

Barber Conable

January 9, 1978

Went to Barber's second yearly dinner for media people in district at Holiday Inn. Wants to try to give these people some idea of context out of which he answers their questions. "Usually they just come up to you at the airport, stick a microphone in your face and ask one or two questions their managing editor predetermined for them. They don't get to know anything about me or what I do."

He thought last year's was such a success that he wanted to try it again. People I met or saw were Tomy Ryan, Warren Doremus, Chuck Platt, Peter Taub, Christy Buckley, Stu Dunham, Mike Power, Art Perry (Erie Canal Land Publication), Jan Novak (Greece Press), Ed Little (radio program) and guy from Batavia paper.

Not one of Barber's better performances--a little stiff, I thought. But he comes through as a person who is very issue-oriented--a serious person. He was worried afterward about how he had done. He asked me, "Did I come on too strong about labor?" He had said he couldn't get labor support from leaders, that he wanted his independence and that "labor owns a lot of congressmen"--and he elaborated on labor's protectionist position and how they were mad at him for his support of trade bill. I said I did not think so and Steve May who was also there suggested Barber get together with Alex Gaby (A), editor of a labor newspaper in town. Barber said that everytime he ever had anything

to do with labor it hasn't panned out. His general idea was that labor wants a commitment and not reasons. "You're either for or against us." Steve May suggested Barber wait till he agreed with labor on something and then call Alex Gaby and take him to lunch, he's a nice guy, etc. Barber said, "With me, it would be two for you and one for us, two for you and one for us. They'd say, 'You've been against us on two issues, now you've got to be with us on this next one. And I'd lose my independence. It's sheep and goats with them. It wouldn't work." Said during his speech that "I think I can talk to the working man" but not leaders.

During discussion of pension legislation he said he became "very alarmed about the tax problems the bill would create for people in profit sharing plans at Eastman Kodak, at Xerox and at Lincoln First Bank--not just for the officials but for the working man--the officials all live over in Frank's district anyway."

Tom and Harry talked briefly about finances afterward. They think it will be harder to raise money and Tom wants to get started and "look very hard-nosed about it in case there's anyone out there looking at us to see if we'll be easy to beat." ~~Rocking~~ won't give him money and Congressional Campaign Committee may not have as much. They will try to push for \$50 contributions--especially from mailing list. 26,000 on it now and they want to solicit everyone on it. Tom said last election someone from mailing list sent them a brick and it cost them \$3.00 to do it! Big laugh. Tom thinks they'll use more media this year. Doesn't want Barber's margin to go down any. Shooting for something around \$25,000 for the campaign. (Still peanuts)

In his talk he spoke (appropos of press being naturally antagonistic to government and, hence, appearing liberal)--"No institution is more conservative than government. Look at congressmen running around in a thundering herd trying to protect their flanks."

January 11, 1974

8:15 Gates-Chili Middle School
10:45 Sperry High School - Henrietta
2:00 Henrietta Town Hall
3:30 WOKR - Channel 13 News Conference
7:00 Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts
 Firehouse in Greece

(Dick Madden of New York Times)

January 11, 1974

"Suburban ~~voters~~ ^{voters} are the most incensed about Nixon and Watergate. They are more accessible to the media and have a higher educational level. They expect more from government and get upset when they don't get it. They have a high sense of moral outrage. The rural people tend to be more tactiturn and are hunkering down. The city people don't expect ^{from Nixon} so much and so they tend to be disinterested."

Before the Gates-Chili talk he said of this group: "I come here every year and it's the livliest and most uninhibited of any of the

groups I talk to. In question period, you'll see a lot of hands go up."

In talk he said (1) energy crisis not as great as some say but could be long-run problem if we're wasteful. Asked kids to save energy whenever they could; ^{We} have shortage, not crisis--not yet--but will in long run if we don't act now.

"The newspapers call me and ask what my constituents are thinking--now that you are interested in what they are thinking.' That makes me angry; it implies that I don't know what they are thinking. I come home every weekend; I get 1,000 letters a week. I've lived here all my life. So I have a good idea of what my people are thinking."

"People are split up and confused." But the note he hit was that people want to wish Nixon out of the way "like removing the quarterback and putting in a new quarterback. But, of course, in a constitutional system we can't do that. It's not that easy." General tenor was one of keeping stability. In answer to impeachment, he doesn't want to see impeachment because of disruption but "I hope I will do my duty if the circumstances indicate that he should be impeached."

"We simply can't go on this way under a cloud because we need executive leadership."

One thing that does come through in almost everything he says is his concern for stability. He does not go around blasting the U.S. for its shortcomings or blaming anyone for problems. No attacks on anyone. "We're terribly lucky to be in this country," by contrast

to Great Britain and Japan. Often made the contrast. Said people spent too much time "breast-beating" and saying what was wrong with country. Said Sinclair record showed other side--but was repeated too often. "Sets my teeth on edge." We ought to be mature enough not to need that constant theme.

Central issue "Not who should or who should not be President, but how can we keep our system of government going." We depend on executive leadership; Congress a check; if President can't lead, we'll need to change.

Dick Madden and I agreed that during the day energy and watergate split about 50-50 in degree of interest.

"There's nothing unique about congressmen. They are somebody's neighbor who gets sent off to Washington to participate in citizens decisions. There are probably 1,000 people in this district who could do as good a job as I. So there's nothing remarkable about me."

Really, he's been a good teacher giving lessons in economics and the political system.

In Gates-Chili Middle School there were 700 students each in two groups--the whole school. Grades 6-8.

In Sperry High School, in Henrietta, there were about 25 Seniors in a Social Studies Class.

Re Henrietta. "I'm a little nervous about it because it's new to my district. But I'm glad to have it because it's the one town on the

south side of the city that's most like the towns I already represent. All my suburbs are lower middle class. I don't represent any wealthy people. So in terms of keeping my district catalogueable, I was pleased to get Henrietta. These are all mortgage row people, mostly young, they work for the corporations but they haven't made it yet. It's a district with a lot of young people, well below the average for NYS and that means lots of children--many Catholics too."

Talk re policy committee. "Happy where I was and didn't really want policy committee." But didn't think he was doing as good a job as he should. What happens is:

(1) *Quie* report has report saying Research should be taken out of leadership. It stirs people up, and gets everyone thinking Barber will go to Policy. Later dropped. Then young people, who want policy, urge Barber to get going for Policy and even threaten him a little with a contest for Research if he doesn't announce for policy. Also Rhodes wants him to run for Policy. "Don't leave me with all those right-wingers."

Del Clawson announced first. "Within a few hours, I put out a statement saying I was running for policy. I couldn't have Phil Crane writing policy statements. So I ran to the cat hole, as the mice said. The moderates don't want the Devine group making policy. They are the activists who make a religion out of their laziness." He figured vote would be 100-80 and it was 88-77. "As usual the moderates were moderate!" Thirteen of my supporters didn't show up and only 3 of Del Clausen's didn't show up. So we had the thing pretty well wired."

I had the support of the liberals. I was the candidate of the Wednesday Club. They had no place to go. So I didn't campaign there at all. My strategy was to split the conservatives."

"I'm wearing my glasses part of the time now to get people used to it--lots of putting on and taking off. I don't want any sudden change and want people to know I'm still me. I'm 51 now. So half the time on TV, I use my glasses; half time not."

Last year, the Republican leadership met with Nixon 12 times and previous year 12 times. And erratically too. They are supposed to meet every other Tuesday.

Re impeachment. "My people are split right down the middle... Everyone is on the hot seat and not enjoying it one bit." (In answering this question, he spoke of people running the risk of losing "their best supporters" and on this question and later he said, "I'm taking a lot of flack from some of my Republicans who say I should stand up for Nixon. But I ain't going to do it. If he won't explain what he's doing, why should I stand up for him."

His answer to 2 questions had a similar theme--that you can't simplify things. We can't just get rid of Nixon and Watergate; they won't go away. Also to question as to whether we couldn't wipe all taxes off book and start fresh. He says it's very complicated and gave examples. Everyone has own benefits; slightest changes send shocks throughout system.

"My suburbs are not mature suburbs--they are still growing--and my district could be one of the fastest growing in the state ... Bob Oakes

(Henrietta Supervisor) tells me they are up to 36,000 already and the sensus says only 30,000."

He called the Henrietta people "gung ho," lots of spirit, he likes Oakes, he likes the town.

"The 19th Ward Neighborhood Association looks like it's going to have a corporate life. It will be a going thing. They're very determined to keep the area from slipping backward as so many changing neighborhoods do. I spoke to their annual convention last week and I was thrilled, frankly, with the excitement and spirit they showed. They aren't friends of mine--they are a combination of bearded whites and up and coming blacks. The days of 19th Ward Republicanism are dead. It used to be Harold Ostertag's bread basket--but no more. They were a bunch of old biddies and they're gone. I haven't paid much attention to it but I was very excited by what I saw. I'm going to do some missionary work with the 19th ward association. They are worth it."

Impeachment. "You can't make any nickels on the issue. If you vote for impeachment and you're a Republican, then you're a turncoat; if you're a Democrat, you're a political opportunist. It's a highly polarized situation and everyone is very uncomfortable." Idea was that a strong Judiciary Committee report would be welcomed by everyone.

Re his ideology. "I don't know. One day a Carl Rowan called me an rubberstamp and the next day Evans and Novak called me ruggedly

2-1/13
are gung ho
4/5

independent.... I'm confused ... but I guess I'm a ruggedly *independent rubberstamp."

Earlier, before the TV interview at Channel 13, Barber said that in Policy Committee fight, he was viewed by some Clamson supporters as an "eastern liberal," and Alex Gaby of Labor News (AFL-CIO) said "labor, sees you as a right-wing reactionary." To which Barber replied, "That's life." He's always skittish about labels and he himself answers questions like the one on ideology with a sort of arch equivocation.

Ken Keating ^{story} ~~strong~~ in Wyoming County.

^{to begin with} West New York for Scranton.

"In this district the suburbs hold the balance of power. The city has a little less than a third of the population, the suburbs a little more than a third and the rural areas a third. I don't campaign much in the rural areas--they already identify with me strongly. I don't dare campaign in Wyoming County for fear they'll find out it's not my brother whose the Congressman. He's a very popular county judge. In the city there are organizations to tie into and I attend their functions. But I do most of my hard campaigning in the suburbs--particularly in the schools and in shopping centers." People in good mood shopping--take his cook books--doesn't like Plant gates--people in hurry.

What he seemed to be saying is that his formula is (1) take his primary constituency for granted (2) perform perfunctorily in area where

he gets weakest support and (3) campaign heaviest in area where he has supporters but where they are most volatile where he does well but cannot take them for granted.

"Monroe County has two-thirds of the people but only one half of the Republican votes. That's what makes me so hard to beat in the primary. My strength in the rural areas is so great that people from the city think I'm unbeatable. At least that's the way I've figured it out. Did Harold Ostertag ever talk like this, Dick?" (Answer: he wasn't very articulate about these things.) He went on to call Harold a good politician and helpful to him at time of his nomination. Called him a man of limited background, railway clerk and "professional veteran" who could learn quickly and had good native intelligence. They are really very different types. Barber well suited to the kind of young, suburban, growing district his has become.

After the conversation with Henrietta Supervisor Bob Oakes, I asked Bob how he liked switching congressmen and he said, "The birth pangs are hard for both sides--while we build up rapport. Barber Conable will measure up I'm sure. I like him. I don't understand what he's saying half the time but I like him." He recounted how Riverton had gotten complicated, how he went to Horton and said "I need help" and how Horton got a whole bunch of HUD people together to meet with them in Washington. "There were lawyers down one side of the room, HUD people down the other side of the room and the hayseeds from Henrietta in the middle. But it was very helpful."

He used this as example of what Horton had done for them. Barber, of course, kept saying during the meeting that anything he could do, he would. I felt the meeting was stiff in the sense that Barber rattled off the federal programs involved and sometimes wouldn't let Oakes get a word in edgewise--as if he were nervous and trying to impress these people (which he did). But there was no relaxed banter of any sort, of the kind you get with friends. He was not "at home" clearly. Oakes ran with conservative support, saw Agnew as "a straight arrow," "a man who stood tall" and who had badly let Oakes down, real disappointment at performance of federal government. Talk of mass transit, Dial-a-Ride, revenue sharing, sewer grants, Riverton. Also Finance Committee chairman was there--Mr. Gibson, I think, who had ideas on revenue sharing changes. Barber thought it a strange meeting since he thought Oakes wanted to see him about something. Actually, Harry Nicholas and Republican Headquarters had set it up to give Barber something to do in an otherwise empty time-slot--because Dick Madden was there!

Re district. "It's not a safe district. I should win, but it's not as Republican a district as it looks. Lyndon Johnson ran better here in 1964 than in any other upstate district except Ted Dulski's in central Buffalo. I always run better than the Republican ticket. I can be beaten. But I think it would take someone with an awful lot of money; because it would require massive media expenditures to get

name recognition. In a far flung district such as this, that's not easy. I have pretty good recognition now. I've been on the job and I'm identified with the job."

He said Terry Spencer was good opponent who campaigned hard in the wrong places--mostly with teachers and not out in the streets. He said he (Barber) wasn't strong with teachers. But Spencer campaigned with them too much--because he was a teacher I guess. He also noted that it ought to have been somewhat discouraging for Spencer to find that after all that campaigning he did 2% worse than the guy did who ran the year before.

Throughout the day, there was an undercurrent that he was going to have to run harder this year and that his opponents are gearing up to beat him ("Labor has a war ^{chest} and to beat me"). A great deal more talk about labor than I usually hear. "Labor will be completely unemotional about it. If they think they can beat me they will try. If they don't, they won't. I can't make any nickels with labor. If I try, I'll only drive my supporters away. And labor will never support me. Steve May advised me the other day to go to more meetings--including labor. I asked him if that was what he and Al Skinner did in the last election. I couldn't resist that! I'm very suspicious of Steve and I think his advice was directed more at his career than at mine. Maybe he's laying the ground work to disassociate himself from me--by saying I rejected all his advice. I hear he wants to run in a primary against Gordie deHond."

In this context, he said several times that he wanted to see Don Cook to tell him not to engage in a "blood bath" with Fred Eckert. Apparently Cook and May want to use labor to beat back Eckert's aggressive ambitions. Barber says if Eckert and Cook come to a confrontation now Cook will get clobbered by Eckert--who comes on as anti-establishment. It seemed vague and Byzantine and I didn't ask Barber to elaborate.

But on question of his relations with Eckert, he made it clear he wanted to stay at arm's length. "Greece is my biggest town and my biggest headache. I don't go there anymore than I have to. They want you to commit yourself all the time--it's sheep and goats. Fred Eckert is very ambitious and he just loves confrontation. He wants to test you constantly, just loves to fight. You can't make any nickels in that situation." Idea was that Greece is a mare's nest and he wants to stay away. He has a certain wary respect for Eckert, but he certainly does not want to see Eckert advance. Guy at lunch the other day called Eckert a great campaigner.

At lunch he talked about his relations with local leaders generally. "A congressman has to make a conscious choice, whether he wants to be a local political leader, to be a big cheese in local politics or whether he wants to tend to business in Washington, and do what the local leaders ask of him in local politics. I deliberately chose the second course." He couldn't mention many Congressmen who did otherwise. Said Goodell tried to pick own county chairman and Erlenborn had lost in a recent effort to do so. He said it was actually helpful

in many situations because he could answer requests that "you'll have to clear that with X," and it takes heat off of him.

"My local political leaders never call me to influence my vote in the House. I learned that lesson in the State Senate. I called county leader once and asked him how he thought I should vote on a matter and he replied, "What the hell do you think we sent you down there for?"

He said that he was affected by who ran on the ticket with him but that he saw no evidence that he could transfer his popularity to anyone else. Said Malcolm Wilson could help ~~him~~ by "keeping the conservative party calm. ~~He~~ He has good ties with the Catholic Church and with veterans groups--the two that have formed the heart of the conservative party." Talked about how he had never sought nor taken conservative endorsement. Thought it might drive away other support and was philosophically opposed to third parties--which start out with issues base and end up with influences out of proportion to numbers as they turn into crass bargainers. But he seems to be particularly anxious to deactivate them this time. "I come back here every weekend scrounging for votes and I can lose 12-14,000 votes just like that when a conservative runs against me."

Said he kept track of how many times he came home so that when opponent started saying that 'you never see Barber Conable,' he will have figures on tip of tongue to refute it. Only point is that he consciously uses these figures to protect his flank from opponent.

With respect to him lending his strength to others, he says that if he has to be brought into endorse someone, that person is probably too far gone!

He's going to talk to the Dansville Chamber of Commerce tomorrow--after cocktails at John Kelley's. "Those people are in a bad state. They are angry at Nixon for damaging the economy. They want me to give them reassurance. I'm afraid I can't."

At end of the day he asked me whether I thought he was disassociating himself from Nixon too much. He was asked all day--and I'm sure any opponent will tag him with the same things, indeed. Dick Madden said one reason why he picked Barber was because of his close association with Nixon--about his support for Nixon via his voting record. Barber gave a couple of answers. First, he tried to distinguish between a voting record based on issues and one based on following the President. Said he believes in same things as President and naturally voted for them. But not because he checked with President--which, he said he never did and usually didn't know President's position. In essence he distinguished an associational relationship, ^{from a causal one.} And was somewhat upset that people would not make that distinction. Second theme of the day (which he often used in connection with Republican party as leaders in impeachment effort) was that Nixon did not behave like a party leader and never asked for party or personal loyalty. Again and again, he said Nixon had not been a party leader, didn't call leadership meetings, etc. and never spoke in terms of party loyalty. Privately, he found this very

frustrating and said that at several points in the Watergate proceedings, Republican leadership "turned things around" by complaining to White House staffers bitterly "Don't talk to us about the legal niceties of the President's position. Tell us what can we say to our people back home. The President turned his defense over to a bunch of lawyers; but the Presidency is a political office." He can't figure Nixon out, is bitter at the state Nixon has left the party in, sees no one who wants either to support him or push him out. Barber would clearly like to see him resign; but may not vote to impeach him. He agreed that when you look at Nixon long enough, "you get to be a two-bit psychologist" because you are inevitably led to wonder about Nixon's psyche. Barber's guess is that he's somewhat manic-depressive--that he'll perform beautifully (as in Operation Candor for a short while) then he withdraws to brood. (Like Abraham Lincoln!) But you have to wonder why such an obviously bright man has made such a colossal mess. Barber said Laird was so exasperated he wouldn't even talk about it--that he gets to see Nixon, but Nixon won't listen to him. Nixon likes to listen to Haig and Zeigler, who tell him just what he wants to hear.

All day (and before the news men to days earlier) he consistently down played the Policy Committee Leadership role--that it wasn't much, that it got notice because there was a contest. I asked him why. "For one thing, I don't want to appear any more partisan than I already appear to be. The more I emphasize it; the more I would be associated with Nixon. Politically, it is better for me to treat it as 'no big deal! That's part

of the straight ahead--neither to the right nor the left kind of image I have. I don't want to appear to be scrambling up the ladder over the backs of others."

His attitude toward the position is that if circumstances change, he has "~~not~~ contract" to stay on Policy and that his people would understand that. But, for the moment, he has his eye on no other position and wants to be taken at his word (as he said we should take Jerry Ford's that he doesn't want to be President). He says he wouldn't be a good floor leader, that W & M is not good training for that--that he couldn't be Whip because he couldn't be on the floor all the time. He sees self as needed on W & M.

We had a long talk in which I asked him if he could name 6 or 8 people whom he trusted and would go to for advice, i.e. would be influential with him. His first question was 'Do you mean politically?' and I said OK, politically. Then he began to have trouble. He asked if I would put myself in the group of those he trusted. I said I considered myself as a friend but that I had no influence with him. Then he allowed as how maybe no one had influence with him in the sense that he went to them for advice. Still, there were people he trusted in the sense that if he went to them for advice or they came to him, he would listen to them and take seriously what they said. These people were Don Cook (Monroe County Chairman), John(?) Reedman (his new campaign manager), Mike Telesca (former campaign manager), Joe Esposito (County Legislator), Tom Benton, Harry Nicholas. (I talk with Harry a lot).

He then went on to tick off people that he liked--Don McConnville and Norm Beach at Kodak. (I like them but they are professional businessmen.) "Some of the bankers downtown seem to like me but I don't go to them for advice." Mentioned "several middle-aged ladies in Batavia who have been awfully important to me in organizing things in that community--from the United Fund Drive to primary campaign." He mentioned "the Upsons in Batavia, an elderly couple who were my first supporters. I talk with them, but more because I want to keep them identified with me than because they give me advice. They wouldn't presume to do that"--

Then he talked of his old cronies, "a gossip group of old men". He meets with them in Jimmie's Bar now (Youngs is torn down) and they beat up on him about government in a ritual, stylized meeting. They fulfil emotional need more than political. He was going to meet with them again tomorrow, but no sense that they give him advice. It's an emotional need they fill for him--to keep him in touch with the community. A very disparate group by the time we got through.

"I guess there just isn't any group I go to for advice. And I do very little of that inside the House. Maybe I should."

Then we got down to specific issues and he said the only time he might solicit advice would be in an area he didn't know too much about--like Agriculture or banking, he suggested. But when we got down to specifics, it turns out he never has. He said in agriculture, he'd go to Call brothers--the best, most progressive, most successful farmers in Western New York--one brother is Agriculture Professor at Cornell etc.

Said they would have best advice--but that he's never called them and if they did say something, he'd have to discount it because they are unrepresentative of farmers, being "head and shoulders" above everyone else. Said he meets with Farm Bureau people every year and has a dialogue. "But they have no influence on me whatsoever." With bankers, he mentioned a man named Ely(?) of Security Trust that had written him a few times--but doesn't go to Ely for advice. He called people who write often to him as "the nuts". He doesn't like surveys because they imply that you haven't been doing something you should, that you ~~then~~ have to do that something, and there's something manipulative about that that I don't like." I suspect he just doesn't have to use surveys. ~~When~~ When asked at WOKR if he used surveys, he said no, but that he was sending out questionnaires. That probably satisfies general public, but the two are hardly equivalent.

So the trust-influence question may be very tough. I do think I could have probed further and found some of the rudiments of trust. He said, for example, that he trusted Reedman because he's "outside the organization." Which indicates a kind of special-unique-singular-exclusive attachment to the Congressmen. This holds for Harry and maybe Telesca, but not for Cook--or Esposito. He would take Cook seriously--but could he "trust" Cook to have his (Barber's) interest at heart? Nonetheless, I could probably get a pretty good picture of Barber, if I wanted to, from canvassing among the names he went through--even if the relationship

between him and them is not the same in all cases. Clearly he talks to these people more than with others.

After Scout, flag presentation at Greece, he called these people "the salt of the earth. If I can carry them I don't care about the others. These people will bring the others with them." *Handwritten: notes*

Re his \$50 campaign limit, he made it clear he would try to keep it but it's political thing, not a moral thing. "I'm not wedded to the \$50 limitation, but I want to keep it as long as I can. In politics a good rule is: Don't do what you don't have to do."

In Barber's District office in the Federal Building, Wednesday, Olga Alexander, his district secretary and only person in the office, told me that Barber meets constituents in the office only about twice a year. That they do everything they can to help people short of having Barber deal with them. When they insist, they have a day in which everyone comes in and backlog is reduced. He's not case work oriented personally. The very opposite from Zion.

Interesting that in discussion of my other Republicans and who was and against him with him/on policy fight, if you used ideology as basis for predicting, you would have been wrong in every case but one! Mailliard and Thone were vs. him, Zion was for him. Mailliard because Clawson was from California; Thone because he hates McCollister who was one of Barber's key organizers, Zion because Barber made him Chairman of energy task force. Spence did, as one would predict, vote vs. Barber on straight ideological grounds. (He thinks I'm a communist.)/ *Handwritten: Congressman in 'Sunlight Dialogue' used same 'salt of the earth' phrase!*

He discussed his first primary and election again in same terms as earlier. Added very little--except that he had been Scranton organizer in 1964 and that took some of Goldwater curse off him but that he did support Goldwater, thereby not becoming controversial in party. Told story of how he kept distance from Keating in 1964 when they would cross paths--since KK was not supporting Goldwater. At Wyoming County Fair he got HCO to come sit on platform between himself and Keating so he would not be identified with Keating and against Goldwater. When they shook hands, he lagged way behind Keating that day--Hilarity.