

LEADING DEMOCRATS PRAISE DOLE LEADERSHIP ON DEFICIT REDUCTION; DOLE'S 1988 PRESIDENTIAL EFFORT ADMIRER

DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE PAUL TSONGAS

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Is there anybody in this country that does not believe that if Bob Dole had been President, in 1988, that this country would have a realistic program to deal with the deficit?

Bob Dole is a tough, principled, irascible American who was prepared to do what was necessary to deal with the deficit. George Bush wasn't. Who got elected? George Bush. ...

The fact is, if the deficit and the lack of growth in the American economy is the major issue, what you needed was a President who had the principles and the willingness to follow through with those principles to deal with the problem.

Bob Dole is that kind of person. George Bush was not. Bob Dole lost to George Bush.

So in essence what the system is saying, show no discipline, show no capacity to have principles that you would die for, and you get elected.

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When George Bush defeated Bob Dole, the country lost something. ... Bob Dole...[has] courage. The American people had a choice in the Republican Party. George Bush, he'll tell you anything. There's no core set of principles. And Bob Dole would have made the very tough decisions to turn this country around.

And they turned to George Bush. And I think that was a travesty. America's been hurt by it, we've all been hurt by it. The question is, is this going to continue? How do the Bob Doles, again, just using Republican examples, how do the Bob Doles and the Warren Rudmans and the Howard Bakers succeed in an environment where pandering works?

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EXCERPTS FROM A WASHINGTON POST OP-ED BY SENATOR LLOYD BENTSEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE APRIL 5, 1992

If Bob Dole had been elected President in 1988, dealing with the federal deficit would have been his top priority, and there's little doubt in my mind it would be under control by now.

The Post rightly honors Dole as one of a small group of senators who have courageously fought to eliminate the deficit over the years. And he really paid a political price for his courage in the New Hampshire Republican primary of 1988.

Dole came into New Hampshire as the front-runner, leading in the polls and having beaten Vice President Bush in Iowa. The Vice President actually ran third in Iowa, behind both Dole and the Rev. Pat Robertson.

Bush came out swinging in New Hampshire. He ran TV ads unfairly charging that Dole would increase taxes, simply because that was among the options Dole felt a President shouldn't categorically rule out. "Senator Straddle," the ads called him.

That wasn't the end of it. Dole had supported establishment of the bipartisan National Economic Commission to find ways to cut the huge federal budget deficits. Many believed the commission -- headed by two savvy political insiders, Democrat Robert Strauss and Republican Drew Lewis -- offered the last best hope of finally breaking the impasse that had nearly paralyzed the budget process for most of Ronald Reagan's tenure.

Vice President Bush didn't see it that way. In one of his New Hampshire TV ads, he said the commission "exists to provide political cover for a tax hike. If it doesn't recommend a tax increase, I'll not only eat my hat, I'll eat Bob Dole's hat."

After beating Dole in the primaries, the Vice President went on to the Republican National Convention, where he was nominated. In his acceptance speech, to ensure that everyone knew of his adamant stand against tax increases, he uttered his famous "read my lips" pledge. The commission, which had become a political football in the New Hampshire primary, broke up in later. Unable to reach agreement, it issued two separate reports in early 1989. Neither report recommended a tax increase, but there's no evidence Bush made good on his offer to eat both his and Dole's hats.

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EXCERPTS OF SENATE FLOOR STATEMENT BY SENATOR JIM SASSER, CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE APRIL 7, 1992

I remember the very able Minority Leader, a man that I respect enormously -- I think the generation represented by the Minority Leader, Senator Dole, the generation represented by the distinguished Chairman of the Finance Committee, Mr. Bentsen, may very well be the finest generation of Americans in the 20th century. They were the Americans who braved the Great Depression years of the 1930's, who marched off to fight the war against fascism and militarism and won it, and came home to build the most prosperous economy the world had ever seen, at least in modern history.

I remember in New Hampshire in 1988, when Senator Dole tried to tell the people of that state and the people of this country the truth, and he was asked, "If you are elected President, will you raise taxes, will you raise additional revenues?" He did not say he would; he did not say he would not. He simply said, "I am not going to abandon any responsible way of dealing with the fiscal problems of this country."

So what happened? He was pilloried in the media of New Hampshire and all across the country as a tax raiser -- raising taxes. He was confronted with the slogan "read my lips," which I thought at the time was not responsible, and it pained me greatly. He is a man that I admire, one of a different political party and one of a different political persuasion, but one that I thought could have discharged the obligations of Chief Executive of this country with distinction.

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