

Remarks of Senator Bob Dole

86TH ANNUAL MEETING

of the

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

May 13, 1992

WELCOME TO CAPITOL HILL. I KNOW YOU HAVE A FULL AGENDA,
AND I'M PLEASSED TO BE PART OF IT.

YOUR VISIT IS TIMELY. MUCH HAS CHANGED THESE PAST 12
MONTHS, BOTH HERE IN WASHINGTON AND AROUND THE WORLD.

WE'RE ALL STILL GRAPPLING WITH THE MEANING AND IMPORT OF
THE RECENT AND TERRIBLE EVENTS IN LOS ANGELES. THERE ARE NO EASY
ANSWERS.

WHATEVER OUR VIEWS OF THE VERDICT IN THE RODNEY KING
CASE -- AND IT IS HARD NOT TO VIEW THAT VERDICT SKEPTICALLY --
I'M NOT SURE IT SERVES ANYONE'S LONG-TERM INTEREST TO GIVE UP ON
OR START BASHING OUR JUDICIAL PROCESS. IN FACT, OUR JUDICIAL
SYSTEM, OVERALL, HAS PROBABLY DONE MORE TO PROTECT AND ADVANCE
MINORITY RIGHTS THAN ANY OTHER INSTITUTION OF OUR GOVERNMENT.
AND ONE COURT CASE, NO MATTER HOW SHOCKING OR SEEMINGLY UNFAIR
ITS OUTCOME, DOESN'T CHANGE THAT.

MORE TO THE POINT, THE KING CASE CERTAINLY DOESN'T
PROVIDE ANY JUSTIFICATION FOR CRIMINAL VIOLENCE. BURNING AND
LOOTING AND RANDOM ASSAULTS ON INNOCENT PEOPLE DON'T DO A WHIT OF
GOOD FOR EITHER RODNEY KING, OR FOR THE PEOPLE OF EAST LOS
ANGELES.

I ALSO DON'T BUY LAYING ALL THE CARNAGE AND THE CHAOS AT
THE DOORSTEP OF ANY ONE PRESIDENT OR ADMINISTRATION, PAST OR
PRESIDENT. LYNDON JOHNSON AND JIMMY CARTER DON'T DESERVE ALL THE
BLAME, TO BE SURE. BUT NEITHER DO RONALD REAGAN AND GEORGE BUSH.

AND I CAN'T BE TOO CLEAR ABOUT THIS -- SOME OF THE BLAME FALLS ON THOSE WHO RIOT AND LOOT. THEIR ACTIONS ARE UNJUSTIFIED, AND -- NO MATTER WHAT THEIR ECONOMIC OR SOCIAL STATE -- THAT IS NO EXCUSE FOR THE KIND OF LAWLESSNESS AND VIOLENCE WE ALL WITNESSED.

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, WE DO HAVE A LOT OF UNFINISHED WORK IN THIS COUNTRY. RACISM IS A SICK AND SAD FACT OF LIFE WITH FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE. AND WE DO HAVE ENORMOUS SOCIAL PROBLEMS -- MANY, BUT NOT ALL OF THEM, CENTERED IN OUR LARGE URBAN AREAS.

THE FACT IS, NOT ONE OF US HAS THE WHOLE ANSWER. THE FACT IS, THIS WHOLE STORY HAS FAR MORE VICTIMS THAN VILLAINS; AND THIS WHOLE PROBLEM YIELDS FAR MORE QUESTIONS THAN SIMPLE ANSWERS.

AND WE'RE NOT GOING TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM UNLESS WE SET ASIDE VIOLENCE AND HATRED; PUT DOWN POSTURING AND PARTISANSHIP; AND WORK TOGETHER -- THE ENTIRE NATION -- TO DEAL FORTHRIGHTLY WITH ALL THE COMPLEX ASPECTS OF THIS SITUATION.

WITH POVERTY. WITH SHORTCOMINGS IN OUR EDUCATIONAL, HOUSING AND HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS. ALL OF THAT.

BUT WITH LAWLESSNESS AND CRIME IN THE STREETS, TOO. WITH A BREAKDOWN IN FAMILY VALUES AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY. WITH THE CENSORSHIP ON OPEN DISCOURSE AND CREATIVE POLICY-MAKING IMPOSED BY THE STRICTURES OF "POLITICAL CORRECTNESS" AND TABOOS ON CERTAIN TRUTHS.

THESE ARE PROBLEMS AFFECTING ALL OF AMERICA. AND THEIR SOLUTION WILL REQUIRE THE INVOLVEMENT OF ALL AMERICANS.

AND THE RIOTS AND THEIR AFTERMATH, OF COURSE, ARE ONLY THE MOST RECENT OF THE STARTLING EVENTS OF THE PAST 12 MONTHS.

A YEAR AGO, GEORGE BUSH WAS RIDING HIGH IN THE POLLS, AND THE DEMOCRATS WERE SCRAMBLING TO COME UP WITH A "SACRIFICIAL LAMB" FOR '92.

A YEAR AGO, DEMOCRACY AND FREE MARKETS WERE JUST STARTING TO TAKE ROOT IN EASTERN EUROPE, EVEN AS GORBACHEV STRUGGLED TO SURVIVE IN THE SOVIET UNION.

AND A YEAR AGO, WHILE THE COUNTRY WAS STILL CELEBRATING OUR VICTORY IN DESERT STORM, PRESIDENT BUSH LAUNCHED A MAJOR INITIATIVE FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST -- AN INITIATIVE WHICH, FOR THE FIRST TIME, HAS BROUGHT ISRAEL AND ITS ARAB NEIGHBORS TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE.

TODAY, A YEAR LATER, WE FACE A PRESENT FULL OF PROMISE - - BUT STILL HOLDING MUCH PERIL, FOR AMERICA AND FOR THE IDEALS WE ESPOUSE.

THAT IS TRUE HERE AT HOME WHERE, HOPEFULLY, WE ARE SEEING THE FIRST CONVINCING SIGNS OF AN ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

IT IS TRUE OVERSEAS, TOO, IN THE EMERGING DEMOCRACIES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION, IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND ELSEWHERE AROUND THE GLOBE WHERE FREEDOM CONTINUES TO ASSERT ITS TIMELESS APPEAL.

AND IT IS TRUE, PERHAPS MOST POIGNANTLY OF ALL, IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

LET'S FACE IT: WE AMERICANS ARE NOT A PATIENT PEOPLE. IN WHATEVER WE DO, WE WANT VISIBLE PROGRESS. WE WANT QUICK SOLUTIONS. AS I HAVE SUGGESTED, THAT IS TRUE IN TERMS OF RACE

RELATIONS AND SOCIAL PROGRESS IN AMERICA. AND IT IS TRUE IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA, TOO.

IN OUR HASTE TO BRING PROBLEMS TO THEIR ULTIMATE SOLUTION, WE SOMETIMES LOSE SIGHT OF WHERE WE STARTED, WHERE WE ARE, AND HOW FAR WE HAVE COME. WE TEND TO FOCUS NOT ON WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED, BUT INSTEAD ON WHAT THERE IS STILL TO BE DONE.

SO TODAY, IF I HAVE ANY MESSAGE IN REGARD TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS -- LET THE MESSAGE BE THIS: KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE.

AND -- WITHOUT UNDERESTIMATING THE PROBLEMS AND PITFALLS THAT LIE AHEAD -- LET'S KEEP IN MIND HOW FAR WE HAVE COME.

UNDER PRESIDENT BUSH, WE HAVE SEEN THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM -- AN HISTORIC BREAKTHROUGH FOR FREEDOM IN ITS OWN RIGHT, BUT ALSO THE COLLAPSE OF THE "REAR BASE" OF RADICAL ARAB REGIMES.

UNDER THIS PRESIDENT, WE HAVE SEEN NOT ONLY THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL, BUT ALSO THE FALL OF THOSE TOWERING WALLS WHICH FOR YEARS IMPRISONED MILLIONS OF JEWS INSIDE THE SOVIET UNION.

UNDER THIS PRESIDENT, WE HAVE SEEN THE DEFEAT OF THE MOST BELLICOSE AND BOLD OF THE RADICAL ARAB LEADERS, SADDAM HUSSEIN; AND THE DECIMATION OF HIS MILITARY MACHINE, THE MOST POWERFUL IN THE REGION OUTSIDE ISRAEL.

UNDER THIS PRESIDENT, AND GROWING OUT OF HIS BRILLIANT AND DETERMINED DIPLOMACY IN THE AFTERMATH OF DESERT STORM, WE HAVE SEEN ISRAEL ACHIEVE THE CENTRAL GOAL OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY, DIRECT TALKS WITH THE ARAB STATES -- TALKS ARRANGED LARGELY ON

ISRAEL'S TERMS.

NOW, LET ME BE CLEAR. NO ONE HERE HAS HIS OR HER HEAD BURIED IN THE SAND. THERE ARE PROBLEMS OF SUBSTANCE AND NEGOTIATING STRATEGY IN U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS. THERE ARE PROBLEMS OF POLICY AND PERCEPTION WHICH HAVE DRIVEN A WEDGE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND MANY IN THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY.

BUT ARE THESE DIFFERENCES IMPORTANT ENOUGH, WHEN MEASURED AGAINST ALL THAT WE HAVE IN COMMON -- ALL THAT ISRAEL SHARES WITH THE U.S., ALL THAT PRESIDENT BUSH SHARES WITH THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF JEWISH AMERICANS -- ARE THE DIFFERENCES SO IMPORTANT THAT THEY SHOULD THREATEN ALL THAT WE HOLD IN COMMON?

MORE TO THE POINT, EXACTLY WHOSE INTERESTS ARE SERVED WHEN ISRAEL AND THE U.S. LET BRUISED FEELINGS LEAD TO BRINKMANSHIP? WHOSE INTERESTS ARE SERVED WHEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY LET RUMOR AND RHETORIC SUBSTITUTE FOR REASONED COMMUNICATION AND COMPROMISE, AS WE ALL SEEK TO SHAPE AMERICAN POLICIES IN WAYS THAT ADVANCE AMERICAN INTERESTS - - AND DO THAT IN IMPORTANT PART BY INSURING THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL?

WE ARE WELL INTO OUR ELECTION CAMPAIGN. ISRAEL IS COMING TO THE CLOSE OF ITS CAMPAIGN. IT IS A DIFFICULT TIME IN BOTH COUNTRIES TO AVOID POSTURING AND PARTISANSHIP, AND TRY A LITTLE STATESMANSHIP.

BUT DON'T THE STAKES FOR ALL OF US DEMAND THAT WE TRY? THAT WE EACH DO OUR PART TO BRING OUR NATION -- OUR PRESIDENT,

AND YOUR COMMUNITY -- TOGETHER, RATHER THAN PLOTTING HOW TO BRING EACH OTHER TO GRIEF? THAT WE EACH DO OUR PART TO REBUILD AGE-OLD TIES BETWEEN OUR NATION AND ISRAEL -- TIES OF PRINCIPLE AND POLICY THAT TRANSCEND TRANSITORY PROBLEMS?

AS I SAID EARLIER, THESE ARE HISTORIC DAYS, OF BOTH PROMISE AND PERIL. IT IS UP TO US -- AND IN IMPORTANT WAYS TO THE PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM -- TO DECIDE WHICH PATH WE CHOOSE.