

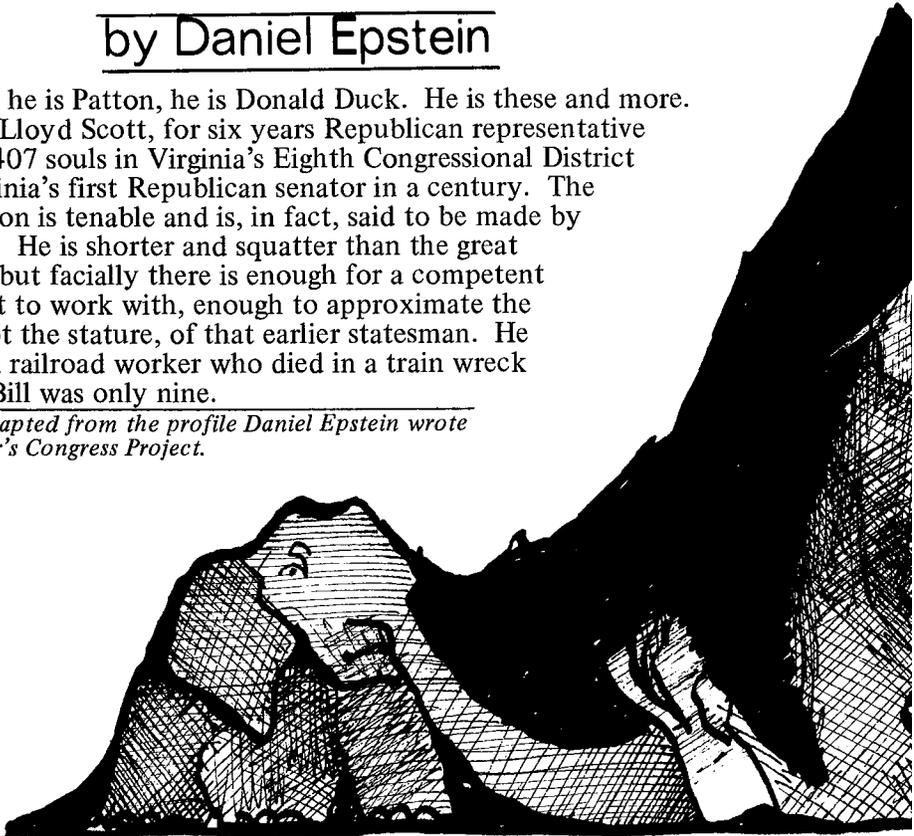
DEMOCRACY IN ACTION:

One Who Won

by Daniel Epstein

He is Lincoln, he is Patton, he is Donald Duck. He is these and more. He is William Lloyd Scott, for six years Republican representative of some 594,407 souls in Virginia's Eighth Congressional District and now Virginia's first Republican senator in a century. The first comparison is tenable and is, in fact, said to be made by Scott himself. He is shorter and squatter than the great emancipator, but facially there is enough for a competent make-up artist to work with, enough to approximate the features, if not the stature, of that earlier statesman. He is the son of a railroad worker who died in a train wreck when young Bill was only nine.

This article is adapted from the profile Daniel Epstein wrote for Ralph Nader's Congress Project.





He grew up in the Tidewater region of Virginia and came to Washington, D.C., at age 19 to start his government career as either a 60-cents-an-hour laborer at the Government Printing Office or (reports differ) as a messenger with the Post Office Department. Today, at 57, completing his third term in the House of Representatives, he says proudly, "It's an honor for a poor boy to be in Congress."

But if Bill Scott is Lincoln to himself, he is Patton to his hard-worked office staff. Here, in this smaller arena, if not in the great halls of Congress itself, the second image recurs: interviews with Representative Scott's aides portray the member of Congress as a General George Patton in civvies who is irritated with laziness or with anyone who reads a newspaper in his office. In fact, the bulk of Scott's reputation seems to consist of grotesque tales of harsh temper, ingratitude, niggardliness, quixotic disciplinarianism, and summary mistreatment—mostly directed at those in his Capitol Hill employ, but also at times extending to visitors in his office. This facet of his reputation nettles Bill Scott. He has been, perhaps unduly, put into the position of the man who is routinely asked: Have you stopped beating your wife? The glare of politics and mass media seems to allow for only a yes or no answer, and Scott has worked hard to extend his options for reply.

As to the comparison with Disney's immortally foolish character, Donald Duck, it is oblique but apt; it is adduced to explain how Bill Scott got into Congress in the first place. In 1966 Virginia witnessed the end of a political era. The Byrd machine, which had kept crusty Old Judge Smith in Congress for 36 years, got caught idling and failed to get Smith elected in the primary; he was bumped off the ticket by George Rawlings, a liberal. The Byrd-Smith Democrats looked with contempt on Rawlings. As political reporter Jack Limpert recalled two years ago in *The Washingtonian*, "The Byrd machine

was so mad it would have backed Donald Duck against Rawlings." In fact, they backed Scott, if only by default, and gave Scott, after years in the civil service, the first elective office he ever held.

He won in 1966. He won in 1968. He won in 1970.

And now, in 1972, he has won a seat in the Senate after a surprise victory over Democratic Senator William Spong.

Who and what is Bill Scott? And why is he? The record is extensive by now, if uniformly thin. He has put in some 30-plus years of government service and is very much his own man. He is a canny civil servant, careful about his government career, a shrewd and clever captain of his own fate, who at this point is ready to steer into his final haven—further public service in the U. S. Senate. He is a paradigm of his ilk, and as such, his story is worthy of some study.

Just a Farm Boy at Heart

Country Bill Scott lives with his wife Inez on a four-acre country place outside of Washington where he keeps physically active pattering around the house and tending the fruit trees that dot his land.

Gazing out over his hand-tended acres, the veteran pragmatically sums up his congressional philosophy in one of his rare on-the-record utterances, and although the sentiment is terse and almost trite, it perhaps holds the secret of Scott's cautious and careful success: "If the people will tell me how they feel," he says, "I'll do a better job of representing them."

To find out how the people feel, Scott works hard. "He sends out newsletters and questionnaires, answers his mail, offers free booklets on home heating and veterans' benefits, takes groups of children on tours of the Capitol, and pushes his Buick along country roads to chicken dinner after chicken dinner," Jack Limpert wrote. "For many years Scott taught an adult Bible class at the Fairfax

Methodist Church, and he still delivers guest sermons at churches in his district. He is a Lion and a Shriner. Although his World War II service was limited to computing payrolls from April through October, 1945, he loves talking to American Legion groups, and he is a flag-waving conservative in the best Southern tradition." In addition to these public-performance activities, Country Bill (the sobriquet aids in distinguishing him from Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania) has been active in PTA groups and has been president of both elementary and high school area PTAs. He is on the rostrum, in the pulpit, in the chair so often that it would seem that he views congressional office, and the road thereto, as primarily an exercise in the performing arts.

The Representative's time is not all spent before the public gaze. At his office in 1217 Longworth House Office Building, Bill Scott puts in a hard-driving working day. There, nattily attired in conservative shirts, careful suits, and polished shoes, Scott keeps a tight discipline and holds himself up as a model of industry and frugality for his employees to follow. Here, he insists upon the same spartan code he practiced during the brief period he was off the government payroll. (He was dropped from his job as special assistant to the Solicitor of the Interior Department in July, 1960, less than a year after receiving the political appointment—and this, after 21 safe, tenure-protected years in the Justice Department.) He opened up a private law practice and dug in with that determination to succeed which had marked his earlier civil service career. Nothing was too small, no expense too trivial, to escape his passion for frugality. In his law office, "his secretary wanted to take money from petty cash to buy paper clips," Limpert reported. "Scott said no, that he had a shopping bag of paper clips he had saved from his government service. The girl dutifully used them but many were rusted and they marked up letters and legal docu-

ments. When she complained, Scott said he would wash them, which he did, spreading them out on towels on the top of his desk to dry."

Waste Not, Want Not

But before the shopping bag of ex-governmental paper clips could be so fully recycled, the flesh-pressing, community-serving, party-working activities which Country Bill had so sedulously practiced for so many years abruptly paid off in the hesitation and demise of the Byrd machine. Scott suspended his law practice and was again upon the government payroll. "I want to be a full-time congressman," he told a reporter. "Life is too short to hold two busy jobs at one time. Besides that," he candidly notes, "my congressional salary of \$30,000 a year—not including allowances—is adequate to live on." Ensclosed in his plush congressional suite, his frugality-almost-to-a-fault did not abate. One employee relates that he became angry with her for photocopying excerpts from the Congressional *Record* instead of procuring free extra copies: "If a member of Congress doesn't use his stationery fund all up, he gets to pocket it," Scott reportedly admonished.

The stories of Pattonesque treatment of his staff are common Capitol gossip, as are statistics tallying the swift turnover in Scott's staff. (Of the 56 people Scott hired between 1967 and 1971, only 12 stayed with him to the end of 1971.) A possible explanation comes from a former press secretary summarily fired for "disloyalty":

"He's a strange guy—at first charming—gives you assurances of his deep personal interest in your good job. He talks for half an hour to say one thing—or else bursts out of his office, comes out yelling. He talks backwards—conclusions first, then problem: 'I'm mad, you're not loyal.'"

Further marring the good record Scott tries to present are stories of his forcing staff employees to wait on tables at fund rallies, ordering that

blacks not receive his newsletter and similar mailings, and bodily ejecting proponents of gun-control legislation from his office.

On the other hand, Scott has to his credit such achievements as the Ft. Belvoir Post Office toilet facility project, where he was instrumental in having separate commodes put in to replace the old, single one which had served both sexes. A woman worker at the site is quoted as asserting that the Representative restored her "personal dignity."

The Ft. Belvoir toilet facility is, indeed, the very type of down-home grandstanding which any representative must do if he hopes for reelection. It is what technicians in the lore of law term "case work"—that is, the taking care of the problem cases which constituents bring to their legislators. And it is in just this area of serving as backyard ombudsman that Country Bill Scott functions more than adequately. The voters like what he does and they like the way he does it, having given him majorities as high as two-to-one in his congressional races. After lagging in the opinion polls, Scott beat Spong with some 55 per cent of the vote.

Whether the people of the whole state will be quite so pleased is hard to tell. Scott beat Spong not by discussing his own record, but by broadcasting endorsements from Spiro Agnew and speaking of a "McGovern-Spong" axis. The trail Scott has left behind him during six years in Congress makes one wonder whether Virginians knew what they were getting. It's not just that Scott has taken a doctrinaire right-wing position, voting against nearly anything that comes up (and earning, along the way, a 94-percent rating from the conservative Americans for Congressional Action and a three-percent rating from the Americans for Democratic Action), but that in doing so, he has even resisted the temptation to vote for projects that would benefit his state:

Business—Scott's district (not to

mention his state) is largely rural, but the few business subsidies he has supported have been for big-city or out-of-state industries. Scott voted against creation of a rural telephone bank (to make loans for rural phone service) but voted for special subsidies to Lockheed (a \$250-million bail-out), the major airlines (for SST losses), and the merchant marine (\$500 million for construction subsidies).

People—Scott didn't represent coal miners as a congressman, but he will as a senator. They may not be cheered to learn that he voted to cut Social Security payments for miners who get black-lung benefits, and that he voted against the Black Lung Benefits Act in the first place. In 1970, Scott was one of only 12 congressmen who voted against the Coal Mine Safety Act.

The Environment—The congested stretch between Scott's home and the Capitol is one of the best arguments for mass transit, but Scott has voted several times to kill funds for a subway system for the metropolitan Washington area. The day after he beat Spong, one of Scott's two promises to Virginians was to push for completion of Interstate Route 66, a highway that would cut through residential and rural areas of northern Virginia. (The other promise was to trim welfare programs.) On national environmental issues, Scott has won a 13-percent rating from the League of Conservation Voters by voting against most anti-pollution measures. He was, for example, one of only seven congressmen opposing a "national scenic rivers" program.

Environmental issues were important in Scott's 1970 campaign, when his opponent, Darrel Stearns, took a stand against the Salem Church Dam project. The Interior Department and conservation groups also came out against the plan, which would have dammed two wild Virginia rivers, the Rappahannock and the Rapidan. Scott supported it, though, noting that it had been under study since 1933 and that he "didn't want any more studies."

It is informative to review the mechanisms by which Scott (or any other representative) takes his case to the electorate and comes home with the bacon. Somebody wins and somebody loses, and Country Bill Scott has been good at winning. How does he do it?

Bringing Home the Bacon

Scott's 1970 campaign against Darrel Stearns—one of charges and countercharges—is a good example. Stearns took the offensive in challenging Scott to debate, and said, "If he chickens out on this series of debates as he retreated ignominiously from debates in other campaigns, I promise that my campaign will be merciless in exposing the totality of his inept, insulting performance as an elected representative of American citizens."

In an interview with the *Fredricksburg Free-Lance Star* on October 14, 1970, Scott said: "I don't reply to any charge that's made by my opponent. I've lived in the same house for 23 years in Fairfax County, I've been in touch with people throughout the district, they know me—my precinct, you know, I carried it by better than 80 per cent—so I'm not particularly concerned about smear tactics at all."

Stearns continued to challenge Scott to debates, but Scott never accepted. In one instance, Stearns asked Scott to debate at the Navy Elementary School in Fairfax County on October 28 at 8 p.m. and circulated fliers advertising the event. A Scott spokesman told the *Free-Lance Star* that "There's no chance he [Scott] will be at the Navy Elementary School. If Mr. Stearns wants to go there then that's fine by us."

In a newspaper article, Stearns detailed his opinion of Scott as a representative:

Scott has turned in a personal performance of congressional ugliness and rudeness that I find unparalleled in any congressman. He has bodily thrown constituents out of his office who have come to see him on matters

of importance; he has insulted newsmen from Eighth District newspapers and thrown them out of news conferences when they asked questions he didn't want to answer; he has been so ungenerous and petty as to refuse to have his picture taken with the children of servicemen because their parents couldn't vote for him. His employees know his true colors and have left his employ in numbers unmatched by any congressman past or present. . . . I find it revealing that his strident racial bigotry is so extreme that it embarrasses even his friends.

Scott did not reply to charges made by Stearns, nor did he agree to

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debate with him. Scott only reacted after Stearns charged that Scott was unpopular with President Nixon, Governor Linwood Holton, and his congressional colleagues. Scott's response was, "a person who bases his entire campaign on a series of falsehoods is not competent to hold any office of public trust and is certainly unfit to sit in the Congress of the United States." Stearns' charges that Scott was unpopular are hard to prove; the other charges, however, are not.

The question of who bankrolls Bill Scott is a fascinating one but is hard to answer. Country Bill's own attitude seems to be, "the less said, the better." He refuses to divulge financial sources in any open way and apparently feels he has more to gain by mystery than disclosure.

The Bankroll

Scott received substantial support from the National Republican Campaign Committee (NRCC) in 1968—on four separate occasions it contributed a total of \$4,000 to his campaign. The National Association of Manufacturers' political front, the Business-Industry Political Action Committee, contributed \$2,000 on September 12, 1968. Other contributions were not disclosed because of a loophole in the Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1925 which requires members to report only contributions of which they have personal knowledge.

In his report to the Clerk of the House, Scott noted that the total funds received by the "Committee to Reelect Scott" were \$43,442.89. He also reported that the committee had spent a total of \$35,908 for his 1970 campaign. Thus, there was a sizeable amount—\$7,535—left over which Scott didn't spend on his campaign but received as campaign contributions. It is unclear what happened to that money.

In fairness to Scott, it should be said that this reluctance to give out information is consistent with his

whole record and character and may have its basis in nothing more than a quirk or personal idiosyncrasy—on a par with his hordes of rusty paper clips, his interoffice penury, his inability to say thank you, his reluctance to be interviewed or quoted or to go on record with any sort of meaningful statement. He retains all he has acquired and cannot easily or graciously part with any of his acquisitions, be they money, influence, information, paper clips, or campaign-funding data.

Reaching for the Senate

After the 1972 redistricting, Scott's own residence was put into the 10th District by the Virginia General Assembly. To run for representative from his old Eighth District, Country Bill would have had to move. His dilemma was clearly defined: stay put, stick with the representative role, and pit himself against Joel T. Broyhill for the 10th District seat—which Broyhill has held almost as a fief for 20 years—or move off his four stately acres to a new site in the shrunken Eighth District. Typically, he played the staying game. Scott's decision to run for the Senate against Spong was made early enough to insure nomination—and late enough to salvage his 30-year service pension, if he met defeat. He announced his candidacy in November, 1971, with a 750-mile flying trip around the state, saying he expected "no material opposition" for the Republican nomination.

If Scott had lost his campaign for the Senate he would have retired on a \$28,500 pension. He could then have chosen either to get out that old bag of rusty paper clips and go into law practice with his two sons, or sit contentedly on his four acres in Fairfax, gaze out over his manicured trees, and sip the sweet wine of reminiscence, secure in his conviction of a life well spent, of a long and careful career as a canny, pragmatic politician. But Scott didn't lose; now he goes on to the Senate. ■

MEMO of the Month

DATE: September 27, 1972

TO : Professional Staff, OPA

FROM : Jack L. Billings
Acting Assistant Commissioner for Public Affairs

SUBJECT: Illuminating Affirmatively

Under the Operational Planning System, the Office of Public Affairs has one "objective" which is to be tracked by the Deputy Commissioner for External Relations. The title of the objective is "Affirmative Illumination of Success of Education." With critics continually emphasizing what's wrong with education, the Commissioner wants to counter-balance that by highlighting what's right with education.

In order for this office to provide a continuing report on the achievement of this objective, it will be necessary for us to receive quarterly reports of progress from all units of OPA. The first quarter of this fiscal year will end on September 30. By October 10, we will need a report from each Division and independent unit of accomplishments which can be included under the stated objective.

Although this will necessarily be a quantitative report, the format will be narrative. In other words, we do not want a table showing the number of press releases and actualities produced during the quarter (in the case of the news division), but rather a paragraph about press releases and actualities--or one on each--explaining how these helped to achieve the objective as well as how many were produced and what the distribution was.

The key to this exercise is the name of the objective. We are to report on those things we did that helped to shed light in a favorable way on educational success. One could, of course, argue that this is, in fact, the entire name of the game for OPA. That would be an evasion of the point. For example, press releases are prepared and distributed about the appointment of new employees of certain ranks and grades. Such items clearly have nothing to do with illuminating the success of education. There are many other activities which also have no impact, except by the most devious route, on this topic.

We should end up with an overall narrative report (one at the end of each quarter) which will clearly tell the Deputy Commissioner what OPA has been doing to help achieve this goal.