

2-8-1975

Annual Legislative Dinner, Democratic Central Committee

Max S. Baucus

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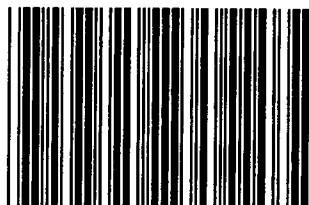
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(2) Subject* **Annual Legislative Dinner, Democratic Central Central Committee**

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BAUCUS

SPEECH BY CONGRESSMAN MAX BAUCUS

Annual Legislative Dinner, Democratic Central Committee,
Helena, February 8, 1975.

I was delighted to accept your kind invitation to speak to this distinguished gathering because it gave me my first opportunity since taking office to return home to chat with my many friends in Montana. I see many in this audience who were very helpful in sending me to Washington, and I'm glad that you could be here to hear my first report on my experiences in Congress.

I would like to tell you a bit about what we've been up to back there and give you some ~~some~~ impressions of my first month in Congress after ^(serving) two years ~~in the state legislature~~ in the state legislature.

As you already know from reading the press, those of ~~us~~ us whom some of the media have dubbed the "Young Turks" ~~have~~ already ^(have) made quite an impression on the nation's capital. The new House of Representatives has 91 ^{newly-elected} ~~Freshmen~~ members, 75 of them Democrats. One of the first things the ^{new} ~~freshmen~~ Democrats did was to organize into a group called the Democratic Class of the 94th Congress. I have found the new members to be a tremendous group with lots of dedication to the task before us.

MESSAGES
p. 6.
LEGISLATURE
expand

Old times forcing us to vote - Forum.
Organization - 3 minutes

slowly

The reform bandwagon in the House already had been rolling for the past two sessions, but I think the freshmen can take credit for hopping on board and really giving it a push. Among its earlier reforms, the House had done away with automatically naming the senior Democrat on each committee as chairman. But the senior members, many of them southern conservatives, who were not in tune with the majority of the party, continued to be elected chairmen. This year, all of that came to an end when we killed the seniority system by electing chairmen on merit rather than longevity.

One of the things the freshmen caucus did that was unprecedented was to invite all the holdover committee chairmen to appear before us to defend their stewardships. We wanted to know how they ran their committees and what their legislative priorities were. In some cases, the exchanges were most enlightening. For instance, Rep. Al Ullman of Oregon, who replaced Wilber Mills as head of the Ways and Means Committee, gave us a detailed talk on tax reform. But others were vague and non-responsive in their answers.

We also wanted chairman who wouldn't block legislation - regardless of their politics. E.g. Mills wouldn't bring tax reform bill to floor of house. We wanted a democratic system. Formerly, committee chairmen ruled fields & banning blocking legislation, thwarting will of majority & based leadership. Caucus rule changes designed to weaken these fields and strengthen leadership and majority. Of course some of our reform aimed at political philosophy, but most of it was to democratize.

(OVER)

ask - ward

Example
Egon

F. Edward Hebert of Louisiana, known in Washington as one of the Pentagon's closest allies, had been chairman of the House Armed Services Committee for four years. Hebert was evasive about his record as chairman and he ~~was~~ addressed us as "boys and girls." Led by the freshmen, the Democratic caucus tossed out Hebert and replaced him with Melvin Price of Illinois, who also is considered a ~~friend~~ friend ^{of} the military, but who is much more liberal in his outlook. He is expected to follow the policies of the Democratic caucus and is ~~not~~ expected to be less arbitrary in dealing with fellow committee members.

junior system
W.R. Poage of Texas, another of the conservative southern chairman, had been head of the Agriculture Committee for eight years. He ^{was} ~~was~~ criticized by reformers for the ~~high-handed~~ high-handed way in which he ran the committee and for his lack of legislative leadership. Poage was voted out in favor of Thomas S. Foley of Washington, a bright, young moderate who is very knowledgeable about farm affairs. Foley, who is also chairman of the Democratic Study Group in the House, is recognized as a very competent legislative leader.

Hebert also defended himself for actively supporting republican candidates in several congressional races last November. Said that Armed Services committee is bipartisan - wants to support his friends on the committee - whether democrats or republicans.

Wright Patman of Texas, long known as a critic of the big banks, had been chairman of the Banking, Currency and Housing Committee for 12 years. While he is a well-known populist, Patman was very unimpressive in his meeting with the freshmen. Rather than responding to our questions, he read a ~~prepared~~ prepared statement and lectured us as if we were in a beginning civics course. Patman was replaced on Banking, Currency and Housing by Henry S. ^{Reuss} ~~Reuss~~ of Wisconsin, who is one of the ~~brightest~~ brightest men in the House. He was selected as chairman over two other ~~members~~ members with longer service on the committee, a tribute to the respect he enjoys among his colleagues. I'm confident that ^{Reuss} ~~Reuss~~ will exert the leadership necessary to reduce interest rates and bolster the economy. He'll be every bit as tough on the big banking interests as Patman was, but with more legislative ability to accomplish party goals.

Wayne Hayes Rove.

I think the removal of some of the chairmen who were ineffective or out of touch with the mainstream of the party will remove some of the roadblocks to progressive legislation, not only on ~~the~~ the three committees affected, but on others. All chairmen are now on notice that they are subject to the will of the party and the committee majority, not just their personal whims. I think we have done more ~~the~~ ^{to} democratize the system than most people realize.

*making a
committee
Congress
with
legislation*

This in turn, however, will place a greater burden on the Democratic party to come up with solid programs. No longer will we have the excuse that a few ~~s~~ southern conservatives are preventing the majority from working its will. The burden is now on us to propose solutions to the nation's problems, not just oppose the ~~the~~ President for the sake of opposition. I think the electorate is becoming more sophisticated all the time and ~~we~~ ^{the people} recognize purely partisan politics for what it is. Therefore the Democratic leadership will have to come up with solutions, not ~~the~~ rhetoric.

*Reform in the Senate
Sparking of Senate - investigating FBI, CIA - just like joke.
Hals. of Watergate - crime page*

I'm frank to admit that ~~that~~ thus far I've been disappointed with the party leadership in the House of Representatives. The leaders don't seem to be aware of what is happening in the country. I believe that the 75 Democratic freshmen were elected to send a message to Washington--and the message is that Washington has not performed. If the voters don't see some ~~performance~~ performance in the next two years, I think they'll be sending a new set of messengers to Washington after the next election.

*message to us
two days*

As far as I'm concerned, the people send us to Congress to do two things: to reform and democratize the system so that it will work and to do something about the ~~the~~ economy. I think we've done much toward accomplishing the first objective. Without the necessary procedural ~~reforms~~ reforms, we would never be able to bring about the substantive changes that are needed. So the easy part of the job is done, but the tough part remains.

Thus far, I've been somewhat ~~frustrated~~ frustrated by my brief experience in Washington. We've been at work for more than a month, but we've spent most of that time dealing with organizational and procedural matters, and little time dealing with substantive legislation. ~~legislation.~~ The Democratic party has issued a sweeping economic plan with ~~many~~ many fine goals, but it's a bit vague on how we're going to achieve those goals. Significantly, we have not yet offered a reasonable, workable alternative ~~to~~ to the President's disasterous energy proposals.

*Miss
Sawyer
instructed
CWT, 1/2/52*
I find it interesting to compare my brief time in the Congress with my one term in the state legislature. At this point in the legislative session, the work is half done, while in the Congress, or ~~so~~ so it seems, the work is half baked.

The Congress and the ~~legislature~~ legislature are similar in many ways. In both places, for instance, the Republicans may need protection as an endangered species. You have a 2-1 Democratic edge in the House and so do the Democrats in Congress. ~~Equally important, however,~~ You have a 3-2 Democratic margin in the Senate, and so do the Democrats in Congress. By contrast, however, you have a Democratic governor to work with while we in the Congress must deal with a Republican President. As far as getting anything done, I envy your ~~own~~ situation.

Another similarity between the legislature and the Congress is the unusually large number of ~~members~~ ^{newly elected} members. First-termers ~~comprise~~ comprise more than one-fifth of the U.S. House of Representatives. In the legislature, the ratios are even greater, with 57 new House members out of ~~100~~ ^{a total of} 100 ~~members~~ and 33 new senators (including 14 who are ~~brand~~ ^{brand} ~~new~~ ^{new} to the legislature) ~~out of a total of 100~~ ^{out of a total of 50.}. I think the people of Montana ~~are~~ ^{are} sending a message to Helena similar to ~~the~~ the one the nation is sending to Washington.

That brings to mind another similarity. The people have set similar agendas for ~~both~~ both of us--to deal with the economy of the state and nation, to solve our energy problems and to do so in a way that protects the environment.

On the other hand, there are some differences between the legislature and the Congress. One of the most obvious is that in Congress, I'm 2,000 miles away from my constituents except for occasional trips home. During my legislative service, I ~~see~~ saw those I represented much more frequently. I must admit, however, that the mail, ~~which~~ which I receive in ~~surprising~~ surprising volumes, keeps me pretty well informed about what the residents ~~of~~ of the western district are thinking. ~~One~~ One of the things I've seen over and over again in those letters is an expression of strong opposition to President's Ford's proposals to raise the price of gasoline and other fuels.

It's a concern which I certainly share. I believe that hiking fuel prices at this time will only add to the inflationary spiral and deepen the recession, while not guaranteeing any energy savings. The price of oil imports has quadrupled in the past couple of years with only the slightest effect on energy consumption.

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I've also received considerable mail in opposition to the President's proposal to raise the cost of food stamps and I'm beginning to get letters in opposition to his proposal to supply another \$522 million in arms aid to South Vietnam and Cambodia. I find it particularly ironic that the President is asking us to further prop up the Thieu and Lon Nol regimes within a few months of ~~proposing~~ proposing to raise the cost of food stamps to save a mere \$650 million. We've already paid for our participation in the War in Southeast Asia at a price of 55,000 lives and \$150 billion. To continue to furnish bullets to that area while asking the nation's poor to pay more for food stamps strikes me as being an unconscionable reversal of priorities.

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While I disagree with the President on his energy, food stamps and arms aid policies, I do think there is some common ground between the President and the Democratic Congress. We both agree, for instance, on the need for a tax cut to stimulate the nation's economy. We may differ somewhat on the details, but I'm hopeful these can be worked out in a bipartisan manner. After all, the people of this ~~country~~ nation want to see us solve the nation's economic problems, not see who can score the most debating points.