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Dole Replies to Critics Who Believe That He Hurt Ford

By DOUGLAS E. KNEELAND
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 4—Senator Robert J. Dole, the losing Republican vice-presidential candidate, defended himself today against criticism that his slashing campaign style might have contributed to President Ford's defeat in Tuesday's election.

Several national surveys have shown that the dark-visaged, ardent, 53-year-old Kansan's demeanor on the hustings turned some voters from the Ford-Dole ticket, while his counterpart, Senator Walter F. Mondale, apparently added a bit to the acceptability of Jimmy Carter.

"If You Win, You're a Genius"

Obviously fatigued and fighting a mild flu virus, Senator Dole relaxed on a sofa in his Watergate apartment, munching on a sandwich and sipping milk, in a midafternoon interview in which he declared:

"If you win, you're a genius. If you lose, everybody's trying to assess."

Apparently annoyed by suggestions that he might have cost the Republicans the election, Senator Dole continued:

"I kept reporting back to the President. I figured Stu Spencer [political director of the President Ford Committee] or somebody, if they were getting any feedback, would tell me. They kept telling me to 'keep doing what you're doing.'"

"I had to be cast in the role of lightning rod in some ways if the President was going to stay in the White House."

Later, in what could have been a sort of backhand criticism of Mr. Ford, he added:

"Maybe it's defensive, but we started way behind, and it ended with just a whisker. I had to be there to take the heat. It probably did rattle a few people, but somebody had to go out there and mix it up with Carter. You can't just talk about the quality of life."

In trying to emphasize the positive in the campaign, President Ford devoted much speaking time in explaining what his Administration had done and would do to improve the "quality of life" for all Americans.

At another point in the interview, when asked if he should have taken a softer approach on the stump, Senator Dole smiled and said:

"This quality of life of the President, we tried that four or five times, and it seemed to me they (audiences) went to sleep. The people who come to rallies, they want to know you're alive. You've got to get them to go out and work for this guy."

Still later he added somewhat ruefully:

"If you take the heat for the President, you have to take the lumps, too, I guess."

Asked what could have been done differently to change the results of the extremely close election, Senator Dole, a former chairman of the Republican National Committee who has made no bones about the fact that his main passion is politics, replied thoughtfully:

"You always try to go over everything that happened and what could have changed. I don't really believe you can put your finger on anything except that the President almost pulled it off. It was remarkable—for six months, no one remembers what the score was, and then it was a close election."

Declaring that he had "no bitterness" over the outcome, Mr. Dole added that he also had no "guilty feelings" because he had "worked hard" on the hustings.

Perhaps he worked too hard, he went on, in the 10½-week campaign that took him 65,000 miles through 44 states with scarcely a day off.

"And You Make Mistakes"

"You're more effective if you're rested," he explained. "My voice was giving me fits the last few weeks, and you make mistakes, too."

The Senator was wounded twice and decorated twice in World War II. His 39-month struggle for rehabilitation from wounds that left him with only one leg and with little use of his right arm, seems, according to some friends, to have made him strongly reluctant to show any signs of weakness.

In the campaign, he often seemed unwilling to acknowledge mistakes or apologize for them, but after conceding today that he had made some because of fatigue, he went on:

"I think some of the things I got messed up on...I wasn't consistent, but I wasn't deliberately trying to be evasive."

The remark that probably brought him the most criticism in the campaign came during his nationally televised debate with Mr. Mondale when he said that all four wars involving the United States in this century had been "Democrat wars."

Later, despite the controversy it appeared to be causing, he continued to say that if the Democrats wanted to dredge up Watergate, he would "dredge up" the wars in their past.

At another point, he denied that he had ever used the phrase, then when confronted with a copy of the quotation instructed his press secretary to say that he did not recall using it.

If He Had a Second Chance

However, when asked today if he would avoid the "Democrat wars" phrase if given the chance to do it over again, he said:

"I think probably, in retrospect, that was just kind of a shorthand approach to what I had in mind. We weren't trying to suggest that every time you're a Democrat in the White House you have a war."

Contending that he had only meant that it was a historical fact, he acknowledged that it "may have sounded partisan."

"The point I was making was that we were trying to be prepared for peace, but I apparently didn't do a very good job of it," he said. "It came out that I was totally partisan."

On another matter, discussing the breakdown of the voting and President Ford's strength in the West, Senator Dole said:

"That's that Sunbelt that Reagan was talking about, coupled with the South. That's fine if you don't have a Southern candidate running against you."

Asked if he thought Ronald Reagan, the former Governor of California who nearly defeated Mr. Ford for the Republican nomination, could have beaten Mr. Carter, he said:

"Ford carried Michigan and Illinois. I don't know how Reagan would have been there. It's a question of whether he could have cracked the South. I don't know whether anybody could."

Would Mr. Reagan or someone else have been a better choice to run for Vice President on the Ford ticket?

Senator Dole mused for a minute.

"With Reagan on the ticket, he might have pulled it off," he said. "Who knows, but he didn't want to run."

After pondering another moment, he went on:

"I don't know who would have aided [John B. Connally? With Connally in Texas working night and day—and, of course, that's not the same as running—we got beat. [Senator Howard] Baker? We lost Tennessee. Kit Bond [the Governor of Missouri] was mentioned. He was defeated."

Senator Dole said that since he had not been in on the decision-making at the National Convention in Kansas City that led to his selection, he did not know what their options were.

Name Kept Popping Up

"The President said my name kept popping up," he said. And Mr. Reagan put in a good word for him at a time when Ford people were convinced that he had to have a running mate acceptable to the Reagan supporters.

"They were behind in the Farm Belt and had to have somebody who could help," Mr. Dole went on. "And the facts are we carried the Farm Belt."

Then he added:

"Had you won, it would have been a perfect ticket. But you lost, so..."

As for the future of the Republican Party, which has only 20 percent of the nation's registered voters and will now control neither the White House nor Congress, he said:

Nixon calls loser Dole

WASHINGTON (UPI)

Sen. Robert Dole received a phone call from Richard M. Nixon after the election in which the former President expressed the wish that Jimmy Carter would do a good job in the White House.

Dole, vice presidential candidate on the Republican ticket with President Ford, disclosed the conversation with Nixon during a television interview with Martin Agronsky of the Public Broadcasting Service Friday.

Asked if he had heard from Nixon, Dole said:

"I had a call from Mr. Nixon—he said, for whatever it's worth, I want you to know that I think you did a good job, and he did say, and I think very properly, he said 'I hope Governor Carter does a good job for the sake of the country.'"

"He said, 'It's always hard to lose the close ones—'

—if it's a big one—but when it's close everyone is looking around, you know, the cannibals come out and try to assess what happened."

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Dole Wishes Campaign Was 1 Week Longer

By Ray Morgan
Kansas Correspondent

TOPEKA—Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) says the momentum developed by President Gerald Ford during the last days of the campaign would have enabled the President to win if the Ford-Dole team had had one more week in which to get across its message.

"As far as I'm concerned the greatest thing about the campaign was that the President told me election night he was very pleased with what we had been able to do," said Dole, who lost a chance to be vice-president when his Ford was defeated at the polls Tuesday.

"You look at the way the farm states went and we carried almost every one of them. I think one of the reasons why I was put on the ticket was to help carry the farm states where the President thought he might be in trouble."

"I campaigned hard in those states and since we were able to carry them for the Republicans it would appear that I was able to do the job that I was assigned."

Dole, who spent election night at the White House watching the returns with Ford, said the only time the President expressed real disappointment was when the figures showed him losing South Carolina and Louisiana.

"He had hoped he would be able to carry those states against Jimmy Carter to make some inroads in the South," Dole said. "As it turned out,

the South stayed pretty much with Carter as their own man."

"Looking at it in hindsight, it would appear that we might have spent too much time concentrating on the South in that effort. We might have been better off to have more or less written off the South and spent more of our time campaigning in the industrial North-east."

The Kansas Republican, whose nomination for vice-president at the G.O.P. national convention in Kansas City surprised many political observers, said he realized that he was often criticized for being too controversial during the campaign.

"I knew we were getting all those comments, but I was out there trying to do the job the White House wanted me to do," Dole said. "I can tell you it was a pretty lonely spot out there being the lightning rod all by myself for the opposition."

"It was my job to be out there going after Carter while the President stayed in the White House right up to the last carrying out his duties as chief executive. That was the job I was assigned to do and I did it the best I could. It's easy to be a grandstand quarterback now about what we did wrong."

Dole admitted that he had problems with some members of the press, particularly Douglas Kneeland of the New York Times. At one point in the campaign, Dole ignored questions from the

press only trying to do their job," Dole said. "It was just that I couldn't even take out the garbage at home without them going with me."

"Early Wednesday, I told them I appreciated all they had done but that I didn't think we needed them any more now that we'd lost. They pulled out right after that."

Dole, relaxing before a week of vacation, said he was looking forward to getting back the U.S. Senate and helping the Republican party rebuild.

"We have to face it," Dole said. "We lost some pretty big figures in that election Tuesday. Sen. James Buckley of New York went down and Sen. Bill Brock of Tennessee, who many thought might be the candidate in 1980, went down to defeat. We have to rebuild."

He said he did not believe that Carter and his running mate, Sen. Walter Mondale (D-Minn.), will get all their legislative passed easily even though there are large majorities for the Democrats in both houses.

"I certainly am going to be there in the Senate letting them know what I think," Dole said. "There are a lot of Americans in this country who expressed their opposition to the big spending programs that Carter was

talking about and I intend to speak out for them on the floor of the Senate."

The Kansas Republican said he was grateful that his own state did not have its back on him and President Ford.

"That was one of the fears I had all through the campaign was that somehow we'd lose in Kansas," Dole said. "But we didn't. They really came through for us out in the home town here, Russell, in Johnson County, in Topeka and in a lot of other areas."

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Dole's campaign style may have cost votes for Ford

By KEN PETERSON
Staff Writer

The acidic campaign style of Sen. Bob Dole may have contributed to the defeat of President Ford.

The Republican vice-presidential nominee avoided any reference after the election to several national polls that showed his presence on the ticket may have cost Ford the votes necessary for election.

He did, however, allude somewhat to his own political future, particularly offering a glimpse into his own still-existent desire to seek his party's presidential nomination in 1980. Several close aides have confirmed Dole regarded his run in 1976 as a springboard to greater heights in 1980.

"Vice-presidents have been forgotten and vice-presidential candidates who run and lose are forgotten even sooner," a tired and subdued Dole said after an all-night election return vigil at the White House.

Dole blamed the Republican loss on a failure to "crack the South," an area he personally canvassed repeatedly in the campaign with the likes of John Connally and Ronald Reagan.

His presence on the ticket, criticized editorially by several major newspapers, probably hurt Ford with the national electorate.

Harris polls showed Dole trailed his Democratic counterpart, Sen. Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota, in popularity, and, in one of the more telling surveys, revealed Ford suffered a 2 to 3 per cent drop in popularity when the full tickets were compared.

"There is nothing wrong with the Republican party that better candidates can't cure," George F. Will, columnist for the Washington Post, said in the newspaper's Thursday edition. "The challenge confronting Republican candidates is to dispel the suspicion that a conservative party invariably has its mental windows shut and shuttered. In that regard, something must be said about Robert Dole."

In a close election almost anything can be blamed for the margin of defeat. But recent history has made voters pay a bit more attention to some of Ford's blunders, like the remarks about Poland, may have been essentially unpremeditated.

"But Ford chose Dole after consulting with what Ford considers the cream of Republican thinkers. The harshness and negativism of Dole's campaigning called to mind memories of the last elected vice president, and he thought that one Agnew in a generation is ample."

Dole did lash out several times in the campaign. He charged, for example, that organized labor would call the shots in a Jimmy Carter administration, and, in the debate with Mondale, blamed Democrats for every war in this century.

After the election, Mondale sent a telegram to Ford and congratulated

him on conducting a campaign that was "one of the cleanest and fairest in American history."

Mondale did not have the same plaudits for Dole, but referred to him as "an able and effective advocate."

State party officials, including McDill "Huck" Boyd of Phillipsburg, Republican national committeeman, and former Democratic State Chairman Bob Brock, generally agree Dole accomplished his mission in the early days of the campaign.

While Ford remained in the White House to retain the aura of the presidency, Dole carried the Republican attack nationally by seeking to raise doubts about Carter's leadership abilities.

Boyd said, "If you think back, in the first 30 days Bob was on the hustings pretty much by himself. During that period they started out 30 points behind. In early October they were about 10 points behind. The Democrats became aware Sen. Dole was a formidable opponent."

Brock, executive director of the Carter campaign in Kansas, is a Dole antagonist from way back. His direction of Bill Roy's campaign in 1974 almost toppled Dole.

By building up a very non-presidential image for himself he probably cost President Ford a lot of votes," Brock said in an interview.

A news analysis

Brock asserted Dole carried what some believe is a gunslinger image into the national election and that voters quickly picked up the negativism.

Boyd, who has said Dole is in the best shape of any American to run for president in 1980, said Dole went on the attack only after Democrats began to snipe at him.

"I think he's been subject to attack because Democrats fear the guy," Boyd said.

Boyd said he hopes Dole will return to his Senate duties now and maintain a low profile.

Boyd also said he believes Dole's presence on the ticket helped carry midwestern and western states, areas he said that were dominated by Reagan forces.

The impact of a vice president—particularly a home-state candidate like Dole—is difficult to measure.

"I suspect it's easy to overplay the role of a vice president," said Dr. Mike Harder, professor of political science at the University of Kansas. "A vice president is important only when he displays the type of personalities the President will have around him."

Some Republicans indicated they are disappointed at the showing Ford made in Kansas. Ford won the state with 53 per cent, compared to Carter's 45 per cent.

Carter showed surprising strength in many rural parts of the state. He carried several major wheat producing counties. Sumner County, the largest wheat producing county in Kansas last year, carried Carter by almost 800

votes.

Brock said the rural support for Carter does not reflect against Dole, but shows rural disaffection for \$2.50 wheat.

Ford smothered Carter in the urban areas like Sedgewick, Shawnee and Johnson counties, but Carter won in highly Democrat Wyandotte County and also took Reno County.

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