

STEVE BELL

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"What a mess. We're in big trouble. These people have been meeting and there are wide divergencies of opinion. Yesterday's meeting was mush. The Democrats are meeting in caucus all day today--to what end I don't know. The President is saying he'll go the extra mile, but he won't budget on taxes and he won't budge on COLAs. He's just posturing himself. O'Neill is just posturing himself, too. They are both getting ready to blame the other when the process fails. That's what worries me. They are preparing for the failure, which leads me to believe they have already given up."

"Domenici thinks he can get 12 Republican votes to vote out a budget resolution very close to his. We could take that to the floor and have a very tough battle and perhaps, carry it on the floor... He would much prefer to do smething on a bipartisan basis. If nothing happens this week, we may move to markup next week. I think we've got to do that. And I'm telling Domenici he should do it. If we're going to go out, we should go with a bang and not a whimper. That's the attitude I've had ever since I took the job... The way to keep the budget process alive is to use it vigorously. We could lose it in one of two ways. One is to have people reject it. The other is to go so slow, saying wait a while, such that by the time you do anything you are superfluous. Nobody needs you and nobody cares about you. You just get left behind."

Re support for budget process in the Senate. "Very little. It has some appeal because the procedural safeguards that are built into the resolution make it a good vehicle to carry a lot of legislation. There is support because of Domenici's personal popularity. (I think he mentioned another reason) Most people don't understand the budget process, don't know how it works and don't care about it." On the committee there is great loyalty to the budget process.

You never saw such loyalty." Then he talked about member of Committee.

Is Pete hemmed in in what he can do now? "No he's not hemmed in; but he has hemmed himself in by his decision to be constructive and not to go off on his own half cocked on something that won't get anywhere. He may have to decide to do something on his own next week... I think we've got a very serious, dangerous problem. I've never seen anything like it."

He told someone on the phone that yesterday's 4/20/82 WSJ was essentially accurate on the situation.

He talked about the committee - after saying that the Republicans were loyal to budget process.

"You've got six freshmen on the committee. And when you talk about Grassley and Symms you aren't talking about heavyweights. Kassebaum is not a heavyweight though she may become one. Armstrong is too rigid and ideological. Boschwitz is unknown. Hatch is afraid he'll be unelected and he is totally unpredictable. Tower is potentially the most dangerous threat to the entire process. He has only one thing that interests him in life, to get a bigger defense budget... Right now he's mad as hell. He's been cut out of the budget negotiations and he's threatening to bring the whole thing down... Then you've got Quayle, Kasten. (he shrugs) and Gorton. He's new but he's going to be very good some day. With these people, an awful lot depends on Domenici."

How about Dems--are they committed to the process? "Johnson is. Chiles is. Hollings is. But now he's running for President or majority leader or whatever. He's very unpredictable--and vain. Hart--you never know what side of the issue he's going to be on. Biden--I can't figure him out. Moynihan, Riegle, Metzenbaum are absolutely useless. wants to get reelected, and does

not understand the budget process. is too partisan. He's no help. It's not like it was when you had a group of senior Democrats on the committee (he named them, Muskie, Magnuson, etc.) who could help protect the Committee." *The picture he paints--though he did not say so--is a picture of a vulnerable committee.

I asked him if the media helped. "They are a big help. Our relations with the media are excellent. If you can get your story out it's got to help. My attitude with the press is to tell them the truth. I've been quoted all times by name and not by name--and I've never once been misquoted. I tell them what's going on and I work for ^a Senator who has a lot of respect. He doesn't go around holding hearings on the sexual practices of teenage girls. He's not a nut. Our media relations are a big help." I meant to ask him whether their constant reporting and somewhat optimistic reporting didn't hurt them. But he saw the question as his media relations... Anyway he didn't see media as any problem. I think he cultivates the media, for Pete and for the committee's position. *yes an ex press secretary -* Right now, the Senate Committee is taking the optimistic view that gets mirrored in the media account. Tom Foley said last night that he thought the press was playing it too optimistically. But that's because Tom is on the other side.

I asked Steve how Pete was feeling and said I hoped he'd tell Pete to take care of himself. He said Pete had been without a smoke for 21 days, but that he won't exercise. And he noted that Pete uses his time inefficiently. He said earlier that Pete "was feeling very bearish this week."

He took a call from Pete's brother-in-law while I was there. He's a lobbyist for Westinghouse and is interested in Ex-Im Bank. Steve gave him a budget rundown like he gave me. He got Sandy to get "the green book" from Bob Fulton so he could give the Brother-in-law the figures in the Domenici plan.

The Albuquerque Journal came into the office with the Times Post and WST. The overnight clippings from the Albuquerque office came to Bell's office. He has a map of N.M. on the wall and a couple of indian art objects (rug and sort of weaving). When I left, we walked to Dirksen where Steve was going to talk with PD "I've got a doctor's appointment--it's euphmistically called a doctor's appoint." He also made a Friday AM 7:55 breakfast date with PD at Capitol Hill Club. The signs of PD and NM are all around. There is no pretense that the Bell-PD link is not there and paramount. The Secretaries were talking about how many times they had retyped PD's OpEd page article on New Federalism in today's Post. Bob Fulton was having a conference to prepare Pete for a Q & A on COLAs with US News. So--everywhere you sense the fact that they work for Domenici--in all his parts.