

Barbuto hopes to catch Fish

'The key is opposition'

By Jim Doughty

As Hamilton Fish, Jr.'s next race to represent the 21st Congressional District approaches, his challenger is busy preparing his guns. New to the Congressional race but by no means new to politics, Richard Barbuto of Radnor Avenue in Croton is the Democratic party's choice for Congress this fall.

"The key is opposition," Mr. Barbuto said

1965, has based his economic outlook on land value taxation. "That tax is going to revolutionize world politics," he said. In principle, what he proposes is to tax vacant land at the same rate as productive land and to make buildings exempt from taxation. "Building taxes are, in effect, 'fines' for the 'crime' of public improvement," he has stated.

"Right now, we're taxing the productive people. Why the heck should we tax away their productivity?" He said that if vacant land is taxed, it will be more expensive to hold it speculatively. "Why do we have Harlems? Speculative land values," he said. His land value taxation theory, he says, is inspired by the 19th-century economist Henry George and his work "Progress and Poverty". In fact, he has produced three plays on the writer's life since 1986, as well as a production of Ibsen's "Enemy of the People" here in Croton. He says that he sees "politics and election campaigns like theater, or a stage, for real life to be enacted and struggled with for resolutions to human aspirations."

Asked what he would like to be remembered for if he were to win the Congressional seat and occupy it for six terms, he said, "I would be happy to say that I accomplished in 12 years what my friends couldn't do in 100 years." Mr. Barbuto says he supports the movement to limit congressmen to six terms.

He has declined up until now to speak out on the mainstream issues of the day, such as abortion, crime, foreign policy or others, preferring to outline his views on economics and environmental preservation. "I'm looking for people to see me as a champion on the economic issues of the day. Other issues will come later."

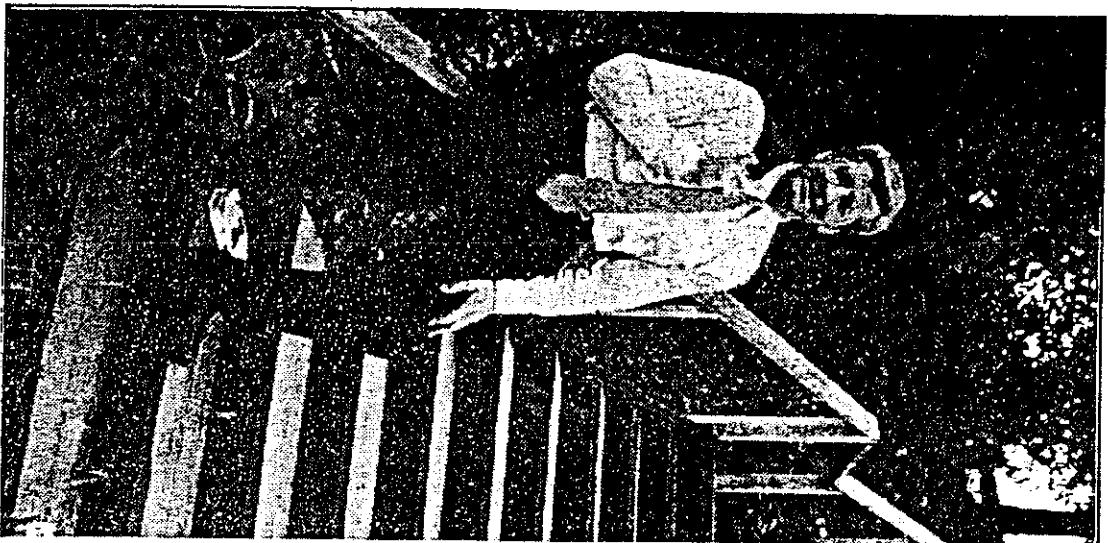
"By doing that, I can possibly attract contributors," he said. "All of these issues I've identified are the ones I've heard my neighbors talking about. These are bread-and-butter facts, and I want to say something new could be done."

Mr. Barbuto is serving as the first elected coordinator of the "Croton We Want" Fo-

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Barbuto gets Democrat line to challenge Fish —3

Photo-James Doughty



when asked if he thought he could defeat Mr. Fish. "You can't ask the people to replace him without a viable candidate." Mr. Barbuto, coordinator of the "Croton We Want" forum and a former one-term village trustee, has also run for Cortlandt town councilman, county legislator, state senate and most recently for village justice in a total of nine campaigns.

Mr. Barbuto, who has called Mr. Fish the "Rip Van Winkle of Congress," says that his opponent has not been attentive to major local issues. "While the alarms were ringing, he has slept through the big booms," he said, citing the crisis of environmental damage on Croton Point. "Fish slept through the alarms for the Croton Dump," he said, "and now it's a 25-million-dollar Superfund site."

He is quick to temper his criticism of Mr. Fish. "The guy's definitely working," he said. "He's done a lot of good bills, but when it comes to big-bang issues, he's not an alarm-ringer."

Mr. Barbuto, who studied economics and philosophy at Iona College before getting a law degree from St. John's in Brooklyn in

Fish...too early

By Jim Doughty

Efforts to reach Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr. for his comments on the upcoming race were unsuccessful. Fred Stokeld, Mr. Fish's press secretary, said, "We consider it too early to have made any campaign plans at this point. The question is whether the people of the 21st election district will re-elect someone with a proven record."

Mr. Stokeld said that the only campaign event scheduled is the Fish Family Circus, to be held at Sylvan Lake on September 16.

Mr. Fish's campaign manager, John Barry, said it was "a bit premature" to be campaigning. "I can assure you that there's been no great planning session," he said.

Barbuto

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rum, a post he says he relishes. "I consider myself the chief executive of the fourth branch of government in Croton," he said.

"My motive [in organizing the Forums] was literally to create a Jeffersonian fourth branch of government," he said. "I didn't want a town meeting format, because if you notice, a town meeting has a dais."

"I'm against simply government 'for' the people," he said. "I think it has to be 'for,' 'of' and 'by' the people." As an example of his views on government, he recalled the time during his tenure as village trustee when the stairway leading from Croton Point Avenue to the Croton-Harmon train station had to be repaired.

The initial proposal called for an all-steel, \$120,000-project including a ramp for the handicapped, he said. It was then scaled down to \$60,000. "I still said no," he said. "We kept on fighting."

A local citizen proposed to do it himself, Mr. Barbuto said. "I got a bid for about \$7,000," he said, "and finally the village did it with our own staff for about \$1000."

"We hire [Village Manager Richard] Herbeks and [Village Engineer Phil] Tullys and all these other people to do our job," he said. "Then we went to a citizen, followed his lead and we got a solution." Currently, the village board is considering replacing the steps again.

Mr. Barbuto, who has called himself an anarchist in the past, was asked what an anarchist is doing running for public office. He sought to clarify his position. "I'm an anarchist-syndicalist," he said, explaining that he thought the people should exercise power in "an association of anarchists."

"We don't want 5 percent telling us what to do," he said. "An anarchist says, 'we're the leaders'. We associate government with leadership. That's bull. Government are the implementers."

"Trusting one's neighbor is an anarchic act," he said. "You don't need rules and laws to keep your neighbor in place."

Mr. Barbuto, who has two victories to show for his nine election campaigns including the Croton Forums, is quick to justify his position as a perennial candidate.

"The campaigns have been an end in and of themselves," he said. "I've helped get nine Democrats in office in Croton and Cortlandt. That's part of my accomplishment. We were able to persuade people in an area that government was not producing."

He said that he has tried to get in touch with Mr. Fish but could not. "I called Ham Fish 30 days ago," he said on June 28. "I don't get it, and I hope he doesn't run the campaign that way."

"Whatever we do at the Federal level has to be responsive to people at the local level," he said. "Until we do the right thing locally, we can't afford a federal government. We have to serve families first."

"Again, on all these issues, has Fish spoken? I say no," he continued. "He might have made other contributions, but I've been working on this stuff for 20 years." Mr. Barbuto has made available a poem he wrote which he says expresses his views on reforming the economic system:

Justice and its Paradoxes
SLOW, must be the process,

By which

Injustice — that slow
miserably-felt
malaise that drains both spirit
and body —

Must be drained
From the political economy.

QUICK, will be the knowledge

Through us

Of Justice — its quick
wonderfully-known
abundance that
fills you, me
and many
When it fills
Up the human community.

BE its source
tragic

Or blameworthy,
Injustice is an evil
that requires
saints

To restrain revenge.



Not Forth
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