

25 min address at
PFEIFFER COLLEGE
Misenheimer, N.C.
17 November 1978
to begin at 10:00 a.m.

SENATORIAL REPRESENTATION: The Way I

See It

I. Introduction

Ever so often, particularly after national elections, any elected official will begin to question his performance, his effectiveness the role of the political process and even the political system itself. What I would like to do this morning is to think aloud -- with you -- about the issue of representation.

1. QUESTIONS

a. CAN I REPRESENT THE PEOPLE

OF NORTH CAROLINA?

The answer will involve
a look at the candidate, basic
requisites, essentially trust

b. DO I REPRESENT THE PEOPLE OF
NORTH CAROLINA

Here we must look at citizen
demands and the fundamentals of
performance

c. HOW MUST I REPRESENT TO ACHIEVE
RESULTS?

This includes the message
itself

can demands and performance
bring about the desired
results? But results

which are not communicated will not be regarded as results. Therefore, we must talk about the means of effective communication.

2. SPEECH OUTLINE:

The Candidate as an Elected
Official

Is there such a thing as
Representation

The Need for a Philosophical
Outlook

Constituent Demands

What is the Political Message

The Modes of Communication

Conclusion: The American System
Works

II. THE CANDIDATE AS AN ELECTED
OFFICIAL

After twenty years in public life, most of them as an elected official, and four years in Washington, I am beginning to wonder what made me deserve this punishment. More seriously, however, why is one politician elected rather than another? To my mind, the answer to this question can be reduced to three principles:

1. Identity of Views

there must be a likeness in spirit:

towards religion (sincerity,
loyalty, honesty)

towards government (needed to
the extent necessary)

towards life (fairness, rich
or poor)

2. Complete Trust

accountability necessary but
only periodic elections
physically removed from most
citizens (Washington, etc)
THEREFORE: Constituents must
believe for better or for
worse, until the next election
The elected official, in turn,
must prove worthy of this
trust.

3. Any politician must be an
ethical person

elected officials are supported
with trust but also with

taxes. He must be absolutely above suspicion regarding misuse of funds or growing rich at the expense of the taxpayer (illustrations from Ethics Committee experience)

In conclusion, any political candidate must reflect the majority of the people, their beliefs, their sentiments and even their aspirations. In other words, he must represent them. But this raises a difficulty.

III. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS REPRESENTATION?

Whenever there is a major issue being discussed in the Senate, hundreds of citizens demand that their Senator

vote as they demand. "We sent you to Washington to vote on our behalf; doing otherwise would be contrary to your mandate." The other side of the coin, of course, is voiced by Edmund Burke who, almost 200 years ago, maintained that a politician can only represent his conscience. But unfortunately, the issue is much more complicated than expressed in these two views. If citizen input would be the only decisive element, perhaps a computer in the Senate would be sufficient which registers the buttons being pressed back home.

Acting solely on one's conscience may also not be adequate. There is

the case of one of my predecessors, Senator George Moses, who stormed into the Coolidge White House to complain about a Republican senatorial nomination as a person "being an out-and-out S.O.B." "That could be," replied President Coolidge, "but there are a lot of these in the country, and I think they are entitled to representation in the Senate." (perhaps over-representation?)

In reality, there seem to be six elements which, as a composit, are influential in political decision-making, and thus in representation:

1. Party Responsibilities:

2-party system

support obligation

2. Special Interest Pressures:

inevitable, sometimes justified
also single issue groups

3. Constituent Input:

important but is it representa-
tive?

percentagewise, only a few

contact their representatives

4. State Needs:

legislation must protect North
Carolina interests

individual and industrial goals
must be satisfied

5. National Interest:

legitimate concerns must go
beyond state interests
any vote must give priority
to America

6. Personal Convictions:

reflect the total make-up of
an individual

This last element is probably the most decisive; it will permeate all other considerations. Voters placed their confidence in the views and beliefs of their representative; they ultimately will be the judges of his success or failure. What, then, are my basic attitudes, the political foundations around which I order my performance?

IV. THE NEED FOR A PHILOSOPHICAL
OUTLOOK

Before going briefly into this subject, let me emphasize two points. One is that most pragmatic politicians, short of being an ideological fanatic, will not adopt for themselves a clear cut philosophical statement. Normally, one can assume a vague familiarity with acceptable concepts, a framework of basic ideas which fits one's convictions. Nevertheless, despite such a generality, the need for a philosophical outlook is dictated by circumstances.

The most important reason, of course, is that any person running for elected office must present to his voters a comprehensive body of

political ideas which is consistent and cohesive. Once elected, a Senator will be confronted with thousands of decisions on issues about which he may lack expert knowledge. In this case, he will need an attitudinal yardstick, a set of basic convictions which will help him to vote for what he believes. In my case, there are probably four areas which best characterize my political beliefs.

1. Equity and Fairness

protect the individual against
encroachment by state
assure individual constitu-
tional rights
e.g. the rights of the
elderly

no conflict between security
and liberty

no violation of privacy
consumer protection, home
ownership

anti-trust (right of small
business)

preservation of democracy to
guarantee rights.

2. Fiscal Responsibility

there is no just government
unless it is responsible
like individuals, governments
must spend within means
income tax is a finite
resource, and so is patience
of constituents
believe in limited government

spending

e.g. balanced budget

reform of social security
and food stamps

dubious of tax rebates with

large federal deficit

overgrown federal bureaucracy

3. Maintenance of Federalism

greater imbalance today

compared to Founding Fathers'

concept of balanced government

genius of American people

neglected through remoteness

of federal government

foster respect for local and

individual interests by

promoting diversity and

plurality

need for bringing government
closer to the people

e.g. encourage greater
reliance on state effort

greater revenue sharing
without controls

H.E.W. anti-smoking and
higher education...

stimulate state self-reliance

4. A Strong and Positive America

need for preserving what is
good.

country, people and institutions
are worth protecting.

with growing interdependence,
need to project ideals.

world not without conflict;
strength mandatory.

e.g. service on Armed
Services Committee
military preparedness assured
introduce registration for
selective service
weapons cannot substitute for
a happy and loyal citizenry

V. CONSTITUENT DEMANDS

Any philosophy will remain lofty
ideals until these are translated into
the realistic currency of day-to-day
legislation. When specific needs and
specific services are being identified,
the legislator will have to depend upon
the advice and the enthusiasm of those
most directly affected. It is our
responsibility to convert a job into
a vocation, a town into a community,

and aspirations into accomplishments. But it is equally necessary to insure the broadest expression of opinion if a consensus is to provide the motivation for our policies.

Citizen action is vital to our political process. I see it in three phases: input, participation and effectiveness.

1. Constituent Input:

should be frequent, broad
and well informed

should be positive and

constructive (mail is the
opposite

should include all types of
groups and individuals

DANGER: SINGLE ISSUE GROUPS

who are they? emotional and symbolic; organized around issues e.g. abortion, gun control, women's rights, ethnic...

effect: refuse to compromise arouse emotions, imbalance system in favor of issue, seek tactical victory over diversity

2. Participation:

education and information invites involvement

most of our constitutional

amendments enlarged partic.

size of country prevents

direct democracy, but

participation at every
level possible, ultimately
through election and
representation

DANGERS: apathy, only 37% of
eligible voters went to polls
(those who abstained are
affluent, educated and
satisfied)

Washington DC represen-
tation

3. EFFECTIVENESS:

The impact of citizen-representa-
tive relationships can be increased
through greater awareness and
sensitivity of each other's position.
It was once said that a politician
should grow antennae and not horns.

Perhaps Calvin Coolidge expressed it even better. His successor as Governor once inquired why Coolidge could see so many visitors and still leave the office by 5 p.m. "Why the difference," he asked? "You talk back," answered Coolidge. The lesson is, I assume, to do more listening and less talking.

But this leads me to my next and final point: politics is a two-way street. You cannot assume your representative to act without telling you that he acted, how he acted and why he acted. Next to voting, keeping his constituents informed is probably the most important task and one that

is difficult to accomplish successfully.
Let me give you some illustrations.

VI. TO COMMUNICATE THE MESSAGE

Woodrow Wilson once said that "the informing function of Congress should be preferred even to its legislative function." (Congressional Government, 1885). This view of the pre-eminence of information has been stressed throughout our history by philosophers, statesmen and courts alike. In a protest by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison to the Virginia House of Representatives in 1797, they said:

"That in order to give to the will of the people the influence that it ought to have, and the

information which may enable them to exercise it usefully, it was a part of the common law of the land, that their representatives, in the discharge of their functions, should be free from the cognizance or coercion of the co-ordinate branches, Judiciary and Executive; and that their communications with their constituents should of right, as of duty also, be free, full and unawed by any..."

Wilson's statement, like those of Jefferson and Madison, reflects a deep conviction that self-government can succeed only when the people are informed by their representatives,

without interference by the Executive or Judiciary, concerning the conduct of their agents in government.

To carry out the intent of the Framers of the Constitution, Congress has provided financial support for communications between its members and the public, including the franking privilege for letters, telegram and telegraph allowances, stationary allotments, and favorable prices on reprints from the Congressional Record. Congressional Hearings, moreover, are not confined to gathering information for internal distribution, but are often widely publicized, sometimes televised, as a means of alerting the

electorate to matters of public import and concern. The list is virtually endless, but small samplings of contemporary hearings of this kind would certainly include the numerous hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the Vietnam War or the Panama Canal Treaty or the Banking Committee hearing on federal aid to New York City. In short, there is little doubt that Members of Congress regard the informing function as one of the most vital services which they are performing in order to keep our system of government alive and well.

In my office, we are relying on a number of media devices which are of

varying effectiveness. Let me comment briefly on each of them for the sake of comprehensiveness.

radio and television: timing at
local stations,
news worthiness
cost

newsletter: used even in the 18th
century --(circulated)
issue information
ethical limitations

news releases and press conferences: publication depends upon
media

the dangers of over exposure

issue memoranda: on specific topics
sent to selected audience
background information

speeches and conferences: the
need for frequent visits to NC
the constancy of 7-day weeks
partisan audiences or the
uncommitted?

visits by constituents: daily and
numerous
individuals and groups
frequently lobby oriented

correspondence: about 2000 pieces
of mail per week
content: often critical and
abusive

resources limited: technical
process of responding (one
sample attached)

As these indications will indicate to you, a major emphasis is given in my office to the information function. It is the duty of any elected official to account to his constituents frequently and fully to the extent possible. I readily admit that however comprehensive the effort, it is not enough. At best, I can probably reach no more than 25% of the electorate in North Carolina. Perhaps we need to rely more on the 18th century methods, despite our modern and technologically advanced communication media, and depend upon

the word-of-mouth message, the circular letter and the small group meeting. Finally, let us realize that although an informed electorate will sustain our system of government, we can only inform people who want to be informed. There must be reciprocal interest in government -- or the people are the losers.

VII. CONCLUSION: - THE AMERICAN SYSTEM
OF GOVERNMENT WORKS

Despite the onerous burden of being a citizen... despite the mounting labor and costliness of being a representative, we must cooperate to maintain our system of government. It has lasted longer than any other system of government. It has lasted longer

than any other system in the world;
it has made us a productive and
affluent people respected by others.
We must acknowledge that what we
possess is unsurpassed. Let us not
belittle the efforts of our brethren
because we all want the best for our
country --- TODAY. .