

Buckley After 100 Days in Washington: At Ease in Senate Role

By RICHARD L. MADDEN

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WASHINGTON, May 1 — After completing his first 100 days in the United States Senate today, James L. Buckley should not have an identity problem.

The national publicity over his election last fall has put the Republican-Conservative from New York in great demand on the fund-raising circuit for Republicans around the country.

He is somewhat distinctive on the Senate floor. Among Senators who still have hair, Mr. Buckley has the only crew cut. And while other senatorial ties are growing wider and brighter, Mr. Buckley occasionally shows up wearing thin bow ties with button-down shirts.

And yet, the mail into Mr. Buckley's Senate office one recent day brought the following letter from a former fan in Buffalo:

"Now that my nausea has subsided after accidentally observing your appearance on 'Laugh In' last evening I, as one of your constituents and former admirers, am constrained to comment.

"Your silly grin as the inane and vulgar questions were asked and your equally inane replies were less than worthy of a Senator of the United States.

"The fact that you answered on that program at all was an insult to the decent people who you represent.

"The disgusting episode in which you freely participated and apparently enjoyed—as an accomplice in lending your position to a disgraceful program—is an affront to the dignity of the Senate, to your family, to your church and to your constituency. I trust that your acting the clown insured the support of the addicts of the program who undoubtedly enjoyed its indecencies. I trust, too, that they are in the minority."

Senator's Reply

Senator Buckley wrote the following reply to the Buffalo constituent:

"I have forwarded your letter to my brother the columnist—William F. Buckley Jr.

"It was he, not I, who appeared on 'Laugh-In.'

"I can't help but be curious as to why you consented to watch a program of which you so strongly disapprove."

Then William F. Buckley Jr. clarified matters with the following letter to the man in Buffalo:

"It is typical of my brother to attempt to deceive his constituents. It was, of course, he, not I, who appeared on 'Laugh-In,' just as you suspected.

On the other hand, you need not worry about it. His greatest deception is as yet undiscovered. It was I, not he, who was elected to the Senate. So you see, you have nothing to worry about. You are represented in the Senate by a responsible, truthful man."

Now More at Ease

For someone who had never even met a United States Senator until he ran against Jacob K. Javits, now his Republican colleague from New York, in 1968, James L. Buckley appears to be more at ease now in the role of a Senator himself, although he still holds doors open for his aides.

(When he answered his first quorum call on the Senate floor, Mr. Buckley said "present" and stood up. When he looked around and saw no other Senator standing, he settled uneasily back into his seat. Now, carrying out the chore that falls to Buckley frequently presides over the Senate and handles the jargon and parliamentary procedures with apparent comfort.)

"I didn't expect to change the history of the United States in the first 100 days," Mr. Buckley said in an interview.

"I don't think I had any illusions of being able to influence more than one per cent of the vote," he said of the 10-member Senate. But in time, he added with a grin, "you may influence 2 per cent, or even 3 per cent."

In an age of speech writers and big staffs for politicians, Mr. Buckley usually ends up writing his own speeches on a legal pad or by dictating into a recorder. But he has delivered only a few of them on the Senate floor. As a freshman, he said, "I don't think you can come here and make noise and not make a fool of yourself."

'Symbolic' Actions

He has been surprised, he said, to discover that so many things happen in the Senate "for symbolic reasons" rather than practical

reasons, such as the practice of Senators offering amendments that they know have absolutely no chance of passing.

Another problem has been how to ration his time to do his Senate homework, meet the people who demand to see him and to see the people he wants to see, attend the ceremonies and dull dinners that a Senator must attend and still have time for himself.

Mr. Buckley, whose campaign was, "Isn't it time we had a Senator," told an audience the other night that his six children were beginning to ask: "Isn't it time we had a father?"

Senator Buckley has introduced at least two major pieces of legislation on his own—one a "revenue-shifting measure that would be an alternative to President Nixon's plan to share \$5-billion in Federal tax revenues with the states, the other a proposal to cut off economic aid to foreign governments that fail to act against the illegal drug traffic.

But because of his limitations on staff and facilities,

Mr. Buckley said, he had to "farm out" work to outside friends and advisers, whom he declined to identify, on two other legislative proposals he is considering.

One would seek to aid business enterprises established by members of minority groups. The other would seek to make available what the Senator called "far-out research" on such things as potential new sources of generating power for public utilities.

He's turned out to be a pleasant surprise," one rather liberal Republican Senator said of Mr. Buckley recently. "He's smart and conscientious. But I think he's going to surprise some of his conservative supporters, because he's going to realize he can't carry out the rhetoric that sounds so good in the draw-rooms of Sharon," the Buckley homestead in Connecticut.

Mr. Buckley's relationship with Senator Javits is by all accounts said to be proper but not especially close.

He said that he had found the Nixon Administration, which aided his election campaign against former

Senator Charles E. Goodell, to be cooperative, although "I haven't made any extravagant demands."

As for his relations with the Conservative party, Mr. Buckley said that he was a close friend of J. Daniel Ma-

honey, the party's state chairman, but added: "I've never been part of any political organization."

In any case, Mr. Buckley noted, a Senator really doesn't have much patronage at his disposal.