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NEWSWEEK: JANUARY 5, 1987 27

Suddenly a Hot Property

Dole's stock goes up

By noon last Tuesday Sen. Bob Dole was supposed to be on his way out of Washington for Christmas. But his wife, Elizabeth, who is U.S. secretary of transportation, was running late. So Dole, at his office desk in a cardigan sweater, stole time to work the phones in what has suddenly become a very active—and hot—campaign for the 1988 Republican presidential nomination. He checked in with an enthusiastic contributor in North Carolina and ordered aides to locate a letter praising his support for the Nicaraguan contra. Dole hoped the document would impress a conservative writer newly curious about his campaign. And he talked shop with John Sears, a so-far-uncommitted GOP insider now likely to join the Dole team. "It's like the tortoise and the hare," said Dole. "We've been crawling along. I think we're making progress."

Closing in on Bush: Most Republican strategists view that as an understatement. A recent series of polls show that Dole has drawn even with, and in some cases surpassed, Vice President George Bush. With Bush bogged down in the Iran controversy, Dole has freely used his high-profile Senate role to champion full disclosure about the scandal and portray himself as a savvy op-



The GOP's hope from the heartland? Dole in his office

erator who can revive the GOP's fortunes.

The GOP's loss of the Senate will next week officially relegate the senator to the role of minority leader. But, at 63, he has a number of natural assets that should help him stay in the limelight: a confident style, a sharp wit that he now uses to make friends, not enemies, an uncanny ability to jump on hot political issues and a record of wartime bravery.

But natural assets aren't enough, as Dole learned in his go-nowhere campaign for the nomination in 1980. One problem

six years ago. And the senator, who hails from Russell, Kans., thinks he's found something else his 1980 campaign lacked—a theme. He will portray himself as the GOP's hope from "the heartland," where farms and rust-belt factories are in need of help. "That's where the problems are," said Dole. "Whenever we get in trouble in this country, we turn to somebody from the Midwest." The theme is an effort by Dole to bring his political identity—and base—into focus.

While it has clearly helped him, the Iran debacle has also produced unflattering echoes of his hatchet-man days as Gerald Ford's running mate in 1976. When Bush branded Dole, by implication, disloyal to the president, Dole shot back with an interview implying that Bush must have known about the Iran arms deal.

Last month the senator and Mrs. Dole considered—and rejected—a proposal that they quit their jobs immediately to devote full time to the campaign. Instead, Dole will gradually increase his time on the road, taking with him his sense of political fatalism. "If you have a little blip-up," he says, "you might go down as fast as you go up. That's why we want to keep running in place. No, that's what we did in 1980! This time we want to run in at least second or third." For now, that doesn't seem to be a problem.

HOWARD FINEMAN in Washington

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Congress Faces Life

Sen. Bob Dole had hoped that Congress would forgo its usual "rain dance" of criticism of the president's budget, but budget director Jim Miller was more to the point yesterday. He said there would be no White House budget "summit" with Congress unless tax increases are ruled out beforehand.

In short, Congress can criticize the budget all it wants, but this Democratic 100th Congress should expect to operate as the 99th did, within revenue constraints set by the president. The rain dance and its ritual discarding of the president's budget is an old custom. But for all the stumping around in paint and feathers, Congress never alters national priorities as much as it threatens to do. The federal budget codifies a vast set of personal interests tied to the annual disbursements of the U.S. Treasury of one trillion dollars. Much of what the president submits represents continuity and much of what Congress does is merely ratification.

It is what is done on the margins that creates excitement in the Washington community. Who's getting more and who's getting less is the burning issue. The heat has been turned up as the president and Congress have practiced more budgetary restraint. The president intends to keep it turned up with a tight grip on revenues, something he has proved he can sustain politically.

All of which presents a problem for the Democrats. Congress has not been a model of efficiency for some years now, having failed every year to meet its statutory budgetary responsibilities. Congressmen make the pro forma charge each year that the president's budget is "unworkable." An appropriate countercharge is that Congress has become unworkable.

Some recognition of this problem may explain why the Democratic rain dance this year has been a little more subdued than in years past. It's their Congress and what goes wrong is their baby. The Democratic leadership has to ask itself a few questions: Do they have any workable alternative plan for stopping the farm-subsidy hemorrhage? Do they really want to risk receiving the blame for a recession by engaging in a new round of protectionism? Do they want to risk further alienating state-level party members by defending unworkable federal social programs? Do they want to cut off U.S. aid for Nicaragua's anti-communist guerrilla forces and risk taking the blame for losing Nicaragua a second time around?

Do they want supplemental spending bills that will send the deficit soaring? Do they want to put defense?

These decisions will not be made any easier by the composition of the Democratic Party itself. For years, it has drawn both its strength and weakness from the fact that it, to a far greater degree than the Republican Party, is a conglomerate. Its highly diversified membership ranges from the very conservative to the very, very liberal. In the conservative political climate of the 1980s, Democratic liberals have been fighting for their lives. The fights they win often end up hurting their party more than the fights they lose. It is already beginning to dawn on many Americans that the sanctions imposed on South Africa last year, and the campaign against American companies operating there, have sharply reduced U.S. influence on behalf of positive change.

The traditional constituencies of the Democrats also are becoming more divided. Jimmy Carter won more than 90% of the black vote in 1976. But today many blacks are more interested in sharing in national economic growth than in the redistribution of wealth. The Democrats pull votes heavily from the public-employee unions, but at the risk of losing ground among private-sector workers, who increasingly resent the burdens imposed by government. If the Democrats have in mind attracting farmers, they had better be aware that many now think getting the government out of agriculture is their best answer.

Even the Iran-contra affair may not prove to be a bean feast. Bob Dole put out a warning signal Monday. If we are going to investigate private aid to the contras, he said, maybe we should also investigate private aid to the Sandinistas. How many Democrats, we wonder, want that?

After the 100th completes its organizational chores, it will go about its work in the traditional ways, trading votes, making politics, doing favors for constituents and lobbyists. We would gladly suspend criticism if we were offered assurance that at some point the rain dancing will end and the 100th will attempt to reorder the vast, wasteful enterprise we call government instead of trying to roll the president for a tax increase.

Tuesday, January 13, 1987 The Kansas City Times B-3

Dole nurtures hopes for presidency with weekend visit to South Dakota

By Stephen C. Fehr
Washington Correspondent
WASHINGTON — Republican Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas, a probable candidate for the GOP presidential nomination next year, is mounting a big push for support in South Dakota, which will hold its primary next year soon after the Iowa and New Hampshire presidential contests.

On the heels of an endorsement by Republican Sen. Larry Pressler of South Dakota, Dole, accompanied by Pressler, traveled to the state over the weekend and Monday in search of support from the state's GOP. Dole also attended the inauguration of Republican Gov. George S. Mickelson.

"South Dakota's going to be a good state for us," Dole said Friday before leaving Washington.

Dole, the Senate minority leader, is counting on a good showing in Iowa on Feb. 8 and South Dakota on Feb. 23 because of their relative proximity to Kansas, both geographically and politically. Midwestern farm states have been hit hard by the farm depression, and Dole is an agriculture leader in Washington.

"Senator Dole is clearly the candidate most identified with South Dakota issues," said Pressler, who has written to 9,000 of his supporters in South Dakota explaining his

decision to support Dole.

Dole is particularly excited about the prospect of snaring Dwight Adams, Mickelson's campaign manager, to head his South Dakota campaign. Adams will meet with Dole's political staff Wednesday in Washington.

"We haven't reached any final conclusions yet, but there's a strong likelihood I will," Adams said Monday night. "I'm supportive of Dole for the presidency whether or not I join the campaign."

Two of Dole's probable opponents for the nomination, Vice President George Bush and New York Rep. Jack Kemp, visited South Dakota last year during the general election campaign, but Dole has been there more often and was the first presidential hopeful this year.

"At this point, I'd say he's out in front in terms of recruiting people and starting to come up with a solid organization," said Bill Protxer, executive director of the South Dakota Republican Party.

Joel Rosenthal, the state GOP chairman, and Adams said that the crowds over the weekend were enthusiastic about Dole and impressed with his message. The senator visited Pierre, Rapid City and Sioux Falls.

"There will be a lot of sympathy for him here," Rosenthal said. "This weekend should be a big plus for him. They had over 200 people at breakfast this morning (Monday) and they seemed to respond well."

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Dole says no

If Sen. Robert Dole is running for the White House, he's off on the right foot. His resolution to put senators on record against any income tax increase this year is the stuff of which presidents are made.

Ronald Reagan, in his re-election campaign, didn't make a lot of commitments, but he did vow not to raise taxes, a promise his opponent declined to make. And where is Walter Mondale today?

The Democrat-controlled House, to no one's surprise, voted against a no-tax pledge, 240 to 175. Mr. Dole has introduced a companion measure in the Senate that already has attracted 20 co-sponsors — though no Democrats.

The resolution ought to remind Americans of the difference between the two parties. The Democrats might not like shooting at the Sandinistas, but they don't mind plinking away at the American taxpayers. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 had as its fundamental principle the reduction of tax

rates in return for the elimination of special benefits. Now the rate-jacking Democrats want to confirm the fear that reform was just a crafty way of raising taxes.

In the event the Senate kills the bill, Mr. Dole should point out that the Democrats have again declared war on the taxpayers. As the economy booms, workers will take umbrage at having their increasing prosperity gobbled up by revenue enhancers. With inflation nearly non-existent, unemployment down, and sales up, people are beginning to believe the Republicans may really do know how to manage the economy. Even George Bush may be convinced.

The dominant party hopes to make headlines with the Iran-contra investigations, but the public tires of the story. Opening fire on the taxpayers will put the Democrats back on Page One all right, but in a way hardly beneficial to their presidential hopes. Good news if, like Sen. Dole, you're a Republican candidate.