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He comforts conservatives, plays to the cameras and draws support from Reagan and other GOP powers. It's Gerry Ford's horse race this year but Kansas' junior senator foresees his own presidential stakes in 1980. If Ford wins this one, that is.

Sen Robert J. Dole says he wants to be vice president because it's inside work and there's no heavy lifting. An aide compares it to the job of the fellow who cleaned up after circus elephants. One day, when asked why he had performed the cleanups for so many years without complaint, he said, "It's show business, isn't it?"

The junior senator from Kansas is now in this circus called the national election campaign. He jokes with a deadpan face that he has discovered that if President Ford wins, he wins, too.

And he's out doing his part to see that Ford does win. He has been tirelessly campaigning and mercilessly attacking the opposition. That, after all, is probably why Ford selected him for a running mate. He runs hard.

Bob Dole is not the warmest person in the world, and therefore does not bring a different dimension to a campaign beset at times with verbal and strategic errors. The Republican party needs the support of blacks, Mexican-Americans, more minorities, the vice-presidential candidate says, but by himself he probably can't do that. He doesn't seem to relate that well to urban areas, either.

What he can do in this campaign, however, is be the Comforter paying cross-country homage

to Gerald R. Ford, and extolling the virtues of conservative principles. He travels the nation to assure Republican gatherings the President hasn't forgotten or overlooked them. He's been in the forefront of Republican activities for years and now he's repeating the task with overtime.

He seldom enters politically hostile territory and before partisan gatherings his entertaining off-the-cuff remarks tightly bind him to the audience. He's an instant hit, the morale booster of Republican forces. And in these weeks of vice-presidential campaigning the President's sharp-tongued champion has, aboard his red-white-and-blue "Bob Dole Campaign Express," logged in at more than 80 cities in 40 or more states, surrounded by staff and with his radiant wife, Elizabeth, on his arm.

With notable exceptions his remarks are weighted carefully to place the focus on the President.

"We can't make policy," Dole said when asked in an interview about the role he and Democratic vice-presidential nominee Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota play in the campaign. "I can't stand up and say this will be done in the Ford-Dole administration because I'm the vice presidential candidate, Mondale can't say it either, and I'm under even further restraints



Queen of the stump is Elizabeth Hanford Dole, on leave from the Federal Trade Comm., and working crowds with charm.

because I'm running with a President. I've got to be careful what I say. You know, it could have some impact on some government functions."

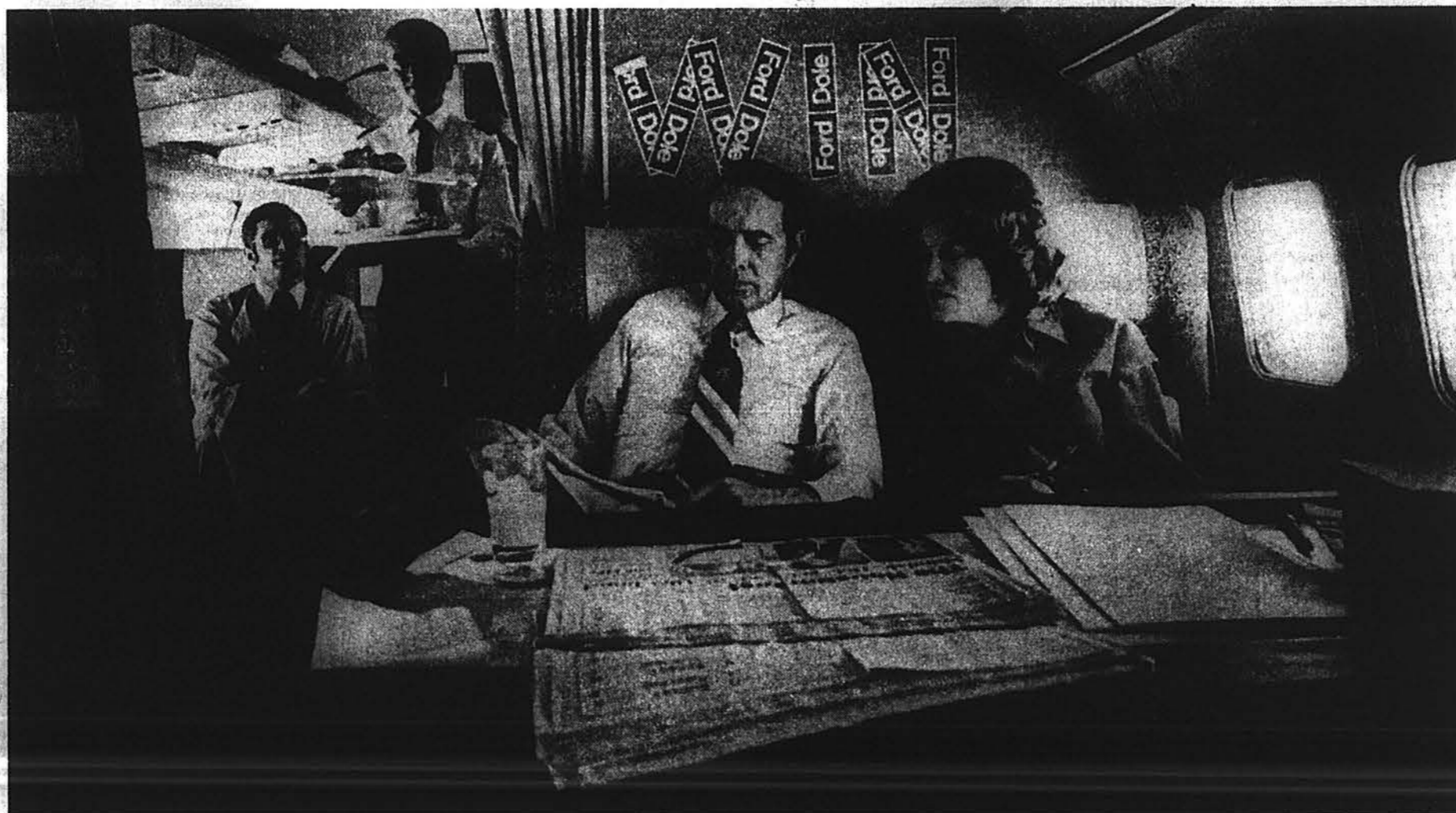
Ford sets his policy and espouses it, Dole can only espouse it. But with his usual free-wheeling style and little advice, guidance or suggestion from the President Ford Committee, Bob Dole manages his own campaign with his sixth political sense. Dole staffers make suggestions that their boss may or may not follow. He speaks best with no papers before him. If he

by KEN PETERSON
photos by DAVE JOHNSON

has a prepared text, his delivery sags and bogs down.

A tip-off to the kind of out-of-the-spotlight vice president Bob Dole would be lies in the fact that with only three weeks left in the campaign, Dole says he hasn't been told what his duties would be as vice president, aside from being chief engineer of Republican farm policies.

It is also the sign of a campaign working. *Continued on next page*



Between whistle stops on the airborne "Bob Dole Campaign Express," the Doles read political critiques of the previous day's stumping and the candidate polished his arguments against Carter and Mondale.