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Rockefeller at Hearing: A Partial Picture

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WASHINGTON—Only a partial picture of Nelson A. Rockefeller's 15 years as Governor of New York State has emerged in the Senate Rules Committee hearings on Mr. Rockefeller's nomination for Vice President. The more persistent inquiries made of the former Governor during his two and a half days of testimony last month focused on his vast wealth, on possible conflict of interest if he was confirmed as Vice President, on his views about the doctrine of executive privilege, and on other areas with national and international, rather than state or local overtones.

The Senate committee today postponed until after the November elections any decision whether to call Mr. Rockefeller back for questioning about reports of substantial gifts made over the years to friends and aides.

The Senators have asked him for a written explanation of the gifts, and are also awaiting the results of an audit of his taxes and other finances.

During last month's hearings, the former Governor's written and verbal accounting of his years as head of New York State did not dwell on the harsh realities of running a huge industrial state. Like any politician, Mr. Rockefeller put his best foot forward.

And there was scant disposition on the part of the Senators questioning him to probe much beyond Mr. Rockefeller's presentation of his years in the state house.

For the politicians, lobbyists, reporters and others who have studied and dealt with Mr. Rockefeller in Albany over the years, not all aspects of the Rockefeller style were on display during the hearings.

There was no hint, for example, of the man with a reputation among friends and enemies alike as a first-rate political operator who never hesitated to wheedle, capote or threaten legislators to get his way. Nor did there appear the man known for occasionally being waspish—some say arrogant—or overenthusiastic or pedagogic.

Masterpiece of Understatement

Indeed, there were occasional moments at the hearings that made some New York politicians and political observers guffaw, such as Mr. Rockefeller's response to a question put to him by Senator Harrison A. Williams Jr., Democrat of New Jersey.

Senator Williams wanted to know how Mr. Rockefeller felt about charges that he had arrogated so much power to the executive branch in New York that he often functioned as a "One-man Legislature" in Albany. Mr. Rockefeller's reply was a masterpiece of understatement.

"I worked with Democratic leaders as I had the Republican leaders," the Governor replied. "I had them totally in my confidence, took their ideas, tried to accommodate them in the

development of legislation. The result of this was by the time I gave a message to the Legislature I was already aware of the general outline of the leaders' positions. They were aware of mine. It appeared that I was dominating but, in actual fact, that was the furthest from the truth."

No detailed mention was made of Mr. Rockefeller's frequent use in the Legislature of "special messages of necessity," a technical way of avoiding the normal three-day aging process of proposed bills.

The device is supposed to be used only in emergencies such as floods. But Mr. Rockefeller perfected it as a means near the end of a legislative session of having pet bills gavelled through both houses without giving rank-and-file lawmakers time to scrutinize them too intensely.

A classic example of the Rockefeller clout occurred in 1968 and involved the creation of the Urban Development Corporation, something he avidly sought.

No More 'Personal Favors'

He engaged in the kind of politicking that has earned Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago the title of "boss," an appellation that somehow was never attached to Mr. Rockefeller despite more than a decade of iron-fisted control over the state Republican party and more than a little sway in some Democratic party decisions.

The bill passed the Senate but was rejected in the Assembly by both Republicans and Democrats. Mr. Rockefeller picked up the phone and later in the day the bill was adopted. "I told them that I would be unable to continue to do many of the personal favors," he told a newsman later on, things like "appointments and such things as signing their bills."

During the Senate hearings, the Vice President-designate was asked about his 1972 appointment of Stephen S. Gottlieb, a Manhattan Democrat, to a lucrative post on the State Liquor Authority. He replied that he often had to make Democratic appointments and that Mr. Gottlieb was "fearless" and "a very straight shooter."

It was no secret in Albany that the appointment of Mr. Gottlieb, a relatively obscure young minority party Assemblyman, was a political payoff to Senator Joseph Zaretzki, the Democratic Senate minority leader and a man who had often worked closely with the Governor. Mr. Gottlieb accepted the post and did not challenge Mr. Zaretzki in the Democratic primary, as he had planned.

Mr. Rockefeller was asked about legislation he sought and received in 1971 calling for a one-year residency requirement in the state for those trying to go on welfare.

"I asked for a one-year residency law which was declared unconstitutional," he replied. He did not mention that he had proposed the bill despite the fact that the United States Supreme Court had ruled two years earlier that welfare resi-

dency requirements were unconstitutional.

The welfare proposal was a reversal of Mr. Rockefeller's stance in 1960 when he vetoed a residency bill, citing "our state's heritage with its respect for the dignity and worth of each individual."

'Most Agonizing' Time

Mr. Rockefeller told the committee that the "most agonizing" time during his years as Governor concerned the Attica prison uprising in which 43 persons died. He repeated his defense of his decision not to go to the prison to negotiate with the rebellious inmates.

He was not queried about the conclusion of the New York State Special Commission on Attica, headed by Robert B. McKay, dean of New York University Law School, that he should have gone to the upstate prison before ordering an armed assault on the rebel inmates.

In response to questions, Mr. Rockefeller discussed enactment of his much-publicized "tough" anti-drug law in 1973, in part a response to the failure of the Rockefeller-created Narcotics Addiction Control Commission to curb addiction despite the expenditure of about \$1-billion.

The former Governor told the Senators that the bill had been enacted over the objections of judges, prosecutors and other members of the judicial establishment.

Sorry for Choice of Words

What did not come up were the recent assessments of many law-enforcement authorities that the stringent new laws had not measurably slowed the over-all flow of drugs or driven major narcotics dealers out of business as they were designed to do.

In the second day of his testimony, Mr. Rockefeller let slip an unfortunate phrase when he discussed the state's programs for treating the mentally ill, which have been the subject of a good deal of criticism.

"It is very difficult to get people to devote their lives to take care of a human being, while really in full fact it is no more than a vegetable, and to do it 24 hours a day right around the clock," he said.

The next day the former Governor interrupted a line of questioning to apologize for his choice of words.

He easily handled inquiries about the vast South Mall project he began in Albany adjacent to the Capitol. The Congressional line of questioning about whether it was a "personal monument at public expense" was similar to questions he had often answered at the state and local level.

The project, which New York State Controller Arthur Levitt estimates will cost \$1.5-billion when the interest charges are paid off, will be "the most beautiful urban development in the United States," Mr. Rockefeller said, repeating earlier hyperbole. "It's provided work for a great many people who are delighted." There were chuckles in the committee room.

One aspect of the Rockefeller style that was evident was his ability to choose highly competent aides. Several of the Senators have gone out of their way to compliment him on the thoroughness of the documents he has submitted to the committee, and sometimes during the hearings he merely reached behind him to motion an aide for some fact or figure that he could not recall off-hand.

An early example of Mr. Rockefeller's tendency to entangle over a pet idea did not come up during his testimony before the Senators. That was his conviction—obsession, his critics called it—that nuclear fallout shelters were needed throughout the state. His zeal, in the opinion of many, contributed heavily to the fears of a holocaust prevalent in the state in the early sixties.

Asked about his sanctioning of wiretaps in the state, Mr. Rockefeller said that they had been found to be "the only possible way to be effective in trying to break up organized crime."

Then in a more general discussion of bugging, he said: "I think when one talks to high officials, and I have felt this way for 20 or more years, 30 years, that one has to assume that maybe they are being recorded. I personally have not indulged in this."