

## Score one for Dole in power play

Senator stifles Clinton stimulus plan for now, but the game isn't over

By Tom Webb

Eagle Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — Sen. Bob Dole stood before the TV cameras Friday wearing a smile — a new accessory since January — and the satisfied look of a coach whose team just staged a late rally.

This week he led the Senate's outnumbered Republicans in derailing President Clinton's economic stimulus package. But more broadly, the episode slammed home a lesson in Washington power: Dole and his 42 Senate Republican colleagues

showed that they cannot be ignored, no matter that the Democrats control the White House and both houses of Congress.

"The trouble is, they didn't call us," Dole said Friday. "It's too late now."

Said Burdett Loomis, a University of Kansas political science professor: "You've got Dole as a veteran chess player demonstrating to Clinton that he's got some real power. And can use it — not all the time, certainly — but when he can get those 43 guys together, he can really be a force."

By hanging together in a blocking ma-

neuver, Senate Republicans forced Clinton to abandon his \$16.3 billion stimulus package. Despite deriding it as pork-barrel spending, Dole conceded it contained some worthy things.

"If the president really needs money for summer jobs, he'll get money for summer jobs. And immunization," the Kansas Republican said Friday.

While the weeks-long stimulus debate centered on money and deficits, political observers also view it as a tussle for power and attention.

"This was an issue that Dole grasped as a unifying one for his party, and I thought he played it very skillfully," said Stephen Hess of the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank.

"And not only was he a good winner, I think he was an accurate winner. It WAS just a bump in the road. The stars will have to be in a certain configuration for the Republicans to be united. So it's not as if this opens up a new era when 43 votes can march in lockstep together."

Yet Clinton hinted he sees it less benignly. Asked whether he underestimated Dole's clout, Clinton said, no, he'd underestimated Republican unity. But Clinton also suggested that Republicans were double-dealing.

"I also thought that if I made a good-faith effort to negotiate and to compromise, that it would not be rebuffed," Clinton said Friday. "Instead, every time I offered something, they reduced the offer."

Clinton's pique does raise a question: Might he now retaliate against one of Dole's Kansas projects?

"I don't think so," Dole said, then added with a grin, "I was thinking



Dole

The Senate minority leader won with an outnumbered, but unified, GOP force.

the other way around."

Agreed Hess of Brookings, "It would be very heavy-handed, and so noted, if Kansas lost something they were entitled to because of the Senate minority leader. He (Clinton) would way overplay his hand if he did that. After all, the minority leader is expected to oppose. You've got to woo him."

To be sure, not all observers are lauding Dole's political savvy. The New York Times published a scathing editorial on Friday — "Mr. Dole's Selfish Strut" — that blamed him for running up the deficit as Ronald Reagan's water-carrier, then added, "Mr. Dole gave a good thrashing to the poorest, weakest and most underdefended Americans, who might have profited by its job programs and by a stronger economy."

But at the microphones Friday, there was no strutting. The senator from Kansas was conciliatory and — he knew — the winner of one game in a very long season.

"There are going to be a lot of things happening in the next three years and nine months," Dole said of the Clinton presidency. "I'll bet a year from now nobody is going to be asking about the stimulus package."

## Clinton's mistake was to misread the power of Dole

By John Ellis

Special to the Los Angeles Times

BOSTON — The first clear indication that Sen. Robert Dole, R-Kan., had President Clinton's "economic stimulus plan" on the ropes came the day after Easter Sunday, at the traditional White House Easter Egg Hunt. Clinton summoned the press to the Oval Office to lambaste Dole and his motley crew for their filibuster of the \$16.3 billion "stimulus" legislation.

Outside his office, children searched for painted eggs. According to Clinton, those children were "hostages" of the GOP, because tucked away in the "stimulus" bill were funds for child immunization programs. "When I go out there on the lawn and I think about those kids, picking up Easter eggs," said Clinton, "I want to be able to think about them all being immunized."

Whenever the Clinton White House is having a hard time explaining itself, and the scribes are rolling their eyes as the president speaks, "the children" are often introduced as the compelling moral reason for whatever proposal or scheme needs a quick rationale to carry it through the next news cycle. It was hardly surprising then that as the president's economic stimulus package staggered toward its demise, the White House sought to recast the issue as Clinton, defender of the little children, vs. Dole, hard-hearted hatchet man from Inside the Beltway.

Children or no children, the "economic stimulus" package collapsed last week in the face of Dole's unbreakable Republican filibuster. It was a clean kill for the Kansas senator. The White House was forced to accept a revised \$4 billion package that extended unemployment benefits. Total surrender.

The White House legislative defeat was as embarrassing as it was complete. With a comfortable Democratic majority in the Senate and an even larger margin in the House, an important part of the Clinton grand economic strategy had nonetheless gone down in flames, just 90 days into the administration. Worse, there were few, if any, of Clinton's Democratic allies on Capitol Hill who seemed upset. "We need to move on to something else," said Sen. John B. Breaux, D-La.

The plan's demise was the result of dubious economics, self-important politics, partisan tactics and poor execution. White House political operatives, often portrayed as the new wizards of Washington, were arrogant in their assessment of the situation. And they underestimated the character of the man across the table. Underestimating Dole is a mistake professional politicians should never make.

At the outset, the Clinton "economic stimulus plan" was the opening gambit in an overall political strategy to consolidate the president's tenuous political position. The stimulus package was aimed at the Democratic Party base (minorities, urbanites, labor-liberals) and was advertised as a "jobs" program. Its passage would have coincided with the economic recovery that had started gathering steam during the last months of the Bush administration. It would have enabled the Clinton administration to take credit for an economic resurgence that would by itself yield a high political return.

The White House strategy seemed reasonable — at the time. After Clinton's strong performance during his State of the Union message, poli-

data looked favorable, the Hill seemed agreeable, the opinion elites receptive to the new president's direction. White House operatives were pleased with Clinton's strong position. After a stumbling start, they had recaptured control of the agenda.

Or so they thought. Actually, the decision to put the "stimulus" package ahead of deficit reduction on the legislative agenda doomed the plan. Congress was skittish about anything carrying a "spending" label, because of the extraordinary breadth of Ross Perot's support. As one congressman said, "Twenty percent of the country voted for a fruitcake because of the deficit issue. That's a political fact I ignore at my peril."

It was a fact Dole knew in his bones. Shut out by parliamentary procedures from any serious play on the deficit reduction part of Clinton's package, Dole locked onto the "stimulus" package like a cruise missile. In the wake of George Bush's defeat, Republicans were reeling toward irrelevance. Dole needed a win, and quickly — to rally the troops, check the growing perception of a Clinton juggernaut and get the GOP back in the thick of things. When Clinton agreed to go with "stimulus" first and itemized deficit reduction pain later, it gave Dole his opening.

Dole had a much truer reading of the public mood than did the Clinton crowd. He noticed, for example, that many serious economists thought the stimulus package was unnecessary. He also noticed that the public clamor was not for fiscal stimulus, but deficit reduction. And he noted with pleasure that Clinton's job rating disapproval numbers were at historic highs.

The White House, meanwhile, was preoccupied with other issues (gays in the military, Bosnia, Boris Yeltsin, the Lumber Summit) and lost its focus on the stimulus package. That enabled Dole to recast the issue from "jobs" to "runaway federal spending" and that old standby "pork-barrel politics." This he did (in concert with fellow Republicans) to a rare-fare-well.

Dole was generous in legislative victory. "It's just a bump in the road for President Clinton," he said, adding that GOP senators would support Clinton on other important issues. The administration was snappish in defeat. George Stephanopoulos, the White House communications director, said: "The minority leader (Dole) showed that playing politics is a lot more important than putting people to work. The real losers here are the hundreds of thousands of Americans who won't get work this summer and beyond, because a minority of Republicans put politics before people."

Dole did not respond. Why bother. He was back on center stage: calling the GOP shots, doing interviews, getting the message out, rallying the faithful. The road ahead was as full of promise as the April air. These days, Dole issues non-denial denials when reporters ask him about the 1996 GOP presidential nomination. Whatever the future holds, one thing is clear. The Bobster, a 69-year-old spring chicken, is at the top of his game.

John Ellis, a consultant, is a former political analyst and producer for the NBC News election unit.

## Kassebaum, Dole differ over Bosnia

Kansas senators see policy against Serbs differently

By Barry Massey

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Kansas senators are divided over what steps the United States should take against ethnic fighting in the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia.

Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kan., warned Friday against lifting an arms embargo against Bosnia and launching U.S. air strikes against Serbian military targets.

In expressing opposition to those steps, Mrs. Kassebaum put herself at odds with a growing number of lawmakers, including Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole, who are urging President Clinton to take immediate military action in Bosnia.

"It is dangerously wishful thinking to believe that small, symbolic actions such as ending the arms embargo or a few air strikes will change the brutal realities of Bosnia," Mrs. Kassebaum said in a written statement.

"The Serbs will quickly gauge these steps for what they are: nothing serious and nothing threatening to their aggressive plans."

Mrs. Kassebaum outlined her position as the Clinton administration was reviewing options on what can be done to stop the ethnic war in Bosnia.

Dole and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, have recommended allied air strikes against Serbian military targets and lifting an arms embargo to



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— Sen. Nancy Kassebaum



**'I don't want to suggest that we have to get into every dog fight in the world, but sooner or later this is going to be something that we have to face up to, and it seems to me that the longer we wait ... in this particular instance, the worse it's going to be.'**  
— Sen. Bob Dole

provide weapons to Bosnian Muslims.

Dole reiterated that call on Friday, and expressed doubt that new international economic sanctions against Yugoslavia would succeed in halting Serbian attacks against Muslims in Bosnia.

"I think it's time to make some decision that we stand for something," said Dole, who opposes the use of any U.S. ground forces in Bosnia.

Tougher economic sanctions by the United Nations against Yugoslavia will take effect Monday unless the Serbs sign an international peace agreement for Bosnia. The

warned that lifting the arms embargo or air strikes would mean a dramatic change in U.S. policy.

"We would be discarding the role of mediator and taking up arms as an active participant in the fighting," Mrs. Kassebaum said. "If we, through NATO or the U.N., become a combatant, the present humanitarian relief operation that sustains hundreds of thousands of refugees will be put at further risk. Deliveries of food and medicine that now run a gantlet of Serbian harassment could be halted entirely."

France and Britain have expressed reservations about the use of military force in Bosnia, worrying that their troops with U.N. peacekeeping forces would be vulnerable to retaliation by Serbs.

Mrs. Kassebaum explained her views on Bosnia in an article sent to newspapers.

"The United States has no vital national interest at stake in Bosnia. But we do have a legitimate humanitarian concern there. I believe that concern must remain the focus of our policy. We must not allow ourselves to be diverted into ancient arguments over territory," Kassebaum said.

She suggested the United Nations could declare "specific sanctuaries and delivery corridors" for humanitarian relief in Bosnia.

"This course is not without risks," Mrs. Kassebaum said. "To be effective, the U.N., including the United States, would have to be prepared to deploy significant ground and air forces to safeguard the Bosnian sanctuaries. I do not believe we should make such a commitment without a full debate, and a vote, in Congress."

"It may be that we do not have the stomach for even this limited engagement in Bosnia. If not, we must face up to that fact and not pretend that small symbolic measures will do anything other than to save our own consciences."

## Dole pushed for funds during filibuster

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — At the time Senate Republican leader Bob Dole was lambasting the "embarrassing pork projects" of President Clinton's stimulus package, he was quietly pushing for federal money to convert a vacant building into a boathouse back home in Kansas.

The Democrats noticed and took Dole to task Friday, calling the situation "ironic to say the least."

Dole asked the Department of Housing and Urban Development in a March 5 letter to approve Community Development Block Grant money for the project in Wichita, Kan.

"The proposed public use of the facility as well as the revitalization of this blighted area seem to be goals which fit well within the contemplated purpose of the community grant program," Dole

said in the letter.

At the same time, Dole and fellow Senate Republicans were using a Clinton request for \$2.5 billion in additional block grant funding in their argument against the White House's larger, \$16.3 billion job-stimulus package.

During the debate over the jobs bill, Dole said he was a supporter of many of the programs Clinton had earmarked for increased funding and that his opposition to the bill stemmed mostly from the fact that the measure would increase the deficit. But he did at times join other Republicans in characterizing the measure as political pork.

Republicans ultimately prevailed and killed the bill.

But the Democrats have continued to single out Dole for criticism, and they jumped on the HUD letter.

"I'd say it was ironic to say the least that he was doing that while publicly criticizing the president's plan to make broader use of the same program," said Democratic National Committee chairman David Wilhelm. "It's just a continuation of extraordinary partisanship."

Wilhelm spoke in a telephone interview en route to New Hampshire, where he was delivering the administration's latest criticism of Dole, who visited the state two weeks ago.

"He has established himself as the principal agent of gridlock," Wilhelm said. "What the people voted for last year was an end to politics as usual, so I think it's time for Senator Dole's filibusters and premature campaigning in New Hampshire to come to an end."

Dole's office did not return telephone calls seeking comment.

## 'E' for Clinton's effort

Dole grades the first 100 days saying president's pace too fast

By Ray Hemman

The Hutchinson News

As Democratic President Bill Clinton nears the end to his first 100 days in office, what grade does the nation's chief Republican give him?

"I'd give him an 'E' for effort," said Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., and Senate minority leader. Dole discussed Clinton's first days in office during his weekly telephone press conference with Kansas journalists Friday.

So far, the president has not been "steady," but Dole said he was not saying that as a criticism because it takes any new administration time to "get going."

If he were to advise Clinton on how best to proceed, Dole said he would encourage the president to slow his pace.

"I think they ought to slow down and have a 40-hour week or something for a couple weeks to determine what their priorities ought to be and stop pushing so many hot buttons," he said.

"There are so many people scared about taxes and spending under any circumstances, and I think it has been heightened by talk about a value-added tax and all the taxes in the economic plan and all this spending in the stimulus package that wasn't paid for, new spending for health care."

"People just don't understand where all this money is coming from. Every day it is some sort of a new program — a new education program for \$470 million, something new on the environment. All those things may be vital to America, but maybe we ought to slow down and just say, 'We'll do A, B and C then we'll worry about D, E and F later.'"

Also during the press conference, Dole said his office had expressed concern to the Department of Agriculture about quality problems Kansas milo farmers are having with the 1992 crop. On



Sen. Robert Dole

April 9, Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy announced that corn farmers would be eligible for disaster assistance because of quality problems associated with storage of the crop. His announcement came after Michigan corn farmers had requested the help.

The announcement raised the ire of Kansas farmers for two reasons. First, victims of a May 1992 freeze that decimated part of the northwest Kansas wheat crop were not fully compensated for their losses. The farmers had been told they probably would be getting further assistance.

Second, a cold, wet fall prevented many farmers from harvesting milo on a timely basis. Some farmers only now are getting finished.

"A whole bunch of my neighbors had quality problems," said Ben Duell, Goodland farmer who received only half the disaster assistance he should have. "I was in the field yesterday with a farmer. He was cutting milo, finally getting back into the fields because of the kind of winter we had. The test weight was 49

pounds, not a bad test weight under the circumstances. But because of discoloration, the elevator refused to take it. Now we are talking about the loss on production plus the cost of harvesting."

"I hate to say politics has raised its head, but Senator Riegle properly brought up the quality question and Espy made a commitment to him, which may cost our farmers money," Dole said, referring to Sen. Donald W. Riegle Jr., D-Mich.

Dole also told reporters that a "sober investigation" into events at Waco, Texas, needs to be undertaken.