

Barber Conable

February 13, 1973

In talk to my class, he discussed his \$50 limit on contributions. Said "I started it, frankly, when I went on the Ways and Means Committee." The idea was he wanted to retain his own independence and retain the credibility of the government generally. He stressed, particularly, the idea that he, of course, could not be bought for \$50 or \$10,000 but that "the appearance" was terribly important to people--especially to people in his district. "It means a lot to my people in the 35th District. Therefore, it's an important part of my campaign. I would never give it up lightly." This, in answer to a question of what he'd do if he had to ^(a communitarian perspective?) run an expensive campaign. He often said "my people" during the day. Said he took money from National, State and County Republican committees also. Way he raises money is to give his newsletter list to a group of friends who write asking people to contribute \$10 or less to the campaign. He gets about 1600 people to contribute that way (or did in 1970).

A theme he echoed in both talks was that a congressman must carry "the burden of explanation" to his constituents. "We have a saying in Congress that 'if you have to explain something, you're in trouble.' It means you should go along, keep your head down and accept the protective coloration of the group. That's an indication of the low estate to which the Congress has fallen. I think we have to take on the burden of explanation more than we do. We have to have the will

to govern and then explain to our people what we have to done." That was his answer, basically, to Congress-President relations--that the will to govern and the willingness to accept the burden of explanation were what was needed, more than internal reforms, more expertise, etc. That, plus his frequent comment that "it's a human institution" seemed to go to where he thought heart of problem really was.

In conversation, as example of burden of explanation he cited his vote vs. 20% Social Security increase. Said "I knew the old people would organized against me; and they did. But I had to believe the young people would be smart about it and understand. Actually, they couldn't care less. So I had to keep explaining my vote to the older people." Said he voted vs. Social Security "because I was so mad at the way it was done." (Actually, it was an internal reason--credibility in committee).

Later, in the Welles Brown meeting, the Jewish students put him under heavy fire for not co-sponsoring ^{Sack} Vanik Mills bill which denies most favored nation status to Russia unless it takes emigration tax off, thus permitting Jews to leave for Israel. He kept explaining that he didn't know whether this was most effective way to accomplish the desired ends. "Actually Charlie Vanik is mischievous. He's working with his unions to muddy our relations with the Russians so as to improve the chances for Burke-Hartke. Those who want to expand trade hope to sell much more to the East and improve our balance of payments

that way. But I couldn't tell them that." Very patient while he was under emotional attack; it showed the burden of explanation. His arguments were that he just wasn't sure whether Russians would ever change their policy officially because of Arabs and that informal negotiations might work better, and that he was trying to get information from State Department as to what they thought most effective approach was. Students not satisfied--they wanted commitment; not discussion of options. (Peter's reaction was that Barber "didn't turn the students on; they saw him just as another politician." Peter doesn't care for Barber's style either, I guess) BC said easy thing would be to just sign it--as FH would do.

"It's a lot easier to be anonymous than to be described as influential. Every since I've been on the cover of Time Magazine, (i.e., "his ties with the White House are strong") people think I can do things or get things that I just can't. Their expectations have no relation to my real influence. I've even had people in the White House aske me to help them with their superi^{ors}. Shortly after Time appeared, I called the White House and I said "This is Barber Conable. I'd like to speak to whomever it is that I'm supposed to have influential ties with." And the answer came back, "Barber, who?"

"Tonight I'm going to speak to the Holland Land Purchase Society on the Sullivan expedition against the Six Nations in 1770(?). It's something I do every year. It's a way of letting people know old Barber is still the same fellow as he always was. It will be a labor of love-- a labor of love instead of a burden of explanation. How do you like that?" (self conscious about his language)

Walking across campus, we met Wayne Harris, head of Monroe County Conservation Council (?). He said he hoped Barber would be able to get to some dinner of theirs. Barber said he doubted it (since it was on a Wednesday) but would like an invitation. "Our relations are pretty good. But I'm not as ready to throw myself in front of the caribou, on the arctic tundra, as he would like. I tend to trust in procedures that I think will work to protect the environment; but that's not wholly satisfactory to him. Wayne's a very tough guy."