

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas) SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-1601

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 1987

CONTACT: WALT RIKER
(202) 224-3135

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
BICENTENNIAL MINUTE: SENATE REVERSES CENSURE OF PRESIDENT
JANUARY 16, (1837)

TODAY MARKS A NOTABLE ANNIVERSARY IN THE SENATE'S HISTORY. ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO THE SENATE VOTED TO EXPUNGE FROM ITS JOURNAL A RESOLUTION OF CENSURE AGAINST THE PRESIDENT. THREE YEARS EARLIER, THIS BODY HAD ADMINISTERED AN UNPRECEDENTED REBUKE TO PRESIDENT ANDREW JACKSON IN A RESOLUTION DECLARING THAT HE HAD "ASSUMED UPON HIMSELF AUTHORITY AND POWER NOT CONFERRED BY THE CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS, BUT IN DEROGATION OF BOTH."

THIS CONFLICT BEGAN IN 1832 WHEN THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE VETOED LEGISLATION TO RENEW THE BANK OF THE UNITED STATES' FEDERAL CHARTER. SINCE 1816 THIS PRIVATE FINANCIAL INSTITUTION HAD EXERCISED EXCLUSIVE CONTROL OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S DEPOSITS. JACKSON AND HIS SENATE SUPPORTERS, LED BY MISSOURI DEMOCRAT THOMAS HART BENTON, ARGUED THAT THE BANK WAS UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND THEY ALSO BELIEVED THAT IT AIDED COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN THE NORTHEAST AT THE EXPENSE OF THE REST OF THE NATION. AFTER JACKSON DEFEATED HENRY CLAY, A STRONG BANK ALLY, IN THE 1832 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, HE WITHDREW GOVERNMENT FUNDS FROM THE BANK. SUBSEQUENTLY, JACKSON REFUSED A SENATE REQUEST FOR BANK-RELATED DOCUMENTS THAT HE CONSIDERED PRIVILEGED. THIS PROMPTED THE SENATE'S ANTI-ADMINISTRATION MAJORITY IN 1834 TO CENSURE THE PRESIDENT.

SENATOR BENTON WORKED TIRELESSLY OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS TO HAVE THIS BLOT REMOVED FROM JACKSON'S RECORD. FINALLY ON JANUARY 16, 1837, AS THE AILING PRESIDENT WAS PREPARING TO LEAVE OFFICE, THE DEMOCRATS, WITH A NEW MAJORITY IN THE SENATE, ACHIEVED BENTON'S WISH. BY A VOTE OF 24-19, THE SENATE DIRECTED ITS SECRETARY TO DRAW HEAVY BLACK LINES AROUND THE CENSURE NOTATION IN ITS 1834 JOURNAL. THE DEMOCRATS THRILLED TO THEIR GREAT SYMBOLIC VICTORY WHILE HENRY CLAY, DRESSED IN BLACK TO MOURN THE CONSTITUTION, CONCLUDED: "THE SENATE IS NO LONGER A PLACE FOR ANY DECENT MAN."

###