

Pete Domenici

May 23, 1979

I got there at 4:30, waited till 5:30 - got in and waited while he talked to Brayman. Then he went to vote and called and told me to come to gallery. Budget conference report was up suddenly. *Reid,* and watched him give a speech. I got back, Brayman, Bell and Wellish all come in and talk. He's totally accessible to staff. Finally, he shuts everyone out and we have a couple of drinks and talk. It goes OK; not great. He tends to make a speech at times. Yet that may be genuine and natural, i.e. "in this free and open society of ours."

We got from about 6:45 to 7:35.

Hal Brayman comes to talk about their new water projects bill, cosponsored with Moynihan. (They were talking about it last week.) In the course of it, it comes out that I'm reading Reid's book. I get introduced to Brayman and Domenici says of the user charge bill.

"That was a great day. We even had champagne. Things like that don't happen around here very often. It was a great confrontation and played up in all the Washington papers. We pass amendments, but we don't very often have a confrontation and a change of direction. That's what we want with the water projects legislation--confrontation and change. I'm excited about it--if I can ever get free from all the things you have to do in this institution."

In the office - an indian tapestry with roadrunner in middle, indian paintings (he talks about indian who does sand painting and was shot and is active in tribal government), has got couple of dozen awards, a frame of 4 cartoons, few elephants.

He and Paul Laxalt and *Bennet* ~~Daniel~~ Johnston are cosponsoring a resolution calling for independent *audit* ~~audit~~ of oil companies *practices* ~~inventives~~--and he talks to

Laxalt about it over the phone. "Can you get anymore cosponsors? If you do, let me know. I got six Democrats. Do you think that will get us some press? Have you got the wire service guys?" It is his great concern whenever I'm in the office. Yet it never came up in the interview.

On the new water projects the following conversation took place after Brayman had left. And PD had said that press ~~on~~ conference with *D Moynihan*  
*PM would get eastern editors.*

Domenici: This water thing will be great.

Bell: You may not get as much publicity from it as you think.

Wellish: I've got New Mexico all juiced up. We're going to hold a closed hookup new conference--all the major papers and the wire services.

Domenici: This will be the second time in history (we've done that).

Bell: Why don't we get Moynihan to do that with us, too. He's a national figure and he likes publicity.

Wellish: It would take the partisanship out of it back home.

Domenici: Let's get him.

Bell: It would be a good gimmick for him.

Wellish: I've got one radio station to carry the thing live.

Bell: How about the TV station?

Wellish: I'll get them tomorrow. We'll get a lot of good play in N.M.

Bell: You've got to get the TV, get the TV.

I talk about yesterday's energy markup and ask if compromise role is one he finds himself in.

"Your observation is pretty accurate. I find that as member of minority that when 2 things are present this kind of intuitive approach to resolve the issue comes into focus and works very often--it worked in clean air act. I have to personally feel comfortable with the subject matter. I don't know as much about ARSt. as the staff guy and I'm not afraid to tell him so.

*Away from Reactor Storage*

But I felt comfortable with <sup>the</sup> parameters of the thing. I knew before little Dan Dreyfus told me that what we were looking for was not necessarily 300 million but that there wasn't a delay in the program and that we didn't want to go through it year after year. ~~The second way~~ <sup>so</sup> I felt comfortable. The second way I <sup>get</sup> involved is <sup>the</sup> When I've been working at something for a long time. Ultimate clear air standards for autos - believe it or not <sup>the</sup> levels of pollutants and years in which they were to be achieved, ended up being my proposal. I wasn't the only person who ever thought of it, but when we had House and Senate bills <sup>mine</sup> was acceptable. It was my compromise that appears in <sup>the statute.</sup> ~~statement.~~ I can easily do it when I have staff assistants that understand issues and can make <sup>them</sup> ~~it~~ understandable to me. The same thing in the East and West <sup>coal</sup>, and flexible versus inflexible clean-up standards. That whole thing is a Domenici amendment in conference. <sup>^</sup> Good staffer that makes good sense out of it helps <sup>like</sup> Lee Rawls. All summarized in NJ - House does things totally political. They set EPA standards to benefit eastern coal (Set <sup>percentages</sup> of clean up.) I didn't have to know specific subject--just the general subject--to come into the breach and do this. You'll find senators with a more facile approach. They don't have to be well informed to appear well informed. <sup>Date</sup> Bumpers--and I'm not critical, I <sup>re</sup> admit it--can take a piece of paper and begin spouting as if he really knows. I can't do that. It's not in my nature. The staff <sup>pushes</sup> me. But some thing prevents me from doing it.

I asked if he wasn't in the ideological middle.

"I'm not precluded from taking a position by ideology. An Orrin Hatch has as much natural talent as anyone. But he would not be able to offer <sup>a</sup> ~~or~~ compromise as much as I can. He would feel locked in by his ideology."

"I'll lock <sup>in</sup> ~~it~~ on the military." "I'm for cutting taxes to produce incentives and the like. I'll be locked in vs. tax expenditures <sup>going back to the</sup> ~~gone~~ <sup>PP 8</sup>

<sup>government</sup>  
 But on ARS - I'm not locked. On Clean Air I'm willing to argue with the auto companies and with Ed Muskie. I wasn't taken for granted by the auto companies and I had <sup>a</sup> long argument with Ed Muskie."

<sup>Re</sup> He has second term; - "The <sup>dimensions</sup> ~~Domenici~~ change. <sup>You get</sup> Got to be more of a redist. in terms of how much a Senator can accomplish in the institution. You can do more than you think the 1st year. But you understand. There are 100 guys - You aren't going to do everything in other domains. <sup>You have respect</sup> for committees, <sup>don't</sup> ~~but~~ <sup>break</sup> with <sup>them</sup>. Keeps you from being impetuous - don't have to be on floor to prove you're on conservative or that you're for military. Stennis and Tower will cover waterfront."

Are you a little less anxious, more comfortable? "Precisely."

At the same time, this may be part of our times with the <sup>two problems--</sup> economic problems and <sup>an</sup> unstable world. <sup>In spite</sup> ~~inspire~~ of feeling more comfortable, I'm more certain than ever that in its own crazy way the world is a barometer of feelings of Americans. I never thought that there would be so much anguish and confusion and uptightness as there is. Legislation schedule was supposed to be greatly diminished - work load more accommodating. Tain't so - we are slow by conventional yardsticks.

→ Bills introduced--down; bills passed--down; days on floor--down, amount of anguish and tension--up! I remember <sup>a</sup> saying of my mother's <sup>like a</sup> chicken with its head cut off." You would wring the neck of the chicken to kill it and it would flop <sup>all</sup> ~~etc.~~ over, not knowing where to go, feathers flying. Although I'm more comfortable, I'm like the chicken with its head cut off. I don't remember what I did; I'm trying to do more than I can. Communications, letter writing, trips home, staff in state have produced a more direct thermometer effect on me and on the institution. Diesel fuel runs out and in 2 weeks, the institution knows we're out of fuel. People are mad and we get sentiment of anger felt quick."



"I've grown more comfortable and more skeptical and concerned about <sup>our</sup> ability to solve problems in this free and open society.

Reputation - 1st term and 2nd term. - <sup>What do you hope reputation will be at end of 2nd term & what was it at end of first term.</sup>

"A couple of characteristics that are important and don't change. I hope I had 'em after 6 years and I hope I'll have 'em after 12 years -- honesty and integrity. <sup>That</sup> I'm not in <sup>this</sup> the political, public service job for personal gain. If that's not there, I'd feel very very bad. I would have abused the system terribly. The second is that I'm generally interested in people. <sup>Both</sup> <sup>there</sup> <sup>the</sup> But were <sup>the</sup> they in last campaign, <sup>that I've been and was</sup> concerned with their problems. To take the <sup>two</sup> 2 and move over to next 6 years, I'd hope on the 2nd one, <sup>the</sup> concern for individuals in my state, <sup>the</sup> that I see need to balance <sup>the</sup> concern for individuals with <sup>the</sup> need for change in national policy. I hope I 'm seen as honest and full of integrity and that my people see my concern about them, but I hope I can convince them that their problems are part of America's problems and there is a need for change. <sup>here I want to</sup> If I <sup>can</sup> come through 6 years and <sup>have</sup> people say, "he didn't vote for exactly what my group wanted but he voted in the way that we now realize was good for country," I can't avoid it. I can't be here 12 years and say to you on every single issue I went down and asked my people what's best for them. I want to be in touch but we've got problems that might require national leadership. It may be in history that people say 'Hey, Pete did right.' That's a tug of war. You want to be popular every day. You want to say 'I did exactly what you asked me to do.' But the accumulation of saying yes may have put us where we're at. I'm <sup>hoping</sup> <sup>happy</sup> I can please <sup>my</sup> constituents without being for everything they want."

<sup>anything</sup> Learn from campaigning? "I don't want to be mean to anybody. I have to be careful how this comes out. We can't be statesmen all the time. You have to be a politician. What I really learned is you could go to people 6-8

months before election. Do you approve of this, this, this<sup>2</sup> and 90% would say yes. But if somebody said 'Pete got too many contributions from the oil companies,' even though it wasn't true, the same people forget what you had done. <sup>I guess what I mean is that</sup> People vote <sup>against</sup> ~~vs.~~ as much as for. The campaign pointed that out. ~~I guess what I mean is that.~~

Re. winning and governing.

"Carter is the living example of a packaging job--packaging without reference to whether he can govern."

"There's a protective mechanism when you are part of a group - people second guess you up here." Therefore, <sup>to winning, governing dilemma</sup> different answers <sup>^</sup> for executive and legislative.

Packaging is related to election.

<sup>This</sup> Qualities that make you a good senator <sup>thing - -</sup> forethought, honest, hard working, do your homework, <sup>the</sup> homework <sup>then</sup> would end up showing up here and easier <sup>up</sup> for you to win. If you're a governor, you'll be a good politician - can talk, promote, at both ends. What I've learned is that Ed Muskie was <sup>a</sup> successful campaigner because he's a good Senator."

"Successful senator means personal qualities and business qualities people look for. We have to be honest, decent, considerate, the things that help us represent our people. Most important quality up here is respect as legislator.

<sup>You've got</sup> to specialize and become knowledgeable and get it out to your fellow <sup>s.</sup> members. Be wise enough to pick an area, bright enough to learn it; find the opportunity to apply it. <sup>You</sup> Do it both in committee and <sup>in</sup> on floor work.

→ The Biggest mistake you can make, and I made it, is that the institution demands so much of you that you will shot gun and try a little bit of everything. The temptation is severe. For a representative in the minority, it's the sure way to failure. Pick or fall into an area and, along with honesty, <sup>cameraderie</sup> camaradence and decency, you will get respect."

I picked up on comaraderie to ask if Senators had personal friends. "It's a bitch to preserve close friendships you had and ~~hard~~ to develop new <sup>ones</sup> ~~rules~~. Only thing I've found if you force yourself to spend time in your neighborhood, you might pick up friends, if you work at it. In 6 years, I have one."

"Among senators, it's incredibly difficult. It's not difficult because we vote differently, <sup>or</sup> ~~its~~ because we expect loyalty. No one expects you to vote with 'em. However, in <sup>the</sup> institution now, there are a couple of things that promote friendship. "The prayer breakfast is very helpful. Then, we have our own 4 Senators, 2 Dems and 2 Republicans and 2 outsiders. We eat for 1 1/2 hours together. We did today. We discuss~~ed~~ each other's families. We know each other's wives name--even though we haven't met. We talk about each other. We talk about our experiences. We pray for each other. We talk about institutional problems, national problems, leadership problems. It's 3 1/2 years old, ~~we~~ seem to be the best of friends, but even that is not carried over to weekends."

I guess that Nelson, Hollings, Stennis, have little groups of buddies but I don't know.

"They speak of this great club. That's purely a fabrication. If it were a club we would be together. We would be buddies and friends. It doesn't have that. Those qualities are not there. We have respect for each other. We love each other. But we don't know a hell of a lot about each other. Once in a while, we get a little time together and we say wouldn't it be nice to get together more often. But it doesn't happen. You haven't asked me, but I'm going to tell you. The major shortcoming of the institution is that there is no time to think. When you have time away from the demands and the rigors of the

institution, you're so delighted to be out from under it <sup>that</sup> ~~and~~ you put it aside <sup>and</sup> ~~to~~ forget it. Guys say wouldn't it be nice to think of world history or have some scholars talk to us. It doesn't happen."

" Lee Rawls and I have decided that the Senate is like dancing with a gorilla. You dance when it dances; you sit when it sits; you stop when it stops."

I said, "it rides you; you don't ride it."

" I don't care how big and how powerful you are, you don't ride it. Maybe for one week, in your hey day you can beat it and stick it, but, it's going to ride you. And the faster times change and the more complex the society becomes, the more certain it is that it will ride you."

The whole picture was kind of discouraging. I should have asked him whether he likes it! And it will be interesting to see if his mood changes.

Interesting thing was that press obsession never came up. I may not have asked right question.

He said early in the interview "I was talking the other day to some ethnics--people from Viet Nam to Mexico--people who had not been born here but who chose this country. I have a real feeling for those people. I'm a second generation American. My father came here from Italy, and I remember how he felt. When people criticized the country he would compare it to what he had left. 'You're crazy; you're crazy' he would say. He had a real feeling for this society and what it meant."