

Denton Blasts Baring's Negative Congress Record

(Following is the second and concluding part of an address by Clark County Commissioner Ralph Denton, a candidate for the U. S. House of Representatives on the Democratic ticket, delivered at the State AFL-CIO Convention in Las Vegas earlier this month. The first part appeared in the Aug. 20 edition of the VOICE)

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"Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem them like the ark of the covenant, too sacred to be touched. They ascribe to the men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human, and suppose what they did to be beyond amendment . . . forty years of experience in government is worth a century of book-reading; and this they would say were they to rise from the dead . . . laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also and keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him as a boy, as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."

Those words, ladies and gentlemen, were written by Thomas Jefferson. Like Jefferson, I consider the Constitution a noble instrument, the most successful in the world; and a document to live, and like all living things, to grow. I admire the author of the Constitution and the author of these words--the same man. I offer as one appeal for your support the fact that I am a Constitutional Democrat, and an admirer of the wise, the brave and the reasonable Thomas Jefferson.

Since I can accept the virtue, patriotism, and loyalty of practically all of my fellow citizens, I must look for evidence in deeds as well as words. The effective purposes of any party, at any time, are reflected in what its members do in Congress--in what emerges as specific legislation.

Congressmen work in close connection with each other on committees, in conference and elsewhere. Any Congressman who finds himself out of touch with his fellow Congressmen is almost automatically removed from effectiveness as a legislator.

The State of Nevada has one Congressman. Only one. It is accordingly of vital importance that Nevada's lone representative have the confidence and respect of his colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, and more than almost any other Congressman, he must struggle to make his opinions and his votes an influential as possible.

WIN OR LOSE ON ANY ISSUE, as the lone Congressman, any Nevadan has a clear duty to

his constituents to be alert, aggressive and effective in representing the people who have elected him. I contend that my opponent has not done so. On the contrary, he has isolated himself from the councils of his own party. He finds sympathizers only among those who share his minority views and he is ineffective in gaining support for even those.

We have heard much from him about seniority. It ill becomes him, ladies and gentlemen, to boast of his seniority. Seldom in legislative annals has so little been done by one who has been there so long. Most Congressmen, even in the minority party, can achieve important committee assignments and can bring benefits to their states by their efforts, often early in their careers. His seniority is his best, almost his only, real argument for support. It is a pity that he has so poor a record.

I might add that my Republican opponents for this office will point it out, too. They may find little to quarrel over as to issues, but I can predict that they will agree with me that his long tenure in office has been notably unproductive.

HE ALSO PROCLAIMS, to the point of weariness, it seems to me, that he will not be a rubber stamp for any administration. I have asked him where his support will be in the coming election. Will he support President Johnson or Senator Goldwater? He has not answered. But he has thumped his chest again, and said he will not be a rubber stamp.

Well, good for him. I will support President Johnson and the Democratic platform.

I will reserve the right to dissent, when I must, from the party. In short, I will not be a rubber stamp either.

But I ask you to consider Mr. Baring's record. He has switched 180 degrees from the record of his first term in Congress. I do not condemn him for changing his mind, or even for having his mind changed for him by somebody else. I do not know who supports Mr. Baring these days, but they are well financed. Let us not for a moment deny Mr. Baring's right to take the 180-degree turn, but let us ask why he took it. Is it possible that he is now voting the courage of somebody else's convictions? Is it possible that he just put down one rubber stamp to pick up another?

I would take little comfort in his support, even if I agreed with his views. For where will he be tomorrow?

I shall continue to ask Mr. Baring what he is for. I shall continue to tell you what I am for. I wish he would tell us whether he is for Mr. Goldwater or not. If he will, then we can discuss the issues before the public and thereby give the people the choice which I insist every candidate owes them.

I will meet him anytime, anywhere, on issues. Meanwhile, I must assume that he agrees

in the main with Mr. Goldwater, who however appalling his views, at any rate expresses them.

True, he has a little trouble saying it clearly, but at least he says it. Mr. Baring won't say anything except that he is a red-blooded Constitutional Jeffersonian Democrat--like all the rest of us. I would like to campaign against an opponent, not a phantom, even a red-blooded one.

MR. BARING IS AGAINST THINGS; this we know. He is against the tax cut; he is against civil rights; he is against the federal pay raise; he is against the creation of a permanent committee to investigate campaign expenditures; he is against the land and water conservation bill; he is against the Great Basin National Park, and by his own admission did not even read the bill that killed it before he introduced it.

You might agree with him on some of these, but ask yourself what in Heaven's name is he FOR? What does he offer as a choice for the things he votes against?

I want now to comment on some specific things.

As a County Commissioner I have seen this valley's spectacular growth choked and obstructed by antiquated public land laws. Huge areas of Nevada are public domain, and we must find ways to assure that faster and more equitable ways can be found to gain the land we need for growth.

The best place, the only place, to achieve them is in the Congress. We must do it fairly, and, let me say again, as reasonable people. We have to provide for our growing populations, their recreational needs, water, wildlife, grazing prospecting, national defense areas, and all the rest.

We can not do all of this without much thought, without careful consideration of everything involved. The single individual who can do the most is the Nevada Congressman.

If he is well informed, if he has the interests of all his people at heart, if he is persuasive and effective in working with his colleagues and with federal agencies, he can do a great deal.

The time is now; Nevada can't wait!

Let's get a Democrat in office who believes that the federal government and the people of any state are partners for the good of all.

If I become the Congressman from Nevada I will resist being pushed by a federal bureaucrat just as I will resist being pushed by a selfish group at home. I will try to secure well-considered and well-tested legislation, which is the only way we can operate in our constitutional system.

AS FOR BEING WELL INFORMED, let me say that I am not an expert on public health, who can decide whether fluoridization of drinking water is a dangerous treachery. I am not even one experienced and qualified highway engineer, let alone a dozen, who therefore knows best where a new highway should be built.

As a lawyer, I know that the implications of constitutional interpretations by the U.S. Supreme Court are far-reaching and of concern to everyone. As a lawyer and a Democrat, I accept the challenge to govern, to protect minorities, to give the majority a voice.

I shall always try to be well informed, and this will involve avoiding the worst kind of pretense-- the pretense of knowing everything. Some people know a good deal more than I do; I can not serve my State or country by refusing to listen to them.

In closing, I hope you will see that I am not a "me-too" candidate. I am not saying that I alone can do it better than Mr. Baring. I think almost anybody could.

I believe we must look forward and upward, not downward and backward. If you agree, I ask you to send Ralph Denton to Congress. You need a representative in Congress very badly.

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