



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

FULTON COUNTY LINCOLN DAY DINNER

MARRIOTT MOTOR HOTEL

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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As you know, ten years ago we were being told we were on the brink of extinction, due to go under any minute. The obituaries continue now, from pundits and observers, as well as some disillusioned Republicans. But are we dead? I don't think so.

- NOT ALL SETBACKS -

We have controlled the Executive Branch of the government for six of the last ten years. We have -- you have -- re-established the Republican Party in the South. We ended Kennedy's War, pretty much the way Barry Goldwater said it should have been ended back in 1964. We are still wrestling with Johnson's Economy, and it's hard to say how that is going to work out. The Supreme Court has stopped listening to port. That is a Republican achievement, and one which I hope we will build on as we go along.

We have reversed the flow of political power into the Federal City. So far, that is a marginal accomplishment, but the effort to decentralize power will continue and, I believe, is irreversible. All things considered, we aren't doing too badly for a dead party.

But we have to be realistic and recognize that we are doing badly enough.

- ONE MAJOR SETBACK -

The events of Watergate hurt the Republican Party badly. It would be foolish to pretend otherwise, after seeing the results of the '74 elections. Watergate is history, and as Republicans, we can't change history.

Some can pretend that Kennedy's War was really Nixon's War, or that Johnson's Economy is really Ford's Economy, but we can't pretend that Watergate was the culmination of a lot of abuses that had been indulged in by both parties for a long, long time. In the case of Watergate, we can't even learn anything from history that we didn't already know before it all happened.

- CHANGING THE FUTURE -

But we can change the future. We have an excellent opportunity to do that.

We can do it precisely because the Democrats are the majority party. They have started the majority of the wars in our history. They have ensured that the majority of the power which our Constitution gave to the people has been moved to Washington and passed down to the Bureaucrats. They have sponsored the majority of the spending programs that have brought us to the edge of bankruptcy.

And, at the present rate, I expect that before long a majority of them will have declared for the Presidency -- at least a majority of those in the Senate.

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- CONGRESSIONAL POWER LOSS EXPLAINED -

As a result of this mob-like yearning to get out of the Senate and into the White House, a majority of the time that ought to be spent working on legislation is spent working to get a nomination that is fifteen or sixteen months away.

Any objective observer must find it curious that so many can express so much concern about getting power back into the Congress while at the same time they are themselves spending so much time trying to get out of the Congress. Anybody that wonders why the Congress has lost so much power in recent years and why the White House has acquired so much, should just look at the absentee records of the Members of a Congress that has been Democratically-controlled for the period coinciding with the loss of Congressional power.

So when you put the Democrats in perspective, they haven't got a great deal to brag about when they consider their majority status. At the same time, for that same reason, all Americans have a great deal to worry about.

The most conspicuous Democrat achievement in this Congress, to date, has been the resurrection of King Caucus as part of the effort to impose a new orthodoxy on Congressional Democrats. The liberals among House Democrats have seized all power in the caucus. They control a bare majority of their caucus. But because they do, they can determine the Democrat position and dictate to the full House, no matter what Republicans and conservative Democrats may prefer.

Already, one very respected and very senior House Democrat has become a Republican to avoid the discipline of the new caucus-imposed, party-line orthodoxy. Among those who didn't leave on their own, the first to feel the sting were four Southern Committee Chairmen, deposed for their heresy of independent thought and independent action.

I don't suggest that this is a message to your fellow Southerners. Perhaps it doesn't indicate a generalized assault against the power of the Southern delegation among Democrats, historically its most stable element.

But it might. And it is worth reminding your Democrat friends of, if they tell you that voting Democrat is the only way to insure the South a voice in national affairs.

- SOME CAUSE FOR HOPE -

But, as for we Republicans, I think we make a mistake to wallow in our misfortune, to wring our hands about our future, and to entertain dark self-doubts about why we are Republicans in the first place.

Obviously, many of our fellow Republicans show signs that they are going through such a political identity crisis.

We would do well to ask how do our opponents answer the analogous question -- why be a Democrat? Is it to pursue such lofty goals as:

- Elimination of oil production and discovery incentives at precisely the time we need them most?
- Continuing indefinitely our Government's spending binge?
- Continuing the growth of Federal power at the expense of private freedom?
- Or to bless us, at some later date, with coupon gas rationing?

Why be a Republican indeed.

If that's why Democrats are Democrats, then two easy answers immediately come to mind about why we are Republicans.

First, to oppose the Democrats' program.

Second, because if they really do pursue these goals, then in six months, or maybe a year, the American people are going to wake up to the reality of what the current majority party has in mind for them and the country. And then, it isn't necessarily dreaming to predict that others who are not now Republicans are going to start asking themselves some pretty basic questions.

Like why not?

The Democrats -- no matter what the size of their Congressional majority -- cannot lead. But they are demonstrating they can obstruct.

- NEED FOR LEADERSHIP -

Make no mistake about it. We are in a dangerous period. The Congress is bent on retrieving some of the power that has been siphoned off by the White House. And it should retrieve that power. All things being equal, that is a positive move. But all things are not equal.

The country needs attention. It needs leadership. And the Congress which proposes to take back power and provide that leadership, doesn't know what to do with the power, has no legislative leadership, and is trying to buy time while they figure out where the leadership is going to come from, where it's going to go, and what to do with the power.

Unfortunately, we don't have that kind of time.

- ENERGY POLICY OBSTRUCTIONISM -

Consider the energy situation. President Ford proposed a very comprehensive program for dealing with our energy needs. The Congress has responded by singling out one small part of that program, condemning it, offering nothing in its place, and ignoring the rest of the program. And finally, yesterday, supposedly in the interest of compromise, they offered an energy scheme of their own that's literally miles away from the President's plan. If that doesn't make compromise impossible, it certainly makes further lengthy delay inevitable.

It ought to be clear that the Democrats are not going to have a very pretty record to take to the Nation in 1976, in spite of their present optimism.

Those who say the Republican Party is dead presumably think the Democrats are very much alive. Alive and kicking.

But whom are they kicking?

And just whom is this much-vaunted, "self-described" party of the common man "kicking"?

Why, who else?

- CONCLUSION -

I want to leave you with one cautionary "don't". Don't get caught in the trap of overreacting or participating in a lot of divisive ideological posturing, and threats of third or fourth party activities. Although we can't fly on one who, and neither can the Republican Party, we need all factions. We need conflict because it leads to progress. But it only leads to progress when it ends in resolution and not in dissolution.

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The Democrats, who think themselves so familiar with the lot of the common man, so familiar with his true wants and needs and desires, so familiar with what is really in his best interest, are proving beyond doubt that familiarity really can breed contempt.

And contempt breeds control.

Direct control, for example, of about a third of the so-called common man's paycheck. Taxes led the rise in the cost of living last year and the Social Security tax now takes more than the income tax from almost half of American workers. In spite of this, there is a new awareness that the Social Security system is on the brink of bankruptcy, and without major reform, won't much longer be able to live up to the promise the Democrats made for it.

The most revealing thing about the Democrats' vision of the common man is that, down deep, Democrats don't really think they have much in common with him.

They think they know what's best for him. They think he doesn't.

They think they can take care of his future. They don't think he can.

They think they can provide for his food, his shelter, his children's education, his retirement, his health, his happiness. They don't think he can.

But, by giving him everything they think he wants -- or should want -- they have taken a lot away from him.

When he begins to ask for help, as I'm sure he will; when he asks to be saved from his Democrat saviors -- we'd better be there and ready.

We all have a lot of work to do, and the nuts and bolts part of that work is going to have to be done by people like yourselves, in conjunction with the National, State and local Republican Committees.

- ORGANIZATION THE KEY -

Political success, like genius, is 90 percent perspiration and 10 percent inspiration. The key to everything is organization.

The real work consists in plowing through registration lists, computer runs, and telephone books, and then going to the people. That is the guts of politics, and there has never been any substitute for it. The pollsters and media experts, and the campaign directors and all the rest can't do a thing for you unless you have people registered to vote, and willing to vote Republican.

One of the most important things demonstrated during the Nixon Presidency was that there are a lot of Americans who are Republicans -- whether they ever knew it before or not. They stand for fiscal responsibility, they stand for a strong -- not fat, but strong -- national defense, they stand for government restraint, and they will no longer fall for pie-in-the-sky programs that produce little more than a bigger bureaucracy and a higher national debt.

Your task is to go out and bring those people in. Don't be discouraged by Watergate, don't be misled by those who tell you the Republican Party is in disgrace, and don't be dismayed by those who say we are a dying party. We weren't dead in 1974. But we were asleep. And while we slept, Democrats sneaked in and stole our issues -- and several seats. That can't happen again. The party of Lincoln has not come this far into America's future to perish because we allow Democrats to take the initiative away from us on our own issues.

- ONE CAUTION -

I want to leave you with one more cautionary "don't". Don't get caught in the trap of encouraging or participating in a lot of divisive ideological squabbling, and threats of third or fourth party activities. Airplanes can't fly on one wing, and neither can the Republican Party. We need all factions. We need conflict because it leads to progress. But it only leads to progress when it ends in resolution and not in dissolution.

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Remember, it is the Democrat Party which is the most divided. It doesn't have just a liberal wing and a conservative wing. It has McGovernites, populists, radical fringe groups of all descriptions, cold warriors, one-worlders -- call them what you will, it is factionalized, polarized, split, divided.

And yet, we never hesitate to talk about the Democrats as just that -- THE Democrats. Their divisions are worse than ours, yet their ability for coalescing behind a candidate who shares their political label is seldom in question.

We can do the same, and ought to do it better because we are divided by less. It is significant that the talk of imminent formation of a third party has quieted down because, as yet, no one has come forth to accept the mantle of leadership for a third party movement.

There are all sorts of good pragmatic arguments against third parties. Adverse campaign finance laws, difficulty of mounting a nationwide organization, you know them all.

But, first of all, there is the hard reality that no third party is going to get very far off-the-ground unless it shows the general population that it knows how to lead. And for that it needs a leader. At present, it doesn't have one, and all those whom it has wooed, have politely discouraged the courtship.

- FORD DESERVES SUPPORT -

On the other hand, President Ford has said he will run again. Maybe he will, and maybe he won't. We should take him at his word, and give him every possible bit of support as our President and our Party leader, because he is our Party's leader and he is doing a commendable job as our Nation's leader, given the obstacle of an obstructionist Congress. That doesn't mean he is sacrosanct. When the time comes, the primary process and the convention process will provide us with a good Republican candidate, whether it's President Ford or somebody else, and we better be prepared to support him. The point is to avoid getting postured in a way that produces bitterness, intransigence, and political splits.

Whatever our internal differences, we are all agreed that the Democratic majority does not serve America's best interests. We need to continue to hold the White House. We need more Republicans in Congress, in the State Houses, in the State Legislatures, and in local Government. And the only way we can do all this is by coming together, staying together, and working together.

If we do our job, we will end up with holes in our shoes, and calluses on our thumbs, and sick of telephones.

But the results won't be merely positive. They'll be crucial. If we keep the White House, and expand our Congressional and State House strength, we can -- as we must -- move this country away from the mistaken direction of the past and towards a future of peace, prosperity and continued enjoyment of the fruits of freedom for all of us.

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