

6/70
I'm on my way to Batavia to meet with Barber Conable and his campaign manager, Tom Benton, in the town of Darien. It's a gorgeous Sunday morning, about 10:30; it's the third day of my travel with Congressman Barber Conable - a glorious June day, 75 degrees and I'm reflecting a little bit on what happened yesterday. I think the most dominant characteristic of the Congressman, as I saw it yesterday, was the evidence of his enormously deep roots in the District that he represents. I think this is truly a 'man of the land'--a man who knows the history of the District; a man who is very concerned with the land and has a very strong sense of identification with rural people. ^{His comment to me about his profound sense of identification with the people} of his District, was almost poetic in nature and came just as we left the four-lane super highway designed to speed up traffic from Buffalo to Rochester. As we left that highway and moved on to Rte. 33 headed for Byron and Burgeon and moved from the super highways of the 1960's onto the small town two-lane highways of the '30s. It was at that point that he, as we moved from a Labor Union meeting in the city of Rochester toward the celebration in Byron that he began to talk about the traditional values of the country and how they were rooted in the rural areas. We went to Byron and that's the place where the Congressman seemed to be most at home. ^{They} ~~He~~ had a small-town parade that lasted about a half an hour and there were the marching Fire Departments from the nearby towns of Clarendon and Elba and there were the floats depicting church scenes and old automobiles and people were garbed in general dress of the 1820's. The curious thing was that it didn't seem to me as though the people of Byron had moved so very far from the 1820's, at least not as far as the people in the City of Rochester. The Congressman obviously enjoyed himself; he moved easily around the crowds. He spoke as if, and said at a couple of points,, "it's just like old home week". He looked forward to this and seemed to know

the names of most everybody, identifying them either by the families from which they came or from the town^{or}_^ by the county from which they came. He would say to people, "OH, you've come a long way over from Orleans County. How are things in Orleans County?"

When he talked, he gave a very short speech. The gist of the speech was that the people of Byron and this area were extremely fortunate that they had grown up among the people that were there, they knew one another's problems; they shared one another's heritage and there was a tradition of neighborliness. He stressed the notion of neighborliness and tradition and that they should be thankful for this tradition. He spoke about the divided world in which we live, the polarization and said that the people of Byron had a special obligation to adhere to the values of the country that had ~~had~~ made the country what it was and to help stabilize the country in a time of great division and great turmoil. He introduced ^{the} a speech by talking about some people had known in the area, about his family, about their roots in the area, and altogether it was very much a celebration of the small town and of a rural way of life. And the contrast between this performance in which he was totally at ease, totally without pretention, the contrast between this and the earlier meeting with the Labor Union with the people in the Sheraton Hotel was enormously striking to me. At the Labor Union meeting, he was on the defensive; he was not in basic sympathy with the people there who were extremely worried about problems of representation in the unions in the Federal government. At that meeting he talked a good deal about the necessity to communicate with Congress. He presented himself as a very open-minded person, and the Union people seemed pleased that he had taken the time to come and talk with them. But on the whole, that was not a meeting to which he had looked forward; he had ~~worried~~ ^{fretted} about

Byron has an
entirely different
picture given
problems of the
city - invasion
& skepticism
but no loss
of sense
commitment
to people.

and shuffled papers on the subject all the way from Batavia to Rochester;
it_A and the meeting in the countryside was obviously much more to his taste,
much more to his pleasure.

When we left Byron, he began to talk as we drove through the corn and beet countryside, green and rich and full of history; began to talk about the pre-history of the area about which he knew an enormous amount. It was truly a remarkable performance that he put on as he talked, eventually, I think, for about an hour and a half, about the Indian history of the area, about the warfare between the Iroquois and the Hurons and how the tribe in between the Neuter and in the neutrals and in the buffer zones between the two warring nations. He talked about the way in which they resolved their problems, the way in which the Iroquois had colonized by defeating the Hurons in a surprise attack in 1840 and then moved against the Neuter tribe and commingled with the Neuter tribe and then eventually colonized that group. He talked at enormous length about ^{how} he knew every fort along the Genesee River, which was the boundary between the Iroquois or the Seneca tribe and the neuter. He knew all the early settlements in the Niagara area; he knew all the battles between the French, the English; he told of how the Seneca's were wiped out by the French expedition under Denonville near the town of Victor. He talked about the great leaders of the Indians and about the various kinds of artifact that he had found and how he used to talk about Indian history before Rotary Clubs. And he was able to span the history of the Indian tribes in a truly remarkable tour de force.

When we got to Alexander, we immediately walked around his land; and there isn't any doubt of this man's enormous love for the land--his feeling for the land. He owns a hundred acres. Every Spring, he and his daughters come to Alexander and plant about a dozen trees on his back lot which is a couple of acres in size; and we walked briskly around the land, looking at

every single sapling--there must have been fifty. He knew every sapling; he knew every tree; he knew ^{kind} what of make it was, what kind of leaves it had, how it grew, what kind of soil it needed; where the rabbits ate the bark; and he wanted to see how many of these trees had survived since the early planting this Spring. He kept saying "I love trees". And he pointed out to me every tree, every bush on the land and how it grew and what the differences were between one kind of spruce and another, the difference between one kind of fir and another, between hemlock and spruce, tulip, catalpa, various kinds of locust, oak, walnut and varieties of tree I had never heard of. He spoke also of his home built in 1830, a home which was an exact replica of a home that Thomas Jefferson had planned for his daughter, a home which now sits in Williamsburg, Virginia known as The Randolph-Semple House. The very house itself reeked of history. We walked through the house and he showed me tables that he had bought at auctions that belonged to President Millard Fillmore. There were pictures of Abraham Lincoln on the wall. There were old pieces of furniture that he had bought from hotels when they were torn down - hotels in Batavia. The house had a kind of history; the furniture had history, the land over which he walked with such obvious emotional attachment--all these things give you the feeling of a person of the land, attached to the land, a person with a kind of open honesty associated with the land, a sort of matter-of-factness about him that led me to believe that ^{this} ~~he~~ ^{the} was a genuine person and that from this heritage came the political stance, the votes, ^{the} enormous popularity that he had won among his colleagues in the House, which is very much like a small town. I had the feeling that I had somehow or other between the events of Byron celebration, the tremendous erudition ~~and~~ concerning the pre-history of his area and his love of this very old home and the land on which it stands, that in all of these ways I had

more or less come to find the essential person behind the Congressman.

It was a very revealing experience for me.

well go and talk to him
~~Next will be~~ campaign he's planning when I meet him and Tom Benton
at Tom's house in Darien.

jb:10/7/70