

THE HOWEY POLITICAL REPORT



The Weekly Briefing On Indiana Politics

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Quayle decision won't come until summer or fall

Issues '96 says heavy May travel schedule precludes earlier gubernatorial process

INDIANAPOLIS - Sources close to former Vice President Dan Quayle are saying that he likely won't make a decision on whether to run for governor of Indiana until "this summer or fall."

"He has a very heavy travel schedule this spring," said Anne Hathaway, executive director of Quayle's "Issues '96" committee. "It lightens up in May. He'll be spending more time in Indiana and he'll talk to people about whether his involvement will be on the international, national or local level."

As for a short-term deadline - one that has been requested from gubernatorial candidate Rex Early - that isn't likely. "I wouldn't put a deadline on a decision," Hathaway said. "It will be made sometime this summer or fall."

Sources in and close to the Quayle camp say the dilemma facing the former vice president is one where many of his ardent Hoosier supporters are urging him to make the race for a probable 1996 matchup against Lt. Gov. Frank O'Bannon. Those supporters include former Indiana State GOP Chairman Allan Hubbard.

"But for every good reason there is to enter the race, there are as many reasons not to," one source said.

Supporters of a Quayle gubernatorial bid cite the short "shelf life" of former vice presidents - four years. After the four-year cycle between presidential elections, former vice presidents tend to fade from the public eye.

"There is a school of thought that Dan Quayle needs to maintain his public stature and being governor of Indiana would fit that profile," the source said.

A Quayle entry into the gubernatorial race would almost

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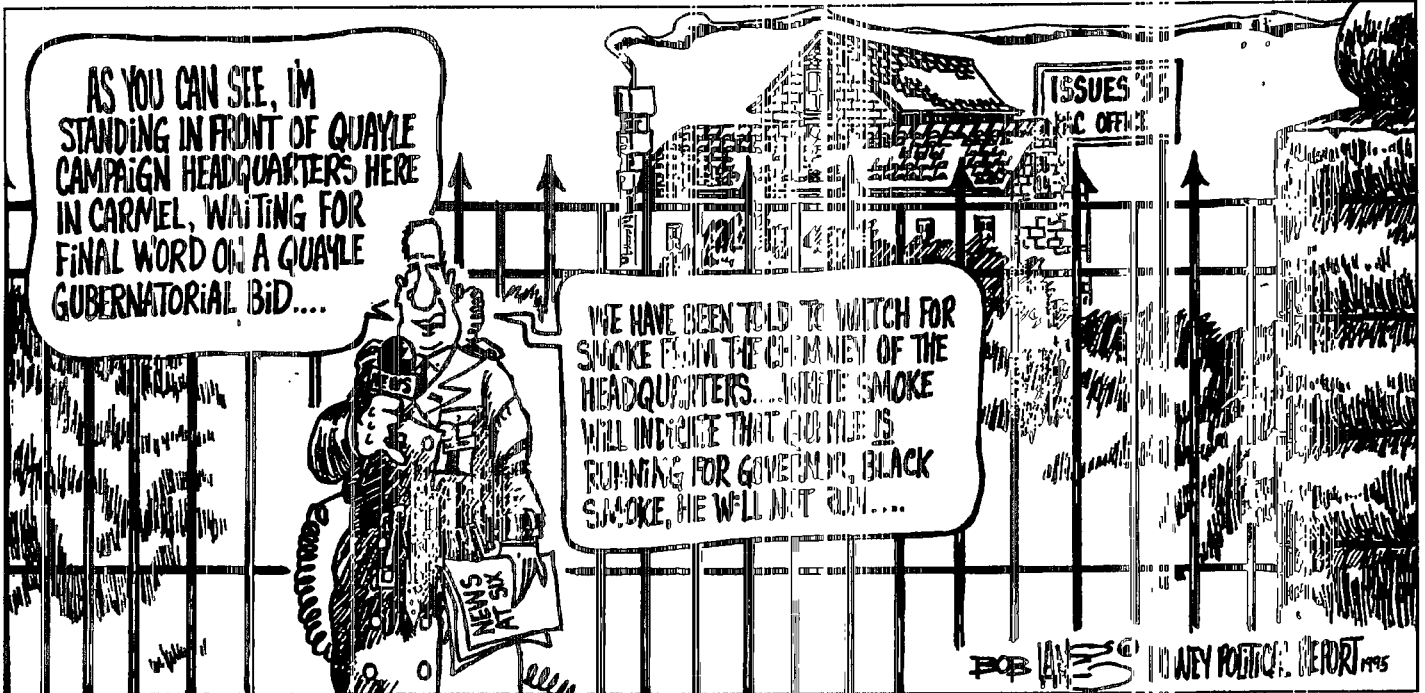
"QUOTE" OF THE WEEK

"(Dick Lugar) would have made an excellent secretary of state in the Clinton administration...."

- Frank McCloskey

INSIDE FEATURES

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HUMOR

M I L L

"Well, now, everyone knows this state is supreme when it comes to...pro basketball. - Brian Howey

Devil's Dictionary, by Ambrose Bierce

Lap, n. One of the most important organs of the female system - an admirable provision of nature for the repose of infancy, but chiefly useful in rural festivities to support plates of cold chicken and heads of adult males. The male of our species has a rudimentary lap, imperfectly developed and in no one contributing to the animal's substantial welfare.

Politeness, n. The most acceptable hypocrisy.

Quayle decision to come this summer or fall

automatically make him the front-runner, both in the Republican primary and general election. While Quayle can't transfer campaign money from federal races into an Indiana race, virtually no one believes that Quayle would have any problem raising the necessary money to wage a winning campaign. Indiana Democrats readily acknowledge that a Quayle candidacy would pose a formidable task for O'Bannon.

Should Quayle win the election, he would be in a position to seize the "new federalism" concept sweeping Congress where many federal programs would be transferred to the states, many in the form of block grants. "As governor, Quayle would have an opportunity to develop and pioneer the new roles for states," a proponent of his candidacy said.

Quayle has made it clear that he wants to run for president beyond 1996. The fact that Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton all were propelled into the presidency after serving as governor this century bolsters the argument that it would make a proper platform to launch such a bid.

Detractors of a Quayle gubernatorial

bid see numerous pitfalls. One is the level of expectations that would be created by his mere entry. If Quayle defeated O'Bannon, but only by a narrow margin, it would hurt his national profile.

"If I were in Mr. Quayle's camp, I would advise caution," said Brian Vargus, who heads Indiana University's Public Opinion Laboratory. "He's got much more to lose."

Vargus notes that the "de-evolution" of federal programs back to the states might provide a proper political platform. "But Indiana is such a weak governor state," Vargus said, "he might find himself boxed in."

There is the "1962 scenario" where former Vice President Richard Nixon ran and lost a gubernatorial bid. Noting that O'Bannon will be no patsy since he will be able to tap into mainstream donation sources as part of the current state administration, detractors say that the supreme risk for Quayle is that by losing, his political career would be finished. The wild card is a short "disenchantment cycle" nationally that could prompt a backlash against the 1992 "Republican Revolution." A CNN Poll released Tuesday reveals that Congress has a 37 percent

approval rating and a 56 percent disapproval rating, while President Clinton's pro/con ratings stand at 46-45 percent.

Others view Quayle as having little experience or inclination in dealing with state issues, both past and present. Hubbard, a top aide to Quayle during the Bush administration, made that transition as state chairman and proved to be successful. Bill Schreiber, O'Bannon's key strategist, is partially in a wishful mode when he says that either Dan or Marilyn Quayle "have the profile to serve in the next Republican administration cabinet" in Washington.

Many believe the next governor of Indiana will have to raise taxes to face the rising demands placed on states after eight years of the Bayh administration. Detractors of the bid are convinced that President Bush's tax hike in 1990 after his "read my lips" assertions in the 1988 presidential campaign doomed his re-election.

Then there is the reason why Quayle opted out of the '96 presidential race. Marilyn Quayle quoted her husband last week in Birmingham, Ala., as saying he "didn't want to spend the next two years looking at motel rooms" while their three teen-agers grew up. While running a gubernatorial campaign isn't as intense as a presidential bid, it would still take a great deal of time away from the family. The difference is that he would be able to come home most nights after stumping the state, but many evenings and weekends would be spent on the stump.

From all accounts, Quayle will give the bid serious consideration. He has kept his

"Issues '96" office in Carmel open. A staff of 10 maintained there includes Jim Huston, who managed Linley Pearson's 1992 gubernatorial campaign as well as U.S. Rep. John Myers' 1994 re-election bid. Another is Susan Wehrenberg, who came over from the state GOP committee last winter.

"You have to read something into the fact that there's still staff there," one source commented. Huston's reputation has not been hurt by the candidate's self-destructive nature of Pearson's campaign, and he took a moribund Myers organization which appeared to be ripe for defeat last year and beat Greencastle Mayor Mike Harmless with 65 percent of the vote.

Officially Quayle has said, "I will take some time to think about it and talk to people in Indiana. The people in Indiana will help make a decision on what my next step will be. I will not be able to make that decision for some time now."

Vargus thinks it's noteworthy that Quayle has yet to sanction a poll to see how he would stack up in a race against O'Bannon.

That says volumes about the Quayle timetable.

■ **QUAYLE NOTES:** Hathaway says inquiries into Issues '96 cover an array of topics. "Some want him to re-enter the presidential race, some expressed disappointment. We're getting support on the national level for him to run for governor.

Hathaway added, "We're keeping very busy here at Issues '96."

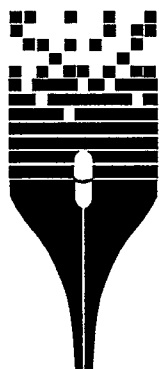
TICKER T A P E

Leave it to former Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz to put a Dick Lugar presidential bid in blunt perspective. Speaking in Linton, Butz said, "Dick is perhaps the most intelligent man in the United States Senate, which isn't saying too much. But he's probably too honest politically to make a good president."

Richard L. Berke writes in the *New York Times* that lobbyists from the Indiana Farm Bureau "tried for more than two months to call on Rep. Mark E. Souder" but that "he refused to see them." The reason? A late October endorsement at an Arcola hog farm of his opponent, former U.S. Rep. Jill Long. "They made a bad political choice, and they chose to do it in my face, and then they got rolled," Souder said. He met with the Farm Bureau only after bowing to his demand to replace its lobbyists with people sympathetic to his conservative views. "They need to get the message in the PAC community that they need to hire staff people that represent the members' wishes and want to keep us in power," Souder said.

As predicted last month in HPR, House Speaker Paul Mannweiler threw the informed consent bill to the GOP caucus earlier this week. It will be heard in Rep. Bob Alderman's public policy committee. Mannweiler put the matter to a vote in the GOP caucus earlier this week.

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Thursday, March 23, 1995

TICKER T A P E

House **Speaker Paul Mannweiler's** insistence on Tuesday that his proposal to redistrict the House to 99-seats is "not political" rings a bit hollow. Rumors about redistricting began surfacing at the Statehouse on the heels of the two huge labor rallies. The reason: it would allow the GOP to shore up seven districts vulnerable to a labor backlash.

The Feb. 8 edition of the *Cook Political Report* speculated that **U.S. Rep. Lee Hamilton's** 9th CD seat might be "open" in 1996 due to retirement. But Hamilton press aide **Holly Baker** told HPR, "I have absolutely no indication that he won't run." Baker suggested Hamilton might have been fodder for retirement speculation because "they always look that way at people nearing their mid-60s."

Howard County Democratic **Chairman D.J. Bolinger** has ruled out a 5th CD run for 1996. He's looking at possible races in either '98 or '00.

Democrat **Jonathan D. Weinzapfel**, a public relations manager for the Old National Bank in Evansville and a former aide to **U.S. Rep. Frank McCloskey**, is testing the waters in the 8th CD.

The *Chicago Tribune* reported that during his trip to the Windy City last week, **Gov. Evan Bayh** asked O'Hare Airport officials for a place to jog. A special area was created for the run, but officials were then told the gov had changed his mind

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Labor clout hasn't translated to polls in years; Republicans believe they can defuse issue

INDIANAPOLIS - The question to Brian Vargus was simple: is there any 1994 polling data on how organized labor voted in the 1994 election?

The intent was quite simple, too. A week after 20,000 members and sympathizers of organized labor protested the revamping of Indiana's 60-year-old prevailing wage law, no one seemed to have any data on how that might translate to the polls in 1996.

Vargus, who heads Indiana University's Public Opinion Laboratory, plowed through his files, finally ending up with the Roper Center's "America at the Polls in 1994." The demographic breakdown hit gender, education, race, age, religion, party ID, '92 vote - virtually every societal subgroup except for "organized labor."

"That should speak volumes on the political clout of organized labor," Vargus said. "Most political scientists will tell you labor vote is a thing of the past, in terms of actual delivery of votes."

Many political analysts are not discounting the potential impact the prevailing wage issue will have on the vote in 1996. HPR last week outlined seven Indiana House seats - where Republicans won with pluralities ranging from 1,457 to 7 votes - in communities that had a history of high labor involvement.

"The Democrats' problem in the last election was pretty much turnout," Vargus said. "But you have to look at Republican leadership on this prevailing wage issue, given the Republicans poll collection methods. They don't seem very frightened."

Indiana's economy is based on manufacturing, with General Motors as its biggest employer. But labor hasn't delivered its membership at the polls - only campaign funds. "The ISTA is a classic example," Vargus said. "They were terribly ineffectual at delivering their membership at the polls."

Republican gubernatorial candidate George B. Witwer worked on behalf of most of the endangered House Republicans identified by HPR last week with his Opportunity Project of Indiana. "1996 will be a tough year," Witwer

acknowledged. "The reason Republicans did so well is so many Democrats stayed home. If there is a regular Democratic turnout or it goes higher than normal, there will be a whole different dynamic."

Yet Witwer believes if GOP legislative candidates "explain their stance on prevailing wage, I think they win that argument."

He noted that State Rep. Jeff Linder recently found himself talking to "a real angry labor guy" at a public forum. "Jeff said, 'I represent you. I also represent the elderly citizen on a set income. Am I supposed to transfer that money to you, or let this elderly person keep more of her money?'"

"Taxpayers will be better off by \$300 million," Witwer said. "These legislators who voted to revise prevailing wage basically said 'I don't care whether I lose my seat or not. It's so overwhelmingly correct.'"

Bill Styring of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation issued an essay on prevailing wage. "None of the arguments for retaining Indiana's prevailing wage law can stand scrutiny," Styring writes. His major points include:

■ Indiana local governments spend \$1.5 to \$2 billion in an average year on public construction.

■ Labor content ranges close to 50 percent of costs.

□ Putting the volume and labor content together "we find Indiana taxpayers are buying something approaching \$1 billion per year in public construction labor subject to the prevailing wage law.

▢ Prevailing wage represents a transfer of resources from taxpayers in general to unionized construction workers, who, as a whole, have higher incomes than taxpayers.

□ Styring writes that union officials argue that highly skilled workers can complete a project with fewer man hours. "This argument defies all logic plus a great deal of empirical evidence. If it really were true, union labor is lower-cost labor, when productivity is taken into account. If this were true, union firms would have a bidding advantage over nonunion firms".

COLUMNISTS ON INDIANA

Don Kaul, Des Moines Register - (Richard Lugar) is, in short, everything the American people say they want in a leader. So why does he have not a prayer of winning the Republican nomination, let alone being elected president? Several reasons. The television camera doesn't like him. He's not a bad-looking guy in person, but on the tube he comes across as a funeral director who's telling you that there's this little problem: they seem to have lost the body of your loved one. He doesn't get the breaks. Losing out to Quayle for the vice presidency is like finishing second to Roseanne in a Miss Congeniality contest.

David Broder, Washington Post - Republicans and some Democrats are eager to "redress the balance," as they say, between the federal government and the states. It needs redressing. But no one in either party except (HUD Secretary Henry) Cisneros wants to talk seriously about redressing the balance between cities and suburbs. Even Sen. Richard Lugar, who engineered the last city-county consolidation when he was mayor of Indianapolis a quarter century ago, says the federal government can offer little more than "moral suasion" on that topic now. Lose Cisneros and you lose HUD. Lose HUD, and let the Republican Congress convert more and more federal programs into block grants for the states, and the suburban-dominated state legislatures will steer those federal funds to their own constituencies.

Sylvia Smith, Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette - Perhaps the Lugar camp hopes to create a cult of Americans who find Lugar endearing despite his elegant verbiage, his Victorian manners (Newt Gingrich should find that appealing), his Boy Scoutness, his dignity, his...well, dullness. It's not a far-fetched idea: Ross Perot and his charts and ears and 78 rpm voice certainly grabbed attention in the last presidential campaign. But the difference between Perot and Lugar, at this point, is that Perot did capture the

nation's attention. It will be interesting to see whether Lugar gets a gimmick and buys into the entertainment side.

Tom Tuley, Evansville Courier - Since we frequently and without hesitation head for the woodshed with our representatives in the Indiana legislature when we are unhappy with their performance, it is only proper that we also send flowers when we are pleased. Today, bouquets to Vaneta Becker, Greg Server and Larry Lutz. What's important today is that Lutz, Ms. Becker and Server are standing up in the General Assembly, sending strong signals that they will no longer be blindly controlled - ordered to be more precise - by the Indianapolis power elite. Perhaps if they stand there long enough, others in the Legislature will recall that this body was never constructed as a monarchy, but, instead, an organization of citizen legislators entrusted and empowered with promoting the general welfare of Indiana.

Brian Howey, HPR - Now, the common man might wonder why declarations have to be made some 14 months before the '96 Republican gubernatorial primary. The reason is the Republican primary will likely be a bruising multi-candidate affair not for the faint of heart. A load of money will have to be spent just to wrap up the nomination. Then there's Lt. Gov. Frank O'Bannon, who will have the significant fund-raising punch that comes when you've been in the incumbent administration for eight years. "I think I made the right gesture," Early said of his offer to make way for Quayle. "If he wants to run for governor, just let me know." In these somewhat bizarre times, when the O.J. Simpson trial seems to permeate many aspects of a baseball-less society, Early's is the plaintive wail of Hoosier politics.



Thursday, March 23, 1995

TICKER T A P E

State Rep. Craig Fry, D-Mishawaka, may have set a new standard for political crudeness. He responded to seven-term Mitchell **Mayor Jerry L. Hancock's** letter in which the mayor backed repeal of the prevailing wage. "Don't bother to send me a letter ever again because I don't represent Mitchell, Ind.," Fry began (**Jack Colwell**, *South Bend Tribune*). "Further, I don't like your uninformed position on prevailing wage and OSHA. I'm sick and tired of small-town mayors like you expressing opinions that lack understanding of the big picture." And Fry closed his letter this way: "Please leave me off your Christmas card list, too!" Said Hancock, "I don't send Christmas cards. The postage is too high."

Legendary high school basketball coach **Marvin Wood** is seeking a Republican seat on the Mishawaka City Council. Wood coached Milan HS to the 1954 boys basketball title. In 1990, he lost a legislative race to Fry.

Lugar campaign sources tell HPR the nerve gas terrorist assault in the Tokyo subway system Monday is a prime example of the kind of security concerns that could thrust his presidential campaign into a credible one. "It's the kind of trouble facing the president over the next two years and for Americans as we head into the next century," the source said.. Lugar is the only candidate who has emphasized foreign policy and security concerns.

The *Sullivan Daily Times* becomes the 25th Indiana newspaper to publish **Brian Howey's** weekly political column.

McCloskey options open until fall; sees 'bizarre situation' in GOP House

HPR INTERVIEW

"I tell people that I would decide absolutely on next year's race no later than early fall...."
- Frank McCloskey

"I have found Gingrich to be one of the most diabolically negative individuals I ever encountered in public life. I will be surprised if he is, in the long run, a success...."
- Frank McCloskey

Frank McCloskey says he's been in Washington as an attorney for Cohen & Malad, PC, almost as much as he was when he represented Southwestern Indiana's 8th CD.

He is carefully watching his successor, Republican U.S. Rep. John Hostettler, and keeping his options open until this fall. In the meantime, he's still involved in efforts to get aid and relief to Bosnia, living in Bloomington, and commuting to Indianapolis.

HPR ran into McCloskey on the western steps of the Statehouse during the March 14 labor rally against rescinding the prevailing wage statute. Then we caught up with him six days later and conducted this telephone interview:

HPR: What are your general observations about the 104th Congress, the "Contract with America" and the Republican Revolution headed by Newt Gingrich, who, ironically, got on his leadership track due to his outrage over your controversial seating in 1985?

McCloskey: I'm starting to hear some mixed reviews on the contract. Overall, I would say Gingrich and Co. were pretty shrewd. Nearly all of those items polled and tested pretty well. They did that beforehand. I think there's a general feeling they've done the easy stuff so far and it's getting tougher now in some ways. It tests their sincerity. I don't know that now that the Republicans are in the majority they are interested in term limits. Obviously Gingrich and Co. are going to fight those variations of term limits - legislation that would call for any retroactive compilation of service to the extent that they could not run in '96. I don't see a lot of hope for term limits. I don't think it's good policy anyway.

HPR: All the contract calls for is a vote on the floor on issues such as term limits.

McCloskey: That's really nice.

HPR: During your '94 campaign, did you see the contract as a strength for Republicans?

McCloskey: The contract was nearly - I won't say totally - was significantly to thoroughly inconsequential as far as the election results were concerned. I think it had some impact, but I don't think it was in the top five reasons why the Republicans moved like they did.

HPR: When did you sense that you were in trouble?

McCloskey: I knew it could be very close weeks or months before the election. I was in essence not shocked by losing. I knew that intellectually and psychologically it could go either way. I figured one of us would win 51-49 rather than losing by 52-48. If anything we had improved and built upon our performance in the last week or two before the election. We had great media. In fact, we had a great month. It was one of the best closing months I ever had in an election. I think given Gingrich's masterly negative tactics, the rise of Rush Limbaugh talk radio, the beating that the crime bill took in conservative districts, it just resulted in too much of the Democratic labor base staying home or sending them into the Republican camp.

HPR: You were at the Statehouse labor rally last week. Is labor reinvigorated?

McCloskey: One of the conversational themes going around the two labor events at the Statehouse is the fact that many of the guys are saying they're going with the Democrats in '96; that they're not going to have a '94-type problem. They're going to stay on point with their leadership and the Democratic Party. It's probably going to be the case, but quite frankly, it's a long way to the election and there could be a lot of issues and strategies coming up on all sides in '96. But the message has gotten out that, lo and behold, surprise, Republicans are going to behave like Republicans. You see them going after prevailing wage in Indiana and Davis-Bacon in DC. Gingrich and my successor getting out there wanting to cut school lunches and food stamps.

HPR: How do you see Hostettler's stance on food stamps and school lunches playing in the district?

McCloskey: I hear there's a lot of people expressing disappointment and lifting eyebrows and saying - I don't know what the word would be - a bizarre situation. It's going to have to play out into the '96 election.

HPR: Are you looking at a rematch with Hostettler?

McCloskey: I'm not ruling anything out. I'm keeping in touch. Whether I run or not, I have friends all over the 8th District. I'm occasionally going out to events. My main priority really has to be my professional life in Indianapolis and DC. I'm doing governmental relations, trade and promotional stuff in Southeast Asia. I have some interesting work to do. I'm starting to establish some reasonable economic prospects. I tell people that I would decide absolutely on next year's race no later than early fall.

HPR: It's been said that instead of a generational, eight- or four-year "disenchantment cycle" we're in a two-year cycle of change. What are your thoughts?

McCloskey: Change has some healthy aspects. Obviously Republican majorities are responsible for the work product of the House. They ultimately can't afford just to be negative or to be all things to all people. They're making the decisions. It's on their backs. Working Americans are going to see more than ever what their values are. I have been in various encounters with Newt Gingrich over the years. As you know, his poll numbers are very low - worse than Bill Clinton's. I have found Gingrich to be one of the most diabolically negative individuals I ever encountered in public life. I will be surprised if he is in the long run a success.

HPR: When you were seated by House Democrats in 1985 after your recount, it's been said that Gingrich was so galled by that issue that it put him on a leadership track.

McCloskey: It's one of the reasons why he went after (House Speaker) Jim Wright. To me, Gingrich's real problem with Jim Wright was that he was looking at one of the best speakers in the history of the U.S. House. He had started to build a solid record of achievement and Gingrich didn't want that to happen. They exploited a particular set of circum-

stances to drive Wright out when, if anything, Gingrich's book deal is bigger than anything Jim Wright ever thought about. If there's one key watershed moment as to why we have Republican leadership now it was the day Jim Wright resigned with a lot of Democratic complicity forcing him from Congress. That in essence was having Newt Gingrich naming the Democratic speaker of the House.

HPR: This Congress began by voting in a number of reforms, such as members of Congress having to live under the same laws normal citizens do.

McCloskey: That's fine. Ninety-eight percent was basically passed intact already anyway. I don't have any quarrel with that.

HPR: Gingrich's book deal and the dealings of GOPAC - do you see the seeds for his downfall there?

McCloskey: Oh, I don't know. I'll be fairly plain-spoken and blunt. His corruption is not in the book deals or PAC building. He truly has in a world of massive egos - and I wouldn't say mine is minimal - he has the most massive restrained ego without any sense of his own human proportion or limits. I think we have a classic American political story in the making there.

HPR: Rep. Hostettler has taken an ideological stance on, for instance, the I-69 funding. What are your thoughts on that?

McCloskey: Southwestern Indiana really needs it. Evansville needs it. All these small and medium sized towns need it and not just the counties that are immediately involved on the route. It takes a congressman and a congressional delegation to continue to push and lead on that. So without a champion for it, and greater citizen involvement, we'll see the thing fade indefinitely for years and some \$30 million allocated for continued work, planning, engineering, environmental reviews, land acquisition will be allocated for other priorities. So the highway really is on the drawing board. Serious and significant work is being done, but I don't think Hostettler cares to be a champion of it.

HPR: Is that shaping up as a big issue in '96?

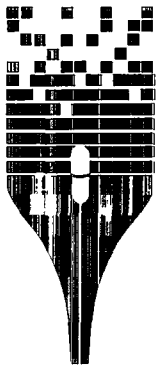
McCloskey: It's hard to say. It really is a bipartisan issue. I don't want to see it as a partisan issue.

TICKER T A P E

Johnson County **Prosecutor Lance Hamner** has closed an investigation into Republican Greenwood mayoral candidate **Charles Henderson**, a former police chief. "I have a good reputation, and my integrity was questioned unjustly for political reasons," Henderson told **John Masson** of the *Daily Journal* in Johnson County. "The charges stemmed from allegations that city police officers were using garage facilities to work on their own vehicles, and how Henderson used a city credit card.

Political observers in Lake County are saying former **Judge Charles Graddock** appears to have the momentum in the Gary Democratic mayoral race. They note his chief opponent, **State Sen. Earlene Rogers**, has had little time to campaign due to the legislative session.

Chris Ternet on **Paul Helmke's** mayoral campaign in Fort Wayne told HPR that the two-term incumbent wants to "lower expectations" in order to "build up the race." The Helmke camp fears that if contributors don't see a race shaping up, the money won't flow properly. "You want there to be a race so he can articulate a his accomplishments and vision." Helmke expects to face Wayne Township **Trustee Thomas Essex**, who first must win a five-way Democratic primary. "The silence is deafening over there," Ternet said.



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PERHAPS... WE WANDER

By Brian Howey

NASHVILLE - A few years ago, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist named Bob Unger began an interview with U.S. Rep. Andy Jacobs on Capitol Hill.

As Unger began a question, Jacobs stopped him. "Where's your tape recorder?" the Indianapolis Democrat asked.

Unger said he didn't need one. Jacobs' face lit up with a smile as wide as the Wabash. "I can tell you're an old pro," Jacobs said.

To Unger, the opportunity was to "share information" with Jacobs', as opposed to "going for the heat" by documenting every word.

Unger spoke to the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association last weekend in this Brown County resort town. Working for such great newspapers as the Chicago Tribune and the Kansas City Star, the Sullivan, Ind., native is now teaching at the University of Missouri at Columbia.

He portrays the Washington press corps almost as an unfortunate chapter in his life - a kind of "Animal House" in \$300 suits, verbal toga parties in the East Room in a culture where top network correspondents have intimate relationships with key sources.

"Why do Washington reporters act like such jerks?" Unger asked at one point. "Because they are."

"It's incredibly easy," Unger said of the many national correspondents who form the media horde. "The Washington press corps is lazy. Most days they never venture out of the office." The news on any given day comes from a culture where there are dozens of press aides for each reporter, feeding out the spin of the day. "Everybody gets the same ball of wax," Unger said.

He uses another example: the AP reporter who dashes to the phone after a big news conference, yelling into the phone the story lead. "He doesn't need to shout," Unger said. "He's really yelling to the other reporters. He's setting out the story line for that day."

He noticed over the years how his stories in the Kansas City Star didn't make it out of the Kansas/Missouri area until one of the big

five national papers picked it up. "It's not news until they say it's news," he said. "Sure, they want to say it first, but they don't want to be different."

From his perch in academia, Unger believes that today's journalists have been well taught in terms of politics. "And there's been a decent job of teaching journalism. But they've done a lousy job of teaching the confluence of the press and politics. That is crucial."

In a profession where its stars have gone after and brought down the biggest power brokers in town, Unger sees a problem within the press corps similar to a calcified government that brought on calls for term limits. "Most Washington reporters are as out of touch as much of the government," he said. "They live in the beltway bottle."

The consequence is that instead of substantive reporting, Washington becomes a process that is akin to "an on-going family spat" reported as a torrent of "inconsequential BS."

"The process of journalism; the process of news overshadows the product of the government of our nation. The product gets shoved aside," he said.

Unger is even challenging some of the major tenets of reporting, such as the newsroom taboo of reading a story back to a source prior to publication, saying that many editors are "isolated and out of touch." He did that as a young reporter in 1970 and was told by an editor, "Nobody reads the Chicago Tribune before it hits the streets!"

At the time, Unger said, that admonition got his testosterone level up. But now he pauses. "Where did we get the idea that we are so high and mighty? We should be showing the story, defending the truth to our sources and take it to the people, but with the subject having the chance to challenge the story."

The First Amendment, Unger said, is now feared by much of the public. Little wonder a Harris Poll shows public confidence in newspapers at 11 percent (down from 28 in 1979).

The First Amendment, he said, "was designed to defend our right to be wrong, not to defend our right to be damned stupid."