuity of theme from campaign.

On the ride back to his office he talked about how he took the wrong glasses and couldn't read his notes. "We had issued a press release, so I had to stay somewhat close to my notes. But I couldn't see them."

I mentioned the applause and he said, again, how crazy those expensive lifts were.

He went back to signing the mail and said I could have 20 minutes later in the week.

He seems like a different man here than in ND--less comfortable. But that could just have been today's episode. I find him not eager or ready to talk about how things are going. I suppose I should ask him point blank if he likes it.

The next day I sat for 3/4 of an hour in his Transportation Subcommittee hearing. He and the head of Washington Transportation Board(?) had long colloquing about handicapped regulations for busses and again he mentioned North Dakota problems. He was trying to push guy to admit vans were cheaper than equipping 800 buses. I could look at March 11th testimony in this regard. MA seemed like a good questioner to me.