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NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY REPUBLICAN DINNER
WAMPLER'S ARENA
DAYTON, OHIO
MONDAY, APRIL 28, 1975

It is my pleasure to be here this evening with all of you and to share some reflections about the Republic and about the Republican Party.

There are people today, I realize, who think both are in decline. But, as for me, I am an optimist in spite of recent setbacks. And I hope, in the course of these remarks, to describe some of the grounds for that optimism.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Every way we turn these days, it seems, the same uncertain note is sounded. The same questions seems to confront us -- where do we go from here?

Where, for example, do American policy makers go from here, now that inflation has begun to recede and recession has replaced it as our major and most immediate economic challenge?

Where does American foreign policy go from here, after our recent setbacks in international affairs and after our most profound disappointments in Southeast Asia?

And, within our more immediate political family, where do we Republicans go from here in light of the recent polls suggesting that many Republicans have gone away? Our percentage of the voting population is now smaller than it has been since the Party's earliest days.

Each time that question is raised -- where do we go from here? -- in whatever context it is raised, I offer the same basic answer. I trust it is not an oversimplification. Either we go nowhere from here, or we go back to basics, back to beginnings, back to first principles.

IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

A Washington Star-News columnist writing recently about foreign policy, said it was an "awkward time" to be talking about it. In a real sense, he is right.

It is awkward because of our uncertainty about where we are headed. And awkwardness is a characterization that applies to a broader range of discourse than foreign policy.

Take economics. One gets the feeling these days, if he talks about America's great free enterprise system, that nobody's listening.

Take foreign policy. Talk about maintaining America's place as leader of the free world and, it seems, nobody's listening.

Or talk casually with friends. Mention patriotism. All of a sudden, it may seem, nobody's listening.

And again, to get politically closer to home, talk about Republicanism and it seems, nobody's listening.

STORY NOT GETTING THROUGH

But, if nobody's listening anymore, it just might be because they don't understand what we are trying to say. And maybe that's because we aren't saying it very clear.

We are certainly not saying it very persuasively.

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You can't apologize for something and defend it at the same time.

You can't defend the free enterprise system, if at the same time you are apologizing for the profit motive. You can't defend American if at the same time you apologize for the things that make her unique, her wealth, her power, her free system.

And certainly, you can't defend Republicanism, if at the same time you apologize for its principles.

Back to economics for an illustration. Our free enterprise system and its defenders are on the ropes. One reason for this, I think, is that we who defend it, choose our terms with insufficient care.

We cling to a defense of what we call the "profit system," blind to the fact that the nation grows increasingly distrustful of profits and the profit motive. But, after all, it isn't a profit system simply that we have in this country. It isn't a profit system simply that I defend.

It is an experimental system -- a trial and error system. It is a system that allows success or failure to be determined not by the rich and powerful entrepreneur, but ultimately by the individual decisions of the individual consumers -- the one our Democrat opponents have always called the "common man."

It is a loss system as much as it is a profit system. It is a profit and loss system. And in the individual case, the difference is determined by how close you come to satisfying the needs and desires of the individual consumers.

Still a growing number of people who equate profit with selfishness tend to view a free enterprise "profit system" as one that exists for the benefit of the rich and the perpetuation of privilege.

In a country which, because of that system, has extended a higher degree of prosperity to a more nearly universal segment of its population than any in history, it is obvious that the defenders of the system just are not telling their story well.

We aren't making ourselves understood to the people we want to hear us.

It is the same for foreign policy. If we debate whether it is right or wrong for America to hold her present place of influence in the world, as if we could change that, we have chosen the wrong terms for the debate.

As Secretary Kissinger recently described it, there is an attitude in this country that "suffering is prolonged by American involvement... that defense spending is wasteful at best and produces conflict at worst, that American intelligence activities are immoral, that the necessary confidentiality of diplomacy is a plot to deceive the public..." Not only is it argued that we have been doing these wrong things in foreign policy, but the argument is beginning to be made that it is wrong for us to do anything in foreign policy, that is to try to influence international events at all.

These arguments are based on the assumption that we can alter our position in the world that we can draw in upon ourselves; that America, in one famous phrase, can and should "come home" to itself and leave its neighbors alone.

Such debate is an empty exercise. America's place in the world is fixed by our condition. We are a great power. We are wealthy. We are strong. And therefore, we are involved and our influence is major.

Nothing we can do can change that. Even if we should try, if we decide to pull out, our very decision not to be influential in world affairs would itself have a most profound effect on the shape of the world for generations to come.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, in a recent article on foreign policy offers at least a partial prescription. I think it applies as broadly to public discourse in a positive way as does the characterization of "awkwardness" in a negative way.

Moynihan asserts "it is time for American spokesmen in international forums to come to be feared for the truths they might tell."

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It is indeed time. It is time for us to stop apologizing, to stop beating our breasts to stop being defensive about being strong, or timid about seeking peace. It is time for us to stop being reticent about the miracles our system has accomplished or hesitant about proclaiming our belief in freedom as a desirable condition for all.

If the world, by and large, is at peace today -- and it is -- it is because of America.

If the people of the world, by and large, are better off today than they have been in the past -- and they are -- it's because America has helped.

If we have avoided World War Three for the last thirty years-- as we have, if narrowly sometimes -- it's because of America.

If all this is true, and I believe it is, then let's reassert it proudly. And begin to be feared in international forums not for our strength and power, not for our wealth, but "for the truths we might tell."

I fully appreciate that in today's world, an American who's an optimist, a Republican who's an optimist, finds the burden of truth on his own shoulders.

But, as I said, I am an optimist because I believe not only that it is time we began to reassert ourselves but I believe that many of us are prepared to begin that activity.

If the defenders of the free enterprise system begin to assert themselves, then the truths they will tell can change the world.

It is certainly longpassed time -- fully forty years passed time -- for Republican spokesmen to stand up and begin to reassert themselves about the truths they hold -- that is to say the principles they believe in.

One more quote from Moynihan. He says -- and I think he is right -- that those who lay greater stress on freedom end up doing better by equality than those who stress equality by freedom.

He observes that in the community of nations, the United States of America is of the freedom party.

And I remind you that in the American political community, we Republicans have no future, make no sense, unless we are the freedom party.

That, is what we stand for. Shall we apologize for it, be defensive about it? I think not.

Talk about broadening our base.

What could attract more adherents to Republicanism than for this population, now so terribly concerned about threats to individual freedom and the daily encroachment of big government into more and more of the details of their personal lives, than for them to come to understand finally what we stand for as Republicans.

Freedom and the integrity of the individual.

Are we concerned that this gathering, like most Republican meetings I have attended, lacks what they call socio-economic diversity? That, in plain words, there still aren't very many black Republicans, poor Republicans, Spanish-speaking Republicans?

We should be. We should be disturbed especially because what Republicanism stands for is not just our best hope, but theirs. But they don't know that, because they don't really know what it is we stand for. Or they don't understand what it is we stand for. It's not their fault. It's ours, because we haven't been telling them.

We Republicans, I think, stand for all that I have been talking about tonight. We stand for a strong America, proud of her strength and proud of her freedom and ready to carry her message forcefully and convincingly to the world. I don't question the sincerity of our Democrat opponents, nor their commitment to their country. What I do question is how deep is their appreciation of America's uniqueness? Do they share with us Lincoln's sense of urgency about preserving America's integrity because it really is the last, best hope of mankind.

We stand for an American concept of freedom that universally permits individuals to rise above the "common man" status our friends the Democrats would assign them -- and perform uncommon deeds.

My message in all this is a simple and not very profound one. If you believe you are right, don't hesitate to assert it.

Come out of your shells, Republicans. Watergate is over. The elections of 1974 are a reality -- an unpleasant one -- but a reality that we can't change. Come out of your shells and stop wallowing in the defeats of the recent past.

Things are bad. They is no gainsaying it. But I've been there before myself. On October 1, 1974, my own polls showed me trailing my opponent by more than 10 percent. Everyone said our chances were dead. But we didn't lie down.

Well, the Republican party is dead, only if it lies down. So I say to you, stand up for your Republican party, and get to work.

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