

PETE DOMENICI

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I caught him as I got out of the elevator on the way in to his office. He was on way back from meeting with Baker, Dole, Hatfield, Laxalt. He took me into his office and said I could have 10 minutes. When I got in his office, Bell and Fulton showed up. They had been briefing Gorton for McNeil Lehrer. PD said, "They have 5 hours of work ahead of them, tho' they don't know it." Bell looked at me and said "You're turning up everywhere." I felt the same way about him.

As I left "I have to tell you, because of your early association with me that I think I've grown in the job. I'm getting a lot of my ideas into policy now instead of just sputtering the way I used to. I like what I'm doing and I feel fully utilized. I have the resources and I know how to use them. It's much better that it used to be." A comment born of my longer association.

At end of my 5 minutes (to Angela - "Throw the Doc out after 5 minutes") he said. "I guess I'm confessing to you ('confessin to you') that the vaunted success of my chairmanship has operated within a very narrow guage. I don't know how well I'll do the nxt time. If the President goes with these huge deficits it may be impossible to sell them to anyone in the Congress. Both the right and the left will attack him--the right because of the deficits and the left because of program cuts. And the mainstream people in the committee may slip away. Jones is going to have an even worse time on the House side. If it's an impossible task, it won't be a fair test (of my chairmanship). But I'll say to you that we never before cut anything as substantial as what we did this year. They bounced along with 12, 15, 18% increases each year. The \$50 tax cut was about the most serious thing we dealt with." Are you saying that you were ~~tested~~ <sup>fr</sup> tested this year to a degree *never* was. "I am. That's just right."

I asked him about running the committee and bipartisanship. "I don't have a theory about it. And I don't know yet just what I can do. I haven't really been tested yet. I didn't have to run a bipartisan committee this year. So I don't know whether I could or not. I think I know all the personalities involved. I know who I could get on the Democratic side, but I'm not sure how far I'd have to go to get them. But I'd start the other way. I'd see how many Republicans I could hold and make that my baseline. I'm not sure how far I would have to go to hold all of them. Maybe I couldn't. But I'd still make the Republicans my baseline. And I'd make sure before I jumped to the Democrats that I knew exactly where I stood with all the Republicans.

But you have to realize that the committee waasn't always partisan this year." I asked why it became partisan. "Taxes--the Democrats didn't approve of the tax cuts. And the economic assumptions. Then the events of August and September widened the breach and it became polarized. If I had known that the President was going to oppose them, I would not have presented my figures for the second budget resolution. I would have tried for a bipartisan plan. Once I presented my plan and the President opposed it there was nothing I could do about it."

About meeting with Baker. He came in saying "I'm so depressed I may just get drunk." Then he gave Bell and Fulton "five hours of work to get ready for my meeting with the President tomorrow." Fulton showed me the OMB briefing that Domenici had had, predicting astronomical deficits unless something is done about them and predicting political disaster unless they do something.

"Baker started the meeting by saying he had been reading some history. He said do you know who the last really successful Senate Republican majority leader was? He said it was \_\_\_\_\_ the majority leader in the first two years of Hoover's Presidency. Congress completed business and went home for Christmas. And the papers said the Senate had given the President all he

asked for, had passed all the elements of his program, had made a sense of historic accomplishments and so forth. Baker said he was getting just a little queesy."

"Who does he think is getting these things done fro him up here. If it weren't for Baker, Dole, Hatfield and Domenici, he wouldn't have gotten anything through up here."

Re decisions of the group. "They want some program that will identify the Republican party with the average guy. Something we've never had before--invent something, something the little guy can relate to. They are going to tell him that he's got to spend a billion dollars somewhere to do that. They've all read the same polls. I don't know what they are going to say. But that's not my problem." Bell and Fulton tossed out ideas and asked if he wanted them to suggest program and he said "negative."

Domenici's problem is that Reagan doesn't believe how bad things are. And I guess it was Reagan's press conference today that made him so "depressed."

"I don't think he believes those deficit figures yet."

After PD's story about Baker's intro Bell said "Baker's coming around to what you've been saying all along. Does he realize how right he was when he called it a riverboat gamble? He may have thought it was a joke, but it was the truth he was speaking. Does he understand that?"

Bell the cheerleader--as he left "Good luck tomorrow boss. Really good luck (shaking his fingers) You may need the intervention of divine providence." And Fulton said "I told you, didn't I that at the meetings Gail Foster said all the talk was 'the Domenici plan' "The Domenici plan". They have to pump him up--just as Bob said in Albuquerque.

Opening conversation:

PD: The Doc isn't used to breaking news so we'll let him sit in on this.

Fulton: You aren't going to write it up for the Atlantic, are you?

Fenno: You know me better than that.

Bell: I don't trust anyone with a pen in his hand.

Fenno: Have you ever seen me with a pen in my hand? Whereupon all three of us took a beer and sat down.