

FRED'S BEST PICK-UP LINES

Even before Fred Thompson assumed his first elective office, he was being besieged by a capital elite in search of clues that would explain the recently evident revolt of the masses. Ripon interviewed him as he was unpacking his boxes, and came away with the following insights:

ON THE SECRETS OF HIS ELECTORAL SUCCESS:

"It was the combination of a straightforward reform message by a fellow who was not a politician and the fact that it was not a negative campaign. When you tell people you're not going to be a politician, it helps your credibility if you don't act like one. We did not act like one, from the way we campaigned to the message we delivered."

ON WHAT CONGRESS CAN DO TO REGAIN PUBLIC ESTEEM:

"Apply laws to Congress that are applicable to the average person and small business. Restrain themselves in the way they spend money: a balanced budget amendment. Cut staff. Carry out some of the measures that were recommended in the past by the Joint Commission on the Organization of Congress, such as paring down committees and subcommittees. Discipline itself, cut itself back."

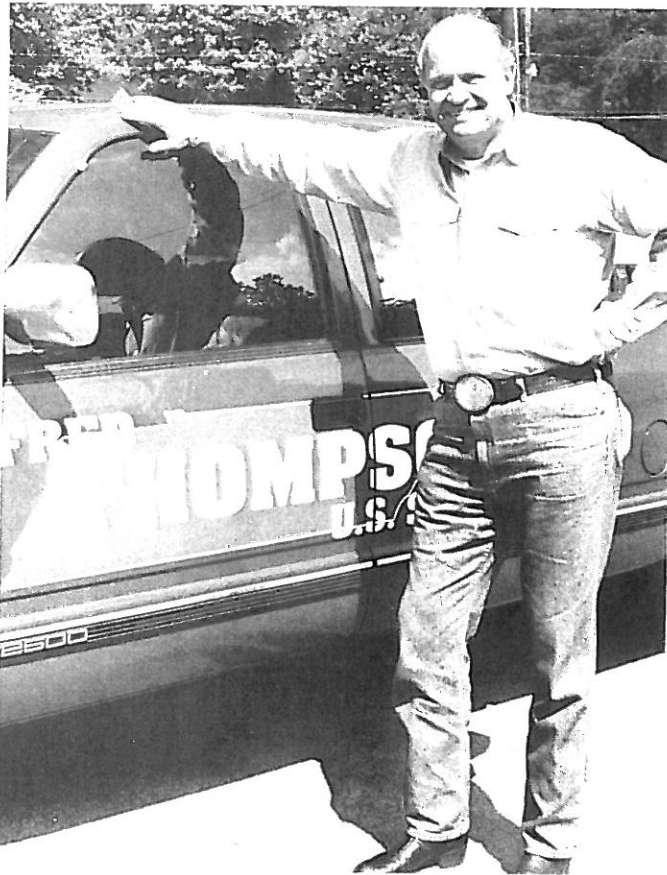
ON APPLYING HIS MESSAGE TO THE '96 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN:

"I wouldn't be surprised to see it happen. Frankly, I think there will be more than one presidential candidate taking out after Congress. That's why

we especially need to take this window of opportunity to make those changes. If we don't, we're going to have any smart Republican who can claim to be an outsider running against Congress. And although it's going to be our Congress now, that message will resonate even within the party, unless we get about the reforms that we promised. That will be additional pressure on us. I expect Lamar Alexander to continue in that vein and I don't think that he'll be alone."

ON READING THE MANDATE OF THE '94 ELECTIONS:

"There were a lot of people at these victory rallies on election night saying 'Oh, the Democrats don't know what happened to them.' It's much more important that WE know what happened to them, and know what hap-



Freshman Senator Fred Thompson

There's something people like about a pickup man

pened to us. The American people are ready to give our substantive proposals a try in terms of welfare and handling the crime issue—just to use a couple of examples. But I really think the driving force behind what happened was the fact that we were there; we were a tool the people used to express their dissatisfaction. It has to do with the reform issues; it has to do with changing the way the federal government does business, the way Washington operates—particularly in regard to special interests. If Republicans think we were given an overwhelming mandate—that people suddenly woke up and started loving Republicans and all the details of our programs—we're making a terrible mistake. But if we can take the lead on reforming ourselves, thereby putting us in a position to move outward, then we're going to have much more success enacting these substantive programs."

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF REFORM AS AN ISSUE:

"It could wind up being the only defining area. Many tend to speculate—and I tend to agree—that Clinton will move rightward. On welfare, for example: if the question becomes: "after two years [on the dole], then what?"—that's a pretty narrow debate. We could wind up with a pretty minor philosophical difference, if he decides to go back to his original campaign pledges. And if Clinton is additionally smart, he'll take it to us on some of the reform measures—starting with the executive, making it apply to the executive branch and challenging Congress to do the same. Another good reason for us to stay in the forefront of reform.