

Pg. 132 - 1993

Dole says he'll work for reform

GOP to work with Clinton on health care

By The Associated Press
WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leader Bob Dole said Sunday that his party is ready to work with President Clinton on a compromise health-care reform package, but that the legislation won't be approved this year.



Dole

Dole said the Republican won't remain on the sidelines on the health-care issue as they did in un-animously rejecting Clinton's deficit-cutting budget plan earlier this year.

The Kansas Republican said several GOP health-care plans are expected to be introduced to counter the Clinton plan.

"It's not going to pass this year," Dole said.

Dole in an appearance on CNN's "Newsmaker Sunday" declined to criticize the Clinton approach to health-care reform for the time being and suggested there will be room for negotiation and compromise.

"I think we ought to keep our powder dry," Dole said. "If we're going to have broad bipartisan action on health care, we shouldn't start firing shots before we even know what's in the package."

Clinton, returning from an 11-day vacation on Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, is expected to focus in the coming months on getting congressional ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement and support for an overhaul of the health-care system.

A special task force on health-care reform, headed by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, is scheduled to produce its proposals within weeks.

Dole said that along with the Clinton administration "our goal is universal (health-care) coverage" and that the Republicans were prepared to discuss compromises with the White House on health-care legislation.

But he said he expects Congress first to tackle the North American Free Trade Agreement for which there is considerable Republican — as well as administration — support.

Dole brings pro-NAFTA road show to Kansas; says wages are key issue

By John Hanna
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — The most effective weapon opponents of a free trade agreement have is a feeling that Americans will lose jobs because of low wages in Mexico, U.S. Sen. Bob Dole said Tuesday.



Dole

Dole brought his campaign in favor of the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, to his home state. He predicted Senate passage for the treaty but acknowledged that wages represent the key issue.

The Republican senator and other supporters of NAFTA, including President Clinton, are seeking to dispel the notion that American companies will move their plants south once the agreement is ratified.

Dole spoke to a group of about 40 business owners and representatives of agriculture groups in Topeka, then held a news conference. He met with business leaders in Wichita, and planned to have a similar event at the Johnson County Executive Airport in Olathe today.

"You've got Bob Dole up here with Clinton's charts," Dole quipped during his meeting with business and agriculture officials in Topeka. "So it has to be right."

The agreement would link the United States, Canada and Mexico in a trading bloc and make it easier for goods to move among the three countries. Dole and other supporters contend it will create jobs by opening new markets.

Despite Clinton's support for NAFTA, many of his fellow Democrats in Congress oppose the agreement. Labor groups also oppose it, as does former independent presidential candidate H. Ross Perot.

"One thing that's been some hindrance is that the opponents of NAFTA have been out there for months and months and months, picking it apart," Dole said. "We think it's time — the President think it's time — to get on the offensive."

Dole acknowledged that wages in Mexico average \$2.17 an hour, far lower than they are in the United States. Opponents claim that with the free trade agreement, American companies will be encouraged to manufacture their products in Mexico, then ship them back to the United States, tariff-free.

But Dole noted that the United States already has a \$6 billion trade surplus with Mexico, its third-largest trading partner. It has a \$60 billion trade deficit with Japan, where wages are \$14 an hour.

"We have our largest trading surplus with Mexico, where they have the lowest wages," Dole said. "It doesn't add up. That doesn't tell the whole story."

Dole stumps for trade pact support

By The Associated Press
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File photo

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"We have our largest trading surplus with Mexico, where they have the lowest wages," Dole said. "It doesn't add up. That doesn't tell the whole story."

"Keep in mind that we're five to six times more productive in America because of technology, because of our work force, than they are in Mexico."

Still, Dole acknowledged that his office is receiving many negative phone calls about the agreement.

"I thought I'd stay here for a while," Dole joked, referring to the crowd of NAFTA supporters. "I'd say right now that most calls are anti-NAFTA."

Dole starts stumping for NAFTA

By Anne Fitzgerald
The Wichita Eagle

Sen. Bob Dole thinks it would be a mistake for Congress to reject the North American Free Trade Agreement, even though it probably will cause some job losses in the United States.

"There will be some (job) dislocation," Dole said, but the potential payoff in terms of export growth and resultant jobs outweighs that concern.

Just back from Mexico, where he met with President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Dole made his remarks during a meeting with a hand-picked group of about 50 business people — mostly NAFTA supporters — Tuesday at the Wichita Marriott.

The Senate minority leader later traveled to Topeka for a similar meeting and will meet with business leaders today in the Kansas City area.

Despite widespread opposition from some labor, minority and environmental groups, the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States recently endorsed NAFTA side agreements on labor and the environment. Although the leaders of all three countries have endorsed

Campaigning: Dole asks police to support anti-crime bill. 1D

NAFTA, those nations' legislative bodies must approve it.

It is expected to be introduced in the Congress this month.

Dole has sided with President Clinton in pushing for the passage of NAFTA and he said Tuesday that approval of the trade agreement was not a partisan issue.

"I'm prepared to do anything the president wants me to do on this issue," he said, acknowledging that the agreement faced stiff opposition.

While passage of the accord will be an uphill battle in the House because much of the Democratic majority opposes it, Dole expects the Senate to approve it and has asked the Clinton administration to introduce it first in that chamber.

The gathering in Wichita included people from small and large manufacturers and service industries, some of which export to Mexico.

Several people at the meeting spoke out in favor of NAFTA, including officials with Learjet Inc., Excel, the Wichita Chamber of Com-



Bill Tuttle/The Wichita Eagle

All for one: Sen. Bob Dole says NAFTA isn't a partisan issue, and to prove it, he's backing President Clinton to get the measure past vigorous opposition in Congress.

Dole tries to quiet U.S. fears of NAFTA

By BARBARA JOSEPH
The Capital-Journal

Fear of losing jobs to Mexico because of its lower wages is fueling the main opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement, U.S. Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., told Kansas business and agricultural representatives Tuesday.

Fresh from a visit with Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari about NAFTA, the Republican senator was in Topeka to garner support for the pact after an earlier promotional stop in Wichita.

Dole acknowledged Mexican wages were between 58 cents and \$2.17 an hour. But he noted the United States had its largest trade surplus — \$6 billion — with that country. In comparison, Japanese wages are \$14.41 an hour, yet the United States has its largest trade deficit — \$60 billion — with that country.

"We have our largest trading surplus with Mexico, where they have the lowest wages," he said. "It doesn't add up. That doesn't tell the whole story."

He said it was important to keep in mind the United States was up to six times more productive than Mexico because of its technology and work force. Moreover, Dole said Salinas assured him and other Republican senators on the Mexico trip he was going to index the minimum wage to productivity, causing Mexican wages to rise.

The Senate minority leader also shot down the argument companies will move to Mexico once the agreement is signed.

"They can do that now — nothing to stop them," he said, citing two plants that have moved back to the United States from Mexico, one of them a General Motors plant with 1,100 employees.

Despite predicting Senate passage of NAFTA, Dole acknowledged other opponents to it: labor, a large bloc of congressional Democrats, former presidential candidate Ross Perot and many of Dole's own constituents.

"I'd say right now most calls are anti-NAFTA," he said. "We think there's an organized effort out there. That's why we need to make certain that everybody knows some positive things about the North American Free Trade Agreement."

Dole and other supporters contend the pact among the United States, Canada and Mexico would create jobs at home by opening new markets. And Dole said Central and South American countries are eager to join what would be the world's largest trading bloc.

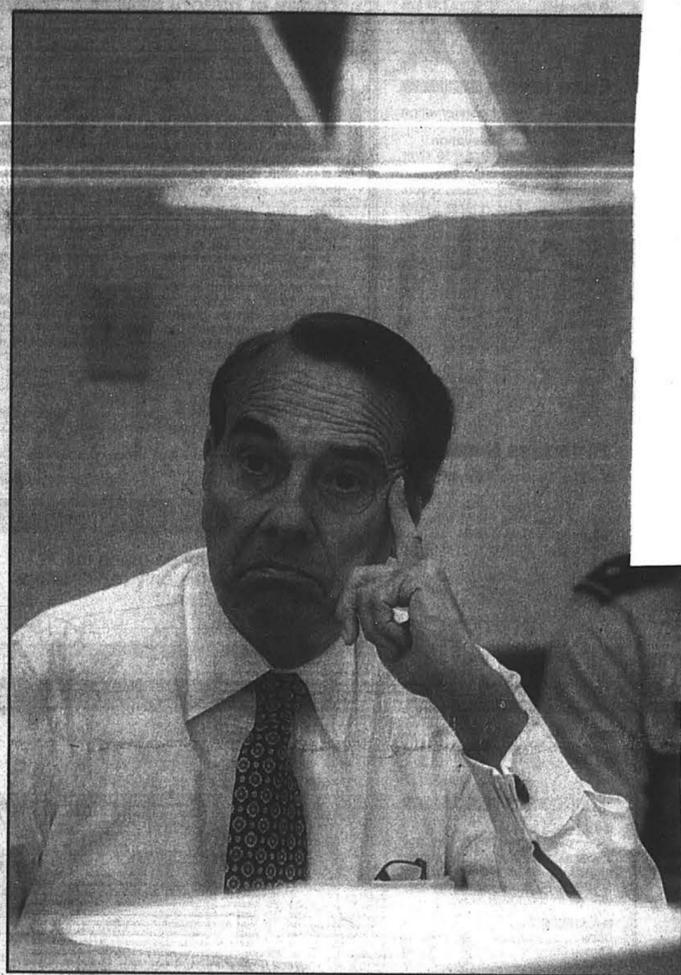
He promised to get more information to constituents about safeguarding side agreements on labor, environment and import surges.

Dole said it was important to get the agreement signed this year because the longer it hangs out there, the more opposition it draws. And the 1994 elections will make it more difficult to pass.

With his support of NAFTA, Dole finds himself lining up behind President Clinton to pass the treaty.

"I'm going to bat for America and Kansas, and I'd be happy to bat for the president, too," he said. "It just happens we tend to be more free trade or fair trade on the Republican side. This is not a partisan issue."

Dole made his remarks during a forum with about 50 business and agricultural leaders and during a news conference. He plans a similar NAFTA promotional stop in Olathe today.



—Jeff A. Taylor/The Capital-Journal

Senate Republican leader Bob Dole was in Topeka on Tuesday to discuss subjects ranging from NAFTA to flood assistance. See related story on page 8-A.

merce and various trade groups. "It's just a tremendous opportunity for the U.S. pork industry," said Tim Rose, an official with the Kansas Pork Producers Association.

"It would dramatically increase jobs on both sides of the border," said Ted J. Vlamis, an official with Pioneer Balloon Co. But some people voiced concerns.

Christina Campbell Cline, a Wichita accountant who opposed Dole last year in the Republican primary, said she thought it would be a boon to the U.S. insurance industry, but later said she was worried about the safety of food imported from Mexico.

Harry Hicks, a retired executive and board member of the Wichita World Trade Council, said he thought parts of the accord were bad news for the United States.

"It's just like a grass fire that gets going and is hard to stop," Hicks said before the meeting with Dole.

"I'm an avowed free-trader, absolutely, but the inclusion of Mexico at this point, a developing nation ... will just complicate the thing if not destroy it."

During the 45-minute meeting, Hicks handed a one-page memorandum to Dole in which he called the inclusion of Mexico in the agreement "premature" and "a bad marriage."

If NAFTA is approved, the Mexican market will grow, Dole and others said, but if the United States does not capture the market, some other country will.

"We need them, and they need us," Dole said of the Mexicans. "It's a great big opportunity for us. ... It's something we shouldn't let pass by."