



Rep. Barbara Jordan (D., Texas)

Rep. Barbara Jordan (D-Tex.) has admitted that she might have been "induced" to remain in Congress had she been offered a significant House leadership role. Instead, the nationally-known spokeswoman for women's rights and civil liberties -- known for her role in the memorable Nixon impeachment hearings and the ringing keynote address at the 1976 Democratic Convention -- shocked observers by announcing earlier in the year that she would retire in December.

Emphasizing that she is still a proud ideologue and a confessed "patriot," she explained she'd also paid her dues -- in three terms of "nitty gritty" legislative work -- and had advanced about as far in the House as she perceived she could.

The Texas Democrat -- just five months shy of ending her meteoric Congressional career -- made these and other revelations on a recent edition of THE MACNEIL/LEHRER REPORT, produced by WNET/THIRTEEN, New York, and WETA/CHANNEL 26, Washington, D.C.

Questioned by Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer, Ms. Jordan said: "I did not feel that I could further impact dramatically or moderately on the course of events, personally, as they moved through the Congress of the United States.

"I feel that I have occupied this period of time in my life for as long as I want to occupy this period of time. And I feel the tug of my own conscience, if nothing else, to sight gears, and do something different . . . Legislative work is nitty gritty, there is no way to get away from that. All I am saying is that I had done all the nitty gritty as long as I intend to do the nitty gritty.

"Now, if Congress had offered me, let us say, the opportunity to work through the politics of the Congress to a leadership role, I supposed that I could have been induced to forego the tug of conscience for a little longer. But the House politics did not seem to make it possible that I would be able to do that. There is also a sense, a sense that I have of a diminution of my efficacy in the House."

Rep. Jordan said she had considered running for the United States Senate, but asked herself, " . . . is this achievable within the context of the practical realities . . . given the only state in the nation I would possibly represent is the State of Texas, is this, the United States Senate, an achievable goal at this time? My answer to that question was no."

Rep. Jordan was asked if she would have accepted a position in the Carter Administration: " . . . If I took any position in the Carter Administration the only one I would accept would be Attorney General . . ." the position for which the President reportedly had considered her.

Congresswoman Jordan said that since her December 10th retirement announcement she has had job offers in business, law, and education, including one to occupy the Nixon chair at Whittier College in California. Rep. Jordan has instead accepted a professorship at the University of Texas at Austin.

Asked about the mood of the country Rep. Jordan said, "It would appear, whether we like it or not, the country is making a gradual

turn to the right.

"The Congress has been traumatized by the Jarvis Amendment. You would not have a pleasant time in the Congress of the United States these days because the elective public official is so fearful, so reactive, so knee-jerking from what occurred in California, the behavior of the members at this point borders on irresponsibility.

"Now, I'm not saying that my colleagues are irresponsible. I am just saying that they are so traumatized by the event in California that our behavior borders on something less than statesmanship, but not quite irresponsibility.

Even with the passage of the Jarvis Amendment Rep. Jordan says, "It is my firm view that people do not care less today than they did, when these programs were first enacted. I think that people still care, and maybe some may say that I am being too optimistic, that I am being too Pollyannish. I think people are concerned about those who are sick, and who are hungry and who have inadequate clothing and inadequate housing.

"But people also care about being able to live and breathe and grow without having some Big Daddy superimposing a set of musts on them. I think that's what's happening. I think that's why people are not as anxious to underwrite such programs."

On the subject of foreign policy Congresswoman Jordan feels America "is viewed as less than the all-powerful leader of the free world . . . People are coming to view the United States with less and less awe, or reverence, and we get no clear sense of what the President is saying. His message has been uneven, and I don't know who is to blame for that.

"I think Mr. Carter is trying to be as open as he can be, consistent with his promise to the American people, when elected. The real problem is whether it is possible to conduct foreign policy openly. That is the question which is yet to be answered.

"Another problem, to be fair on both sides, is that Congress is feeling its foreign policy Cheerios. We are an equal partner with the President of the United States, Congress insists on being a partner. We have a two-headed entity, trying to say: This is what the foreign policy of the United States is supposed to be."

However, Rep. Jordan added, "I feel good about the country. I feel good about our ideological underpinnings. Even though we have become rather dispirited and cynical we still believe in where it is that we want to go. If there are any patriots left in America, I'm certainly one."

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I believe that when a case is brought to court, and a defendant is tried, the plainclothes person should be asked questions; such as their background; their experience; training; how long have they worked as a detective. A judge that is for the people's rights should ask the questions, and move to protect the rights of all, instead of having it look like a one sided deal.

Sid Nasby

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