

Barber Conable

October 29-30, 1974

Tuesday

8:00	Honeoye High School
10:30	Bloomfield High School
12:00	Mount Morris Rotary
2:30	Henrietta Headquarters

Wednesday

6:45	Kodak Park Plant - Gates
9:00	Disney Elementary School - Gates
10:45	Gates High School
12:00	Elmcrest Nursing Home - Churchville
4:30	Gates Republican Barbeque, Dowd Post
7:00	Riga Republican Dinner, Johnson House - Churchville
8:00	Irondequoit Kiwanis Club
9:00	Eighth Ward Republican Club Card Party
10:00	Channel 21 Debate with Costanza

I picked BC up in Alexander and we drove to Honeoye and Bloomfield schools. He told me that he had changed his media campaign. "The earlier spots were too bland and amateurish--good for name recognition, but not hard hitting enough. Fred Eckert was very helpful in making the change. One of the TV spots has me looking directly into the camera saying "If you're disgusted with government, how do you think I feel. I've been fighting your battles there for 10 years,--something like that." Another one starts in "I'll admit my opponent has a bouncy personality." We give it all away

right at the beginning; and then we go on to ask what else she's got and what kind of a representative in Congress do you want. She has the name recognition but I don't think when people take a second look, they will find much there. At least, I hope they will take a second look."

"Today we are just showing the flag in Ontario County. It's new to my district and I haven't been there very much. I have seven towns. I think the media will have more to do with what happens from now on than showing the flag."

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"Ontario County is Republican. But the people here do not have any personal involvement with me. Therefore, they won't hang in there with me like Genessee, Wyoming and to some extent Livingston will."

He said he didn't think he "made many nickels" at the school. In the young group there were some Costanza buttons; but many of the kids wanted his autograph. In the older group, he went because the teacher asked him. Bill Murphy, the teacher, said to me - "I disagree with almost all his positions, but I vote for him every time. I like his intelligent conservatism."

Throughout the two days he said "I'm running against apathy and disillusionment as much as I am against Midge." His only fear is that the Republicans will not come out and vote for him. "If it's a big vote, I'll be all right; if it's a small vote, I won't." He, like other Republicans, does not know how far the wave of disillusionment will roll. He keeps telling his audiences not to drop out, but to participate, that they won't get better government by dropping out. He fears it's the Republicans who will stay home since they have been battered so much lately.

At Mount Morris Rotary, they had a big turnout and it was very encouraging to him. As we went there he was gloomy about his prospects in Mt. Morris--after we left, he felt exhilarated. It was a good example of how an elected official gets a feel. "I had heard that things were bad in Mt. Morris. But I felt I had to show the flag. It's an almost Italian town--at least the community leaders are Italian. Midge has been working hard there. And we didn't seem to have any organization. But I'm encouraged now. That was a big turnout and everyone was very friendly to me. And did you see the way all the young people wanted to have their picture taken with me afterward? I feel good about that whole experience. I'm going to carry Mount Morris!" (Peter thinks Costanza will carry Mt. Morris. It will be interesting!) But point is that Barber took a reading on a group of 50 people and changed his whole judgment about how he would do in Mt. Morris--a town of 3500 people. Maybe all that happened was that he was expecting nothing and found something.

At one point the first day he said "Midge will do much better among the Italians outside Monroe County than she will with the Italians inside Monroe County. Out here they are a minority and they feel like a minority and they will identify with her. In Monroe County they do not feel like a minority and so they will vote on other grounds. The Gates Republican party is Italian and it is for me solid right down the line.... I think I'll carry Gates, by a small margin."

"The average age of the people in my district is 4 years lower than the state average. They are the people on mortgage row--young, trying to make it and on their way up. Frank Horton has the more mature, affluent suburbs. When people make it, they move from my district to Frank Horton's district."

Wednesday I picked BC up at the Holiday Inn at 6:00, we went to Greece to pick up John Tobin (former Greece councilman) and went to Kodak Park to hand out the piece of literature that tells how BC saved Kodak pension plan when the pension reform bill went through his committee. On the way over he discussed this with John. Then John, County Legislator John Hoff and I handed out the literature while Barber shook hands. (It rained and I got soaked.) Anyhow--afterward Barber told me the story of the pension plan success and how Kodak management would not let them put anything in Kodakery--the house newspaper.

Kodak employees have the option of taking their bonus in cash or putting it into their pension plan. If they put it into the pension plan, ~~they~~ tax on it is deferred till they get the pension. The Administration had a provision in the bill that would tax them now if they put money in pension plan. Xerox and Lincoln First Bank employees, also. The provision got put into the bill and Barber single-handedly got it taken out--thereby saving Rochester workers several million dollars in taxes. And, of course, Barber could not have done it had he not been a highly influential Congressman. Naturally, he wanted Kodak employees to know what he had done. But Kodak management wouldn't let any story go into their newspaper about it. BC was furious.

"I got the provision taken out in my own committee. When I saw that provision reappe^Ar in the Senate bill, I went to Bill Simon (Secretary of the Treasury) and I said to him 'I've never asked you for anything. Now I am asking you for something. This ~~provision~~ will hurt the people of my area. I want it out. My political life may depend on it.' He said he

would do that, but the other people in Treasury were against me because it would cost the government revenue. The provision stayed in the Senate version of the bill. So I went back to Simon and I said 'Maybe you didn't understand me the first time. If you ever want me to lift a finger for you again on the Ways and Means Committee, take this provision out.' He called in Hickman, the man who had been fighting me and said 'Give Barber Conable what he wants.' Then I went to see Javits to get him to make sure the provision was taken out of the Senate bill. I told him that if he didn't help me he'd better not show up in Monroe County to campaign this fall because he'd get no help here. He got the message very quickly. I also pointed out to him that several New York banks had the same plan. But the cash option plan is particularly important in Rochester--Xerox and Lincoln First Bank have it as well as Kodak. Our Washington office prepared a story for Kodakery telling what I had done. They said they would print it. But the management, Walter Fallon really--wouldn't let them print it. Then the newspaper did an interview with Kodak's lobbyist; and he told what I had done. Fallon wouldn't let them print the interview. I was furious. I told them, 'I don't want you to build me up. I just want you to tell you employees what I did.' Fallon is so chicken about getting involved in politics. He's scared to death that the City Council will get after Kodak if they do anything that makes Midge angry. I'm going to have a few things to say to Fallon after the election. I'm called the enemy of the working man! And yet I saved their pensions from being taxed. I was the only one that could have done what I did."

So we were over there at Kodak passing out the story. But it was not a really strong sheet--pretty bland, I thought. I told Barber he should use it in his debate with Costanza, but he didn't. He will not toot his own horn in any way. He singlehandedly saved the employees of Kodak and the others millions of dollars and he will not crow about it. Like the trade bill, which means about 7,000 jobs at Kodak. He has to be pushed to talk about that too--when he was the major force behind that bill. He is becoming tremendously influential and important to this area and yet he is totally modest about it in public--even in the middle of his most difficult election campaign. It's like he doesn't want to go out of character at all, under any circumstances.

I remarked after the story of how interesting it is that he is the pictured as/representative of big business--when Kodak management won't even lift a finger to tell a perfectly straight story about his influence, and how they killed the story.

"I guess I am associated with business. They like me because I tell it to them straight. They became particularly interested in me during the trade bill. I told you, didn't I, about the time I was offered the Presidency of _____. I could never understand that; and I thought they were making a big mistake. I'm not at home with big businessmen and bankers and I don't know anything about banking. The bankers are all furious because I opposed them on the tax exemption for some interest on savings accounts. That was the only thing I took a real interest in on the tax reform bill. I beat the bankers on that one and are they angry at me." Idea was simply that businessmen like his ability to talk about economic

issues but he does not represent business--he sees himself as too independent for that.

"I like a man who comes to each issue fresh, unburdened by previous baggage. That makes him unpredictable; and I like independent, unpredictable men." He said that re Gibbons and also spoke admiringly of Wiggins as "an absolutely independent man." Tied in with this characteristic is his emphasis on rationality and dialogue. "I sure talk a lot, don't I?" "Dialogue is the name of the game. I came to answer your questions." Rational voting is underpinning of democracy, he told students at Gates-Chili. Clearly, he thinks he'll win if voters vote rationally--that is if they think for a while about the kind of representative they want--someone who can use good judgment and not be dependent on anyone else.

"They call me a Nixon supporter. That's hilarious. But there isn't any way I can get out from under it. I can't say what I think about Nixon." Actually Barber hates Nixon for what he did to the country and the party. "The greatest service he could perform for his country now would be to die."

When John and Barber and I had a drink after the Channel 21 debate ("I had a little trouble compressing a discussion of tax reform into 60 seconds!") he said "If I can't have an input into government I don't care about the job. I'm not going down there and be a political whore."

He's so fearful of losing his independence that it's almost as if the mere fact of a tough campaign makes him feel as though he's lost his independence. He said of the campaign "I'm not going to go through

that again." And I didn't understand what he meant. I think he meant that the pulling and hauling that went on among his advisors seemed to be robbing him of his independence. The only time I saw him visibly exasperated during the entire campaign was when Eckert had been telling him to get tougher with Costanza at the Gates party. "I'm sick and tired of having everybody tell me what I should do and what I'm not doing right. Do this and do that!" I said it was just because they were interested in him. The key relationships of the campaign were between BC and his close supporters. (After the debate, he said Eckert would probably call him up and say how poorly he had done. And he dreaded that. Eckert had been very helpful but "He's the most completely political animal around." "He's absolutely no compromise guy.")

But Barber's close supporters kept trying to get him to raise the emotional level of his campaign and toot his own horn more and attack Costanza more. And he reluctantly did the first two--but would never attack Costanza. I never thought he should; but Eckert did. "I want to see the ventriloquist not the dummy."

On his prediction of the outcome: "I'll be very happy if I get my 1964 margin--18,000 votes."

He thinks he'll take Gates slightly and Greece slightly. He has no idea how he'll do in Henrietta--for which he has no feel because it is so new to him. He thinks he'll take Livingston County, Wyoming and Genessee. He thinks he'll win.

"I don't mind being swept out on a tidal wave; but I don't want to be defeated by a little ripple." In other words, if the conditions are such that the voter dissatisfaction is indiscriminate and massive, he'll accept defeat philosophically. If he loses and others don't, he'll feel

bad about it. "We're leaving nothing to chance" he said when I met him the first day--and as the week went by, Charlotte's day of arrival was pushed steadily up.

On Wednesday afternoon he went back to his room at the Inn and took a nap. "I feel relaxed" he said, and he got in a good nap. That was in the middle of his "busiest day of the campaign." So I think he's got a lot of inner peace. He thinks he will win; if he doesn't he's pretty philosophical. He said at one point "I won't stay very long anyway." "I won't be around as long as Harold Ostertag." "If there is a landslide, I'm not sure I want to go back there and be part of a corporal's guard." He's restless about his career at this point. And the campaign--instead of making him want it all the more--seems to have encouraged him to think about how much he does want it. And he doesn't want it all that much if he can't be an important figure in government. He doesn't give a hoot about the status or prestige. He wants to help run the government. And being in a perpetual minority is frustrating. On the other hand, he doesn't want to lose--will not enjoy being beaten.

"Fred Eckert has been very helpful to me. It should be in his interest to see me beaten so that he can come back two years later and clobber her." That shows a rather lower opinion of Midge as a politician than I would have. When he said that, John and I both jumped him. I said "She'll never be beaten if she gets in." And John said "She'll be another Frank Horton." But what came through there was Barber's estimate that, despite his comment that she's a good politician, he really does not think she's that good. He doesn't think she can beat him--but that voter

disillusionment may beat him, and that 2 years hence in a different climate, she could be beaten. I do not think so.

At one point when we were talking about his unwillingness to attack Costanza. "It's funny. I was always very competitive growing up--in sports and things." His competitiveness comes out--as it does in so many others in terms of hating to lose. But the campaign process--as it becomes irrational and non-substantive--bothers him. He wants to talk about the issues. His followers want him to attack. His followers want him to do more mass stuff (me and the bowling alleys). He doesn't like that kind of impersonal campaigning. He's a child of the enlightenment--a person completely in control of himself--a very well integrated personality. And he won't change. There's a certain stubbornness about his unwillingness to run a political campaign. He's the ultimate in an issue campaigner and he likes to campaign in forums that allow issues to be discussed. He won't sell himself like soap, won't advertise his virtues. As Fred Eckert said--his strength is his competence. His weakness is his salesmanship. He believes that if he is one of the 6 or 8 best congressmen in the United States (which he is--by acknowledgement of all Washington types) that people back home will give him credit for that. He doesn't think he has to go around asking for credit. He won't ask for anything. John Riedman says he never once has heard Barber ask for a vote. Never heard him say "I'd appreciate your vote on election day." "I hope you'll vote for me on election day" like Jim Corman does. And neither have I. It's not his style. The congressman as non-salesman.

Peter Regenstreif and I sat together at the Channel 21 debate. His first question was "Is Conable scared?" I said "No." "He should be. I've got him right where I want him." "If he had let me manage his campaign he'd be laughing all the way home now." "But he doesn't know how to campaign. I feel sorry for him. I like him. After the campaign we'll get together and I'll tell you all the mistakes he made." Peter thinks he's got a good chance to win, that he needs 10,000 plurality out of Monroe County. "I need 10,000 and I've got 8,000." That Carman will be a key, ("I love him!") and that he'll do very well in the country (carrying Batavia, Mt. Morris and Java) and that's The key is Republican turnout. (BC agrees with latter.)

*Peter thinks
Pulitzer is
margin, not
base.*

Peter is pleased with what he has created. "Everything that is in her head is what I put there. Everything she says I taught her to say. It's incredible. She has an amazing ability to assimilate information; and she has great political instinct. She's a perfect candidate. And if she goes to Washington she'll be a moderate, just like Barber Conable, and she'll rise so fast in the hierarchy there that you won't see her for dust."

Half his pleasure at Midge is his pleasure at himself; and now he has become so emotionally involved that he talks about her campaign as "I" all the time. "I need such and such a plurality in such and such." "I'm going to carry such and such."

Peter: "When I began, I didn't care whether she won or not. It was just a new experience for me. Now I'm emotionally involved. I want her to win so badly. She's earned it."

RF: "I hope Barber wins. He's earned it."

Peter: "Yes he has--in a different way."

As the conversation reveals, not only has Peter gotten emotionally involved in the race, but so has RF! I haven't been the best social scientist where this campaign has been involved--the participant observes balance has been tipped rather markedly.

Anyhow I'm off to New Hampshire tomorrow for a little trip with Nancy that will get me away from politics. I've had enough--for the time being! Strangely, I find it not physically tiring so much as mentally tiring. The abrupt shift from campaign culture to campaign culture is very wearying as I try to soak up first one then the other. I've decided that two campaigns in succession is my limit.