



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

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Eighteen percent of the eligible voters in the United States of America call themselves Republicans.

Almost two and one-half times that percentage call themselves Democrats.

Of the remainder -- the independents -- twice as many who lean at all, lean towards Democrat candidates as toward Republicans.

You all know that gloomy, disturbing, depressing statistic. It wasn't supposed to be news to you. I cited it so that you'd know that I know and so you'd understand, if my remarks here today are perhaps a little strong.

DISTURBING TREND

Eighteen percent -- and even that distressingly low number doesn't tell the whole story. Our numbers have been declining continuously over the last two decades and conceivably this may only be the current low. It could get worse. Worse even than 18 percent.

I don't really believe it. You may not like to think it. Or you may already have thought about it a lot. But I cite the possibility just so you will understand if my remarks today seem a little strong.

This is no great political historian standing in front of you. But none you might choose to hear would dispute this observation:

At least in terms of numbers, the Republican Party is today in worse shape than it has ever been before in its history.

And make no mistake, things are never so bad that they can't get worse. All it takes is for good people who are in a position to improve things to decide they won't, or can't or shouldn't because it isn't worth trying anymore, or they just plain can't figure out where to start.

NOT PINNING BLAME

It may not be easy to pin the blame precisely for what has gone wrong. We may want to blame others, but that is a waste of time. Some of us may tend to blame ourselves. We shouldn't.

But we shouldn't totally absolve ourselves either.

We can only absolve ourselves after we are sure we have done all we can do to improve our strength and re-invigorate our party. After we think we have done all we can, if the Republican Party then is no stronger than it is today, there'll be time enough for self-blame, self-absolution or self-pity.

But I cannot believe or accept the notion that, with the kind of commitment I envision, we can do anything but succeed. As a political party, our strength must be measured in terms of the attractiveness of our political program. By definition, a political party is strong if a sufficient number of people are drawn to support what it stands for. And conversely, a political party is

weak if a sufficient number of people are not drawn to support what it stands for, or if they misjudge what it stands for, or if they discount the importance of what it stands for.

ONE FAULT

We can blame ourselves for one thing. If, with all the accumulated years of Republican political activity assembled here in this room; or, more directly, if after six consecutive years in the White House, we have allowed it to happen that people still misjudge what we stand for, or worse, still discount the importance of what we stand for, then we can blame ourselves.

If, as some of us do, we can let our current misfortune discourage and disillusion us so that some Republicans are beginning to wonder themselves why they are Republicans, then we can blame ourselves.

In the face of an overwhelming Democrat majority in Congress, and all the wild schemes they are proposing, if some Republicans don't know why they are Republicans, then we can blame ourselves.

And we can begin to wonder whether we ourselves really know what it is we stand for.

ONE THING GOP STANDS FOR

We are a diverse party. We have membership from varied geographical, ethnic and vocational backgrounds. Republicans don't always agree on the best approach to solving problems. In fact the differences among us can be wide, and are often described, accurately, as philosophical.

But despite all these differences there must be one thing about which it can be said -- Republicans stand for this.

There must be one thing Republicans stand for or else Republicans stand for nothing.

It is not enough to say our purpose is to win elections. That doesn't answer the question why do we want to win elections. For what purpose do Republicans seek office?

NO IMPOSED ORTHODOXY

Republicanism must stand for something. It must mean something. But we Republicans have never made the mistake of others in claiming that we have a political creed that means everything. Republicanism doesn't stand for everything. Being a Republican, in other words, doesn't give you an answer to every problem. It doesn't impose a political orthodoxy.

Being Republican involves you in a political institution which respects the diversity of its membership, relies on the give and take of rational dialogue to develop its political program and helps to further that approach by conducting election campaigns.

DRASTIC CAMPAIGN CHANGES

But now the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974, in the words of the very useful and comprehensive manual which the National Committee commissioned, has the effect of "drastically altering the way in which campaigns for federal office are financed and conducted."

We must heed that law, for the obvious reason that it is the law. It carries with it very strict fines and penalties for those who violate it. Don't take it lightly. The law is going to be rigidly enforced. Your reports are going to be carefully scrutinized. And if you fail to comply, you are going to be subject to severe penalty.

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RIGID LIMITATIONS, STRICTLY ENFORCED

The law contains rigid limits, not only on personal contributions, but on campaign expenditures. If you knowingly accept a contribution from a single contributor in excess of \$1,000 you can be fined \$25,000, imprisoned, or both. The law limits the ability of State and local parties to participate in National Presidential campaigns and it establishes the limits of National Party headquarters involvement in State and local campaigns.

NEW STATE-NATIONAL PARTY RELATIONSHIPS

It imposes a spending limit of \$70,000 for House candidates and 12 cents a voter for Senate candidates or \$150,000, whichever is greater. It allows the National Committee to spend in these races over and above the limits. It also implicitly requires that the National Committee develop a far greater capacity to do for State parties what they have previously done on their own. Under the expenditure limitations, State level campaigns can no longer afford to pay for needed professional services. National headquarters will have to develop them.

NEW STATE PARTY FUNCTION

The new law authorizes the State party to spend in behalf of the campaigns of their states candidates for Federal office. The unrealistically low expenditure ceilings make those state party expenditures -- and vigorous state party involvement in Senatorial and Congressional campaigns -- absolutely essential. The state party's efforts, in fact, may often prove to be the margin of victory.

In short the new law will require a far greater degree of cohesive, national organization than Republicans are used to. It makes the role of the state parties -- and the National Committee -- far more important than ever before in the conduct of elections at the federal level.

And, on this last point, some view the new law as a kind of blessing in disguise-- because it just may provide the impetus we have never had before for getting ourselves organized as we should be. This has been a recurring complaint of Republicans for as long as I can remember. The Republican Party never seems to have an organization that can match the opposition's.

Now, maybe under the impetus of this new law, it is thought, finally we will get organized.

But my question is this. Why does the Republican party need a law passed by an overwhelmingly Democrat-controlled Congress to force it to do what any candidate for senior class president knows he has to do -- to organize for maximum effectiveness.

If nothing else, the Committee For The Re-Election of the President should have given us enough reason to organize. Our performance in the 1974 elections should have done it. Did we really need the Federal Election Campaign Act, no matter how good or how bad it is, to push us into action?

Is this Republican Party still capable of taking action in its own best interest, on its own? I am not concerned here with the substance of the objections that can be raised against the new Federal Campaign Law. I am aware of the arguments about the Constitutionality of public financing, of the contributions limits, of expenditure limits.

As you know quite well, the new law also puts a limit on the amount that can be spent for conventions. Now limiting the cost of conventions, too, has long been a concern. So I suppose the new law can be viewed as a blessing in disguise in this provision, too. But could we not have cut down on the costs on our own? Did we need the Congress to tell us to?

IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATION

Of this much I am certain. New campaign law or not, we do need to build a more effective organization. Expenditure limitations or not, we have to have an organization that can maximize every dime spent for postage, every penny spent for polls, every dollar contributed for Republican campaigns.

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And contributions limitations or not, we need an organization that can raise the money for our campaigns from a larger number of smaller givers not just because the days of the really big contributors seem to be over, but because the more who contribute, the more who are likely to get involved.

New campaign law or not, this is the kind of organization we need. And I applaud the efforts of the National Committee Chairman, Mrs. Smith, and the staff to build it.

STAFF AND GOP LEADERS

During my tenure as National Chairman, I learned the capacity of the RNC staff. It had then, and it has now, a tremendous ability to get the job done.

But the staff needs your help. You are the leaders of the Republican Party. It properly looks to you for direction. And, if the job ahead -- the considerable organizational challenge this Party faces under this new law -- is to be successfully met, then you, the leaders of the Party, National Committee members, State Chairmen, and all of you, are going to have to stay involved.

The staff will have an enormous burden of work. They need and they deserve your active, continuous involvement in that work. And the Party, if we are still serious about re-capturing our lost membership and building our numbers again, needs that involvement by you.

NEW LAW NOT LAST LAW

It is critically important that we build the foundation for a new and more effective organization on something more substantial than the shifting sands of hastily conceived election reform law.

Campaign reform is an important item on the National agenda. It is an important item on my own personal list of priorities for this Nation. But it has not been laid to rest or finally resolved with the adoption of this new law.

In 1971, the Congress of the United States passed and the President signed a campaign reform law. It lasted through two elections and now, in 1974, we have a second law to supersede the first.

At a minimum, this new Republican Party organizational effort which would be desirable even if there never were a campaign reform law in the first place, must always be flexible enough to adjust to the shifting requirements of the almost inevitable campaign reform law amendments to come.

CONVENTION FINANCING

Many of you have just emerged from the National Committee's Spring Meeting, where you considered, among other things, your decision on taking the Federal funds for the 1976 convention. I note the Committee endorsed a legal challenge to the new law, but authorized acceptance of the convention funds, should the challenge fail.

Your decision to accept the treasury money for the convention implies a decision not to raise it from private sources. This provides an immediate illustration of the need for flexibility which I am stressing.

It is possible that the legal challenge may succeed. I don't prejudge the chances either way. But in the process, an injunction is being sought to prevent the distribution of any treasury funds until the case is decided.

What happens now, if the Federal money doesn't come through at all or not until this possible injunction is lifted, which may be considerably later than the July 1st date presently scheduled.

The same thing would happen in this case as happened to my own campaign committee on January 1st when the new law went into effect. The rules were changed and we still had some bills to pay. What happened, on a much smaller scale than the National Committee will have to cope with, was confusion.

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EARLY DECISION ON COURT CHALLENGE ESSENTIAL

We were paying bills incurred under the old act with money raised under the new. There was no clear direction about which rules we should follow.

To avoid such confusion, it is in our compelling interest as a Party that the current court challenge be decided quickly, one way or another.

But when it is, whatever the rules are, you will not only have to obey them, but you will have to be flexible enough in your organization, to adjust to any changes that may come later with new interpretations, new regulations, or new legislation.

Though we spend Federal dollars and operate under Federal regulations, we will have to avoid taking on the inflexible aspect of just another Federal agency.

INDIVIDUAL ACTION

Because, I suggest to you, that isn't what it means to be a Republican.

It has been said of us so often it's become a cliché that we are the party of the individual.

In these times, when individuality means so much to so many and the protection of the rights of the individual has a newly discovered urgency about it, the party of the individual ought to be doing better than it is.

If we act on that in the way we order our own affairs we can make some headway. If we act as an individual organization that is determined to take individual action because it sees it in its own best interest to do so and not just because the law compels us to, we can prosper again. If our organization is made strong and effective and flexible by our own considered individual action, and not by act of Congress, then I'll be suprised if we fail.

For, before long, we will again become what we are, the party of the individual. And then, an increasing number of people will be drawn to support us. And then, by definition, we'll be strong.

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