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Bob Dole: A key man

By John McCormally
Hutchinson News Service

WASHINGTON — "Bob Dole is going to be a key man in all this. Bob's all right. I think we can count on him to keep a little sanity up there."

This wasn't from a Reagan administration spokesman, but from a fellow from state politician of Dole's — Bob Bergland.

I'd dropped in to see Bergland on his last day as Jimmy Carter's Secretary of Agriculture.

dent Reagan called the nation's "economic affliction," the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee can be either midwife or roadblock.

The reason I detected in Dole is equally understandable. He truly is in the eye of the storm. Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond to the right of him; Ted Kennedy and Howard M. Rosenberg to the left of him; the President's man — Stockman as Budget and Reagan at Treasury — coming at him head on — all with their own ideas how the tax laws should be changed.

Dole's talents as a fighter and a wit, and his penchant for survival, as of Watergate and the vice-presidential defeat, are going to be sorely tested.

I asked him what he made of the President's inaugural declaration that there was going to be "no compromise" on the Reagan economic proposals.

The head cocked, the eyes flashed and there was that small, ornery grin.

"Oh, what he meant," Dole said, "is that they're not going to compromise down there at the White House. There'll be plenty of compromise when they get up here."

Look, he said. "Six of the 11 Republicans on my committee are up for election in 1982. We can't force them into positions they can't run on."

"And," he went on, "we don't have such a wide margin in the Senate that we can run rough shod over the Democrats. We've got to make both camps something they can live with."

I asked if, as a wage earner, I could expect to see a decrease in the deductions on my check stub this year. He thinks it's possible.

"We've got to do more than just offset the Social Security increase and the inflation factor," he said. He predicts tax reductions for business will be made retroactive to the first of the year; those for individuals to mid-year; but thinks workers will definitely see a reduction in their withholding this year. But he can't be specific. "We have to wait until they send their package up here. Then everyone will have his pet project."

Maybe I'll want some changes in the excess profits tax; someone else will want some other change. But we'll work it out," he said hopefully.

Dole's wife, Elizabeth, is special assistant to the president. It is a measure of the stature of working wives that no one is shocked about this unusual concentration of power in one couple. Nor does there seem to be any fear that the separation of powers doctrine will be violated when the Doles sit down to dinner at night. But it does place Dole in almost a unique position of influence in two branches of government.

Dole's concern for agriculture in his

home state and the rest of the Midwest hasn't slackened, although he'll have little time for direct participation in farm legislation, with his heavy finance job.

The two areas do, at times, overlap. Dole is proud of his teamwork with George McGovern in reforming food stamp legislation and he doesn't want Reagan budget cutting to harm the program. He'd like more farmer support for his efforts. "You'd think,"

he said, "that farmers would be more vocal for the food stamp program, considering the market it provides them."

People ask: "Has Bob Dole melted?" In an earlier interview he'd seen it as growing rather than melting. As he went from the county courthouse up the rungs to the Senate and to the vice-presidential and presidential candidacies, appealing to and listening to ever larger con-

stituencies, he developed a broader outlook and appreciation of issues.

He hasn't lost his conservative credentials; but he has won respect for them with his mastering of the political craft.

Where does he go from here? First, he has to pass the test of his biggest job to date, as chairman of Senate Finance. But ambition, such as that which has brought him this far, does not just disappear.

On inauguration day, after Reagan had left the stand, Dole took Libby by the hand, walked up to the podium from which the President had just spoken, and they stood gazing down the mall across the magnificent vista, toward the Washington monument.

When a reporter asked later what they had been doing, Dole replied, with that twinkle which leaves you guessing whether he's serious:

"Oh, just practicing."

Sen. Dole

Continued from preceding page

As the Watergate noose began tightening around the White House, the distance between Dole and Nixon underlings widened. He was eased out most ungraciously, a fortuitous circumstance for Dole, who escaped untainted by the Watergate scandal as a result. It was Dole who coined the phrase "CREEP" for the Committee to Re-elect the President.

"I remember whenever I went to the White House they were all worried about the tapes being released," he joked in 1976. "I don't know if they were there but whenever I was asked a question I just nodded a lot."

As far back as 1960, when he was a newly elected Congressman from the old Sixth District, Dole was a realist, with a glimmer of the self-deprecating comments that continue to this day.

"I don't think one single Congressman is going back there able to solve all the world's problems. And since I'll be a freshman member of the minority party, I may be lucky to get a good seat," he said then.

Today he has one of the best seats imaginable: chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

From that vantage point, Dole can help mold economic policy, the most pressing problem facing President-elect Ronald Reagan and his Senate minions.

The task is Herculean for Dole, a consummate politician who in the past has grown accustomed to being on the outside looking in at power.

On election night, 1980, Dole kept his Kansas admirers waiting past the appointed hour for an appearance at a Topeka motel. His re-election was easy, decided 20 minutes after the polls closed and so unlike his 1974 race against Bill Roy of Topeka. That year, Dole discovered, almost too late, that his Kansas campaign was in tatters and he had to save it himself. He barely won re-election and promised he would be a better Senator.

In 1980, safely shut away in an upstairs suite, Dole and some advisers watched in disbelief as a Republican tide rolled across the nation in a purge of liberal Democrats.

After years of waiting in the wings, Dole catapulted to power. As he admitted later, never in his wildest dreams did he imagine Republicans could control the Senate, mak-

ing him one of the top power brokers in the nation's capital.

The new alignment in the Senate, for instance, will be a far cry from the time in 1977 when Dole said it was easier to fight Fidel Castro than to contradict the Senate Democratic leadership.

Dole is walking carefully in his new role as Finance chairman-in-waiting, giving Reagan adequate time and room to develop some economic plan to submit to Congress. Dole has asked for an opportunity to inject his opinion on tax and spending matters, and he has suggested that Reagan declare an economic emergency, but other than that he has remained quiet on the new job.

"I'm waiting for the Reagan Administration to make policy, and I'm gonna help carry it out," he explained. "There've been a lot of statements made — I may have made some myself — but it's pretty hard to make policy until you get all the people on board."

Dole will be sworn in for his third term Monday, Tuesday, in his new role as Finance chairman, "my first official act will be to have confirmation hearings on Donald Regan and Richard Schweiker (nominees for Treasury and Health and Human Services secretaries, respectively)."

He also remained aloof while Reagan considered job possibilities for Elizabeth Dole. As Dole has said, he probably overestimated, since Mrs. Dole has excellent job qualifications. She will be a top White House aide with direct access to the President, and Dole, who conceded in '76 that his name was "not a household word," now jokes that she is making it one.

But in another instance of late, he has been anything but docile.

He has proven he can heavily influence President-elect Ronald Reagan. Through sheer doggedness, a Dole trademark, he kept up the pressure for the man he wanted as Secretary of Agriculture.

With a determination that offended some of Reagan's transition team, Dole kept calling on behalf of John R. Block, the Illinois director of agriculture. He suggested Block meet personally with the President-elect, advice that was heeded and probably led to Reagan's decision to name Block to his cabinet.

With such tactics, Dole deftly outmaneuvered incoming Agriculture Committee chairman Jesse Helms, leader of the resurgent right, who wanted another for the cabinet position.

Perhaps as significantly, Dole opposed former Treasury Secretary William Simon for reappointment to that post. And Simon won't be in the Reagan cabinet.

Block's nomination was not easy, but Dole is accustomed to the tough jobs. And he expects his staff to have the same devotion to duty. In addition to being driven by politics, Dole is a workaholic of the first order, and the first order is, "Push yourself to the limit."

He spent 39 months in military hospitals recovering from grievous war wounds suffered while an infantry officer in a first flight in Italy in 1945. He talks little about the war and the wounds that gave him only minimal use of his right hand.

The pace has not slackened since he returned. Inspired by a Democratic law librarian at Washburn University, Dole ran for the Kansas House because she believed more young people should enter politics.

He says he needed a job and money, so he returned to Russell and successfully won the county attorney's race. He was first elected to Congress in 1960.

"When I ran for county attorney, I think I ran against every attorney in Russell. When I left for Congress, they had to draft somebody. Funny how these things work out," he says now.

Above all, political winds have made him independent.

He rarely listens to others, preferring to heed his own instincts. With Sen. George McGovern, D-S.D., another player who won't be around in 1981, Dole worked on food stamp reform, pushing through changes not too popular with conservatives.

He was a leading critic of the Panama Canal treaties, and the chief author of a major amendment to guarantee continued neutrality of the canal and to insure that U.S. warships will go to the head of the line in times of emergency. Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, another player who won't be back, led the fight for the treaties and praised Dole for being the original author of the neutrality amendment.

At the time of floor debate, in March, 1978, Dole commented that somehow his name was not among the authors. In a Republican-controlled Senate, Dole has no such worries.

And would he want to bid again for the presidency? If, say, Reagan chose not to run in '84? "I haven't really thought about that," Dole replies. But, he says, if he were to run again, "I wouldn't do it like last time. You can't be a part-time candidate."

The political winds are restive once more, and Dole, now a leader, hopes the people of Kansas will understand if he is gone for quite some time. Leadership demands vast amounts of time, a precious commodity even when Dole was not among the major players.

"I understand the need to get back, but I think there's a great need to cure some of the ills, and you can't cure them if you're out here," he says. "I'm going to have much more responsibility now. I think the people will understand."

...which they know where they want me."

Bob Dole

Bergland was cheered by what he believes will be Dole's insistence on protecting the food stamp program from right wing assaults and tempering what Bergland fears are some unrealistic, if not dangerous ideas of his successor John Block.

Whether or not Dole agrees with or welcomes Bergland's appraisal, it was typical of remarks I kept hearing around town, echoing Democratic respect for and Republican acknowledgment of Kansas Sen. Bob Dole's leadership role as chairman of the powerful Finance Committee in the newly Republican Senate.

I mentioned it to Dole when we sat down to talk in his office. "Yeah," he acknowledged, with both a self-satisfied smile and an uneasy squint. "I guess you could say we're in the eye of the storm."

The self-satisfaction is well deserved because Bob Dole has come in 30 years of politics, in a straight, undeviating line, from county through state and congressional office to a third term in the U.S. Senate and a pinnacle of power in the American political system. It is not quite the pinnacle he hoped for, when he launched his ill-fated presidential campaign last year, but it is a seat of power few men achieve.

Especially in an administration taking its all on curing what Presi-



Topeka doctor/lawyer Bill Roy came closest to toppling Dole in '74; brought the latter hurrying back to take personal charge of his campaign.



Dole listens carefully to Republican elder statesman like former Gov. Alf Landon, generally follows his own inclinations.



Nixon gave Dole the GOP chairmanship for his skill at shooting up Democrats. Dole gave Nixon the chairmanship for his skill at shooting up Republicans.

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Dole withholds endorsement of Reagan budget cuts

By KEN PETERSON
Capital-Journal Washington correspondent

WASHINGTON — Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., has remained relatively noncommittal concerning budget-tightening measures advocated by the Reagan administration, deferring most of the action to President Reagan.

Dole, chairman of the Finance Committee, seems to be unwilling to inject many firm opinions on the proper way to handle tax and spending cuts that will wind up in his jurisdiction within a few days. Instead of espousing policy, Dole talks philosophy.

"We're going to get to bite a lot of bullets in this very room. Most of the cuts, probably half the cuts that are recommended, are going to be dealt with right around this horseshoe here," Dole said Thursday as his eyes swept the scene, the hearing room of the Senate Finance Committee.

After a pause for effect, he added, "I'll probably have a horseshoe around my neck."

In other words, this is the calm before the storm of debate over Reagan's tax and spending cuts, the details of which are dribbling out in bits and pieces.

Until the scene switches from the White House to Capitol Hill, Dole seems content to meet on a regular basis with Reagan's budget slashers and tax cutters.

He also confers almost daily with Agriculture Secretary John R. Block on a continuing annoyance, the Soviet grain embargo, and casts a wary eye toward the administration's proposed cuts in food stamps and child nutrition programs.

Through it all, Dole is treading lightly.

The chairman of the Finance Committee is gushing in his praise of Reagan, saying he is light years ahead of congressional leaders of both parties.

To keep some semblance of the separation of powers doctrine, he observes, "I still agree that anything the president sends up will be modified."

Congress may come up with new places to cut the budget, different areas that have the same effect as the administration's recommended cuts, he says.

If not exactly jumping into the fray with specifics, Dole questions some of the tactics.

The latest administration plan for tax cuts calls for two separate packages, one a simple reduction in personal taxes and faster business depreciation allowances. The other, introduced a few weeks after the first, would be the more complicated reductions dealing with a broad range of issues that include corporate tax rates, the windfall profits tax, individual retirement accounts and incentives for savings.

Dole says he is not convinced that the two-pronged package is the best theory, but it is the latest.

"Most members of Congress, if they see a very strong horse that can carry some riders, will offer some amendments," Dole says. "I'm not so certain you can get a horseshoe bill."

He is also definite about the timing of a tax cut. Businesses, which must have time to react, should be given a tax reduction retroactive to Jan. 1, while the individual cuts should take effect upon date of enactment or by June 1, he says. Returning the individual tax cuts to Jan. 1 would require rebates and considerable administrative problems, Dole says.

If all goes well, Dole hopes Congress can send a tax bill to Reagan by the end of April. But nothing is more uncertain than a congressional schedule, and Dole is one who believes that any tax cut should be accompanied by budget cuts. He hopes the two can stay on the same track.

He has "reservations" about the 10 percent individual tax cut plan, but believes the concern is a healthy skepticism.

"We have to offset the cost of the tax reduction by spending reductions. If not, then we're flirting with inflation, more inflation," he says.

Dole repeatedly returns to the issues of high interest rates, inflation, and unemployment, and says Reagan has vast, bipartisan support across the nation to bring the federal budget under control.

"When he unveils all those cuts, he may lose some of that support, but I've got to believe that in addition to all those people who are going to visit back here and say, 'don't cut my program,' for every one of those there are going to be a dozen who don't come back here, saying, 'we've got to do something about this.' It's going to be popular, I think, for the first time in a long time, to vote to cut spending."

However, Dole also says the administration's proposed \$2.6 billion cut in the food stamp program may be a "bit too

deep but that's a determination that we will make."

For the third year in a row, Congress will have to take emergency action to provide more funds, another \$1 billion or more, to continue the food stamp program. Dole said he expects Congress to enact the supplemental. The Reagan administration cuts cover the next fiscal year.

Dole is chairman of the agriculture subcommittee on nutrition, a panel that handles food stamps and child nutrition programs.

"in the eye of the storm"