

BILL COHEN

January 9, 1979

Talk with Tom Daffron - I went over to talk with Tom Daffron, Bill's AA, a smart, fast talking, phrasemaking, energetic APSA fellow. I took no notes and, so, I missed a lot of what was an interesting talk and some great phrases. But I felt that in this, my first contact, the key was rapport and so I just listened. He packs an awful lot into a short time. I'm not convinced how thoughtful he is, but he's very quick. He may also be thoughtful. It's just that, now, after our first meeting, I'm more cognizant of the volume and of how much I missed.

A lot of it was gossip and maybe that's the difference between him and either Howe, Kanin or Scott. They did not ~~proliferate~~ ^{pontificate} about the Senate. Tom did. He worked 3 years for Percy and is now returning to the Senate, about which he knows a lot. But a lot of it is like Political Science 101.

Anyhow, the interesting things he said were about Bill - which I can't get in sequence, but will try the best I can. The net of it is that Bill can be a great Senator, but Tom worries about him making a good early adjustment.

"The first year is crucial in the impression you make on your fellow Senators. Do you keep your nose to the grindstone or do you look for the headlines? Do you suppress yourself or do you speak out on everything? I'm very concerned that Bill get off on the right foot, do his work and be a team player. Bill and Diane are glamorous and do attract media attention. It's natural that they appear in the *Portfolio* section of the Star. He has to be careful that he is not perceived as letting it go to his head-- that he's interested only in getting that publicity. He has to battle the

cliche that he's all style and no substance. It's the perception that matters here, not what you're really like. One of Bill's problems is that he really is a loner. Like a great many politicians he's really very shy, a private person. He's hard to get to know. He doesn't make friends easily. He was never a part of that largest Rotary Club in the world--the House--with the backslapping, golf talk and the bonhommie. It's easy to perceive of him as aloof or arrogant. He has the capacity to be a great Senator. He's smart, very smart and thoughtful. He's a quick study. He has a lot of ability. And he's happy now that he's here. He was bored in the House and used to say 'I'm going to quit this god damned job.' I told him it will be better in the Senate, and it will be. He can go as far as he wants. Even if he doesn't go any farther than the Senate, they can put that on his tombstone. It's a big challenge. Whenever he's been faced with a challenge--this campaign, impeachment--he's always concentrated on the job and done it well. He's got a lot of pride. He knows he's on trial and he knows he doesn't want to fall on his face. Frankly I hope things get started soon, because he's sitting and getting bored. Maybe the trip to China will be a good thing for him. He will learn something new. One good thing about him is that he's still young enough so that he doesn't take himself too seriously. He hasn't sent out for 3 new togas yet. That makes him easy to work for. The internal environment is so important. It's a job. People have to come to work everyday. He can agree with the Senator's position on all the issues. But that doesn't make up for bad working environment."

In recreating a lot of this I think I started right and ended right--but there was a lot in between. In fact the "togas" quote was near the very end of the talk and most of the rest was nearer the beginning.


Another point he made was that they had asked around for "role models" that Bill might follow and get Danforth and ~~Ing~~gar--not because of ideology but because of their team play. He also said that they asked for negative role models, but didn't say who they were. He said they (maybe just he) went according to Senate gossip.

Another point he made strongly--but ⁱⁿ/discussing Percy was "When you get here it's a clean slate. What you do ^{here} ~~here~~ makes or breaks you. Nobody cares what you did on the outside. They don't care how many terms you served as governor or House member ^{or} ~~of~~ how many millions you made or how large a corporation you ran. The day you start here is 'day one' as far as the Senate is concerned." He said Percy couldn't adjust to that.

Actually he discussed ^{curse} ~~discussed~~ at great length about Percy--it was my fault, I asked him--and I didn't listen to most of it. It was fairly conventional about Percy--straight ^{arrow} ~~arms~~, appears sanctimonious, evangelist, salesman not a "green eye shade man" (left Appropriations) is playing out the string now - caught Presidential fever 2 years after he was in - not popular - almost lost in 1978, talks on everything. "We took a poll and people knew that his daughter was killed and that he was a presidential possibility. That's all they knew about him. There weren't unpleasant attitudes about him. But they had no focus in terms of his record. They didn't know anything he had done."

He said little of interest about staff. They kept congressional staff on and enlarged "The Maine Room" where people worry about base closings, federal grants, etc. Dale Gerry has been brought down to do that. They had 2000 applications, 1900 of them for LA's jobs. It's the legislative staff that balloons in the Senate. No big expansion in staff, however. He mentioned hiring someone from Griffin's office who knew the CMS system in the Senate and all the computer hardware and will be office manager. He was pleased to find that person experienced.

He talked about Bill's Committee preferences. "We thought about the Judiciary Committee. The advantage was that Bill would be fast out of the box because he was familiar with the material. The disadvantage was that he knew it, had been over it all before and wouldn't be leaving. The Republicans were all right wingers and Kennedy was the Chairman. If he opposes the Republicans he looks like a follower of Kennedy--of whom it is said that anything he proposes on the floor has 18 automatic Republican votes against it. If he tries to get along with the Republicans he will go against his philosophy. If he goes with him and opposes them he will be branded as a non team player. Besides they have no sense of humor. They would not be easy to get along with. So we decided against that."

Choices were Foreign Relations, Governmental Affairs, Budget, Finance, Commerce, Energy and Agriculture for ^{P. 15} minor. 

"We chose FR first but we have almost no chance of getting it--one chance in 20. There are four slots and most of them have been spoken for by senior members. Then we picked Governmental Affairs. Bill knows a lot of the people on that Committee and gets along with them--Percy, Javits, Danforth, _____, _____ (I can't recall). Besides, he is good at the investigative oversight function. He knows how to question a witness, boring, boring, boring. He has a very logical ^wlayers mind."

He seemed to stress two criteria, that Bill ought to be on a committee where he can learn something new. And that he be on a committee with people with whom he is compatible. And they are connected in that he will learn from them. "If he's going to be educated in foreign affairs, I'd much rather have him be educated by the guys on Foreign Relations than by those on Armed Services. Maybe being in China with three members of Armed Services, Nunn, Glenn and Hart will change his mind."

Bill wanted Finance more than Tom "We'll be lobbied to death on all sides of all questions--business loop holes, trade, health. And then there's the chairman. Besides I don't think it suits this Senator's skills. I asked him 'Did you like the tax law course in law school?' He said 'I hated it.' I said 'This is a committee that studies the tax code.' And once you are on it you stay. Politically you'd be in trouble if you shifted--unless it were to Foreign Relations or Appropriations. From what I hear we're likely to get Finance. Russell Long's office called today and asked what the Senator liked to be called. The Committee on Committee hasn't met yet, but there's some maneuvering going on."

He was not too sharp on how it was done. He knew you could have one exclusive committee. But he said they put it into a computer. Then he said after seniors have had a choice, they'll get the freshmen in a room to see if they can iron it out themselves. He said they try to give everyone a prestigious committee.

Another concern of Tom's seemed to be that you might get stuck on a committee you didn't like--Appropriations, Finance, Foreign Relations. Budget appealed to Tom because Bill could learn some economics and rotate off after two years after learning about where the money goes--without political penalty.

All this seemed to me like a typical liberal Republicans way of looking at committee assignments--he's looking for glamour assignments more than nitty gritty assignments. Called Commerce "dull, but I'd like to keep some of the fishing stuff." Maybe the strategy is different in the Senate. Pryor put finance first, feeling pretty sure he wouldn't get it.

Not clear what Cohen has done about it. I didn't ask. Tom says Bill met Baker "who bridges the gap" and gets along with Baker. Baker spoke at Bill's kickoff dinner. The only outsider to come in. Says he knows Percy, which is

no help. No sense that he comes in being buddies with Armstrong or Cochran or Pressler. He's a little like Tsongas--odd man out. Everything Tom said indicates that he sees Bill as a liberal Republican, but different from the old liberal republican types. "He's a child of the 50's, a James Dean rebel, a poor boy who fought his way to the top." Makes him different from Case, Percy, Lodge, Saltanstall types.

The James Dean reference appears in the Washington Star article, which Tom gave me. "Feelings are mixed on it. Some people think it's the best piece of publicity anyone could have. Others think it will do nothing but hurt. As one member of the minority staff said to me. It shows Bill and Diane to be young, vigorous, beautiful. Many Senators are old, tired and their wives are ugly. There's a natural resentment there." (Maybe put this back in middle of long comment, where it really belongs.)

There was lots of crisp, bright talk about "musical chairs" of offices and how everyone gets bumped and moves several times. He wanted Dirksen Building despite "senatorial," "prestige" appeal of Russell. "The members offices are not so nice. Besides, the committees are here, the cafeteria is here and it functions better here". Notes how he called and badgered someone for extra room down the hall--which they got.

In the middle of the interview, ~~he~~ hesitated talking about the Judiciary Committee, he said "all this is semi-confidential, isn't it."

Talked of knocking down walls of office so Bill would have a more "senatorial" office. Said that the present office is smaller than what he had in the House.

He also complained of being knocked back by early resignations from 85th on election day to 91st now. Offices are judged mostly by floorspace. Dennis

Howe said they were moving because of "250 square feet more of floor space." And Tom's *appeal to* wherever was in terms of floor space being inadequate for staff of 18.

*like
clothing!*
Talked about how much quicker House is in this matter. "Everybody chooses a room according to seniority. The freshmen come in and draw a number by lot. Then everybody moves. Here, everybody has one day to think about it-- 100 Senators, 100 days to complete the process, theoretically. But nobody does anything till December. This year they had an orgy of self-*congratulation* because they got through the first 80 choices by January. But the new Senators will have to move 2 or three times before it's all over.

Point was that it was long, dragged out process in the Senate.

He noted in discussing the room changes that Hathaway's office did not help Cohen at all. Nothing cooperative about the relationship.

Spoke of Cohen admiring John Aderson who was out of step with other Republicans--as Republican party trended more conservative. Some of the conservatives are "good guys" and some are rigid and humorless--some of Republicans now called "moderate" are pretty conservative. Anderson resented because he's talented. Anderson, himself, is bored and talking of running for the Presidency. He's always challenged from within the party. Point was that Bill identifies with Anderson.

Part of it was idea that it's not fun anymore, and people are leaving. Wednesday Club guys are leaving, but they don't get beaten. He thinks liberal Republicans have best of both worlds and they don't get beaten.

Someone told me recently that Cohen became a Republican because he thought chance for advancement best in that party. A good question to ask him--how and why he became a Republican.

Cohen's office was piled high with boxes. There was nothing but a picture of his children on the desk and one item hung on the wall. It was an encased gavel--a ^{gift} ~~figt~~ from Pter Rodino with a letter which went something like...Dear Bill, "Since we shared such an extraordinary moment in American history, I thought you would like one of the gavels with which I presided over the impeachment hearings." Peter.

I always felt Bill downplayed the impeachment hearings in his own life--but there's no doubt that he wishes to keep it uppermost in his image. There it was, the only decorative piece--the first thing up and in place on the wall in an otherwise totally disorganized--just-moved-in room.

Talk with Dale Gerry 1~~0~~/11/79

Spring 1977. No staff consensus - "could be more effective as a senator" or "he's too strong". September Bill goes on vacation and decided to do it--whirlwind tour of state.

"Second or third fiddle in announcement" crime ring broken on same day.

Dale ^{Ahearn(?)} working on finances - statewide fund raiser. In October - Howard Baker--that produced good support "first indicator of good Republican support" - had wondered about Republican support - "came out in full force". "We thought at that time we were in better shape in Republican party than we had ever been."

^{On beginning 1972} Some factors vs him "you could put him through the wringer all day and he'd still come out looking like he had jumped out of pages of Esquire Magazine."

All 5 ~~former~~ state chairmen accepted invitation to sit at head table with Cohen, 2 didn't come, but only one ^{left - Sy Joly.} ~~by July.~~ Portland office, Dale, Gerry, Becky ^{Arnsteyn(?)} ! p. 31

Start in February. "low key - were low key till summer - org. and fund raising. Bangor ^{the} opened in March, 3 people, mostly fund raising. April had 6 full time people on staff - circulating petitions - 700 mailed 'em to local officials and volunteers - no talk of primary--no primary opposition.

Problem re fact^{is}alism was to keep governor's race from causing bloodshed-- it got "top billing"---"we put togehter best convention demonstration and a good time was had by all. (May 19-20) It put a cap on the Republicans and proved we weren't taking them for granted."

"Now we're effectively rolling into money and getting active organization in committees."

By convention, we had 10 full time people--all young Maine people.

Targeted towns via previous elections and worked on organization.

Newspapers ~~g~~ started giving us more publicity.

In June felt "a little behind" in organization according to timetable, but "no momentum" to campaign at that point.

10 were hard core campaigners. "I would have gone with a strong 16. We were spread awfully thin at times." (He wanted 6 in 2nd district and 10 in 1st district).

2nd district people were "in a holding pattern." But that didn't mean doing nothing. We could be clobbered if we didn't do everyting in the 2nd district that we did in the 1st."

Worked out to be 60% 1st district and 40% 2nd district in terms of Bill's time. (from recess on.)

"In July we were in trouble in York County. Very little media input into York County. Only way is to go through Boston or Manchester. Our ID problem was greater than we had anticipated. We also found out York County didn't make up mind till after the Red Sox season and up to two weeks before election. Then we began to get a steady tracking."

"Our ability to take samplings and get results the same day. We could tell you what streets or wards in Portland we had trouble in--we could get it in one day and that was very helpful as a supplement to our 600-700 sample." Find it to be accurate.

"Catapulted into walk in July. At that time volunteer applications were so great we didn't have enough things for them to do."

"Between January and July I can't think of any minor setbacks. Only exception was our concern over money. Made some ^{??} (extrs) in May to personnel ~~M~~ morale went down when we didn't get new troops. At this time we realized this would be a good race. A down period. Wanted to go for TV if Hathaway went on TV in primary to keep ID up or match ID."

"Took out a very nice ad in every paper in Maine weekend before primary (6,000). I'd have supplemented it with radio in some areas. Feedback had been

Primary is anti-~~democratic~~ ^{climatic}. Cohen did very well regardless of congressional district. Hathaway in a number of communities throughout state had done poorly compared to *gubernatorial* candidates. Some Democrats voted for Democrat gubernatorial candidate and didn't vote at all for Hathaway. Showed good dissatisfaction with Hathaway. "That was a real high for us. We were very tickled. Up to this time the people coming into our headquarters were all Democrats--that we're sick of Hathaway. The result confirmed the unhappiness of Democrats."

"From July on it was a blurry scene--up, up, up, up."

"After July pressure was being applied and every time we turned around Hathaway had a *dog and pony* show in Maine, holding hearings here and there. The thing that got under our fingernails is that he had never done that before."

Story about blimp at Democratic Convention advertising Cohen-- questioned about disclosure on bottom of blimp. "The blimp episode" good publicity.

Hathaway shows concern about it--seems to bother him--reporters also note that ^{at} Hathaway speech he was "frosted" about episode.

Gubernatorial choices had no effect on us.

"Personally I thought there was not the momentum I had anticipated at end of summer or early fall. There were just not that many issues that fired up the electorate. D-L, Indiana. We found that in late summer people still didn't know Cohen's position on ⁱⁿland claims and we got position papers etc.

Paid staff at this point 15. Volunteers - 300-400.

Marathon "One of the most spectacular events of the campaign. We got a group of very young, young old and very old who were interested in jogging-- completely apolitical who just liked Cohen because he was an athlete." "The most well played media event" and raised \$5-7,000. "People knew Bill Cohen was in town."

"Much to our surprise Hathaway's television was not effective. Ours were very effective. We had Bill Cohen on TV talking. All Hathaway ads did not have him talking."

Ind. ^{Land Claims ad} ~~and~~ "I think that one ad was very decisive. Hathaway no, no, no, Cohen, yes, yes, yes. Hathaway knew then that he was in trouble and that's why Washington came up with a settlement. By that time it was too late. Papers had made up their mind and decided it was a very expensive contribution to Hathaway's campaign."

3 debates a farce ⁷ candidates equal time.

Two weeks to end - phone banks - getting out the vote. Cumberland, York, Penobscot, Kennebec, Augusta, Waterville were key areas" made damn certain we had very good, get out the vote effort, identification of Cohen supporters." in some areas, worked with P ^{almer} and some other candidates.

"Politics is like a football game. If you fumble near the other team's goal line you lose your momentum and you're psyched. Unless the other team fumbles, you're out of it. You can't get back in it. We had the momentum from the beginning. Hathaway never had it."

Lack of authority. 4 people in charge - democracy - "Bill Cohen does not put all of his apples into opinion of one adviser - never has and never will. And that's smart, so long as the ship stays afloat."

Dale wouldn't do it now - loves it - but tired.

Staff now in Bangor 3, Portland 2,

1972 original staff = Jackie M^c Dermott, Chris Potheim, Dale Gery, Jan Johnson

When I asked him about campaign - Washington linkage - he went into question of whether campaign personnel make good congressional employees.

Announced early in September because several Republican gubernatorial candidates were breathing down our necks. They were unknown candidates and had to get started." *P* "Instead of saying my prayers, I said to myself 50 times we were in a marathon and *we had* to pace ourselves."

*often, timing
of announcements
forced by
the
candidates
Temptations -
this announcement
season and each when
candidates don't have conflict
control no handling*

Talk with Tom Daffron - 1/11/79 - Do not use without consulting Tom

Cohen Polls - did 2 Muskie polls. June '75 and December '75, 49-41 Cohen.

December 1975 - Hathaway question as throw a way on 2nd of two Muskie polls.

Cohen led Hathaway 57-29. Cohen led Muskie 49-41. (Cadell-Muskie poll showed Muskie ahead 48-40-12.)

June 1977 = 55-30-15.

May 1978 49-40-11 "to our surprise and dismay, caused a certain amount of internal upheaval and change in personnel."

September 1978 (got it October 5th) "I thought it locked it up for us" 56-25-12; 61-29 factorying out the undecided.

Hathaway after indian settlement pitch.

October 27 - down to 12 point lead for Cohen. "We re-jiggered our strategy and went on the offensive, which I believe any non-incumbent has to do." "I remember being somewhat astonished, at that rate we could have lost ^a 19 point drop in few days."

1st problem summer - "Campaign was invisible - people thinking 2 nice guys why throw out the incumbent - we had not drawn out the issue *distinctions* we succeeded in establishing our issues. We were able to make people perceive a difference through advertising and a lot of direct mailing. We almost peaked too soon."--"went to family and bugles too soon."

Glad we took last poll, we could feel slippage, candidate had laryngitis, so we

"Idea was to punch through issues early - we were certain public would support our issues if they knew them." *Duckey* - Lincoln, Indian land claims, government spending.

"The way we were going to convince people to give money is to tell 'em you're going to win." - starting with issues early to get money.

"Our 1st was TV spot-- 10-24 of September - touch on issues--5 minute
talk Out ~~at~~ 16 - then testimonial, walks, inflation. "We thought it
would sustain us. Then it got nasty, "all style, never accomplished anything,
never passed a bill, tool of the special interests. The last thing began to
get to us. Last weekend we filed material on fair practices and that kept him
off the attack. We also borrowed the Dole idea - had people throw mud at
his picture. It was cheap, different and effective, but it didn't say anything.
We did a spot on the Portland Press endorsement. We punched up the candidate
and told him he had to go out and take it, they weren't going to give it to
him. He went back into blue collar areas and worked very hard. Our strategy
was always to go after cities, go to his ^(Hathaway) strength, keep him on defensive.
Hathaway always rose to the bait, fighting with everyone who made a pro Cohen
statement. In the end we were better organized, had a better candidate
in popular appeal and on the right side of the issues. Hathaway seemed
to be saying 'I don't care what you think on the issues; I know more than you
do.'" When he put something on that negated Cohen, we rebutted him and when
he got upset we jerked it off the air. That made him real mad. Then we put
the mud commercial on the air. And what can you say about that."

"We took poll right at end of our media buy. We thought the issues would
be effective and we wanted it to look as good as possible so we could hit
the PAC's for dough."

Re last week. "Seemed to me there was time for us to lose it. I was
worried."

Spoke about Bill being out of commission "for a week". "He had severely
strained vocal cords. In the last debate he was croaking like a frog. We
took him to a doctor that had treated Elvis and Englebert Humperdink. He

prescribed some steroids that would be a long run disaster, and a humidifier. We got a lot of national press coverage--the Senate candidate who can't talk, ha ha. But it came back gradually and the last two or three days he was OK."

He talked about relations in delegation--Hathaway and Emery are alike in style "ambling, hang around the general store types, whereas Cohen and Muskie are more national politicians, interested in national issues." But Muskie "adopted Emery and talked fishing with him." Cohen and Hathaway got along well for a while. Cohen and Hathaway staffs did not get along or like each other.

Hathaway showed Cohen Muskie's polls in 1975, hoping Cohen would run against Muskie. Tom says Hathaway felt "betrayed" when Cohen decided to go against him.

"Bill's relations with Muskie have always been pretty good. Our staff relations with Muskie's staff have been very good. We told him that if he ran against Muskie, he'd carry his own staff 8-7. It made it difficult to run against Muskie. Despite his temper tantrums, no one says he hasn't been a good Senator. During the campaign, they helped Hathaway, though the two have never been close. I think Cohen-Muskie relations will get better and better now that we're here. We suggested a joint Muskie-Cohen television show. Today they called back and were quite interested in it."

This time, when I came back to Cohen's office, a picture of his walking shoes was up on the wall plus another picture. His skis and ski boots were in the corner.

Dale expressed the same uncertainty about Cohen and the Senate as Tom did the other day. "Do you think he'll be a good Senator?" "I don't know. He's got the ability. He could be a great Senator." "Or, he could fall flat on his

face. Cohen is a restless loner. In the Senate you have to listen and you have to be one of the team." ✓

Tom noted that Packwood helped Bill in the fall with money and that they "owed" Packwood. The point is that all the people he says Bill "knows" are people who helped him in his campaign--Baker, Packwood--and Percy, whom Tom knows.

Tom said--re. the feeling between Hathaway and Cohen that they had put Cohen sign on the door of Hathaway's office when they moved down, as most other people did and that Hathaway people tore it down. Also Hathaway people worked till late on the night before the Cohen people were to take over the office (Tuesday, January 2)--on January 3rd to make it hard for the Cohen people to move in.

Tom also noted re the last weekend of the campaign--"You get so you don't want to win, you want to crush your opponent." (Maybe that's why JD's people got so depressed. They wanted to crush Anaya and didn't. And you lose perspective. After all, they did win.)

Note: It occurs to me that Cohen has same problem as Tsongas in Senate. He will be "the other Senator from Maine" because of Muskie's fame. Does he see this as a problem?

The letter on Cohen's wall:

December 4, 1974

Dear Bill,

Since we have shared an extraordinary experience in our country's history, I thought you might like, as a memento of those historic events, one of the gavels I used during the impeachment hearings. ✓

Warm regards.

Sincerely,

Peter.

Cohen - 1/9/79

17

The gavel has a date on it. July 27, 1974 and Peter Rodino's signature. It is glass encased, with the gavel up above the letter.