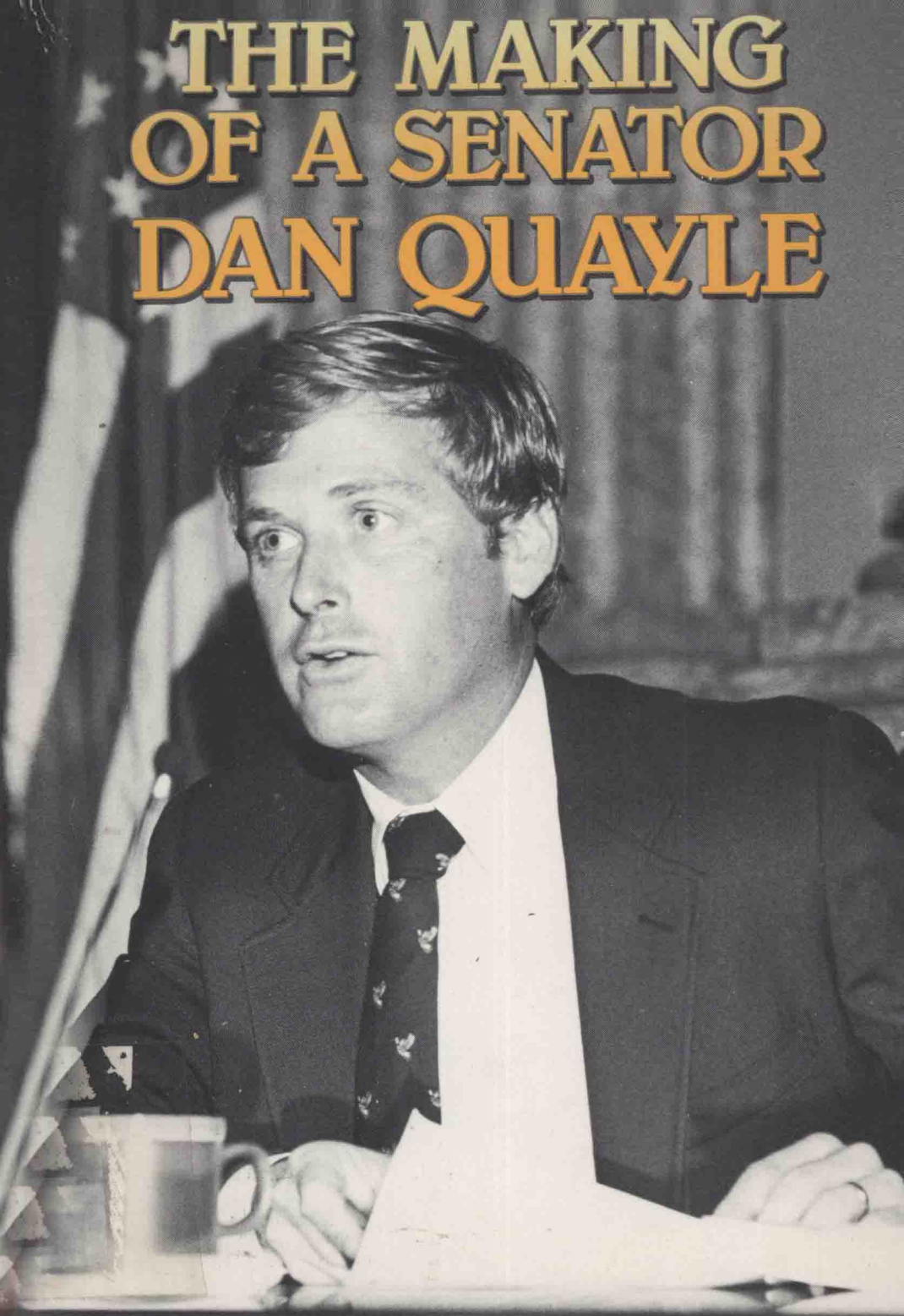
THE MAKING OF A SENATOR DAN QUAYLE



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DAN QUAYLE

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Preface

When this book was written, in 1987, Dan Quayle was a United States senator, little known beyond his home state of Indiana. As the book goes to press, in 1988, Dan Quayle is about to become the vice president of the United States. During the recent presidential campaign, he received as much attention as any vice presidential candidate in this century. And yet, for all of that publicity, he remains, still, "a United States senator, little known beyond his home state of Indiana." Little known, that is, *as a senator.* The media avalanche that landed on him between August and November 1988 covered every available inch of his precongressional career—but not his career in the Senate. In breadth and depth, in intensity and impact, far more attention fell on Dan Quayle's private life than on his public life. This pattern was, perhaps, the media's own contribution to what has been widely called a disappointing and unedifying campaign. In any event, lasting assessments of our public political figures require, in the end, a concentration on their public political careers. In the case of the new vice president, what follows may help us to begin.

This little book is a segment of a much larger research project on the United States Senate. In May 1978 I began the project by observing, at first hand, a campaign for the Democratic Senate nomination in New Jersey. Between 1978 and 1986 I travelled in the Senate campaigns of seventeen individuals—some incumbents (nine), some not (eight); some Democrats (eleven), some Republicans (six); some winners (eleven), some losers (six). My intention was to approach the Senate by way of its members, and to approach its members by way of their election campaigns. For those who won, my intention was to watch over their subsequent political performance, and to conclude by observing their reelection efforts six years later. The plan worked for the nine successful

candidates—five elected in 1978 and four elected in 1980. For each of these senators, I hoped to present a six-year slice of a political career. And through the variety of those careers, I hoped to present an enriched picture of the Senate itself.

One of the nine was Dan Quayle. I went to Indiana in September 1980 to travel with him as he first campaigned for the Senate. And I returned to accompany him in his home state three times—in 1982, 1985, and 1986. I spent the academic year 1981-1982 in Washington observing his senatorial activity—among that of others. The most interesting and important of Quayle's activities that year was his work on job training legislation. My observations eventually focused on that activity. Quayle came to represent, in institutional terms, a subcommittee chairman at work. But my larger focus was on his six-year term and on the relation of his job training activities to his political career during that period.

My research ended with his reelection in November 1986; my case study of Quayle was completed in the summer of 1987. When he was chosen as the Republican nominee for vice president one year later, a finished 253-page manuscript lay in my desk drawer. Completed case studies for two other senators rested beside it. They were to have remained there until the other sections of the book were finished. In the face of an explosion of interest in Dan Quayle, I decided to publish the section on the senator from Indiana. It remains, as it was intended, a book primarily for students of political science. With the exception of routine copy editing, it appears here as it was written in 1986-1987. Except for an epilogue, nothing has been altered or added. In sum, the publication of the manuscript has been affected by the nomination of Dan Quayle, but the descriptions and the judgments have not. The timing has been changed, but not the text.

A guiding question in my senatorial research has been this: what is the relationship between what senators do in their home states and what they do in Washington? Or, what is the relationship between *campaigning*, which is done mostly at home, and *governing*, which is done mostly in Washington? I have watched senators engage in both these activities, in both settings, over one complete electoral cycle. My notion is that an intensive period of campaigning is followed by an intensive period of governing, which is followed, in turn, by another intensive period of campaigning. I have come to think of this six-year cycle—*campaigning-to-governing-to-campaigning*—as the "master sequence" of every senator's political life. And I have sought answers to my original question by tracing the activities of some senators along this path. Dan Quayle is one of them.

The book applies the design of the larger project to describe a segment of one senator's career as he moves across one electoral cycle,

from 1980 to 1986—from campaigning to governing to campaigning again. Readers can also discern, in this case study, certain activities that provide intermediate linkages and contexts within the master sequence. For example, special attention is paid to the relevance of an individual's *interpretation of his election* in linking campaigning to governing near the front end of the sequence, and to the relevance of an individual's *explanation of his legislative activity* in linking governing to campaigning at the back end of the sequence. Within the governing phase, special attention is paid to the newcomer's *early adjustment* to the Senate and to the *succession of decision-making contexts* within which legislative decision making takes place. Throughout the book, as in the larger research project, special emphasis is placed on the effects—both political and personal—of changing contexts and developmental sequences. The notion of "seasons" in the chapter headings is meant to suggest the rhythms and the regularities of political careers.

My vantage point has been the view "over the shoulder" of Senator Quayle and his staff. My perspective has been their perspective. I have not tried to watch or talk to other relevant actors in the events described herein—although I have come across some of them in the normal course of my research. And I have relied, at several points, on the accounts and judgments of interested political reporters—the media scorekeepers.

My personal debts, therefore, are obvious. First, to Dan Quayle, without whose cooperation there would have been no study. I have often argued that from a scholarly standpoint there are only two kinds of politicians—good interviews and bad interviews. Dan Quayle was "a good interview"—accessible and forthcoming, informative and interested.

Next, I thank the members of his staff, whom I have described collectively as "the Quayle enterprise." I am especially indebted to Robert Guttman, the key staff person in the job training story, whose knowledge and friendship were crucial to my education. Among those who smoothed my path and helped with my research, I thank, first of all, Cynthia Ferneau, and also Tom Duesterberg, Myrna Dugan, Rich Galen, Peter Lincoln, Barbara McLennan, Les Novitsky, Lester Rosen, Larry Smith, Jim Wolfe. In Indiana my chief benefactors were Ron Breymier, Frank Gulledge, Mary Moses, Ralph Van Natta, Greg Zoeller.

For preparing the manuscript, from interview notes to finished copy, my thanks go to Janice Brown. For checking it, I thank my wife, Nancy. For promoting, editing, and handling the production, my debt is to Joanne Daniels, John Moore, and Kerry Kern.

Finally I thank the Russell Sage Foundation, under whose auspices, and with whose financial support, the larger research project was undertaken.

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Seasons of Campaigning and Adjustment

THE SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN: AMBITION AND OPPORTUNITY

If there is any uncontested generalization about the operation of the United States Senate, it is that the policy-making work of the body is done in its committees. This generalization can be qualified or embroidered, but the committee-based division of labor stands as one of the few defining characteristics of the institution. If there is an uncontested corollary, it is that the Senate is a distinctively nonhierarchical, decentralized, policy-making organization. Each committee is given a policy jurisdiction and, within that prescribed domain, the committee acts for the Senate, as the dominant agenda setter and decision maker. If there is a second uncontested corollary, it is that the largest share of each committee's policy-making work is done in its subcommittees. In 1982 the Senate's 20 committees were subdivided into 102 subcommittees. So numerous were they that every member of the majority party chaired at least one committee or subcommittee. And, for each of those senators, the leadership of his or her subcommittee consumed—or, better perhaps, could consume—a substantial part of his or her legislative life. Senate subcommittees provide a major conjunction of legislative policy making and senatorial careers. The story of this book is the story of one such conjunction.

It is a conjunction that produced the most important new piece of social legislation in the Ninety-seventh Congress and gave definition to the career of an otherwise unknown U.S. senator. The committee was the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources—with broad jurisdiction in matters of health, education, labor, and public welfare. The subcommittee involved was its Subcommittee on Employment and

Productivity. The policy-making activity was the production of the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 (JTPA). The senator was Dan Quayle, a Republican from Indiana.

The conjunction of the senator and the subject matter was purely accidental. Nothing in Quayle's previous experience would have led anyone to expect him to be especially interested in—much less influential in—this area of public policy. No person in the network of job training policy makers could have foreseen the Republican takeover of the Senate in 1980—much less that their interests would be put in the care of an unknown freshman senator. On the subject-matter side, there was the fortuitous opening of what John Kingdon has called "a policy window," a special set of circumstances that thrust job training onto the Senate agenda.[1] On the personal side, there was the ambition of a new young senator to make a mark for himself somehow in some part of the Senate's work. Once he had positioned himself on a committee and on a subcommittee, the subject of job training fell into his legislative lap.

So one large question becomes: given the circumstances under which he began, what did Senator Quayle make of his opportunity—first, in producing legislation and, second, in capitalizing on his legislative accomplishment? Since most of the capitalizing took place at home, the story gives us an uncommon perspective on the Washington/home relationship. It gives us an unusually clear look at the second link in the campaigning-governing-campaigning sequence. By watching the senator over a six-year cycle, we are in a position to assess the impact of his governing activity in Washington on his campaigning activity in Indiana. And this impact, "back home again in Indiana," is given special prominence in our six-year slice of Dan Quayle's career.

THE POLITICAL CAREER OF DAN QUAYLE: 1976-1980

When he was elected to the Senate, Dan Quayle was thirty-three years old. He had served two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he had been its second-youngest member. He had held no other public office nor tried for any. He had no legislative success to his credit. He was not well known in Washington or Indiana. He was not without ambition or philosophy, nor was he, obviously, without political talent. But he was insufficiently experienced and insufficiently accomplished to provide any clear idea of what kind of senator he might be. His public record did, however, contain essential clues.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

First, there were the circumstances of his two electoral successes. In 1976, at the age of twenty-nine and without a shred of electoral experience, he took on a congressional race almost no one believed he could win. He ran against a sixteen-year incumbent. And he won. Four years later, in 1980, he took on a Senate race very few people thought he could win. He ran against an eighteen-year incumbent, and he won. These actions revealed a degree of self-confidence that has shaped his political behavior throughout his career.

In 1976 Quayle seized an unexpected and uninviting opportunity to run for Congress. In the abstract, it was not an appealing prospect. Indeed, all the obvious, experienced candidates had declined to run, and it was late in the game when the party leadership turned to Quayle. "Ed Roush was a very popular congressman," Quayle recalled.

> He had beaten Ross Adair and been in for sixteen years. All the big guns in the district had tried to beat him and failed—two well-known state senators for example. Nobody was anxious to run against him. Ernie Williams was the editor of the *Fort Wayne Sentinel* and a good friend of mine. One day he said to [the Republican county chairman], "Instead of running someone from Fort Wayne every year and losing, why don't you give young Dan Quayle down in Huntington a chance?"

At that time, "young Dan Quayle" was a newspaperman-lawyer, who had worked for about a year as associate publisher of the family-owned *Huntington Herald-Press*. It was part of a chain of newspapers published by his grandfather, and it was run by his father. It was a job he had inherited; he had no track record as a newsman; and he had not practiced law.

Growing up in the publishing business had given him early exposure to politics and had nourished an interest. "Because of my family," he said, "the interest [in politics] has always been there. The publishing business and politics are compatible—the people you see, the functions you go to." While attending law school at night, he held several appointive jobs in state agencies—including one in the governor's office. It was there, he said, that he first became interested in electoral politics.

> In college . . . I was never involved in student government. I didn't run for student body president. But when I worked in the governor's office, I looked around and thought, "This is fun." That's when I first thought about going into politics. I thought about moving back to Huntington and running for state representative. I had my eye on an incumbent Democrat

> who had been in office for a while. But I never thought about running for Congress.

So, there had already been stirrings of political ambition when the Allen County Republican chairman asked him in March of 1976 to be the Republican candidate for Congress. "I told him," Quayle recalled,

> that I was thinking of running for state representative, but that I was not ready to run for Congress. I told him he should ask other more qualified people. He said, "I've asked them all and no one wants to run." I told him that I couldn't give him a decision, that I would think it over. But I told him that I wouldn't even consider it unless they guaranteed me that I'd have no primary opposition and unless they would raise money for me.

The chairman agreed.

Quayle's conditions indicated that behind his willingness to take the gamble, there lay some calculation. He believed he could win. But his optimism was not widely shared. The Republican National Committee "targeted" two other Republican challengers in Indiana to receive financial help—but not Dan Quayle.[2] He was thought to be "an underdog and least likely to win for the Republican party." [3] When he checked with his father about leaving the paper he got a similar message. "He told me to go ahead but that I couldn't win," said Quayle. "He said that he'd been trying to defeat Roush for fifteen years and it couldn't be done. I said, 'We'll see.' I was a twenty-nine-year-old kid that nobody took seriously."

It was not just the well-known advantages of incumbency that made Quayle's success seem so unlikely. It was also that Quayle, by conventional standards of political science, was not a "quality challenger." [4] He was without experience or recognition. A Fort Wayne political reporter said that

> Quayle came out of nowhere to run against Ed Roush. . . . No one knew who he was. No one knew what he had been doing. . . . I know he had never been in politics. I had been around politicians in Fort Wayne for years; and I had never heard of him.

When "the little-known Quayle" was announcing his candidacy, another reporter recalled, "the local press ran out of his Fort Wayne press conference to cover a breaking police story." [5] "He started the campaign as a nobody," said this reporter.[6]

Six years later, in Fort Wayne, during a discussion of Indiana politics with his closest advisers, the young senator said,

> You've characterized the others by what they did before they got into politics. [Gov. Otis] Bowen was a country doctor. [Sen.

> Richard] Lugar was a Rhodes Scholar. What are we going to say about me before I got into politics—that I was a newspaperman?

One of his friends said, "No, we'll call you Dan Quayle, student." Another chipped in, "How about Dan Quayle, father?" And amid general hilarity, another said, "After all, you were only twenty-nine; we'll just say you never did anything else." It was close to the truth. He was a candidate without credentials.

In 1976, and ever since, local scorekeepers have labelled Quayle's election "an upset," "an upset victory," "a stunning upset," "a huge upset victory," and "nothing short of remarkable." [7] Obviously, Quayle needed to run a good campaign and had to be a good campaigner to win. In the summer, Republican polls showed him trailing Roush by 27 percent to 61 percent, with 12 percent undecided.[8] On election day he won by 54 percent. We shall discuss his campaigns shortly. For now, we shall think of this first adventure as a triumph of self-confidence.

Much the same conclusion can be drawn from his Senate victory over Birch Bayh in 1980. Quayle entered that race, too, after the party's only preferred candidate, and the Democrats' only feared candidate—Gov. Otis Bowen—declined to run. Quayle began the race, again, as a decided "underdog," and as someone who—on the record—"is going to have to prove that he's a heavyweight." [9] One of the best-known Republican party consultants declined to bid on his campaign because he thought Quayle had no chance. As before, he enjoyed little recognition in his prospective constituency; he was "hardly known outside the Fourth District." [10] And in the summer before the election he was, once again, running well behind the incumbent—by sixteen points—in the polls.[11]

There were, however, differences between 1976 and 1980. His two terms in the House gave him a set of prima facie legitimizing credentials he had not had before. He had proven his campaigning abilities with a 2-1 reelection victory in 1978; and that victory put him into the senatorial spotlight.[12] Also, in 1980, Quayle was eager to move to the Senate and he did not have to be asked. Instead, he acted in ways that created his own opportunity.

"Right after my election in 1978," he recalled later,

> I went to see Governor Bowen to ask him if he would have any objections if I started talking to people on an "if-not-Bowen,-then-Quayle" basis. The governor told me I could go ahead. He said he hadn't made up his mind. But the way he said it led me to believe he was not going to run. . . . He was sixty-three. His wife was very ill. I never thought he would run. . . . So I started moving around the state. My assistant in the district could

> handle things there; so I went to a lot of Lincoln Day dinners in 1979, to Rotary clubs, and to Kiwanis. I talked about the Senate. People were shocked; they thought Bowen was going to run. And, anyway, what was this unknown congressman doing talking about a Senate race. Well, in early May [May 8] Bowen announced he was not going to run. I had $20,000 left over from my congressional campaign and we transferred it to a Senate Committee. We had a campaign going by May 14, 1979.

The governor felt that "I had not waited my turn," Quayle said. In his declination statement, the governor reportedly "listed over a dozen potential candidates." [13] But none of them materialized.

When asked during his announcement of his Senate candidacy, in Huntington, whether his task was not a daunting one, Quayle replied in terms of 1976.

> I can remember when we started out in 1976 ... the name recognition of Dan Quayle outside Huntington was about 1 percent and in some parts of the Fourth District it was zero. A lot of people warned me that I was running against a tough incumbent, and it was true. But we won.... In 1980 we're starting out again in Huntington. We have a long hill to climb, but I'm confident we can do it.[14]

Given the race he had undertaken against Roush and the race he was undertaking against Bayh, Dan Quayle fits David Rohde's definition of the risk taker who leaves the House for the Senate.[15] To his Fourth District constituents, he spoke of that risk.

> Certainly, giving up my congressional seat to run for the Senate is a risk. But it's a risk I'd like to take. If I thought it was improbable or impossible that I'd succeed, I wouldn't make the venture.[16]

Behind the acceptance of risk lay a good deal of confidence about his ability to win.

And behind his risk-acceptant behavior, once again, probably lay a good bit of calculation. He was not a compulsive gambler. "To someone from the outside," said a long-time political associate, "he may seem like a risk taker. But he doesn't do anything unless he thinks he can win. Other people may not think he can win; but he does. He's a calculating risk taker." During a 1986 conversation about his career, I asked the senator if he thought of himself as a risk taker. "No," he answered.

> It's more a matter of self-confidence. I have complete confidence that whatever I want to do, I can do. I am confident that things will turn out right for me. And they always have.... In

> my race against Roush and in my Senate race, I was the only person who believed that I could do it. I surprised everyone but myself.

Doubtless, each added success had made an added contribution to this attitude. Doubtless, too, he had led a favored—if not charmed—life. But the point to be made is this, that the little-known and little-accomplished young man who entered the Senate in 1981 was an especially successful and an especially self-confident politician. And therein lies an important clue to his behavior as a senator.

CONSERVATISM

Quayle's pre-1980 record disclosed another basic clue to his later behavior—his conservatism. Summarizing his 1976 race, a local scorekeeper wrote,

> In classic small town Midwestern Republican style, Congressman-elect Quayle . . . called for a limited government, an end to deficit spending and a stop to the Federal bureaucracy's "cancerous" growth.

Summarizing his first-term voting record, the local newspaper said that

> Quayle's approach to economics is almost a pure form of laissez faire—keep the government out and let the natural interplay of supply and demand set prices in the market place.[17]

Calling him "the established conservative," another reporter summarized his 1978 campaign,

> Quayle campaigned in 1976 on a "less is better" platform: less government, less spending, less taxation. He has seen little cause to change that approach for this campaign. . . . The majority of his constituents, he says, are most concerned over high taxes, excessive government spending and too much government interference in their day to day lives.[18]

The core of his conservatism was a deep antipathy to government bureaucracy.

When I asked him, later, about that antipathy, he described it as rooted in a business that is "deeply cynical about government." "You have to go way back to the way I was brought up," he said.

> You don't get these values overnight or from some book you read somewhere. You have to go back to my background in the newspaper business. People in the newspaper business hate the government. They distrust the government. It is the last unregulated business; it is almost immune from regulation. It is

> deeply ingrained in them that the government should keep hands off, that government cannot do any good, that it only brings trouble. That distrust is deeply ingrained in me.

His attack on governmental bureaucracy was the foundation stone of both the congressional campaigns and of the Senate campaign of 1980.

By all the standard scoring systems, his two-term voting record in the House reflected strong conservatism and an equally strong Republican party loyalty. In the years 1977-1980 his support scores on issues important to the conservative Americans for Constitutional Action were 96 percent, 81, 91, 90; and his agreement with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce stood at 88 percent, 76, 88, 73. On the other hand his support levels, over the four years, on issues important to the liberal Americans for Democratic Action stood at 15 percent, 15, 11, 0; his agreement ratings on AFL-CIO scores were 10 percent, 11, 16, 13. By these measures, Quayle's conservatism was unmistakable. So was his support for Republican party policies. On votes where a majority of House Republicans were opposed to a majority of House Democrats, Quayle voted against his party majority only 10 percent of the time in 1977 and 13 percent, 9 percent, and 8 percent in succeeding years. He can be described, in general, as an orthodox conservative Republican.

There is, however, an element of Dan Quayle's conservatism that is not captured by roll-call votes or aggregate numbers. From the beginning of his congressional service, he expressed some restlessness in the harness of fixed positions and an open mind in exploring new approaches to old problems. There was a willingness—almost an eagerness—to lean occasionally against the accepted position of conservatives. "He doesn't like to be taken for granted," said one of his House staffers. Quayle spoke of it as another derivative of his newspaper background. "In the newspaper business, one thing you try to avoid is being stereotyped," he said.

> And independence is the thing everybody strives for. Sometimes you have to go against community opinion. You can't be afraid to do that and still do your job. It's the same thing here. I don't mind going against the crowd when I think it is right.

Within his fundamental conservatism, there is contained an activism of thought and approach that can lead to pragmatic rather than ideological behavior. Since it is an attitude related more to means than to ends, we might think of it as an instrumental independence.

In the earliest part of his career, this independent stance was most noticeable in his relations with the well-organized "movement conservatives." Two months after his election to the House, he was given a featured role at the Conservative Political Action Conference sponsored by

Ronald Reagan's Conservative Political Union. The union and the other staunchly conservative groups participating in the conference had given strong support to Quayle's election campaign. They were touting him as "a bright new conservative light" and a future leader.[19] In advertisements for the conference placed in conservative publications, he was pictured with Reagan and thirteen other prominent national conservative leaders. He went eagerly to the meeting. But in talking about it he described himself as "a creative conservative" and a "creative or progressive conservative"; and he said he would take "independent" positions on "Reaganite" policy matters. He described himself as looking for "new approaches," "new leadership," and a "new image" for the party.[20] He seemed not to want to be put in pigeonholes or taken for granted.

A few months later he was arguing that Republicans needed to develop "positive progressive attitudes" to deal with people's problems. A local reporter wrote, "He said he never was aware of the kinds of difficulties people have until he became a member of Congress and learned from his constituent case load what some people have to deal with." [21] At the end of the year, he was at pains to point out that "I really don't associate myself with the far right of the party." He was describing himself as "somewhere between a moderate and a conservative," and as "a moderating influence on the far right groups." [22] This stance was not reflected in his votes. It was reflected rather in his approach, in a willingness to entertain the other side of the question and to discuss modifications. It was perhaps his newspaperman's sensitivity to civil liberties that produced this open-mindedness, this preference for independence of thought. "On the major issues—the Panama Canal, abortion and farming," wrote one scorekeeper at the end of his first year, "Quayle has walked the fence, leaning to the right, but not quite falling." [23] In a period when conservatism was gaining ideological intensity and organized expression, Dan Quayle's votes were correctly conservative, but he was much less of a true believer than the movement conservatives would have liked.[24]

Style

Much has been written about the "new breed" of politicians who came to the House of Representatives in the mid-1970s. They were young and they represented a new generation; they rode in on personal candidacies and they were not devoted to party; they were electorally self-sufficient and they applied themselves to servicing their constituents; they were comfortable with the media and they wanted open politics; they matured in an era of change and they wanted institutional