

Bob Tyrer - March 24, 1992

- We talked about what to do about Bill to keep him interested in the job. "He does everything we ask him to--everything he's supposed to do, but he's getting more and more detached. I'm losing him."
- As Bob talks about Bill, he's really not into the stuff back in Maine or in doing all the stuff he has to do to entertain people in Washington.
- "One night when he refused to meet with one Maine group, I told him that they were the people who claimed he was in the pocket of another group. When the time came, he was all suited up and ready to go. Sometimes I have to make up a story to get him to do these things."
- "Did you hear the story about how he became a Republican? When he first became a lawyer, he and his partner decided that it would be good for business if one was a Democrat and the other a Republican. When his partner first suggested it, Bill said, 'Ok, I'll be the Democrat.' His partner said, 'I'm already a Democrat.' So Bill said, 'Ok, I'll be the Republican.'"
- Did Watergate come too soon? All downhill after that.
- Mitchell lords it over Bill; and Bill is not number one any more. That "rankles." "Mitchell isn't good about it."
- We went over the possibilities: work within the party, run for President, be a committee chairman, or--the one I pushed--write a column of some kind. Perhaps a moderate Republican story, somewhat pro-institutional--an occasional Maine interpretation, tell it like it is to an audience looking for the truth.
- When I asked if he could do a Maine-oriented column, Bob said, "No, he's not into that. That's not Bill."
- We agreed he gets his kicks from foreign policy and defense issues. "He's not going to be the king of the aging or the great defender of social security. When Heinz died, he took over as ranking on Aging. That's good, but he's not going to make a career out of it. He'll do it, but he's not into it. It's not him. Like prescription drugs. We're going to do a panel on it in Maine. He'll do it. He knows it, big with the senior citizens and good for him. But his heart is not in it."
- He talked about Bill and media. "He turned down Nightline ten times in a row. Because he doesn't want to become a regular pundit. Yet he worries about not getting enough press--even though he blows them off when they ask. It's a paradox. But that's Bill. He wants press, but he doesn't want to pander to them."
- We agreed that he's very competitive and independent. That's at the heart of his ambivalence about press. He wants to compete, in the way he wants to do it, not according to someone else's agenda. He doesn't

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like to dance to other peoples' tune. I told Bob about the night in Maine where he chased the press. He said it sounded right, but yet he "blows it off."

- When I reminded Bob of the way Bill ran out ahead of the group in Maine on my first visit, he cited other instances--on tours of the Capitol with Maine people, getting off a bus in a traffic jam going to the Baltimore Orioles game with Maine dignitaries.
- "I'm not the man of the people any more," Bill told Bob, apropos of not doing all the stuff he used to do.
- Bob has done everything he can to "gin up" the reelection effort. They see Rep. Andrews as Bill's opponent in 1996. Right now, says Bob, Andrews is "making a lot of noises and we'll have to see if he settles down. But 1996 could become a replay of Cohen-Hathaway, in which Andrews takes the place of Cohen. After all, Bill will have been in office 25 years. He's an institution; but we don't want him to look like a tired one. That's why I want to find some way to challenge him. He's 52 and at the peak of his power. For some guys, just doing all the shit you have to do to stay here taxes them to the limit of their powers. Not so with Bill. He's got a lot left over. If he's not taxed to the limit, he gets bored, disinterested and detached."
- If I were to incorporate this dinner with Bob (at Hunan) into the larger picture, I'd juxtapose it against the announced retirement that very day, of Warren Rudman. (See Washington Post of March 25.) Bob mentioned that and said, "He and Bill are very tight. Bill was not surprised by Rudman's decision. They have talked about it a lot. It doesn't leave Bill with very many friends in the Senate--Biden and one or two others--that he can call on the spur of the moment to have dinner or something. He's a loner. But he doesn't want to be cut off from everyone. He'll miss Warren."
- When I got to the office to pick up Bob, he wanted me to go in and say hi to Bill. I did. Bill was his usual cordial self, wanting to know what I was writing, etc. When I told him of the Andrews book, he said he had just come back from a trip to Australia and had been with Mark there. He was the first person all day to speak well of MA. Said Andrews was old "confident" self and appeared to be enjoying himself.
- But Bill turned quickly to the mood on Capitol Hill. "It's crazy around here. It's so bad that I think Tom Foley could lose his job. We are running around cutting out every perk we can find--no more cut-rate prescription drugs, no more flowers from the Botanical Garden, no more 'senators only' elevators--we're closing the dining room at 3:30. Everyone is scared to death. There's no perspective left. We aren't getting anything done. I've never seen things so sour, so disorganized, so paranoid. The atmosphere, the working conditions are the worst, by far, of any time since I've been in Congress (since 1972). The whole system is sick. It's terrible (pause). I'm headed over to the gym now--before they shut it down." I laughed at the last joke, and said, "keep your humor. It's the only sure defense." He agreed. (I may not

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have all this in the right order. Bill rattled it off rapid-fire.)

- He and Bob are still anxiously awaiting a Cohen book from me. I tried to tell Bob that I didn't have a Cohen book, that I might combine Bill and others in a campaign-oriented book.
- Bob laid out his dilemma in a memo to me--and a copy of this memo is appended to these notes.
- "Bill is never going to run for positions inside the party. He'd never do the things you have to do to work your way up from Conference Chairman to Policy Chairman to Campaign Chairman and so forth. Besides, all those positions are filled. People like Dole, Lugar, Cochran--they are the insiders. Bill will never be an insider. It's not that he attacks the institution. He values the institutions. He doesn't want to piss people off--like Metzenbaum does. He's just too independent to do all the little things that senators ask of their leaders."
- Bob began by speculating that a Weicker-style role would be what Bill could find full. But as we talked, he became convinced that that was not right, because Weicker did not command respect and Bill wants respect. But Bill isn't a Rudman. Why not? He could be, by intellect. I think its because he is, at bottom, a loner.