

Tom Daffron

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Does Bill like it? "He likes the Senate. During the campaign, we kept telling him "Believe us. It will be better." After 3 weeks here, he said to me, "You're right. It is better." You have a longer term, more visibility, a smaller universe to work with. He's not the rotary club type that is the key to success in the House. He likes to do his own thing; and that's what the Senate is like. He's good with the media. He likes to talk. He's good at questioning and at debating. All those things are at a premium in the Senate. It's nice to be in a place that is most suited to your talents. He was made for the Senate. And so far as I can tell, he likes it."

When he mentioned things Bill has been interested in, he didn't have anywhere near the repertoire that Rich had. Tom said, for example, that one thing Bill was very interested in "for about two weeks" was the education bill. But I was there during that, and he wasn't very involved--certainly not in the maneuvering. It was going to pass and Bill had no effect on it that I could tell. Tom said he lobbied some groups and made a couple of speeches and wrote some articles in it."

Then, he mentioned ~~Picky~~ Lincoln and how they mustered 46 votes vs. it--which was a respectable story. "We had campaigned against it, so we couldn't let it go by without a fight. It was our first big confrontation with the senior senator. And we didn't want to get wiped out. Last time Muskie had won by 77 to 12 or something like that. We lost by 52-46. That was respectable. And Muskie won't be sulking for the rest of the session. Next time, he won't be so smug. Eventually we'll win. As we say, actuarially, we'll be him."

Then he cited SALT--in which he says, Bill was deeply involved. But no sense of Bill actually jumping into the process, negotiating with others, proposing amendments, etc. And I know from my own visits that he wasn't going to all the briefings.

Also Tom mentioned Armed Services. He also said--when I told him my plan--that it was hard to get a feel for the institution because the committee staffs have gotten so large that each staffer gets a small piece of a Senator. ("Bill will talk to one staffer for one whole afternoon about something and then not see him again for two weeks.") and everything is getting cut into such small pieces. His point was that only the Senator could pull it all together. Everyone else saw only fragments.