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Bungled Campaign How Dole Squandered Money, Opportunities, Dooming Hopes for '88 Failure to Run Ad on Taxes, Pick Running Mate Hurt; So Did Disarray of Staff A Flubbed Line and a Blizzard

By DAVID SHRIMMAN
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
CHICAGO — As Robert Dole watched each of the 17 Super Tuesday political contests slip from his grip last Tuesday evening, a telegram arrived at his third-floor suite: Richard Nixon was urging him to fight on.

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Mr. Dole's reaction to the competing advice symbolizes the legislative mind-set that has doomed his bid to wrest the presidential nomination from Vice President George Bush: He took a middle course, vowing to carry on but dismissing most of his staff and canceling most of his television ads here.



Sen. Robert Dole

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Political Flaws
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- It failed to follow through on a plan to name former Gov. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, a respected Southern politician, as Mr. Dole's vice presidential running mate and to campaign with him throughout the Super Tuesday states.

- It never aired a television advertisement in New Hampshire that might have inoculated Mr. Dole from an image as a big taxer in a state where opposition to taxes is almost a prerequisite for election. The reason the ad never appeared: Mr. Dole flubbed a vital line in a taping session.

- It wasted money at an immense rate. Mr. Dole's lieutenants exceeded their budget by more than 50 percent before 1988 even began and thus were able to spend less than a third of what they had originally envisioned for Super Tuesday television ads.

- Its strategists and aides spent more time fighting with each other than with Mr. Bush. At the same time, the campaign was poorly organized, with Mr. Dole personally making tactical decisions from the isolation of the campaign plane. "Nothing was ever final because the people who didn't prevail could always go to the candidate, where the real authority was," says Thomas Rath, a former New Hampshire attorney general and top Dole aide.

A Quiet Dinner
Many of the campaign's problems emerged into public view in the critical days following Mr. Dole's impressive triumph in the Iowa caucuses. That night, a number of Dole intimates, including Senate Republican colleagues Pete Domenici of New Mexico, Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas and Warren Rudman of New Hampshire, gathered for a quiet dinner in a private room at the Center of New Hampshire Holiday Inn in Manchester.

There they speculated that their candidate was vulnerable in New Hampshire to charges that he was an advocate of taxes. They decided that he ought to make a pre-emptive strike by "taking the pledge"—important symbolic language in New Hampshire—to veto attempts to raise income tax rates. On the Wednesday before the primary, such an ad, titled "No Taxes," was shot at a GOP dinner in Nashua. But Mr. Dole was tired, and instead of saying that he would veto attempts by Democrats to eliminate the lower taxes of the Reagan era, he said that he would veto any attempts to "lower taxes."

Don Ringo, the Dole media producer, recut the Dole tape to correct the language, but, as he acknowledges, "it wasn't going to win any Oscars." Mr. Dole tried again at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, but an oncoming blizzard prompted television stations in the region to adjust their advertising deadlines, making it impossible to get the spot on the air. In any case, Dole pollster Bernard Winick was insisting that taxes weren't a big issue in the race.

"Some people think these four words—pledge to veto—stood between Dole and the nomination," says...

Fluency: Tax to Pay & Crossed

Bungled Campaign: Dole Wasted Money, Opportunities in '88 Bid

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viser. "They were buzzwords. He was willing to say them."
The biggest missed opportunity, however, may have come last autumn, when the notion of naming former Gov. Alexander to the Dole ticket was first broached.

Mr. Alexander traveled to Concord, N.H., in early September to take his daughter to the St. Paul's School, and Mr. Rath, the former attorney general and Dole adviser, talked with him then about the unorthodox notion of inviting him onto the Dole ticket before the 1988 political season even opened. The move, Mr. Rath calculated, would show unusual creativity by a candidate often regarded as a creature of conventional political behavior, and it would help Mr. Dole in the South, already considered a Bush redoubt. But Mr. Rath knew that the deal had to be sealed early so that it wouldn't look like a desperation tactic.

Mr. Alexander seemed intrigued. A speech was even outlined to announce the union: Mr. Dole would say that the most important choice that a candidate gets to make is the selection of a running mate, adding that he wanted to let the voters judge his judgment. The move would have brought pressure on Mr. Bush to select his running mate, too; ironically, Mr. Alexander is one of the vice president's top choices.

Death of Idea
But the idea died internally. To this day, Mr. Rath believes that Mr. Alexander would have accepted the offer.

Throughout the critical winter months, the campaign was wracked with dissension, much of it caused by tension between the campaign's chief, former Labor Secretary Bill Brock, a one-time senator from Tennessee and GOP national chairman, and a cadre of advisers who had been with the Dole effort for a year.

Most insiders say that Mr. Brock was the sole campaign aide who could treat Mr. Dole as a peer. He wrested such tactical responsibilities as the daily schedule away from the candidate and put together a senior management team to guide the campaign.

But Mr. Brock alienated some of Mr. Dole's senior aides, including Mr. Devine and American Consul General David Keene, and he eventually won the scorn of Mr. Dole as well. The candidate, already known for a mean streak that injured his campaign for vice president in 1976, felt that he had to personally launch many of the attacks against the Bush campaign because Mr. Brock seemed unwilling to do so.

The campaign, moreover, lacked organizational discipline, and when operational and tactical decisions were made, they were often disastrous. The Dole effort, for example, concentrated on the entire state of Florida rather than focusing on the west coast, where Midwesterners with an affinity for Mr. Dole tend to retire.

Arcane Terms

The campaign floundered without a theme. When top Republican strategist John Sears was sounded out a year ago about running the campaign, he warned that Mr. Dole needed to offer voters a strong sense of where he wanted to lead the country. But the candidate shunned this advice, even making jokes about it; he believed that his skills as a congressional leader would count for more than a vision about the country's direction.

On the stump and in television advertisements, Mr. Dole talked about leadership and strength but failed to flesh out his vision. Often, he talked in the argot of Capitol Hill, leaving audiences bewildered as he charted the course of legislation and used arcane terms like "bracket creep" that are familiar only to lawmakers and lobbyists.

As all this was happening, the campaign was going through money at an alarming rate. At the end of September, Sen. Dole had spent \$1.4 million less than the Bush effort; top campaign strategists figured that he could spend dollar-for-dollar against the vice president through the Super Tuesday contest and still have a considerable financial edge in later primaries. Since October, however, Sen. Dole has outspent Mr. Bush by an estimated \$3 million or more. As a result, Sen. Dole's cash reserves are now all but depleted, while the vice president has about \$5.5 million in the bank.

Helicopters and Limousines
Where did the money go? Under Mr. Brock, the campaign rented extra space for its headquarters, went on a hiring binge and spent heavily for polling, helicopters and limousines. "Brock's people never said no," complains a veteran Dole campaign official who is still in place. Executive jets were chartered routinely, often from big corporations like Philip Morris and ConAgra. Even before Mr. Brock's arrival, Sen. Dole personally hired Republican pollster Wirthlin, whose services weren't cheap. Mr. Wirthlin billed the campaign \$50,000 to start, and \$420,000 more in January alone. "They got more than they paid for," the pollster says.

Mr. Brock argues that much of the money was gone before he came aboard Nov. 1 and defends the expenditures that were made under his regime. Bernard Winick, his principal deputy, says that at the time he and Mr. Brock joined the campaign, only one minor survey had been

done, only a single television commercial had been produced, and little organizational effort was being devoted to states outside Iowa and New Hampshire. "We had to spend some money to try to get these things on track," Mr. Winick says. With costs soaring, the money available for radio and television shrank. After \$1 million was spent on Boston TV for the New Hampshire primary, media expenditures for Super Tuesday—which some aides had once planned to total as much as \$4 million—were slashed to about \$1.2 million.

'Very Close'
The Dole strategy in the South was to win enough states and selected congressional districts, and thus delegates, to keep Mr. Bush from claiming a decisive victory. "We came very close," Mr. Winick insists. "One way you can look at it is, hey, you guys had all this money and you wasted it. Well, had we won all these delegates or all these states, no one would have said we wasted it."

But Mr. Dole lost every Super Tuesday state, including the one state, Washington, that every political analyst had placed in his corner. And so, last Tuesday, Mr. Dole's most trusted lieutenants began plotting his withdrawal, arguing that "if you go before the Illinois primary, you chart your own course and walk away with your head up instead of having events force you out."

But Mr. Dole hesitated. He wouldn't leave the race before his nemesis, Rep. Jack Kemp of New York, withdrew; that came on Thursday. There was little enthusiasm for some aides' idea for a new set of commercials arguing that Mr. Dole would be a stronger nominee against a Democrat. "Bush just carried a third of the country with enormous margins," an adviser says, "and we're talking about making an electability argument?"

Still, the campaign continued here in Illinois, day after day, mechanically and without inspiration. Saturday night, Mr. Dole appeared in a desperate half-hour broadcast in the face of polls showing him losing to Mr. Bush by more than two to one. But the broadcast became a metaphor for the campaign: Technical difficulties interrupted the video presentation and disrupted the program. Even if this flawed, eleven-hour appeal miraculously revived his effort here, it is generally agreed that his prospects for winning the nomination are negligible.

In the final days, Mr. Dole joked that he had run out of any bad things to say about Mr. Bush. And as news leaked out that the media campaign was being canceled, a few aides returned to their offices. They acknowledged that the campaign was beyond saving. But they said that they were thinking of drafting a plan for Mr. Dole to run on in 1992.

—Brooks Jackson in Washington
contributed to this article

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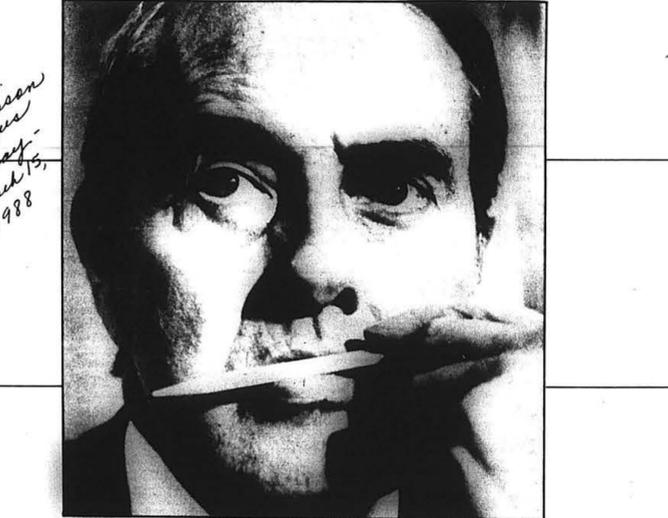
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For Dole, Gore and a spirited debate

The next president of the United States will influence this country's destiny for the rest of the century and beyond. If he has the vision and the strength to deal with a formidable new Soviet boss and with our sagging industrial competitiveness, the nation will flourish for years to come. If he can't manage it, we face continued economic decline and foreign policy fiascos. Two presidential candidates have the ability and the agenda to meet those extraordinary challenges; both are underdogs in the Illinois primary: Robert Dole for the Republicans and Albert Gore for the Democrats. The Tribune urges a vote for them to underscore their messages and inject some substance and spirit into this flagging primary season.

We also urge voters of both parties to pay particular attention to our recommendations for judges, and for Aurelia Pucinski for Clerk of the Circuit Court on the Democratic ballot. An honest, intelligent and independent justice system is vital to the quality of life in Cook County; the court choices below will help get it.



Bungled campaign: how Dole squandered money, opportunities, dooming hopes for '88

Failure to run ad on taxes, pick running mate hurt; so did disarray of staff

A flubbed line and a blizzard

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