

Barber Conable

April 13, 1972

*So he
does get
caught*

I'm getting into a big pull ^{up!} hand with the Conservative party again. They seem to covet my lovely white body--as they did last time. A number of west side politicians have already accepted the endorsement. And Bill Dwyer is urging me to do it too. He thinks I would be quite a drawing card. But the people in my rural counties don't want me to do it because they don't want the conservative party to get started out there and I would give them quite a boost. So there I am again caught between my urban and rural supporters. If I had my druthers I'd reject it--I did last time, and they ran someone against me. He drained off about 8,000 votes. I haven't said anything. I'm afraid Bill Dwyer is negotiating for me--seeking conservative support ^{for} ~~from~~ some weak Republicans and using me as bait. He'll tell the conservatives that if they will support our weak local candidates, he'll deliver me to them. And then the local candidates, to whom the conservative votes may make the difference, will come to me and say, Barber, you've got to go with us, or else we may lose. Then I'll be under great pressure. I don't like being bargained over. I don't know why the conservatives are so anxious to have me anyway--with my support of the President. I wrote half the welfare reform bill and I've been the chief supporter of the irresponsible revenue sharing bill. It's not a decision I want to make. And I hope I don't have to."

" This year I've been rather depressed. You know the big game in Congress is to say next year I'll have more seniority, next year I'll be more in the center of things, next year I'll get some of my ideas across. For me, next year has come. I am in the center of things. I am a dominant force in the Ways and Means Committee. ^{I can get anything I want in the Ways and Means Committee} I have the party leadership position I want. ^{although I haven't got as much authority as I had in the House} Still, I don't have much influence. I can almost open any door if I throw my weight around. I can get all my ideas into legislation. I go to leadership meetings at the White House every week. And I'm the one who speaks up to the President while all the other leaders are saying, "Yes, Mr. President," ^{Yes, Mr. President} I don't know what more I could want. And I don't even know where I could go to have more impact. I'm much better off in the House than in the Senate--that's a mess, nobody leads anyone there. In the House, I notice ^{not} people take some interest in me, they listen when I speak on the floor and they seem to care how I vote. So have everything I ever wanted. Still, I don't have that much impact. I'm not bored. I'm just depressed. I'm reduced to the whimsy of wondering what it would be like to be a member of the majority party."

At intern interviews on Saturday, April 15, 1972.

"Java is the most Democratic town in Wyoming County, because of the George family. They are Democrats and there are about 8,000 of them. The geneology is very interesting in these small towns. I almost lost the western half of Wyoming County in the redistricting. Even though it's the most Democratic section of the County, I didn't want to lose it. I like Wyoming County. I grew up there. Probably I could have saved the Monroe County towns I lost--Brockport, Hamlin, Clarkson--if I had been willing to give up the western half of Wyoming County. When you get right

Barber Conable

February 16, 1972

*Butt away
for
congress!*

On redistricting, how did you do? "Pretty damn good. I lost Orleans County and I'm sorry to lose it. It's a troubled county, but I have an awful lot of good friends there. I lost all the part in Erie County and I'm not sorry. I'll say goodbye to them without a single backward glance. That's where all the Conservative votes were cast against me, by the Polish voters in Lancaster. I'll pick up Livingston County and a few towns in Ontario County. I'll lose 3 towns in Monroe County, Sweden, Hamlin and Clarkson--good Republican towns. I don't like to lose them. Then I pick up Henrietta. Originally I had Mendon and Rush, but Frank said he had to have them--that it was a Democratic district. I said, 4,000 votes? He said, well, maybe he could hold it but not the next person. He says he's slipped from 72% to 70%! In Albany, they said, 'Barber, just tell us you object and we'll change it back again.' I said, 'No, you just say, 'No changes.' They said, 'We don't want trouble; but if you say the word, we'll change it back.' I said, 'No, I've got to live with these people, so I'm not going to object.' The way it is, the district is odd-shaped. Frank has a finger sticking right into my district. I call it 'the finger.' But if I fought for Mendon and Rush, Frank

would convince Bill Dwyer to take some more of the city away from me--probably the 23rd Ward, which has been a good Republican ward. So, I ^{have} ~~was~~ gotten it either way. As it was, Frank got the Republicans to take away the area on my side of the river that includes the government buildings, the main Kodak office building--all the prestige areas downtown. So he can say, "Welcome to the 34th District" when he greets people at the Flagship."

Harry, too, stressed loss of this downtown area, and Barber Conable's first comment to me was "Frank screwed me in the redistricting."

He said Herman Scherbeli ^{nee bel} didn't want to be ranking new member on Ways and Means--but Barber went quickly to him to offer him support, "collegial leadership," etc. And Administration interceded to keep him out of a primary fight--so he could spend time with committee.

Barber turning down interviews to keep from seeming to be the power on the committee--"My reach has exceeded my grasp."

"The bussing issue is tearing this place apart. People are becoming so irrational--talking about kids having to ride 30 minutes on a bus to get to school. So far, I've refused to sign the discharge petition supporting the Constitutional amendment prohibiting bussing. I'm against bussing, but I don't think we ought to prohibit bussing. And certainly I don't think we should tamper with the Constitution in this way. I'm afraid the pressure will get so great I may have to come out in favor of it."

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Part of the congressman's leadership consists of keeping his options open and therefore educating people to the options. Difference between people and congressman is sense for the options. In that sense, "apt of the possible." "Leadership isn't black and white."