

DENNIS HOWE

February 25, 1982

"This time I knew what I was doing. With Pete, we had a lot of people we felt we had to hire from the campaign. We brought a lot with us. Kasten had a very small campaign staff, so we didn't have that problem. And we haven't had much turnover. I still don't have the press secretary I want. The one we wanted went downtown to the administration. (Did you try to bring you press secretary from the campaign?) He's here. But he's inexperienced as a salesman. For press secretary you need someone with ideas, someone who understands the legislation, who knows what an amendment is, and you need a hawk, someone who can sell your wares. Someone like Steve Bell."

He spent a lot of time detailing the staff and where they came from. It turns out there are 11 from campaign, 8 here and 3 in Wisconsin. About half are original Wisconsinites. None are from his House days. He tried to get former LA to be chief LA and that person became AA. He tried to get former press secretary and she was with IBM and stayed. He hired LA's from various places in town. Some had done research in campaign. Hatfield and Packwood hired their subcommittee people for them.

"Kasten likes to funnel all access through me and Dawn, and his personal secretary. He and Dawn and I meet every morning for 10 minutes to discuss what's happening and what's ahead. Pete wanted to talk with everybody on the staff. I guess that's probably changed since he's become Budget Chairman. Personally I'd like it to be a little more decentralized. I think it helps morale and bubbles confidence if the younger people can have access to him, too. But he likes it the other way."

Still, Dennis said that he didn't see lots of evidence for idea that personality makes a difference in staff. Then he seemed to indicate otherwise."

"It's better the second time around--much better. (I asked 'better or easier'). Both. Pete worried about everything. Nothing was ever right for him. Pete was never satisfied. Kasten believes there's another life besides Congress. Pete can't stop worrying. He has aged 10 years in the last two years. He was a hard man to work for. Kasten. is an easy man to work for. He insists that everyone call him Bob. And he says he's never going to become 'The Senator.' I'm much happier here. I've lost 20 pounds. I feel better about myself. I'm even stopping to smell the roses. He's asked me to stay on. And I like it so much I'm going to stay." Point is that the atmosphere of the two offices is very different. One is tense and the other relaxed.

"Pete wouldn't let me do political work for other candidates. Kasten. doesn't care. He's perfectly happy if I do that on the weekends. Pete wouldn't let me take a leave to campaign for Jerry Ford and help make him President of the United States. The real challenge, after all, is winning--it's not governing. The problem is to win.."

I asked if he thought it took same skills to campaign as govern.

He answered by saying that, "In the campaign, you have a date when it ends. In the Senate, there never is any end--unless I guess when you are defeated or retire. You have goals, but a succession of goals. They keep changing. "Implicit is the idea that it takes a different temperament to do one than other."

I summed up by asking him if it wasn't true that the Kasten. office had no "second staff," no turnover. He said that was correct and I said it probably had a lot to do with his experience. He agreed. "The big mistake Pete and I made was that we didn't hire anyone who knew the Senate."

He went on to say "I sometimes think I ought to campaign in every even numbered year and then set up a Senate office in every odd numbered year." He laughed. And it was then he said he would stay on with Kasten. because he asked him to.

"Paula Hawkins has been through two staffs already. We've had very little turnover."