

Contemporaries Differ in Making Appraisal of Taft Conservatism

By RAYMOND LAHR
United Press International
Washington - (UPI) - He was known variously as Mr. Republican, Mr. Congress, Mr. Integrity and the Conscience of the Conservative Movement. Yet even his admirers still debate whether his conservative label was deserved.

A long-time Senate colleague feels he was left of center toward the end. A former President with whom he fought many bitter skirmishes deemed him a dedicated conservative. His oldest son, now in Congress, says he was "difficult to categorize."

The man was the late Sen. Robert A. Taft of Ohio whose death 10 years ago Wednesday cost the conservative movement in this country one of its greatest spokesmen and left a gaping void in the United States Senate.

It also left unanswered the provocative question of where the conservative movement might stand today if Taft had lived and what effect this might have had on the currently booming political fortunes of Sen. Barry M. Goldwater, (R-Ariz.).

Death Intervenes
Taft was majority leader of the Senate when he died of cancer in 1953 barely six months after Dwight D. Eisenhower moved into the White House, ending 20 years of Democratic national control.

Eisenhower's convention victory the previous summer had smashed Taft's own Presidential ambitions. But the GOP's White House and congressional victories moved the Ohioan into a key leadership spot where he could have pressed for his own legislative goals.

Death intervened before any firm pattern could be established, however, and perhaps contributed to the current disagreement over Taft's basic political philosophies.

Sen. Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois, who put Taft's name before the 1952 convention and now occupies his old post of Senate Republican leader gives this appraisal:

"In measuring the impact of Bob Taft on conservatism in this country, it should be noted that he came on the scene at a time conservative interest was weakening and needed bolstering. The vitality he gave it has helped to carry it over and will have a definite influence on conservatism in the future."

Works Still Seen
"What we see now as interest in the Goldwater cause is a measure of the tremendous amount of work Taft did in the country and in the Senate to advance that cause. He took some of the rough edges off the conservative movement. You had some people, for example, who would have no part of anything that had even a touch of conservatism about it."

Two Workshops To Close SOC Session

Ashland - Southern Oregon college summer session offerings will end Aug. 12-23 with two workshops directed by noted authorities in their respective fields.

Studies in depth of the four plays currently showing at the Oregon Shakespearean Festival Theater, Ashland, will be highlighted in the Shakespearean workshop instructed by Dr. H. E. Childs, Oregon State university professor of English. Attendance at rehearsals and regular performances will be required.

Conducting a workshop, Science in the Elementary and Junior High School, will be Dr. Harold E. Tannenbaum, professor of education at Yeshiva university and Dr. Nathan Stillman, professor of education at the State University of New Paltz, N. Y.

Offering three hours of college credit, this workshop has been designed specifically for the inservice growth of teachers and administrators in the field. Tuition for either of the workshops is \$37.50 for three term hours of graduate or undergraduate credit.

Additional information regarding these offerings may be obtained from Dr. Bill Sampson, director of summer sessions or from the office of the registrar.

Hawaiian Poi Curbs Allergies in Babies

Rochester, N. Y. - (UPI) - A little known product of the newest state may help solve dietary problems of allergic infants, a recent University of Rochester study pointed out.

Pediatrics experts at the university found that babies allergic to cereals and other foods thrive on poi, a pasty carbohydrate made from the root of the Hawaiian taro plant.

On the other hand, Sen. George D. Aiken, (R-Vt.) who usually votes with Republican liberals and who was Taft's Senate seatmate for years, told UPI that "Taft was a progressive . . . He was left of center when he died."

"He was difficult to categorize," says Rep. Robert Taft Jr., (R-Ohio) oldest son of the late senator. "He was conservative in some areas, such as economic policy, and not in others."

" . . . He was a very able Senator and an honorable man," wrote former President Truman in 1957. "He believed in and fought for the conservative approach to government. His views on education were sound."

Dedicated Man
This appraisal of Taft was given to UPI by Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, who was Senate Democratic leader when Taft died.

"He was certainly one of the most dedicated men that I ever knew. He was uncompromising in his loyalty to his party, and I believe he really deserved the title, 'Mr. Republican.'"

"But he also understood the fact that people from other parties could disagree with him. This quality made him an able legislator and brought him to a position of leadership that made him legendary even while he was still alive."

But Taft never got the job he really wanted - in the White House, where his father, William Howard Taft, served from 1909 to 1913. The Ohioan was his state's favorite son candidate for the GOP nomination in 1936 and an active candidate in 1940, 1948 and 1952.

He made his strongest bid in 1952 but lost again, to Eisenhower, the candidate of the eastern and more liberal wing of the GOP.

Taft served in the Ohio legislature from 1920 until 1932, when he was unseated in the national Republican debacle at the bottom of the great depression. He was elected to the U. S. Senate in 1938, when the first ballot box reaction set in against Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

Became Liberal
Aiken agrees that Taft was a staunch conservative during his early years in the Senate but says he "became more liberal very rapidly." Aiken once compared his record with Taft's on 44 key Senate votes during the last four years of Taft's life and found that they disagreed only seven times.

"Yet he was a conservative and I was supposed to be a radical," Aiken said. "He had the reputation of being an arch conservative, yet it wasn't borne out by his record."

ord. He was a builder. He was always working for the good of the country."

Goldwater's political base is roughly the same as that which once backed Taft for the Presidency. But there are as many differences as there are parallels between the two men.

The Arizona Senator has the political sex appeal which Taft lacked, a handicap which may have cost Taft the Presidency.

But Goldwater cannot claim Taft's wide-ranging knowledge and grasp of government and legislation.

Goldwater Compared
And Goldwater would not have supported the Taft who was responsible for enactment of the Public Housing bill and for Senate passage on two occasions of a Federal Aid for Education bill. Goldwater's proposals, for labor legislation would be even less palatable to union leaders than Taft's.

While union leaders leveled a savage attack against Taft for the Taft - Hartley law, they never showed much gratitude for his blockade of another bill in 1946. When the country was on the verge of a national railroad strike, President Truman asked for a law to permit the drafting of strikers into the armed forces to operate the trains. A stampede in the House brought immediate approval of the bill but Taft alone prevented similar action in the Senate. The strike was called off and the bill was forgotten.

Although Taft was deeply involved in almost every area of legislation, his chief legislative monument is the Taft-Hartley. This 1947 law, enacted over a Truman veto, was largely a product of Taft's conviction, shared then by most members of Congress, that organized labor had become too powerful.

Listen to Dirksen again:

Role Predestined
"His greatest influence was kind of predestined. You may recall that the great issue in 1896 and later was the creation of monopoly which ran pretty rough-shod over business enterprise. Then Teddy Roosevelt came along and made his real domestic reputation as a trust-buster."

"In Taft's day, we had the development of big labor and somebody had to keep conditions on an even keel. Taft had the courage and was willing to sweat out the problem until we began to curb abuses and formalize procedures. Bob Taft had a tremendous influence."

To Dirksen, Taft was "the classical liberal."
"He defined a liberal as one who stands by the cause of freedom," Dirksen said recently. "The so-called liberals of today want to expand government, to place more restraints on business."

A year after the Taft-Hartley act, Taft was running for the Republican Presidential nomination for the second time with Rep. Clarence J. Brown as his campaign manager. As a youthful lieutenant Governor of Ohio in 1920, Brown had persuaded Taft to run for the legislature, his first try for elective office.

"He was a great man," Brown told UPI. "If he had had the smile and outgoing personality of his father or his son, Bob, he would have been President of the United States."

A Shy Man
"But he was a shy, reticent man. His shyness was sometimes interpreted as coldness but it wasn't."

Taft lost the 1948 Presidential nomination to Thomas E. Dewey, and Dewey lost the election to Truman.

If Taft's integrity is questioned, the challenge is likely to come from critics who condemn his conduct during the second Truman administration. It was then that he encouraged Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis.) who was carrying on his crusade against Communists in government trials. The speech

That crusade continued into the Eisenhower administration until - more than a year after Taft's death - McCarthy's conduct was formally condemned by a vote of the Senate.

Still, during the McCarthy uproar and other periods of Republican distress in 1954, he was closely identified with the so-called isolationists. But even here his record was mixed. He voted for the Greek - Turkish aid program and the Marshall Plan, out against the NATO treaty.

Dewey and later Eisenhower were the candidates of the Eastern "Inter - Nationalist" wing of the GOP.

Takes Leader's Chair
After Eisenhower's election, Taft decided to become Republican leader of the Senate in name as well as fact and shifted from his Policy Committee chairmanship to the majority leader's chair.

While still junior Senator from Massachusetts, President Kennedy published "Profiles in Courage," a book about political heroism by Senators. Taft was given a chapter, for a Kenyon college speech condemning the basis of the postwar war crimes trials. The speech

came when anti - German feeling still ran high and only a month before the 1946 Congressional elections.

Of Taft, Kennedy wrote that "popularity was not his guide on most fundamental matters" and cited the Taft-Hartley law as an example. Kennedy suggested that anti-Taft feeling in unions hurt Taft's chances of winning the 1952 nomination.

"Simultaneously, however, he was antagonizing the friends of Taft - Hartley and endangering his own leadership in the Republican party measures," Kennedy wrote.

"Those who were shocked at these apparent departures from his traditional position did not comprehend that Taft's conservatism contained a strong strain of pragmatism, which caused him to support intensive federal activity in those areas that he believed not adequately served by the private enterprise system . . ."

Unusual Politician
"He was an unusual leader, for he lacked the fine arts of oratory and phrasemaking. He lacked blind devotion to the party line, unless he dictated it, and he lacked the politician's natural instinct to avoid some issues."

In 1957, Kennedy headed a special Senate committee named to choose five outstanding senators whose pictures were to be painted on the wall of the Senate reception room. Sen. Richard B. Russell (D-Ga.), a committee member, nominated Taft, and the committee chose him along with Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun and Robert M. LaFollette Sr.

Explaining his nomination six years later, Russell says he believes no one who ever served in the Senate "had more intellectual honesty and courage" than Taft.

"He was the only man I've ever known in politics who never gave political considerations a thought," says Russell.

The report from the committee naming the five outstanding senators carried this Senate epitaph for Taft:

"The conscience of the Conservative movement, its ablest exponent and most constructive leader, his high integrity, high analytical mind and sheer industry quickly won him a select spot in the councils of his party and the hearts of all his colleagues. His Senate

leadership transcended partisanship; his political courage and candor put principles above ambition. Dedicated to the constitution and the American tradition of individual rights as his keen legal mind interpreted them, he demonstrated the importance of a balanced and reasonable opposition in an age of powerful governments."

SECTION E PAGES 1 to 8

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