

Taking the measure of Bob Dole

Bob Dole is a relaxed man these days, dealing comfortably and easily with topics as diverse as next year's farm bill, Eastern Europe and campaign finance.

A morning visit with the senior senator from Kansas is like attending a presidential press conference with a chief executive having 28 years' experience on Capitol Hill.

If there's any lingering disappointment at his having lost the chance to be that chief executive in the presidential campaign wars of 1988, it seldom shows.

Even when it does, it's expressed with the self-deprecating wit that has led some to observe that in public life, Bob Dole is the most entertaining platform speaker since John F. Kennedy (which probably is true).

In an appearance later in the day before Sedgwick County Republicans' Pachyderm Club, that wit came through. He said he had told people during the presidential campaign, regarding his resolve to reduce the federal deficit: "If you want a rougher, tougher America, vote for Bob Dole. But they wanted a kinder, gentler America, so they voted for George Bush."

Any harsh words that passed between the pair is history now, though, he said. He has a good relationship with the president, and the two former adversaries often help one another.

"You ask him to call 10 senators, he will do it; enjoys doing it," said Mr. Dole, Senate minority leader, of the president.

'People' in charge

The senator's recent travels to some of the world's trouble spots clearly have made an enormous impression on him. He told The Eagle's editorial board and Pachyderm Club members about his trip to Soviet Armenia in the aftermath of the earthquake there a year ago last week.

He and his wife Elizabeth visited one school site, he said, where 400 third- and fourth-graders had been killed in 30 seconds of horror.

Yet even in the midst of all their suffering, he said, the Armenian people "wanted to talk about America; they wanted to be in America."

It's an exciting time we live in, he said, with people on the march toward freedom around the globe: "If you miss the evening news, you might miss a country."

Asked if he thinks President Bush is doing enough to encourage the democracy movement in Eastern Europe, he said "I don't think anybody can shape the events [taking place] the people are making the judgments."

The premier example of that, he said, is Poland: "If anyone tells you one man doesn't make a difference, talk to Lech Walesa." The Solidarity union leader's recent address to Congress was one of the more moving such addresses the senator said he ever had heard.

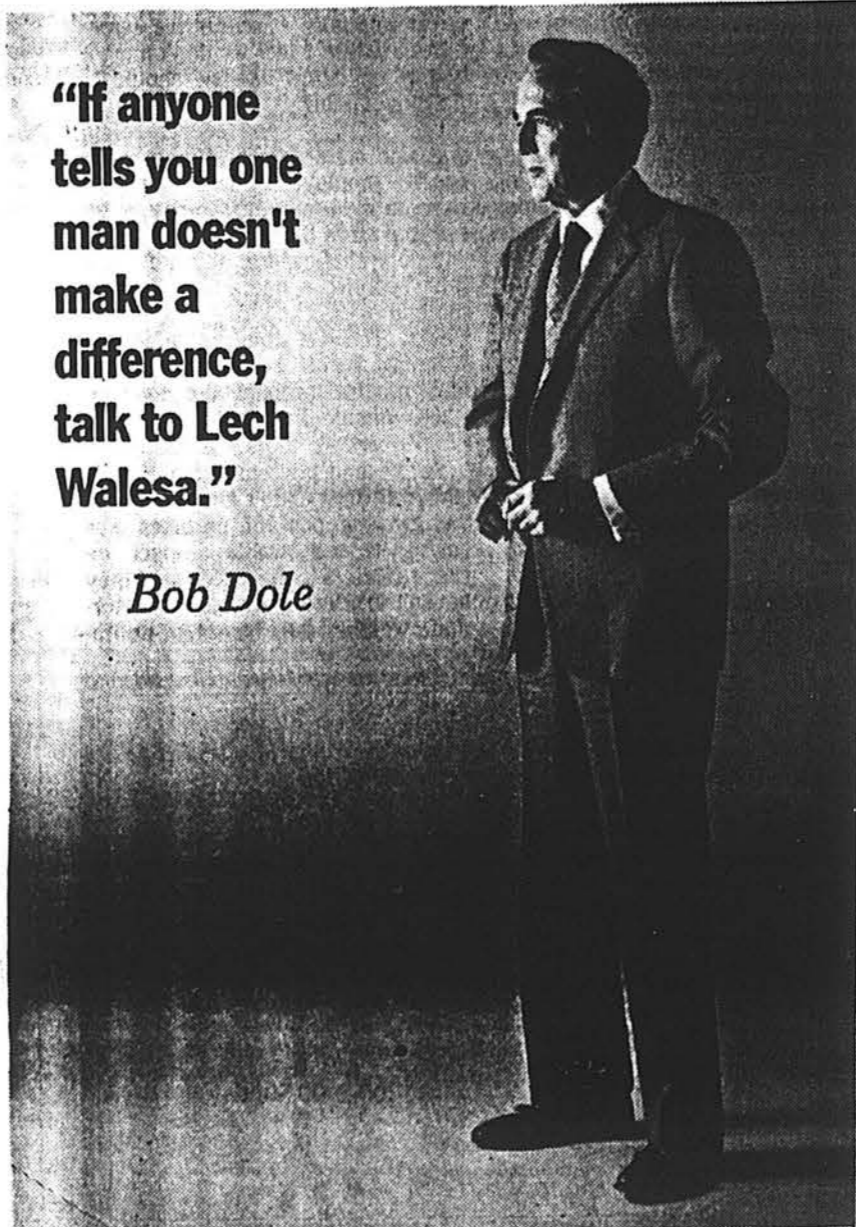
Freedom not selective

With the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania being the next likely candidates to press their demands for freedom, what should the United States do if the Soviet Union were to intervene?

The senator's face tightened at the

"If anyone tells you one man doesn't make a difference, talk to Lech Walesa."

Bob Dole



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GEORGE NEAVOLL

EDITOR OF THE EDITORIAL PAGE

thought, and he said "That would change everything."

This country has to support the Baltic states, he said. "We can't be for selective freedom."

Would he support some form of economic aid to the Soviet Union if it were to advance perestroika?

Actually, he said, the proposed waiver of the 15-year-old Jackson-Vanik amendment placing restrictions on U.S.-Soviet trade would be a form of economic aid. The amendment originally was imposed to encourage a freer Soviet emigration policy, which now has transpired.

Mr. Dole said that "under certain conditions, I could see extending credit to the Soviet Union."

What's next?

- On other topics, the senator said:
- The 1990 farm bill will pay more

attention to environmental concerns among them, pesticides and non-pollution involving agricultural runoff — than farm bills of the past.

• The Senate will make a major push for campaign reform next year. Political action committee contribution should be limited to \$1,000.

• Congress' repeal of catastrophic health care legislation was a mistake leaving the "sickest, the oldest and neediest" at risk.

• John Tower should have been named as George Bush's first choice for secretary of defense. The charge against him were based on "rumor, innuendo," and Democrats' political maneuvering.

• The Malta summit meeting between Mr. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev "was a success they got together." Sometimes what world leaders say is less important than the fact they simply get to know one another.

Looking tanned, fit and rested, Bob Dole appears ready for more political wars. He said he had no plans, though beyond helping his fellow Republican Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, get re-elected next year.

Given the fact he once said the thing more popular in Kansas than Nancy Kassebaum was wheat, that shouldn't be too onerous.

What then? At 66, he looks much younger. And I thought I saw that faraway look in his eyes.

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Dole contests Labor comparison of pension threat to S&L crisis

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Labor Department's inspector general on Thursday warned Congress of continued problems in pension oversight and job-training programs and said the agency was "naive" in relying on civil instead of criminal remedies for most of its enforcement actions.

But in sending the report to Congress, Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole offered a lengthy rebuttal of the major criticisms, taking issue particularly with the inspector general's insistence that problems with the nation's \$2 trillion private pension system rival those blamed for the savings-and-loan crisis.

In the report, acting Inspector General Raymond Maria acknowledged that the comparison, first made in the watchdog agency's last semiannual report six months ago, had come under "a spate of criticism."

But he insisted that audit work by his office "confirms that the similarities are indeed there. These vulnerabilities do not reveal a pension system currently in crisis, but they do demonstrate it to be at risk."

Maria said the department audits too few

pension plans and said pension laws requiring only partial independent audits of most plans allow problems to go unreported.

Dole, in a nine-page letter sent with the report, said the department's Pension Benefits and Welfare Administration had acted on many of the inspector general's enforcement concerns and said the comparison with the S&L crisis was unfounded.

"I continue to believe it is a false comparison and am particularly concerned that it unnecessarily alarms the nation's workers and retirees," Dole said.

She also said proposed amendments to the Job Training Partnership Act that are pending before Congress would address most of Maria's concerns about training programs. In his report, Maria said poor accountability had left

the government with little information on how the \$18.5 billion in job-training funds allocated in the past seven years were spent.

Agency heads generally write a short transmittal letter to Congress when forwarding the semiannual reports. But aides said Dole wanted to deliver a lengthy response because she believed Maria's report failed to acknowledge her efforts to respond to his concerns.



Dole