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EDITORIAL

The Road to Somewhere

Representative Don Young is a man of few words. He offered an obscene gesture the other day in response to a reporter curious about his travels as king of the Congressional pork dispensers. Far from his home district in Alaska, Mr. Young, the ranking Republican for transportation spending, was feted by Florida land developers who chipped in \$40,000 for his re-election drive last year. Fast as quo follows quid, Mr. Young tailored a choice piece of Florida pork — \$10 million in taxpayer money for a cross-wetlands connection to the federal interstate. The connector would boost the value of thousands of acres that Mr. Young's contributors want to develop over the objections of environmentalists.

Last year's transportation bill was stuffed with 6,300 budget-busting earmarks — far too many of them chunks of blatant pork like the road connector. What made this one special was that the local congressman said he never sought the money. Local officials voted twice against the connector.


Mr. Young ran into flak last year for customizing a costly pork project for the Alaska outback that was dubbed the Bridge to Nowhere. At least that was his turf. In Florida, he eliminated the middleman, the elected congressman.

The Democrats took the House majority on promises to end abusive earmarking, but the Republicans say the new majority is up to the old tricks. We hold the new appropriations chairman, David Obey of Wisconsin, to his promise for reform as he wades through 30,000 earmark requests. "I don't give a damn if people criticize me or not," Mr.

Obey snapped. He vowed that staff workers would investigate and publicly highlight each earmark to assure “some idiot” in the House isn’t profiteering. Now there’s a higher road for Congress.

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