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among friends, he saw no reason to.

Several hours later in Grinnell the speech was the same. Dole cited a poll: "Thirty-seven percent of the people think the federal deficit is the main issue. . . . If you don't worry about it for yourself, you had better worry about it for your children and grandchildren, because we are mortgaging their future." He then paused and added—in a matter-of-fact tone chilling for a presidential aspirant—"If they still have a future."

The deficit is Dole's idea of a central issue, and he presented it with the old Dole's images of black humor and individual achievement. He told of his budgetary heroics in 1985, when as majority leader, with 24 years of congressional experience, he managed to pass a measure limiting government spending. The vote was 50 to 49, and the key was bringing Senator Pete Wilson of California from the hospital—

"still bleeding through his bandages and under heavy sedation," said Dole. "He claimed he had had an appendectomy that morning. We carted him in, told him how to vote, then carted him out."

The White House, however, was fearful of the cuts in defense. "They pulled the plug on that deal," Dole was indignant again. If he were President, he implied, it would be different. The audience was nodding enthusiastically. It continued to nod enthusiastically as Dole moved on to his other great victory of 1985, the farm bill. "If you don't like to eat," he said, "you don't need to worry about the American farmer." The bill certainly helped some farmers, but the billions in increased farm subsidies constituted a deadly part of the federal deficit. Dole showed no sense of embarrassment. In front of this audience in Iowa, he did not need to reconcile these positions, and he didn't.

In the question period, a man with gauged hands and coveralls rose to ask Dole what he thought about the value of the dollar (which affects agricultural exports, among other things). Dole didn't know. "I'm not an expert on that," he said. The man sat down, shaking his head.

So far Dole was not showing any signs of change. His town-meeting speeches went from one point to another without any effort to form a coherent stance. What would happen when he confronted a major audience in Des Moines the next morning? Some 1,000 party activists were gathered to hear him in an auditorium at the Marriott. On the previous



During a visit to Kansas last January, Dole, 65, and his wife, Elizabeth, paused on a windy rural road.

day the group had heard addresses from Vice President George Bush, Congressman Jack Kemp and former Governor "Pete" Du Pont of Delaware, all competing for the presidential nomination. It was a significant test.

Dole read a paragraph or two from a manuscript in a loose-leaf binder. Then, as usual, he launched into a series of familiar themes and variations. His voice was strong, his wit agile and his partisan tone in tune with the crowd. Still there was no sign of a new Dole.

Candidate Dole did not like to read speeches when I was with him in 1976. It did not surprise me that in 1987 he still didn't. (When in 1981 President Reagan gave Dole a copy of my book *Wealth and Poverty* as a gift, I was told he did not read it either.) Dole simply does not read any more than he has to.

As the Senator has explained, comparing himself with his wife, Elizabeth, a Harvard Law graduate and Reagan's Secretary of Transportation: "She reads everything, to a point where I think she overdoes it sometimes. I'm not that disciplined. I take things home at night, but just to glance at." A longtime intimate says that Dole learns "by osmosis. He isn't a deep reader." And Representative Kemp cracks, "There was a fire in his apartment and all his books burned up . . . both of them."

Nonetheless, Dole has proved that you don't necessarily have to read to perform well in politics, at least in the short run. He remains not only the most skillful political tactician but also by far the best speaker among the Republican

candidates for President. In a richly resonant voice that both Bush and Kemp must envy, he plumbs elegant ironies worthy of William F. Buckley Jr. To the criticism that he has not spelled out an intellectual platform, a master plan for the voters, Dole replies that it's too early in the campaign. "I've been advised by people I have a lot of respect for not to play the vision game," he says. "As soon as you have your vision, the press is going to dismantle it." For now Dole offers a vision of his own past: his wartime heroism, his many years in Congress, his service as the Senate's majority leader and currently as minority leader.

People who see a new Dole often point to his wife. When he brought up her name in Des Moines, the crowd burst into loud applause. She is the only possible presidential wife in our history who has been regarded as a vice-presidential contender. Over the years Mrs. Dole seems to have moved the Senator toward the left on such social issues as the Equal Rights Amendment. But Elizabeth was also there in 1976; she watched in the hotel room as the senator raged at my speech.

It may be too late for anyone to transform him. Advisers like John Sears, who have urged the senator to uplift his rhetoric and enhance his vision, have been rebuffed by the campaign. David Keene, a consultant once close to Dole, also tried to get the candidate to change, though in a not so far-reaching way. Keene had proposed "taking the 30,000 votes he's cast and deciding what three things it all means."

The paradox of Dole's pragmatism is that, in guarding his independence and keeping his options open, he risks becoming a slave to passing events and pressures. Living by his reflexes, lacking a clear compass of principle, he is in danger of becoming dependent on the agenda of others.

Dole believes that he does not owe people anything but himself, a splendid figure of a man, one who knows that splendor is mostly sham, that idealism is mostly cynical, that survival is the best humans can hope for. His experiences in dust-bowl Kansas and World War II have convinced him that his nation can never repay his services or sufferings. He sometimes seems to be campaigning like a man collecting an overdue debt. Yet throughout he provides a leavening of humor. It is hard to resist the man who—in contrast to Walter Mondale's elaborately crafted presentation on why he wanted to be Vice President—simply quipped: "Because it's indoor work and no heavy lifting." Will he be able, when the time comes in the campaign, to express a vision of triumph over present troubles? Ironically, it shouldn't require any "new" Bob Dole to do that. Triumph, after all, is the message of his own extraordinary life. □

George Gilder is the author of seven books, a former consultant to Ronald Reagan and an admitted polemicist for supply-side economics. Senator Dole has little patience for this theory, but Gilder notes, the administration's tax bills would not have passed without Dole's leadership.

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The Free Press

300 greet Dole in N.U.

By TOM SMALEC
Free Press Assistant News Editor

NEW ULM — Sen. Bob Dole, who hopes to end up being our president 16 months from now, told IRs gathered in New Ulm Wednesday night how he got into politics.

He had just come back to Russell, Kan., from 39 months in Army hospitals after being wounded in the Italian campaign of World War II.

"Both parties thought I'd make a great candidate because I got shot and looked like I had trouble," he explained.

The leader of the local Democrats came around and made his pitch. Then the Republican leader visited. "He said, 'Before you make up your mind, remember in Russell County there are twice as many Republicans as Democrats,'" Dole recalled.

"I made that philosophical decision on the spot. . . . It got a good laugh, but everything is serious in presidential politics."

See DOLE
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Sen. Bob Dole greets supporters, including Rep. Terry Dempsey

Dole at State Fair today

(Continued from page 1)

That joke, for example, helps underscore one of the themes of Dole's campaign: that he is an experienced politician who knows how to count votes, get elected and get things done once in office.

That's an important message for him to get across to the crowd of 300 or so IRs who came from across Southern Minnesota to see Dole at the New Ulm Holiday Inn. They are more than voters; they are the people who will get voters to the caucuses next Feb. 23. If Dole can carry them, they'll carry him.

"The bottom line in 1988 is keeping the White House Republican," he told the crowd.

The Kansas senator and former Senate Majority Leader was the centerpiece of a fundraiser for Brown County IRs. The Dole campaign did not ask for any of the gate, county co-chairman Kurt Johnson said, so the local organization will keep about \$1,500.

It was his second stop this summer in the Mankato area. He is scheduled to appear at the State Fair today.

But not all in the room were Dole supporters — someone put out literature for U.S. Rep. Jack Kemp, R-N.Y., the Republican presidential hopeful winning support from conservatives and Christian activists.

"Dole is a good second choice," said state Rep. Allen Quist, IR-St. Peter, a Kemp fan who showed up at the Dole event.

Speaking for about 45 minutes, Dole covered a variety of topics — from human rights abuses in Nicaragua to the need to change the perception of Republicans as country-clubbers.

He started off with a strong denunciation of the Nicaraguan Sandinista regime, which drew a warm response from the assembled IRs. Then he shifted to talking about himself and his career, saying he wanted the party members to get to know him.

His speech was full of self-deprecating jokes and anecdotes, like one about a radio announcer who said Dole decided to go into politics after being wounded in the head during World War II. (Actually, he was hit in the shoulder and spine by shell fragments.)

When talking about his days as a county attorney in Kansas, he recalled that one duty was to approve welfare claims. That led him into a discussion of the need for Republicans to play up their concern for people and people's needs.

"We ought to now and again say we care about people," Dole said. "Conservatism means we help each other."

Dole spent almost as much time shaking hands and meeting people as he did talking — the handshakes may eventually help him more than any speech.

"[Minnesota] is a state Bob Dole ought to win, or do well in," he said.