

Barber Conable

September 29, 1972

10:45 Flood Control Meeting
Ontario County Courthouse, Canandaigua

3:00 Education Finance Seminar
Marine Midland Bank, Rochester

6:00-9:00 Dinner at our house

9:00 Past Republican Club Presidents Card Party
Brighton Town Hall

Picked up BC at airport at 10:00 and headed for flood control meeting at Canandaigua.

We talked about our summers and he said he'd campaigned during Republican Convention. "I was the only member of the leadership who didn't go, and the President noticed it. At the first leadership meeting after the convention, the President said how proud he was of the group for the part they had played at the convention. He started around the table and said 'Gerry (Ford), you were the permanent chairman, John (Rhodes) was platform committee chairman, Hugh (Scott) was my floor manager, Bob (Griffin) nominated Spiro Agnew. He got to me, stopped and said, 'And what happened to you?' I said, 'I wasn't invited Mr. President.' He waves his hand and said 'Oh, well, you're probably too young anyway.' It was pretty embarrassing being singled out like that." He went on to say it wasn't quite true, that John Rhodes had

asked him to go on Executive Committee of Platform Committee, but that he would have had to run vs. Gordon Howe to do it. Said it wasn't worth it. Also Javits wanted some other position that John Rhodes wanted Barber to take. But he did use the Nixon story as a lever and wrote a letter to all his county chairmen saying that President spoke unfavorably of his absence and that he intended to run as a delegate in 1976. Then he laughingly noted that he'd been "pretty sour" about his job all year and that maybe he wouldn't be around in 1976.

"I've decided to try for the leadership again. I went through a period of soul searching about it--for three reasons. I was spread too thin and not accomplishing as much as I thought I should--especially with the Research Committee. I've been speaking out a little too much at the White House. I've been the most outspoken member of the leadership and have said some critical things to the President.... And I've been worried about the internal condition of Ways and Means. Wilbur Mills' behavior during the last year has built up great expectations and we have not been able to deliver. It's been impossible to get consensus inside the Committee. And the problem will be aggravated by the retirement of John Byrnes. So I thought maybe I should major in Ways and Means this year. I had a long talk with Gerry Ford about it. He said he thought I had done a good job with the Research and Planning Committee. What he meant was that I had not rocked the

boat too much. He also surprised me by saying that he appreciated the support I had given him at the White House. And, finally, he said he wanted someone from Ways and Means in the leadership. He knows he'll have problems with Ways and Means and wants a window on the Committee. My relations with Gerry are very good now. He talks to me a lot. I can't see any alternative to Gerry's leadership; and I can't think of any position I'd rather have than the one I have right now. So I'll run again."

"Canandaigua comes from the indian name Ka nunda ga --which is Seneca for hill of the great spirit. Seneca legend had it that they were born out of the lake, that there was a great serpent on the hill, that they killed the serpent, multiplied and prospered. The word Nunda--the town in Livingston County means 'hill.' What I don't know about Ontario County would fill a warehouse."

"I have eight new towns in Ontario County--Bristol, South Bristol, Naples, Canadice, the Bloomfields. They only have 12,000 people now, but in ten years they will be 30-40 thousand. You can see the building going on there, a lot of summer houses. It's going to be a recreation area, and it has some of the most beautiful land you'd ever want to see." Later, after we toured the newspaper plant "The Daily Messenger" which covers Canandaigua and nearby towns, Barber told Jack Terry, "I'm more interested in establishing long term relationships in Ontario County than I am in getting votes."

The Flood Control Meeting was arranged by Congressman Jack Terry and State Senator Jim Emery, who have most of the territory. It was attended by lots of state officials, the supervisors and other county legislative members, Corps of Engineers personnel and interested local officials and citizens. The idea was to discuss problems created by Agnes and water problems of area generally. Such as: controlling the level of Conesus Lake, flood control in Cayuga, Seneca, Keuka lakes and building of holding basins above these lakes, operation of dam at end of Canandaigua Lake, drainage problems in Caledonia and Canaseraga flood plain problems. Mostly local people raised problems and Col. Moore (Corps of Engineers) and assorted state officials answered. Moore dominated. Everything was "I can do this." "Give me your requests." "I can't help you," etc. Barber called him "a honker." "He came to this district one week before Agnes, and he thinks of himself as an expert on all the problems of the area. He's going to be a problem." I think what he meant was that this man will build up expectations--Barber particularly thought the idea of holding basins was outrageous, that it couldn't be done, that it would be astronomical in cost.

Highlight of the meeting came when BC's opponent Terrence Spencer stood up and said "My name is Terrence Spencer; I'm Representative Conable's Democratic opponent...." Jack Terry, who was Chairman, jumped up and said "This is not a partisan political meeting. It's a group of citizens trying to deal with a problem. Please refrain from

any partisanship here." Spencer started to talk and pretty soon he came to a 1965 Public Works Bill, and said Congressman Conable voted against this bill...." Terry leaped to his feet and shouted 'Sir, let me remind you again this is not a partisan political meeting. We will not have any of this partisanship here. I ask you again to stop it.'" He did.

Afterwards, Jack Terry said to BC, "Did I clip him too hard?" BC said, "It's best not to clip him too hard under those circumstances. He can't make any nickels with that group--except for getting his name in the papers." The episode indicates how hard it is for opponent to get recognized. No matter how he tries it's likely to seem inappropriate--as bringing Barber's voting record into this meeting was. Terry had introduced BC as member of Republican leadership--which was partisan. Partisanship, by incumbent is not partisanship."

He called Spencer "a lively fella--performing his function well." He also sees him as intelligent and articulate, the best opponent he's had in some time, that he's getting around the district pretty well. He said that Spencer's substantive comments at the meeting re. the Sandridge Dam were wrong, but that he didn't want to challenge him there--it would just give Spencer publicity.

He said later in the evening that he and Spencer had had a debate at Genesee Community College and that Spencer had done better than he--

but that it hadn't cost him.

"We debated before about 7 ecology nuts. I had great difficulty getting back into the political idiom. I talked about a bill I was working on to give tax incentives for recycling--as a counter balance to the oil depletion allowance. He said that my stand was typical of a person who supported the big interests--to give them more tax preferences instead of removing all tax preferences. He said he favored the little fellow and wanted to abolish all preferences, like the oil depletion allowance. His position was purely political and I couldn't shift gears fast enough. I had been used to acting where people dealt responsibly with one another. Why, even Charlie Vanik doesn't advocate the abolition of the depletion allowance. He did very well and I did very badly. But it didn't hurt. As I say, there were only seven nuts in the audience and they won't vote for me under any circumstances. Probably they won't even vote!" He added that it would take him a while to get back into the political swing, and that during the last couple of weeks he probably would.

Jim Emery and Jack Terry (with their assistants) wanted us to stay for lunch. Barber declined. As we got into the car he said, "I can't make any nickels there and I'd rather talk to you. They're probably back there shaking their heads and saying Barb's got to get out and around more. Spencer is all over the place and Barb can't

take anything for granted." This is a poor recollection but that's the gist of it. Then he launched into a long, introspective monologue about the stage of his career. I had many of the ingredients of the last conversation we had of this sort--that he was stymied in career in sense that he had all the influence short of majority status that he could have, that he could do other things and didn't have to be a congressman, etc. But it had one very important added theme: "I'm beginning to be a little concerned about my political future. I can feel myself getting into what I guess is a natural and inevitable condition--the gradual erosion of my local orientation. I'm not as enthused about tending my constituency relations, as I used to be and I'm not paying them the attention I should be. I'm beginning to pay the price, I think for my growing interest in government. There's a natural tension between being a good representative and taking an interest in government. I'm getting into some heady things in Washington, and I want to make an input into the government. It's making me a poorer representative than I was. I find myself avoiding the personal collisions that arise in the constituency--turning away from that one last handshake, not bothering to go to that one last meeting. I find myself forgetting people's names. And I find myself caring less about it than I used to. Right now it's just a feeling I have. In eight years I have still to come home less than 40 weekends a year. This is my 36th trip this year. What was it Arturo Rubenstein said?

'If I miss one practice, I notice it. If I miss two practices, my teacher notices it; if I miss a week of practice, my audience notices it.'" I'm at stage one now--or maybe between stage one and stage two. But I'm beginning to feel that I could be defeated before long. Some bright young Republican could come along and whallup me in a primary. And I'm not going to change. I don't want the status-- I want to contribute to government. There are a lot of other ways I can make a good living--though I can't see myself writing deeds and drawing wills in Batavia for the rest of my life. Furthermore, I'm casting some pretty insouciant votes lately. And the organized groups are landing on me. Labor says I've been with them on only 5 of 12 votes and that on the other 7 I cancelled out Frank Horton's vote. The elderly are against me because of my speech on the House floor vs. the extra social security increase. I made that speech, frankly, to retain my credibility and my relations inside the Committee. And the Women's coalition thinks I'm anti women, even though my position on social security was that we should give more relief to the working women instead of across the board. Some of these positions I take because I'm a part of the leadership. But they don't help back home. And I'm not going to change. Well, as I say, I am simply describing a natural, inevitable condition I seem to be in."

At the end I said that his two worries--that he's paying less attention to constituents and that he's casting insouciant votes are related. He always cast insouciant votes but he didn't worry about

them because he felt his constituency work gave him a base. Now that he feels his constituency touch slipping, he worries more about his vote. I think his worries are exaggerated. But I also think the condition he describes is a "natural" one. Jack Flynt is content with his limited governmental activity, whereas Barber is restless. Jack has reached an equilibrium point; Barber has not and is in a time of transition or non-equilibrium. Is this a way to categorize my people career equilibrium vs. career non-equilibrium relative to representation? And is better representation the equivalent of constituency concern? Isn't interest in government good representation?

Barber said something else at dinner which relates to this. "I'm in a defensive position at this stage and I conduct a defensive operation. There is very little outreach to new groups. I have to keep talking to my supporters to prove to them that I haven't gotten too big for my britches. I hope it's not an ever narrowing group.... Tonight's card party will not be very exciting. They are a bunch of old biddies who would no more think of voting Democratic than they would Socialist. But they are an elite group of Republican workers. All are past presidents of Women's Republican Clubs. And if I don't show up, my name will be Barber B. Mud."

After dinner he was comparing our district with his. "This is an entirely different kind of district over here. The upper middle

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class people in this district are very articulate, they ^{are} pulled in seventeen different ways and all they want to do is have a dialogue between themselves and their congressman. They feel guilty about their affluence and so they are liberal. And they are very difficult to deal with. My district is entirely different. I represent the howlers!" Great!

"My newsletter list has 30,000 names, on it. When I took over from Harold, he had 2600 names on his." Nice contrast between old and new, with evidence that Barber has been very different.

He will spend \$16,000 this year on the campaign as opposed to 24,000 in 1970. Says he will not use TV because, in a presidential year, people will react unfavorably to "overkill."

At Marine Midland Bank, we went to top and talked with two VP's. Holley and Straus. Talk of politics at business level--what Peter McColough thinks of McGovern--what meeting with F. Ritter Shumway and others decided about registering young people, etc. I did not feel that Barber was really at home there though clearly he was their candidate. His talk to 150 school administrators and school board members was on subject of federal government aid to education--an inadequacy of categorical grants, on future of revenue sharing for education. He had some statistics he took off from but otherwise didn't prepare. "I went through too many statistics at the beginning. I was pretty relaxed about the whole thing--and I guess it showed. I wasn't overly happy about it, but I held my own. That's all I really wanted to do." (Again, no aggressiveness or "out reach")

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Lots of talk re "operation switch" in which he tried to get Dems in House to become Republicans. Lots of talk among Republican group, proposal to Gerry, rejection by other leaders, fizzled out. Barber concludes that politics of grass roots is what counts--can't engineer switches at the top, no matter what the inducement.