Donnald K. Anderson

Running the Democratic Cloakroom

Detailed explanation of the work of the Democratic Cloakroom staff during the 1970s and 1980s.
Interview recorded October 23, 2006

We monitored the floor, and kept track of what was going on, what the legislative schedule was, where we were in that schedule, the various amendments that had been offered, and how they were disposed of, to each bill as they were pending, various motions that might have been made relating to the consideration of that bill. We had a large bulletin board over my desk, where I mapped out the schedule for the week, and for the day, and posted announcements of interest to the Members, from the leadership or things concerning changes in the program. The Members and their staffs called all day long to track the progress on the floor. And of course, in the days particularly before television, or the electronic means that we have today of tracking floor operations, the cloakroom was probably the only information resource where Members, their staffs, and, for that matter, the public at large, could call to find out what was happening, what had happened, and what was likely to happen in the course of the day. Something that I did all day long was provide what the Members liked to call ±guesstimatesqas to when important things were going to happen. When would votes be likely to take place? When would the last vote occur? Members tried to plan their days, their schedules, around their principal responsibility, which was chamber activity