

April 17, 1970 After intern interviews - BC, TB and myself

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I don't have much time to speak to constituents who are uncommitted. I'm so badgered by people to whom I'm obligated ~~to~~ politically that I spend most of my time performing ceremonially before the people who already agree with me. The ground is very fallow for confronting those who don't have a strong policy position ~~on~~ ^{for} converting the enemy. The people I do speak ^{to} ~~and~~ talk favorably about me. They tell others that 'old Barber' is always accessible and available. And I get a reputation in that way. That's how I succeed in this kind of district. People think of me as a nice guy, one of the boys and they make presumptions in my favor because I'm a nice guy. Sometimes I do my talking to the same people over and over again. But they talk to others. And my newsletter--that has helped. (Over 30,000 people on it.)

He agreed with Tom Benton that he could do pretty much as he wanted in Washington without raising his people because he already has a reputation. He said it wasn't true that he could do anything, but not clear what that forbidden segment was.

Maybe types of reputations go with types of districts and congress^mman becomes a prisoner of his reputation once he gets on--so maybe some reputations are of a liberating sort in some respects. Conable must stay visible ceremonially--in that way he is a prisoner. But he has great leeway in Washington and in that way he is liberated by his reputation.

"I haven't done any door to door stuff since the campaign before last. When I did, in suburban Greece, there were more people who said "We get your newsletter." It was a bridge to people I hadn't met before."

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It's a typical Conable concern to worry about "bridges," "identification," "communication" etc. He worries a lot about "getting along" etc.

"With an incumbent, if you haven't won your campaign before the election begins, you won't win at all. It's hard for me to step up my campaign. I've never been home less than 40 times a year since I've been in Congress. Last time I lost interest in my campaign. Poor old Jim Gerhardt. He fell flat on his face before he stood up. I hear he wants to run against me again. God, I hope not. I hope they run someone who will keep me interested."

"Mailmen throw my newsletter in the Genessee River. They have me marked for extinction."

June 12-14, 1970

Drove ~~BP~~^C to 23rd ward Women's Republican Club supper in Charlotte. Plane arrived late and he had to decide which of 2 invitations to cancel out on--23rd ward or Erie County American Legion Convention in Alden. He called Tom Benton and cancelled out on Alden. I asked why he made the choice.

I can't do myself any good with the Legion. If I go talk to them, I won't be hawkish enough for them and I'll be criticized. On the other hand if I don't say anything they'll give me the benefit of the doubt, since they don't identify me as "one of those peacenik bastards." Under these conditions I'd just as soon duck out. I need all the exposure I can get in that part of the district. But there will be plenty of other chances under conditions much more favorable than they would be tonight."

So we went to the 23rd ward dinner--on the way we talked about the fight in Greece between Eckert and Skinner. The Eckert people had been threatening him for going to the Republican Women's Club in Greece next Monday. He described Eckert as "right wing conservative" "He has a Napoleonic complex and thinks of himself as the next President of the United States. He makes everyone stand up and be counted all the time. I'm not going to let him intimidate me. I'm too soft for that. Soft as the people who have helped me in all my campaigns--like Gurley Gordon. If I were a hard nosed politician I'd tell the Gurly^{re} Gordons of the world to ^{go} jump but I can't do that. You can't be a ruthless politician and survive--not on this level. And I can't let Eckert dominate me." Spoke of Skinner--"A pathetic old man going door to door asking for help. He's an old style formula politician in a new style town. Imagine, he didn't even have one woman on the town committee--in a suburbia town like Greece."

He talked a good deal about Greece on the way out and back. "I don't want to get mixed up until after the primary and then I'll have to make a big effort to close ranks. You can't make a nickel with either side right now. They're having this terrific fight and each one tell you how bad the other is. It's a shambles. And there's nothing I can do about it--the biggest town in my district."

He worried on the way out that the postal workers would be at the dinner and would be abusive. He said they will campaign against him because he voted vs. their last pay raise in the House. He wanted postal reform too. This is the only vote he'd cast against them. He gets 2000 letters on every postal issue. He thinks they control votes and are popular and are political

and later when I asked about the interests in the district he listed Kodak first and laughingly put the postal workers second. He said he suffers by comparison with FH on this. "F commits himself immediately to everything they want and they compare me with him." Could any one vote kill him in the district? "No, not in my district. My district is too diverse--it's not all urban ghetto or Idaho potato farmers. That gives me a chance to balance interests in my votes. There really aren't any dominant interests. No one vote could defeat me--unless it was a crooked vote, of course. Eastman Kodak is the biggest and they don't give a damn. They don't give me any trouble. I help them with their tax problems. But they're so big the only people who know about that are in the tax department. They aren't going to help me on free trade. I called Lou Eilers and told them they had a lot more to lose through restrictions on trade than through competition. He said they sold a lot of Kodak to textile people and that they love their textilers. He was being less than philosophical about it. I'm going to drag my feet all the way to the import quota system that seems to be in the works. They disagree with me on that, but they won't bother me about it."

*Mike Rosenberg
for
Harper.*

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"I have a safe district. I don't see how I can lose it. Maybe I should be superstitious and not say things like that. But I could only lose if there were a Republican disaster. Goldwater got 30.0% in my district and I got 53.9% in that year. It can't get worse than that. Last year I won by 78,000 votes and got a higher % than Frank did. I should break even in the new part of the district. I should get

between 55 and 60% of the vote. That's pretty solid--even if the economy stays bad. So I'm not pushing the panic button. I'm going to spend \$20,000."

Talked about new parts of his district in Erie County--60,000 voters--split, he thinks. Alden, Lancaster ~~and~~ ^{and} (biggest) ~~Holland~~ some others.

Talked about who would be at breakfast in Batavia tomorrow--his old pals from earlier days. Talked about Batavia as 18,000 people and Greece as 75,000 to show size and importance of Greece.

"I still do well in Wyoming County because my brother is so very popular there. He's an absolutely selfless public servant. In some towns there, I'll get 80% of the vote--because they think they're voting for him--honest!"

Talked about his trouble in Parma--Hilton band wanted "fed. aid" to go to Expo 70--\$90,000 and thinks BC should have gotten it for them. Also better postal service.

Talked about losing Livingston County as severe and discussed Emery as not wanting to compete with him on ticket.

He talked about how one of the cronies coming for breakfast, helped him get into the Rotary Club early in his career as a lawyer and how getting into Rotary has the big step in community affairs in Batavia. This man ran a hardware store and Barber got paint and nails from him 1st day he opened his office--struck up a friendship then that has lasted ever since. Hardware store man remarked when BC walked in that he looked like _____. BC said _____ was his cousin--killed at Normandy beach. Hardware man said "If I

Earl Bucholtz,
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can ever do anything for you, let me know."--got him into Rotary ahead of some other lawyers in a cause celebre.

Talked about ethnic makeup--10% non-white, 50% Catholic--no strength among "Catholic vote." But didn't mention strength among non-white. Said that he was "too liberal" for Catholic conservatives, but when I asked if they knew of his liberalism on ~~on~~ civil rights, he said he didn't know.

When I asked re interests in the district, he mentioned EK, Postal Workers--and then the unions UAW in Rochester, ~~U~~E in Rochester and Sylvania in Batavia. "I have no contact with them. They oppose me but they don't go after me. They just identify me as an enemy of the people and leave me alone."

National Federation of Federal Employees--N.Y. Federation

On way to state employees meeting he talked of his differences with unions.

"I've never worked for union support and so I'm not going to do very well here. I figure I can never get the support of their leaders and so I try for the support of their members on issues other than labor issues. I'm on the wrong side of most of their formulas. I don't seek meetings like this. I didn't seek this one. But I won't run away either. Right now I'm getting the heat for my stand in opposition to quotas. The other day the Amalgamated took me right out of committee when I was questioning the Sec. of State, and wanted me to support them. These people just want your support, they don't want to argue the merite of the issue. I said let's talk about it. They said they didn't want to talk

about it, they wanted to know what I was going to do. I blew my cork in traditional Conable fashion. I said I was going to keep an open mind until after the hearings were completed, that I didn't consider the hearings a farce and that I wasn't going to get precommitted. Getting precommitted and cast in brass is something that bothers me more than anything else in legislative life. I hate to go to the vote with any encumbrances. If you commit yourself early and you're on the wrong side, you have to go back on your word or against your judgment. Frank can do that--that's why he will do much better than I before this union group. He's a bright fella and he doesn't drop the ball the way I probably will. He's a formula politician, and he keeps a coalition of groups like this supporting him. You push this button you get the support of this group, you push that button and you get the support of that group. It's a quid pro quo formula. [Could you do it?] I suppose I could. It would be easier in my district than Frank's because he has an upper middle class district and I have a lower middle class district. I could count the labor vote assiduously. I could support whatever the postal workers want. Instead of talking about inflation, I'd talk about doing things for people. I wouldn't vote for things like foreign aid or free trade. I'd vote for quotas. A lot of thoughtful people would be awfully upset with me but they wouldn't have any alternative so long as I was more credible than my opponent. [Why don't you?] Life's too short--I have to live with myself. And I'd rather use my own judgment than follow a sterile formula. Another thing, I can't sell people out by saying one thing and doing another-- on the assumption they won't know what I'm doing. I'm very sensitive about

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hypocrisy about the feeling people have that politicians are hypocritical.

. . . Frank is very popular with people who don't know him and very unpopular with those who do. I'm very unpopular with those who don't know me and popular with those who do. I like it better than way."

At another point during the weekend he said that Frank's district was easier than his for a Republican, that middle class "was Republican and Frank had more middle class constituency.

Talked re Fight going to him for urban renewal and federal building was his doing--a personal favor to BC from head of ~~USA~~. ^{He} ~~the~~ morning coffee "I guess you can see what an institution this is. You have no idea how invaluable these meetings are for me. They keep me in touch with my home base. If you don't keep your base at home, you don't have anything. I'm still considered a local community leader and though I don't like to get into community affairs too deeply I have to know what's going on. I have to be aware of what decisions are being made locally. They've just decided to fire the county historian and that will cause a greater stir than a lot of national questions. I'll say it's a local decision--but I have to know what the decisions are. I'm expected to."

The men at the AM coffee were retired judge, past president of city council, hardware store owner, retired science teacher, retired manager of midland bank, city fathers--full of small town gossip--of people, of churches, of the library, board of education, lawns. Very little knowledge of state politics generally--especially in Dem. or Conserv. politics--

who was running etc. (They are community leaders and old friends, not political leaders at all and in the fall, BC talked of how the County Chairman was suspicious of this little group as a Crable-oriented threat to his leadership. Eddie Kane (Chairman) was leaning hard on this little group to come to a cocktail party of his so that by going they would acknowledge his leadership. Barber called it all nonsense and was amused by it. Called Eddie Kane "dumb" several times. BC does not want to be a local political leader--said that several times. ^{Barber} ^{Phelp}

This fueled Kane's ...
Barber's attitude towards ...

Spent a lot of time going over some John Gardner quotes to see if he could use one at Byron and Federal Employees meeting. He decided re his Byron speech: "I guess I'll smooch em a little. I'll tell them that the values of America are rooted in the small towns." Byron Sesquicentennial.

As we swung off 490 into route 33 to Bergen he said suddenly, "It must be terrible to be without roots, to be without a place to call home. I have a profound sense of identification with these rural people. My wife still worries about me a little bit in this respect--that I'm still too much of a country boy. But life's too short to play a role or strike a pose. This will be fun this afternoon. I'm really going to enjoy myself--not like this morning (with the Federal Employees union). I really worry about the rootlessness of our people, about the changes that are taking place in our values which were, after all, pretty durable and a source of great social stability." As we got closer to Bryon he smiled and said "It won't be long now. Here are the Byron suburbs. There are Gerald *Pritts'* beets growing over there. He grows 3% of all the edible beets in the U.S."

Throughout the day he amazed me with local knowledge--Indian arrow heads at breakfast "archaic Iroquois or point peninsula," types of old fashioned hats "this is genuine beaver isn't it?" in PM. Cost of 1915 Ford "That must have cost \$400 when new didn't it?" Answer \$380.

"Howdy" "How's things" "How's it going" to everyone in PM. At one point he said "It's just like old home week here."

Knows people by county--Orleans, Genessee, etc. A "family and counties" approach. "He's a Genessee County boy, married a Churchville girl" etc. On the way from Byron to Alexander we talked about Indian wars, William Johnson, etc. etc. and picked it up when we left his house to go to the Jack Kemp Dinner. The topics on the way to Kemp dinner were (briefly) Tom Benton and (at length) Indian history. He dug arrowheads as a boy, put on Indian dances as a boy scout and lectured to Rotary Clubs as a young man on the subject of the pre-history of the area. Knows every battle, fort, river, tribe, leader etc. etc. A remarkable performance.

At dinner he said at one point "You have to start in every case with the assumption that you cannot know what your constituents want you to do. But I was born in my district and I grew up in my district and I have a very close identification with the people in it. I know what their values are." He didn't really say that he voted with those values but that was the implication. He made quite a point of the fact that votes are very complicated.

From Kemp dinner home, we talked about his career in the House. "I'm known as the corner in the Northeast. I'm known as a hard worker, a well balanced fellow, a person who's willing to undertake lots of tasks and who is growing in his job." Talked a lot about how Byrnes relies on him now as NOZ on W & M. He doesn't think of self as a party leader but is keeping his options open. Long conversation on this. He sees strength of party in mid west and thinks that a moderate from NYS is not going to get to be party leader. But they do need someone in the leadership from northeast and he could be that one.

He couldn't respond to question comparing his constituency with that of other congressmen. Said he didn't have enough information. He thought maybe his was a lot like Bob McEwan's, though Bob doesn't have anything larger than Watertown, Oswego or Plattsburgh. He also mentioned Erlernborn but said E's district was "too suburban" to be like his and also that "He's a strong leader back home and I'm not." He said he thought there were "a lot" of districts like his and his was "special only in being so typical." We also talked when we got near the Kemp dinner about the redistricting "I got it at both ends in Erie County and in Monroe. I had no one supporting me. Henry Smith had Brydges and Frank Horton had Dick Rosenbaum. I told Dick I was disappointed in his performance in not helping me--but I don't even live in his county." He tried to influence the map making--"strenuously" and failed. He got some part of the 13th ward in Rochester and didn't get East Aurora which he wanted in Erie. But he said "I can't complain too much. I still have a good district." he noted he thought Frank would get part of 3rd ward and grinedⁿ that he wouldn't miss it at all! No feeling for it at all--^{at all} despite fact that he continually described himself as more liberal than his party on civil rights and "too liberal" to be considered for a top leadership post in the party. Said he might get a minor post.

Said Gerry Ford got exasperated at him when he would cite his party. "Gerry takes me for granted and gets very upset when I vote against him on something. He thinks of me as a loyalist. But if you look at my record--on civil rights for example, you'll find I'm not just a wheel-

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horse. I voted against the SST--a big pressure kind of vote." Said he wouldn't vote for something on basis of doing a favor for a fellow Representative or avoid a hard teller vote because someone asks him to as a favor. *(In the fall, he noted that FH never votes on teller votes and will have to now that changes have been made.)*

At Tom Benton's, we talked a lot about campaign contributions-- they had list of about 1000 names and contributions of \$9100 so far. They mailed a letter to all who receive newsletter for 1 year asking for 10.00 or less. They return all over \$50.00. Response from Rochester was surprisingly large for BC. He didn't even try in Rochester last time. He was surprised by money from Brockport.

BC--Are they really that upset about the college? TB--Yes. BC-- But I'm not anti college. TC--Well it's your reputation. You have a reputation as the purveyor of eternal Verities. That's the way people see you. You've come down on the right side of the revolution this time. BC shrugged shoulders. *P*"It's been a pretty typical weekend though some are busier. You can't say I accomplished anything, really, but I didn't unaccomplish anything either. It's a negative thing I guess. If I didn't come to functions like this people who are for me would be weaned away from me. They expect me to be here. So I've maintained my contacts, met people and remained visible this weekend. It's been a pretty non-political weekend. But this sort of thing is a terribly important part of what I do. It maintains my reputation for being available, for getting up and speaking low key, saying some things that need to be said--not very important things maybe--but making a point here and there. I guess

you'd say I'm on display really. Hell, these people don't know me. But now they can say they've seen the congressman and he looks OK. That gives them an identification with government. They need that identification--and I give it ^{just} first by being here. Don't knock it."

Miscellaneous notes:

Barber wants to keep the Alexander House and Charlotte doesn't "But we outvote her 5-1."

How to find Tom Benton's house--"Take route 98 out of Batavia till you come to Route 20--turn right on 20, right past my wood lot. When you get to Darien go past ~~St. Louis~~^{St. Louis} Junkyard--that's the major landmark in Darien--and turn right."

The hair raising backroad 70 mph ride from Batavia to Parma.

The Parma town seal with its emphasis on a home, church and county, wheat and apples "our main crops." Parma very similar to Byron--calls itself "a farming community" but built modern townhall "with guts" says BC. And is sending Band to Expo 70. Barber spoke there, too, about the heritage, country's future as good one, flag is symbol of history.

Prior to speech at Veterans Hospital he said re. his speech "What can I say about the flag. I guess they just want to be reassured."

Veterans Hospital ceremony led by Elks. A surprisingly young group of men led it (20-30 yrs.) They spoke of Elks as "intensely patriotic" "loyal Americans" ready to die for out country" etc. These themes ran through the CPOE (Benenolent and Protective Order of Elks) ceremony.

They said they were the only organization in USA whose charter ordered them to observe flag day every year on June 14th. A typically patriotic ceremony. BC said he was only major politician in Batavia who was never an Elk. *Had had no contact with them.*

BC spoke of "middle course" between being "unloving critics" and "uncritical lovers" of USA--how to continue and still have faith. - *Phrases are from*
Sam Gardner