

PETE DOMENICI

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I said that just being around the institution tired me out and I asked him if it wasn't the same way with him. "Man, I'm beat all the time now. I'm so up tight about whether we're doing the right thing. Even when I sleep, I don't sleep. You know what I mean."

"The numbers we see in the budget are terrible. And the bossman is completely oblivious to them. He's completely oblivious to reality. I don't know how much longer I can stay with him."

How are admin. relations? "Right now they are good. They fluctuate. They don't watch what you say on a daily basis. They know that you're a team player, that you're trying to help them.. But those real supply siders don't understand that in order to achieve what they want, you'd need to have phenomenal growth, faster than anything anyone ever imagined. And if you did that you'd have to run deficits. It's a catch 22. The President doesn't understand any of this. He really doesn't."

I said that Pete's relations with RR had been strained early in the year and he said yes it had. He's always complaining about RR; but he never gets to the limit.

"I've never thought I would ever have the kind of potential for influence that I've had the last two years. I honestly think I've had as much or more influence on the procedure and the substance of public policy than anyone else up here. Dole has been an implementor in a high flying style. But on the direction of public policy and the process by which you get there, those ideas have been mine. Of course, mine within certain limits. I would have frozen everything last September--frozen all those entitlement programs, if I had my way, you know that."

He kept asking me about my book. He wants it done. Of Glenn: "I don't want to be presumptuous but when you started you wouldn't have thought of him as leading the way up here would you? Amazing."

Then he started in saying that he thought 1984 would be a hard year for the Republicans. But said Dems were in disarray. I asked him about Schmitt. Did they have same strength? "Our polls show that in favorability rating, in name ID, in the good things like, he helps us with our problems, he's one of us, he works for us, there's a great disparity between him and me... The polls show that the strongest Democrat is Anaya. He ran close to us in 1978. Between the two of us, there is a great disparity. We ran way ahead of him; and he's in the middle of a campaign getting all the publicity. That could all change by 1984. Right now, great gobs of people in New Mexico like the fact that I'm a big shot. But that won't last. That's what the pollsters tell us. People don't vote on that basis. No one is running against me yet. No one is pointing at me and saying that I voted against cost of living increases for retirees. If the scenary is bad my opponent will say 'he's got no excuses.' He's been in charge, and looks at the mess he made. That's what I'd do if I were my opponent. Of course, I'm not so dumb that I can't duck out from under a lot of that. I think my influence has been pretty general and not something you can easily point your finger at. Right now things look pretty good."

"If you are asking me whether we have the same kind of support I'd say yes we do. I'm just a little stronger in those same places. He'll run a little weaker in the Southeast, because his opponent is a moderate Democrat. He thinks he'll run better in the northern counties since it's gringo against gringo, and he's done some favors. I'm not so sure. We'll see

do here to admit this, because they are so dear to my heart, but the fact is I have very little reliable support in the Spanish speaking

areas. It is not a bastion of strengths--for either of us. He ran better in North East Heights than I did, against Montoya. But he finds that that is flattening out."

He wanted to know about my book and I told him that I thought of him in terms of growth and change and I moved to the press question. Am less anxious now--it took you a long time to pick a new press guy.

"I wouldn't want you to think that I have reached the state that every politician dreams of, where the press back home gives him all the coverage he thinks he deserves and interprets what he does the way he wants it interpreted. I haven't. I still fret when the AP story in New Mexico carries the headline, "Domenici's Budget Committee cuts Social Security 40 Billion." I couldn't get a reply to my complaint. I did not get that story across right. And the things we do get done locally, we don't always build up the story well enough so we get the kind of publicity we want. So I'm not going to tell you my press relations are fine. But overall, there has been an enormous change. I don't want to screw up my press relations, so maybe I'd better read what you write on this. The exposure I get from the national press, from the New York Times and the Washington Post has begun to creep into New Mexico--not a lot, but enough. And I get lots of exposure from national television and radio, especially radio. When you go up to that little room on the top floor, both TV and radio are on. That kind of national publicity has had a big effect on the local media. It has forced the local New Mexico press and television to take me more seriously and pay more attention to what I say and do. We don't have any direct TV coverage by New Mexico stations in Washington. We have two stringers that work for ten stations. That makes my situation

different from most other guys. But the two stringers use me a lot. That helps. The local people will see that I've been put on TV and they will figure if I was number two story and they didn't put anything on, they have lost out. So there's competition between the national and the local people to cover the story well. That competition helps me. When I'm on TV or radio, in the national weekly magazines and the national papers, it gives a legitimacy to what I say when I'm back home. The local people are less suspicious that I'm just feeling them some flak. All that has changed. I don't have the anxiety about press that I used to have. A lot of it takes care of itself now."

"So many people think you don't work hard, they don't know you've got a staff busting their butts for you, they don't know how you neglect your family. When you don't get press coverage for doing good things--and I've always been convinced I did good work--everything about the job gnaws at you. But when you have a chance to substantially influence public policy in the country, the bad parts of the job don't gnaw at you so much. You become less anxious about press relations." I may not have phrased this right. Idea is job is tough. When you get no press, you feel undercompensated and the bad parts of the job are magnified. When you do big things and get recognized. The about the job research.

"It's hard to find the right person for press secretary. Martha worked well because I had worked with her before. Wellish was wild. But I usually keep 'em a long time. Bell stayed for 5, 6, 7 years. After Martha it was hard to find the right person. But I think I've found a very compatible person."

Is the budget process in good shape? "It's in pretty good shape. People don't want to kill it. They want to reform it. But they will probably stay away from it for a couple of years for fear they will kill

it. Its great strength is flexibility. You can do one and get two. Reconciliation has worked just great--in the Senate, not in the House. The chairmen are beginning to like it--our chairmen, not the House chairmen. They know they couldn't do the things that need to be done without it. Packwood called up the other day and said we ought to do it every year--we can get rid of a lot of crap we don't want, clean house, it's great. Dole knows he couldn't have gotten any tax package without reconciliation. Mark Hatfield isn't as opposed to it as he used to be."

"I think the Republicans will get some momentum because we looked good. We've done good work and we look good doing it. Dole is great on TV. I do OK on Face the Nation. Baker, great. People in Washington, reporters, say that the Republican chairmen are a group of very good or much better than they ever. Dole great, Baker great, surprised as hell about Domenici, Hatfield very sophisticated, he weaves around, doesn't get upset. We ought to get some momentum out of our chairmanship. The Democrats did--for years. That ought to help in 1984."

I said (prior to this quote) it seemed to me that the Senate Republicans were running the country." "John Anderson wrote that in the Post, and he's absolutely right. David Broder was right, too, in what he said about the Democrats. They are ducking the issues. They don't want to do anything... The problem for the Republicans is that we may have a great schism. It's just below the surface, and has come to the top the last few days. Those supply siders are not conservatives. I don't know how they ever got put in with the conservatives. They are radical. Jack Kemp wants to be President. From where he sits, nothing but the President will do. A major

schism will kill the Republicans. We are too small a party. We can't survive that. That worries the hell out of me."

He was still worrying about my book when I left. I told him AEI wants me to stay. "That won't interfere with your book, will it?" He's impatient-- as in most things. But a very nice guy. He's not really contemplative. It's hard to get him to sit still and answer questions. He wants to ask you questions and have a dialogue. He's a doer, a talker, a worrier.