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Robert C. Byrd

Howard H. Baker, Jr. Wide World

Russell B. Long Wide World

ROBERT C. BYRD
WEST VIRGINIA DEMOCRAT

Byrd and his power are listed here not simply because he was elected last January as Majority Leader. It's the other way around. Senators elected him because they wanted to put his particular knacks of power to their common use.

At the tense hour of the roll call to ratify the new Panama Canal Treaty, the first time in history that a Senate floor proceeding was broadcast live by major radio networks, listeners heard an episode of typical Bobby Byrd. It may have sounded like buffoonery and bumbling, as gallery tourists often misread Senate carryings-on, but the antics were deadly serious.

Byrd, determined to win treaty ratification for the White House, knew he couldn't spare a single vote. One treaty supporter was Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota. But Abourezk had another fish he urgently wanted to fry: he is a zealous opponent of de-regulation of the price of natural gas. What does that have to do with the Panama Canal? Directly, nothing at all. But in the Senate, anything has to do with anything else—if you can use it as power to change someone's mind.

Sensing he could put a price tag on his Panama Canal vote, Abourezk announced publicly he might vote against the treaty as a protest against de-regulation of natural gas. To some newspaper readers, Abourezk's statement looked scatter-brained, rambunctious, unprincipled. But not to President Carter or Bobby Byrd. Their immediate question: what did Abourezk want?

What the South Dakota Democrat wanted, as it turned out, was 10 minutes on the floor, at precisely 4 p.m., the hour at which the Senate had already unanimously agreed to take its treaty vote. With a good chunk of America listening for the roll call, Abourezk could try to enlist public support for his position on gas-pricing. Needing Abourezk's vote, Byrd asked the Senate for unanimous consent to postpone the roll call for 10 minutes so Abourezk could speak against de-regulation.

"I object," came a high-pitched, foggy voice, the personal pronoun enunciated as a Deep South "Ah." It was the voice of Senator James B. Allen of Alabama, then the Senate's supreme artist at floor maneuver as an instrument of power.

Seeking an instantaneous compromise, Byrd asked unanimous consent for five minutes for Abourezk. Abourezk silently accepted the slashing of his 10-minute price.

"Ah object," sang Allen again.

"Two minutes," bargained Byrd.

"Objection," retorted Allen.

Byrd now unsheathed his ultimate weapon. Glaring at the objector, Byrd declared that the time would come when the Senator from Alabama would want something badly enough to bargain for unanimous consent to get it. If the Majority Leader agreed to it, Byrd boomed indignantly, Allen would expect the Majority Leader to deliver it—and the Majority Leader would expect to be able to deliver it.

Translation: if you expect me to stand by you when I give you my promise, you better stand by me when I give my promise to Abourezk.

That kind of stance is power in the U.S. Senate, where rules are few and trust in a member's word, therefore, must run high. Allen backed down. Abourezk got his two minutes.

In his early Senate days, Byrd's lack of a college diploma sometimes made him the object of whispered put-downs by colleagues. But nobody's taken him lightly since 1971 when he unseated Ted Kennedy as Whip (Assistant Majority Leader). He won and retained that post by spending endless hours seeking out and looking after the seemingly petty floor needs of Senators (such as snuffing out objections to a unanimous consent request), seeing that amendments by inexperienced new members were properly introduced, finding co-sponsors to strengthen support for weak-kneed bills, recording his colleagues' "unavoidable" absences in the *Congressional Record*, scheduling floor debate for a bill

at a time convenient for both its chief sponsor and opponent, writing thank-you notes on the slightest pretext, always managing the availability of an extra pair of tickets to a Bullets basketball game.

And every favor extended so courteously and generously was recorded in a memory cell behind Byrd's high, wide forehead.

Understanding the craftsmanship of Bobby Byrd opens an important window on the character of the Senate. One Byrd-watcher, Ed Muskie—who did not particularly enjoy losing to Byrd in last year's race for Majority Leader—ruefully assesses his former rival as "damned effective."

"In any organization—a social club, the Boy Scouts, or the Senate—when a guy is ready to go out and do the dirty work, the legwork, it's a good case for advancement," says Muskie. "He wheeled and dealed for us. He's a service organization all by himself, and a very efficient one. That's power. When anyone does that kind of job, it's convertible to power. Respect and leadership count whenever a member of a group steps forward and does something well."

HOWARD H. BAKER, JR.
TENNESSEE REPUBLICAN

Howard Baker became a national figure during the Watergate hearings, when the Nixon White House's comical straight man of an ex-cop, Tony Ulasewicz, malapropped his way through a hilarious account of leaving unmarked envelopes full of cash in phone booths and calling lawyers from other phone booths with furtive instructions to take possession of the envelopes. Baker voiced the nation's amused bewilderment, asking, "*Who thought you up?*"

Baker, who is married to the daughter of the late Senator Everett Dirksen, has a talent for the bright, light quip, leading one old-time Senate staffer to call him "the Johnny Carson of Capitol Hill"—always entertaining, but rarely to be taken seriously. One of Baker's colleagues who made that fatal misjudgment was Senator Robert Griffin of Michigan. In a secret ballot last year, Senate Republicans, to almost everyone's surprise, defeated Griffin for reelection as Minority Leader—and elected Baker.

Baker's most useful power weapon is, of all things, amiability. But his easy, winning smile has teeth in it.

One of the most complex, trouble-fraught and heavily-loaded bills in years was the air pollution control law that finally passed in 1977 after two years of high-stakes struggle. Baker, a motorcyclist who would have made a crackerjack car mechanic if he hadn't got sidetracked into outstanding success as a lawyer, was itching to tinker with proposals governing catalytic converters, legislation that could soon speed the end of the internal combustion engine. As senior Republican on the committee designing the law, Baker could have gone at it like a grease monkey—but chose not to. He hung back for two years, purposely avoiding committee meetings, letting other members learn the befuddling intricacies of the issue, thus reserving himself for the role of 11th-hour compromiser.

By the end of the long wrangle, frustrated environment-minded Senators and frustrated industry-minded Senators were so desperate for feasible compromises that they gladly rallied round Baker's, leading to a final bill that fell only one vote short of unanimity within the committee.

"Baker's strength," observes a top committee staff expert, a Democrat, "is not as a deep homework guy, but in his agility. He's a quick study. Unlike so many conservatives and liberals here, he's not trapped by ideology. He's more of a lawyer, trying to find the strongest case to impress a jury. For someone on the minority side, where there is no power except what you can make out of thin air, that talent can be put to great advantage.

"Baker goes to considerable lengths to stay free of special-interest influence. Special pleadings just rub him wrong. His colleagues know that, see it, sense it, and even though they may be weighted down by this special interest or that, they admire his independence of them. That gives him power."

RUSSELL B. LONG
LOUISIANA DEMOCRAT

In the olden days of the remote South, a visit by a medicine man to a village square was a big event, not because the townsfolk needed his medicine, but they craved his entertainment.

Today the rural South produces Senators with Ivy League degrees. But a dash of medicine-man politics still pleases the crowd, and no one's better at it than Senator Russell Long of Louisiana, son of the great Huey Long himself.

Take the recent hectic day when the Senate Finance Committee, chaired by Long, was rushing through vote after vote on the year's major tax bill. A freshman complained he didn't know what he was voting on. Long replied, "If we all knew what we were voting on, we'd never get out of here."

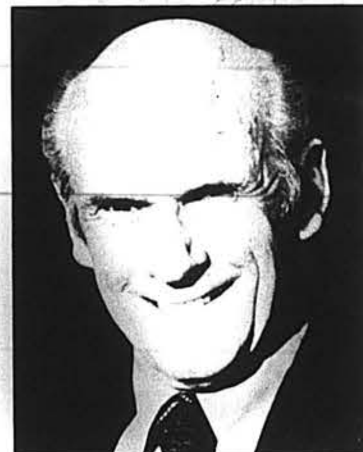
And colleagues still tell of Long's drive in 1965 to become Majority Whip. The race was tight, and Long determined to win the vote of Senator Olin Johnston of South Carolina. In the Senate (like most other places) when you want something badly enough you have to offer something for it. Long decided that what he might offer Johnston was his desk.

Long's historic desk had been occupied not only by his father, Huey, but, far more impressively, by South Carolina's John C. Calhoun. Johnston wound up with the desk; Long got the vote. One of Long's colleagues, dismayed he would give something so hallowed and precious for a mere vote, asked, "What would your father have said?" Long replied with quiet certainty, "He would have understood."

In less than a year, it should be added, Johnston was dead and Long had the desk back.

Medicine man though Long may be, those tales have nothing to do with why Newsweek columnist George F. Will said that the Louisianan "may be the cleverest" member of the Senate, or why Adam Clymer, Senate watch-

Edmund S. Muskie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er of *The New York Times*, called Long "perhaps the second most powerful man in government," or why the Associated Press transmitted word that Long "is one of the two men in Congress whose ideas about taxes matter most to the millions who contribute to the Internal Revenue Service."

Long's Senate Finance Committee is undoubtedly the most powerful in Congress. It sifts every tax bill and almost half of the nation's expenditures, including Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, supplemental security income for all kinds of handicapped citizens, and revenue sharing. But the power of a committee is, at best, only *potential* power for its chairman. He has to be willing and crafty enough to use it. Long is both.

"He knows the tax code," says a frequent adversary, Senator William Proxmire, Wisconsin Democrat, "about as thoroughly as the Pope knows the Lord's Prayer."

Long runs his committee like an autocrat, tightly guarding appointment of staff members to ensure their personal loyalty, refusing to delegate law-writing authority to his subcommittees. Yet his mailed fist of power is gloved in the velvet of meticulous fairness on small matters.

"Our committee meetings," says Senator Robert Packwood, Oregon Republican, "start at 10 o'clock, and we have a standing order that if Long's not there, whoever is next in seniority will start the committee—on either side, even if it's the most junior Republican. Those who arrive first get to ask questions first, and he applies that rule to himself as vigorously as to anybody else.

"The real objection against Chairman Long is that many people who don't agree with him philosophically often lose. They lose in committee, then come to the floor and have a fair fight and lose again. He has beaten me on occasion, but not one of us can claim that we didn't have a fair shot at what we wanted."

One of Long's pet programs is revenue sharing, in which Congress distributes a certain amount of federal taxes to the states without specifying how the money is to be spent. The Revenue Sharing Act of 1976 makes one startlingly specific exception: a grant to pay the salaries of sheriffs in Long's state of Louisiana. That the provision cleared both houses of Congress and won the President's approval is a measure of Long's power—and of ways he's willing to use it.

EDMUND S. MUSKIE
MAINE DEMOCRAT

Muskie ranks with Long as one of the few Senators whom most of their colleagues try not to tangle with in debate. If Long's style is that of a medicine man, Muskie's is a giant compactor.

Four years ago, each house of Congress formed a Budget Committee to determine revenue goals and spending limits of the federal government. It's hard to believe, but until then Congress just passed spending bills with no budget in mind and, if the President signed them, their sum total became the national spending budget. Crazy, but true.

The chairmanship of the Senate Budget Committee fell upon Muskie. What he would do with it became stunningly clear one day when Senator George McGovern brought to the floor a bill to expand the number of children eligible for subsidized school lunches. The Senate being overwhelmingly Democratic and tilting towards liberal, McGovern was confident he'd carry the day. Muskie rose to applaud the sentiments of the bill, to point out that his state of Maine needed its benefits more than most states—then proceeded to oppose it on the ground that it was a "budget-buster."

"If budget reform is to mean anything," Muskie thundered, hammering a fist into his palm, "it has to mean that we are willing to accept its *discipline*"—he paused to let that word seep in—"not only with respect to those programs which we may *not* be enthusiastic about, but also the programs that have real heart-plucking implications. *Discipline* is *discipline!*"

The bill had hit the floor unexpectedly, and it was one of those rare occasions in the Senate when floor debate was what actually changed people's minds. The McGovern amendment, seemingly a sure winner in the liberal Senate, was felled, 61 to 29. A few days later an unexpected budget-buster in military appropriations created even greater surprise when Muskie's defense of the Senate budget killed that bill, too. It was the first time in modern memory that a military appropriation was defeated.

One technique of power that makes Muskie, a liberal Democrat, extremely hard to beat is his penchant for enlisting as his strongest ally a conservative Republican. In the Budget Committee, he made an early deal with the committee's ranking Republican, Henry Bellmon of Kansas: within the committee, he and Bellmon could fight tooth and nail over whether the budget ceiling should go up or down, how much for this category, how much for that. But once a budget emerged from the committee, the two would stand as partners defending the budget targets, opposing any budget-buster that came down the pike.

As a result, liberals have been chary about getting caught to the left of liberal Muskie; conservatives are cautious about straying to the right of Bellmon.

ALAN CRANSTON
CALIFORNIA DEMOCRAT

Until he was elected Majority Whip last year, Alan Cranston to outsiders was a Senate nondescript. His gray-bordered bald pate even made him look nondescript. Yet, when Cranston announced he'd run for Whip if Bobby Byrd became Majority Leader, Senators knew the job would be his hands down.

As far back as June 1975, an old-time Senate staffer described his talents to me: "Cranston is the most effective floor operator around. He's the best vote-counter in the Senate. When he's interested in an issue, he's calling up staff, counting votes, keeping tallies on that long, narrow piece of paper of his. He's a workhorse, a legislative workhorse. For that reason, you watch, he'll someday be Majority Leader. Make no mistake, being a workhorse like Cranston is a route to power."

I recall a typical incident of Cranston's quiet, dogged persistence. For most of 1975, the Senate had only 99 members because of a disputed election in New Hampshire. By September, when the election was rerun, the winner, Democrat John Durkin, was a Capitol Hill celebrity just from the sheer suspense of the protracted dispute. The moment Durkin was sworn in, aides rushed him out to the Capitol steps for interviews, photos, backslapping by his jubilant supporters.

Waiting quietly beyond the rim of the hubbub was Senator Cranston. As Durkin left the crowd to return to the Senate chamber, Cranston called him aside, chatted quietly about an upcoming vote and made a mark on "that long, narrow piece of paper of his." That diligence to vote-counting, repeated hundreds of times, is what later made Cranston a sure thing for Majority Whip.

ROBERT DOLE
KANSAS REPUBLICAN

Here's an exception to the "rule" that household names rarely wield power inside the Senate. Bob Dole became one of the nation's best-known Republicans when President Ford chose him as his running mate, to take advantage of Dole's abrasiveness and unyielding conservatism.

Strangely, what makes him one of the most effective members of the Republican minority is that, behind closed doors of the Senate, Dole is *not* abrasive, knows exactly when to yield, and far from being round-the-clock scrappy, he's considered by other Senators—including Democrats—to be one of the friendliest, wittiest, most harmonious fellows around.

In the aforementioned battle over the "budget-busting" military appropriation, Dole abandoned his fellow conservatives, voting with Muskie to protect the Budget Committee's spending goal, and the infant budget process itself.

Not long ago, a bill that ordinarily would have been a controversial headline-maker, quietly passed the Congress with Dole's support. Hatched in McGovern's Committee on Nutrition, it put an end to the system of poor people having to buy food stamps. Instead of paying, say, $50 for $75 worth of stamps, the new law eliminates the cash transaction, just giving $25 worth of stamps to the needy. How did liberal McGovern put that one over on conservative Dole? He didn't have to. The idea was Dole's, and he convinced McGovern of its merits—chiefly, elimination of enormous bureaucratic work.

Despite his reputation as a hell-raising campaigner, Dole is sought after by Democrats and liberals in the Senate as a good man to work out bipartisan agreements with. That kind of reputation is power.

Power, there you have it: personified by Senators Robert C. Byrd, Howard H. Baker, Jr., Russell B. Long, Edmund S. Muskie, Alan Cranston and Robert Dole. But power is a variable force, and even such a traditional body as the U.S. Senate must always make way for promising new power-wielders.

Among those to watch are James A. McClure, a Republican of Idaho, an indefatigable meeting - attender, homework-doer and fast-thinking debater; Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the New York freshman Democrat, who strangles opponents with garlands of ornate English, and Donald W. Riegle, Jr., the Michigan Democrat, who has pulled off the rarest of feats—a switch in political parties. Riegle started in Congress as a Republican, changed parties in midterm, gained reelection as a Democrat, then defeated a raft of Democrats for the Senate nomination and won the seat. Anyone who can bring that off has got to be a rising star.

What comes out of all this as the *rule* about Senate power? Power certainly is "the ability to change someone's mind," but it's also the ability to use one's individuality to best advantage.

The rule about Senatorial power is that there is no rule.