

Dirksen Becoming a Problem for Nixon

By Drew Pearson
and Jack Anderson

The most delightful and dramatic member of the Senate is also becoming the most difficult for the Nixon Administration—Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois. Officially, Dirksen is the Senate leader of the Republican Party. But, unofficially and in backstage huddles, there are times when White House staffers aren't quite sure whether they would do better without the leadership of the Minority Leader.

The long career of Ev Dirksen has been sprinkled with both drama and expediency.

Perhaps the most dramatic moment was at the 1952 Republican convention in Chicago when Ev stood in front of the TV cameras to berate Gov. Tom Dewey, chief backer of Dwight Eisenhower for President.

Shaking his right index finger, Dirksen, a pro-Taft man, thundered: "We have followed you before, and you took us down the path to defeat."

Dirksen mesmerized millions watching TV. But he did not win for Bob Taft. Dewey's man was nominated.

Since then, Dirksen's dramatic talents have been widely noted, his expediency practiced behind the scenes. One evidence of Dirksen's expediency is his steadfast opposition to proposals that Senators file their financial state-

ments with the secretary of the Senate.

"Now it is proposed that I be reduced to a class B citizen," Dirksen thundered when the financial statement matter came up for Senate debate. "I did not give up my citizenship when I came to the Senate. I do not propose to do so now."

Three times the Senate has voted on filing financial statements and three times the basso profundo from Illinois has cast his dramatic voice and vote in the negative. His influence has been the chief factor in inducing the Senate to veto the tougher code of ethical conduct passed by the House of Representatives.

Law Firm's Clients

There's a good reason why Ev Dirksen voted no—his Peoria law firm.

The firm's lineup of clients is impressive. It includes International Harvester, International Paper, Pabst Brewing, Pepsi-Cola Bottling of Peoria, State Farm Insurance, Mid-States Steel and Wire, Keystone Steel and Wire, Brass Foundry, National Lock and some two dozen others. They span a wide range of industries, banking and insurance.

The fact that these corporations went all the way to Peoria to seek legal counsel may simply speak well for the talents of the firm. Yet the question of what the law firm, through the Senate Republi-

can leader, can do for these clients is inescapable.

And Dirksen's behavior on the Senate floor has increased this speculation. When he battled against highway beautification and for billboards, there was an unkind suspicion that he was chiefly concerned over Pabst beer and Pepsi-Cola billboards.

Pleasing the Clients

When he fought against the Truth-In-Lending Bill, there was a suspicion that he had his law firm's bank and savings and loan clients in mind. When he tried to save the "right-to-work" laws, it goes without saying that his manufacturing and mining clients were delighted.

When Dirksen permitted drug lobbyists to use his office, write his speeches and prepare his legislation on the subject, one of the major contributors to the Republican Party, Olin Mathieson, owner of Squibb, must have been highly pleased.

There have been very concrete illustrations of how Dirksen helped certain law clients. Specifically it was Dirksen who tacked an amendment on the foreign aid bill, blocking aid to countries that did not pay debts owed to American citizens.

Dirksen indicated that he had in mind a "contractor and an architect who were owed around \$2,900,000 by Haiti." What he did not mention was

that the contracting firm was Lankton, Ziegler, Terry and Associates and that they were the clients of his Peoria law firm.

The Senate listened and voted the way Dirksen proposed.

There was another interesting case involving Veterans Administrator William Driver. Dirksen demanded that Mr. Nixon fire him, though he had a long and efficient record. What Dirksen did not tell the White House, however, was that Driver had antagonized one of Dirksen's staunch political supporters back in Chicago—the Blackhawk Construction Company. It was sore at Driver for failing to get a contract to build a Tampa, Fla., veterans hospital.

Blackhawk had built one veterans hospital and was late in completing it. There were other alleged inefficiencies. So when Blackhawk turned up as the low bidder for the Tampa hospital, VA Administrator Driver awarded the contract to the J. A. Jones Company of Charlotte, N.C., instead.

Blackhawk then sued Driver, together with Deputy Administrator A. H. Monk and Contracting Officer Jack Robinson. Blackhawk was thrown out of court. It lost the suit. But later Driver and his top assistants lost their jobs, thanks to pressure from the tuba-toned Senator from Illinois.

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