

JIM RANGE & DAN CRIBBEN

May 25-27, 1982

Re meeting of Rep. Budget Committee in Baker's office - "There was a lot of yelling and screaming. But the small man with the big ears is pretty good when there's yelling and screaming. He doesn't get made very often. But when he does, they sit up and listen. And they did."

Re policy committee meeting. Armstrong--who already sees removal of social security numbers as step backward says "Let's have one more round, come to agreement and then have no more republican amendments and vote against all Democratic amendments. Baker bought that argumen."

"There are some members of our party who believe that the way to persuade someone to do something is to take him in the back room and beat on him till he says 'Anything you want.' That's not this leader's style. He's not Lyndon Johnson."

Cribben: "When Pete Domenici is under pressure he is in here all the time or calling Baker on the phone. He calls him at night. He's in constant contact. That's the extreme case... Bill Armstrong is the other extreme. He wants to maintain his independence from Baker. It's not that they don't talk and get along personally. They do. He just doesn't want to be obligated to Baker politically. That leaves him free to go out on the floor and do what he's doing now--block this supplemental, be punitive and play games. That's just the way he is."

He tells story: Armstrong needs Baker's signature to get gov't money to travel abroad. He pays for it himself instead of asking Baker for his signature.

Cribben says of Baker "Lyndon Johnson browbeat people and made them do things out of fear. Baker deals with his members by being a nice guy. He deals with them personally and is concerned about them, but he stays aloof from

their private lives...when he has some free time, he sits in the cloak room and bullshits. The chairmen come up to him and talk about their schedules. He spends a lot of his time with the chairmen (freshmen?). There are some with whom he has especially good rapport--Warren Rudman for example, They talk a lot and get along well. I can't think of another like that. (On the other extreme) I don't think of Grassley and Symms as coming around very much. He doesn't have any trouble talking to them. They just don't come in much."

Re acting like LBJ. "I'm not sure you can act that way anymore. Baker wouldn't in any case. There may be the realization in the back of everyone's mind that Baker could do things to screw up their lives pretty badly. But he would never do that. That's not his style."

There are a couple of points Dan stresses. The numbers between admin and Budget Committee aren't so far apart when they meet--he suspects prior consultation. "Domenici often works with Stockman directly and outside the view of this office. That's OK, of course, he's the Budget Committee Chairman.

Baker works very straightforwardly on parliamentary procedure. They use idea that committee chairman or Baker moves modification - do it straight - go to Byrd and say I want to do it this way. If you don't, I can do this and this, but let's not play games. Byrd agrees. But they went through all possible amendment trees.

Jim: Re the timing of the budget committee decision "Howard Baker called the shot on that. He has the best political instincts of anyone in this leadership. He was the one who decided when the budget would come out of the Committee. He was the one who said 'Pete, you and the boys have to

get together.' He's the one who called the meeting of the Budget Committee over here. He wanted the budget out that night and he wanted it out at that time. If it had come out three days later, it would have been shot down. If it had come out three weeks earlier, it would have been torn to shreds. I don't think anyone in this body would argue with him on that." Jim describes the policy meeting as reaching "a consensus." "These guys said we understand that you've got to get a budget, but you've got to understand our problem. During the meeting different people got up and said what was troubling them. (At this point he told me he couldn't go into names.) It got heated at times, but never out of control. When they left there was a consensus. You'll get your budget. We'll stick together. And everyone knew how small a margin we have to work with--5 votes. On matters of great importance to particular individuals, it was understood that people might vote against us. But they would do it through the majority leader. And he keeps a tally in his head. Some people go around (Steve Bell) saying certain Senators welched on this deal. Hell, there was no deal like that. There was a consensus that we would get our budget, and we got it--with style. There were some very brave Senators...and there were some real chicken shit Senators who showed ass instead of being/ team players."

Chaffee "He runs in the most Democratic state in the Union. He was up front about his opposition. But he stood with us on most issues and voted for the budget."

Also Danforth. "He's a good Senator--he and Chaffee are close. He's a consolation to the guys who are scared. He says I'm going to run and tell the folks that the check book is dry. If they don't believe me or don't want to hear it, I'll be Ambassador to New Zealand. He made that speech."

And "Nancy Kassebaum performed with style. She felt so strongly about defense that she had to offer her amendment. She put everyone on notice

that she wouldn't do it. She did it in the Budget committee meetings. She showed just how much the defense increase threw everything else in the budget off, given the bottom line we were dealing with." Being serious, having a good rationale and being open and above board are valued. Nancy also tried to get a reasonable compromise on RR retirement.

Jim (and Dan too) thinks that social security "was a flim flam from the beginning. The press and may be some Democrats thought that social security would be the campaign issue. I think it would be one issue. But I think the campaign issue the Democrats want is to be able to say 'The Republicans can't get a budget resolution passed. The Republicans can't govern.' I think that's a large part of what my boss thinks the Senate has to do--show people we are able to govern. Now, the headline reads 'Republican Senate approves budget.' If we had not, the headlines would have read 'Senate Repyblicans Can't Pass Budget. President's program floundering; Congress can't function, etc.'" That's what the Democrats wanted. They don't have any alternative program. They were waiting for the Republicans to fail. That's why they were speechless when we came in with a budget. They didn't think we had a prayer of ever pulling together those different points of view among the Republicans Liz Tankersky ('a good friend' and Hollings key staff person) was unable to speak when it happened. She did not believe it would ever be done."

Jim faults the press a lot for the social security flap that occurred. He believes the educational effort must be done. That it's right to cut social security. "My grandmother" says OK when you ask her etc.

"The members of the Budget committee are educated on the matter of social security. They understand the problem. Other Senators think about it, but not seriously. They may think about it in general, but then they go back to 'what do I want.' When the budget came out with the social security

numbers on it, there was not time to get out ahead of the educational curve. All of a sudden you find 100 Senators most of them uneducated, talking about it. The Democrats started calling them social security cuts. And the press--whether it knew better or not--picked up on the cuts. You have these reporters Dave Espo, Bobby (Merry) who follows the budget in the committee, and then when they get over here, and all of a sudden they find a lot more Senators worried about social security provision they exaggerate what is happening. Our liberal to moderate Republicans--many of whom are up for election--listen to the Democrats and read what the press was saying and they became alarmed. So we started backtracking from the Committee's budget. It was just what Baker had predicted from the beginning. We had the Durenberger-Chaffee plan, the Heinz plan to take it off budget. Baker finally decided to take out the numbers and leave the instructions in the resolution."

Not clear whose idea that was--but Jim talked off and on about Baker's views on social security. "When he first saw Domenici's plan with social security numbers in it he told him 'Pete you're going to have a lot of trouble with that later on.' It wasn't that he didn't agree with Domenici. His practical political instinct told him that it would not pass the Senate. That's just what happened. He didn't say 'I told you so.' But Pete knew." Baker's political judgment better than PD's.

"Domenici wanted to come in with a hard budget, with a budget that was right. Howard Baker agreed with him that it was right. But he has to think beyond what is right and ask what is best for the whole government. He told Pete. 'You may be able to get that budget through the committee. You may even be able to get it past the Senate. But if you do, it will lie over there on the floor of the rotunda and it will never reach the House. If it does, it will get walked all over by the Democrats in the House, and we may never get a budget through Congress.'"

just after I came to work for him. It tells me a lot about his philosophy about the job. We were sitting down at the end of this table. We were talking about something I knew he didn't want to see passed and I was god damned sure I didn't want to see it passed. And I said to him 'Why are you doing this.' He said to me--and I'll remember it as long as I live--'It's their turn.' He believes that the 1980 elections gave the administration a mandate. And he sees himself, with some nuances, as the administrations point man up here. When he disagrees with them--and he does--you never see the disagreement, because those things never get up here. They are stopped before that happens."

Pete Domenici comes off in this interview as somewhat isolated from the rest of the Congress as very cautious in his political judgments and as relying heavily on Baker at key points in decision making.

Jim and Dan outlined a sequence of events surrounding the committee decision. They focus heavily on meeting among Bell, Stockman, Range, Cribben and Fulton in the conference room while Domenici, Baker, Jim Baker and whoever sit next door in the other office. Cribben and Range had made up what Range calls "a budget framework(?)" listing all the alternative plans--for use by the fiscal five. They point out that from that point on, everybody really knew what the parameters were and what one change did to other changes. Cribben stresses that by the time they all sat down in that room they "were not all that far apart." Jim described the process as "starting with the administration figures and working back toward the Budget Committee's figures." Cribben says he doesn't know where the social security item came from the committee and that the admin. swallowed it against its will and better judgment. He paints Reagan as very skittish on social security after last year's fiasco "when he missed a golden opportunity. That fits, however, with

mown (and Jim's) notion that the Budget Committee guys are steeped in social security and see the numbers day after day and become in Jim's words "educated" on the issue. Anyhow, Jim and Dan stress that it didn't take very long for the working group to agree on a budget because of all the preliminary work--all of 'em looking at same numbers for such a long time. PD may be a key educator in the process--educating everybody.

When Domenici sees it, he says "I can't sell that to my committee," although he is personally content with it. That's when Baker decides to call meeting of full budget committee. (I've described that a little earlier). The guys complain; Baker says "This is it. We will offer no amendments on our side and we will vote down all amendments from the Democratic side." The Budget Committee goes back to PD's office and decides to go with it.

A little earlier on what Jim calls "fateful Wednesday" - PD has his "hard, right" budget but "he comes scurrying around through the back door saying he doesn't think he can get it through." That's the event which Jim referred to when he told me at markup that people behave funny when their ass is on the line. Pete referred to his original mark at that point. From these two incidents--both Domenici to Baker--you get the picture of Pete getting right up to the brink of a decision and getting cold feet and heeding Baker's push. The "scurrying around back" occurred before the Budget Committee meeting with Baker--but how much before I don't know--sometime that day. That precipitated the working group.

Re Budget meeting with Baker. "Domenici was willing to go with the plan. But Bell wasn't quite so ready. Bell doesn't want to get cut off at the knees. But he wants to be out front all the time with 'initiatives.' He was a little restless."

Jim started our discussion by going back to the situation before the budget Act--that no one looked at the whole--and that Budget Committee does that and that that characterizes the Committee. It was a very astute analysis, because he did it in order to get to the position where the committee has a bill and doesn't know whether it can pass it. It is an "educated" committee, but isolated by virtue of that experience--and vulnerable to antagonisms from authorizing committees "who like to keep their jurisdiction close to their chests. Add those characteristics to unrepresentative - not running and not liberal and not senior and you have the problem.

"Pete Domenici has done a marvelous job welding the members of that committee into a team." They are a team in the sense, I think he meant, that they understand.

"Edu Muskie was like a voice in the wilderness, speaking out on the need to cut down on spending. But I don't think he ever believed we really needed to cut through the fat, much less the lean. Last year we cut through the fat, but we didn't get to the lean. This year, we got to the lean."

Dan made a big point of the fact that Pete lost his bill last year and was cautious about it this year. Jim said "Pete said he wanted to pass a resolution. Baker advised him not to try. But he did, and he got whipped in his own committee. Baker never did anything to bring that about. But it has made Domenici very cautious this year. He doesn't want to get beaten again by his own committee."

"That's the thing that bothers me about the whole process-- the partisanship. They drag us through the entire process and then at the last minute they came up on the floor with a substitute bill that is very close to what Domenici wanted in the first place. Why did they do it? I know why. But that shows you what a flim flam that whole social security thing was. After



enticing our plan as , they turn around and propose just about the same thing a week later. Of course, that drove away most of the members of their own party. But the Johnston-Nunn substitute shows you just about where a majority of the Senate wanted to be. If we had had a bipartisan budget from the beginning, we would have had about 15 Democrats. And guys like Chaffee could have voted their consciences and their constituencies--against the budget. I think Domenici and Baker would both have preferred a bipartisan budget from the beginning."

On Dan Quayle - "They've been in a pissy match for a long time on that one. Whether or not he can get control of that bill will show us whether or not he's going to become a good senator."

"When he made that speech the other night, I was standing beside two old timers. One said to the other "It's a good thing Dan got that out of his system. It's been festering for a long time."

On RR retirement, he agrees with Bell that the worst program won. Can't understand how that program ever got started. "There were seven votes lost. But they were prepared to go with us--though it wasn't obvious. If you don't have the votes, why lean on people to stay with you. We regrouped that evening. But we still lost--I argued that it was no great loss, that we had to stick together on the others. And we did. I think it may come back to haunt people who voted for it. Some tough campaign material is being prepared: 'Your Senator voted for railroad retirement, but against all these other programs.' Why?