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A More Diplomatic Dole Accommodates His Democratic Opponents

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But as the '70s passed into history, so has Dole's old stereotype. The tongue is still quick, but its results have begun to surprise many people who are talking about a "new" Bob Dole.

"Bob Dole used to be a very unpleasant man," said a former Senate aide, turned lobbyist, who has known Dole for more than a decade.

"He was mean; he was rude; he would as soon cut you to ribbons as look at you. But when he changed, he really changed. Now he's more diplomatic, more self-confident, more comfortable with himself. It makes a world of difference."

In 1981, Dole became chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, which controls all tax laws and half of all federal spending. The position gave Dole the kind of power he had craved for 20 years in Congress. As the past two months have shown, Dole has used that newfound power in some surprising ways. In the process, he has angered some of his conservative Republican colleagues and startled liberal Democrats.

In April, a bill to extend the landmark Voting Rights Act appeared doomed. Conservative Republicans had it bottled up in the Senate Judiciary Committee, where nine votes were against it, seven for it and two undecided. What intrigued civil rights leaders, and gave them a small spark of hope, was the name of one undecided senator — Bob Dole.

"OVER THE years, Senator Dole has been good on civil rights in most respects," said Ralph Nease, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. "We believed he could play a key role on the Voting Rights Act."

Besides, Dole had toured the nation for years telling Republicans they had to broaden the party to attract blacks and other minorities. Now it was time to put up or shut up.

At the end of April, civil rights groups began getting letters from Dole, who said he had a compromise that would preserve the Voting Rights Act but allow conservative fears about racial quotas for public offices.

When civil rights groups endorsed Dole's compromise, the senator went to bat for them, with spectacular results. In days, Dole formed an unbeatable coalition stretching across the political spectrum from Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., to President Reagan.

"DOLE DIDN'T make just a half-hearted commitment," Nease said. "He promised to do everything he could — and he did. He became a very vocal and effective advocate. He talked to other Republicans and he talked to the White House."

As a result, the Voting Rights Act was reported out of the Senate Judiciary Committee in early May by a 17-1 vote. It roared through the Senate by an overwhelming margin.

When Reagan signed the bill into law, the man standing at his shoulder and wearing a broad grin was Bob Dole.

"It just seemed to me that from the Republican point of view we had an opportunity not just to do the right thing, but to make it happen," Dole said last week in reviewing the voting rights battle.

"It seemed crazy to me for us to be dragged into supporting the Voting Rights Act," he added. "I said we should be taking the lead; that's something we can control."

SOME CONSERVATIVES don't share that view and still fume about Dole's role in extending the Voting Rights Act for another 25 years. Dole "apparently felt that his presidential ambitions required compliance with the most extreme demands of the 'civil rights community,'" said the conservative weekly "Human Events."

"I think the conservative view is to take the shackles off of people so they can vote," Dole replied. "Some people argue about preserving the Constitution; what they're really talking about is preserving discrimination."

In the same week that the Voting Rights Act became law, Dole gave some conservative Republicans more to grumble about as he put his finance committee to work on tax increases.

Before a nervous crowd of \$100-an-hour lobbyists, who began lining up at 6:30 a.m. for the show, Dole gored a whole herd of corporate oxen.

Among the wounded were bankers, doctors, oil companies, contractors and hundreds of major corporations that would lose tax breaks worth billions of dollars during the next three years.

majority when the tax bill reaches the Senate floor. They're particularly upset by Dole's plan to eliminate the final installment of Reagan's tax cut for business investment. That item alone would cost businesses about \$32 billion between 1985 and 1987.

The co-author of last year's "supply-side" tax cut, Rep. Jack Kemp, R-N.Y., also has expressed outrage over Dole's tax bill, which he called "unbelievable."

AT THE same time, Democrats are making some approving sounds, even as they try to remain at arm's length from any tax increases this year.

"It's really not a bad little package," an aide to one finance committee Democrat said. "There are things in here that we talked about doing for years. Now Dole is actually trying to do them."

While Dole went after big corporations and highly paid executives in the Senate Finance Committee, he also deflected the budget ax from the heart of social programs like food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid and Aid to Families with Dependent Children, better known as welfare.

For weeks, Dole has gone toe-to-toe in the Senate Agriculture Committee against conservative Sen.

Jesse Helms, R-N.C., to prevent what he calls unduly harsh cuts in the food stamp program.

"SENATOR DOLE plays an exceptionally important role on nutrition issues," said Ellen Haas, director of the Community Nutrition Institute, which monitors federal food programs. "From the start he made clear that he would work to reduce fraud and abuse but that he wanted to preserve necessary support for the programs. He's done that."

Dole appears to have followed a similar formula in putting together \$17 billion in budget cuts for Medicare and other programs supervised by the finance committee. Though the poor and elderly would bear part of those cuts during the next three years, a major share of the burden would fall on doctors, hospitals and nursing homes.

Sen. Daniel Moynihan, D-N.Y.,

"I think my motives are probably fair game. I assume if people don't agree with me, they're going to suggest it's not purely motivated. You just have to keep working at it."

— Bob Dole

the committee's self-appointed spokesman for the poor, indicated he was impressed by Dole's handling of the budget cuts.

"I WANT to thank the chairman for his patience and his compassion in what was not a pleasant task for any of us," Moynihan told Dole. "Even when we couldn't vote with you, we appreciated the way you did it."

At age 58, a new Bob Dole may

be appearing, but old images fade slowly. Some suggest, as the "Human Events" article did, that Dole is merely cultivating a new and more positive image with an eye toward the 1984 presidential race. Others argue that Dole's work on the Voting Rights Act, budget cuts and the tax bill is simply smart politics, aimed at defusing some of the growing criticism that the party he once headed as national chairman is against minorities and poor people.

DOLE DOESN'T quarrel much with theories about his motives these days. For example, he hasn't ruled out a presidential bid in 1984 if Ronald Reagan decides not to run again. And he doesn't mind being known as a smart politician.

"I think my motives are probably

fair game," Dole said. "I assume if people don't agree with me, they're going to suggest it's not purely motivated. You just have to keep working at it."

He added that he has worked in support of civil rights, food stamps and other such programs for years, that the "new" Bob Dole has been around quite a while.

Some of the senator's admirers, such as civil rights leader Nease, make the same point.

"There wasn't much new about the Bob Dole we saw on the Voting Rights Act," Nease said. "He's been a consistent advocate of broadening the base of the Republican party for years to attract blacks, other minorities and women."

"He's doing just what he said he would do."

Quips, Power and Persuasion

They are not laughing so much at Bob Dole these days. It is not because Capitol Hill's lip-with-a-quip has lost his sense of humor. His wit is as irrepressible as ever. As he deftly shaped and pushed through the Senate a loophole-closing tax bill last week, the Kansas Republican eased tense moments with one-liners, delivered with his usual boyish grin, a bob of the head and a self-deprecating chuckle. When Republican Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island protested that he could not go along with Dole's key proposal to withhold taxes on interest and dividends because his re-election literature already showed him opposing it, Dole instantaneously gibed: "We'll buy your brochures. We'll get you new brochures."

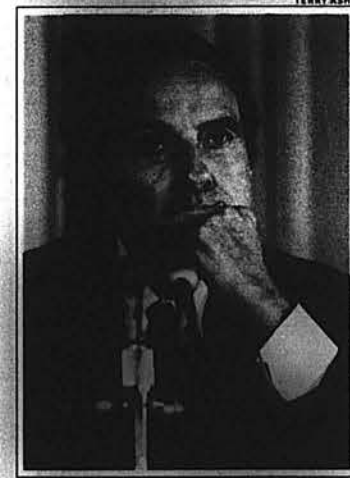
The difference now is that Dole's colleagues take him more seriously. For some 20 years, through four terms as a Congressman and two as a Senator, Dole was a member of the minority party in his chamber. He often explained his wisecracking ways by saying, "A Republican has to have a sense of humor because there are so few of us." And where Dole's sallies often carried a partisan bite, his Democratic foes could laugh along because he carried no clout. But now Dole heads the Finance Committee, his party controls the Senate and even Dole takes himself more seriously. He quickly learned that "you don't get anything done by beating your colleagues over the head." His tongue has lost some of its tartness.

Dole concedes that he often used humor to wound rather than amuse. "I'm very competitive," he says. "And it's easy to move from competitive to combative." Dole's most acerbic period came after Gerald Ford chose him as running mate in 1976. "They needed somebody to go out in the briar patch," Dole recalls. The Kansas tore into the Democrats with a barbed zeal that turned off many wavering voters. In his televised debate with Democratic Vice-Presidential Candidate Walter Mondale, Dole's jokes did not fit the serious forum and his partisanship went too far. He suggested, for example, that World Wars I and II, Korea and Viet Nam could be called "Democrat wars."

When Ford and Dole lost the election, former President Richard Nixon warned Dole that "it's getting to be scapagoat time and you're going to be blamed." Dole admits that the defeat depressed and soured him for a time. By early 1978, however, he was able to joke about the episode at a Washington Gridiron Club dinner. "I'll never forget the Dole-Mondale debate," he said. "Three empty chairs got up and walked out. I was supposed to go for the jugular—and I did my own."

Dole has not only recovered from that 1976 loss, his first ever at the polls, but from his public defense of Nixon during the Watergate period. Nixon had named Dole chairman of the Republican National Committee in 1971 and, luckily for Dole, bypassed him to give the Committee to the Re-Election of the President the chore of running his 1972 campaign. When C.R.P. became deeply involved in Watergate, Dole played good soldier and defended Nixon publicly. "I was sort of a two-gun guy, and if anybody would toss anything in the air, I'd take a shot at it," he recalls. Privately, however, Dole, who has a jolly irreverence for higher authority, kept a few trusted reporters abreast of whatever he learned about the White House involvement in Watergate. When Nixon's taping system was revealed, Dole was ready with a quip: "Thank goodness, whenever I was in the Oval Office, I only nodded."

Now a Senator who has seized power rather than a mere lampooning critic of others who hold it, Dole has mellowed and matured. But he still goes his own way, shunning rigid ideology and seeking consensus for what he thinks will work. The tax bill showed Dole at his best, pulling Reagan and the White House toward a much needed package of selective tax increases, while fending off New York Republican Congressman Jack Kemp and other unbending advocates of supply-side economics. Dole also bucked the opposition of Republican stalwarts in the business and financial communities. "If you want to be a leader," Dole said last week, "you must be willing to stick your neck out."



Dole at a National Press Club debate

Chicago Tribune, Sunday, July 25, 1982 Section 1 5

Dole adds a sobering touch to GOP tax bill

By Dorothy Collins

Chicago Tribune Press Service

WASHINGTON — Sen. Robert Dole (R., Kan.), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, needed \$2.8 billion in a hurry. So he reached into his bag of tax options and pulled out the "three-martini lunch."

Twenty minutes later, about as long as it takes to sip one, the three martinis turned into one and a half, and the deduction dear to the hearts of businessmen was on the rocks.

The change in the deduction, which was reduced by 50 percent for in-town business meals, may never become law, Dole later indicated. But its very presence in the tax bill passed by the Senate early Friday morning shows how touch-and-go the bill's passage was.

Dole needed the \$2.8 billion to reach his revenue target of almost \$90 billion over three years. He needed it because the Senate had killed a \$2.8 billion provision that would have tightened the collection of taxes on tips.

THE TAX BILL now goes to the House, where pressures are expected to be even more fierce than they were in the Senate. The Ways and Means Committee has been meeting behind closed doors, trying to come up with its version of a tax bill. Both Democrats and Republicans on the committee are so worried about their political futures and about their special-interest constituents that the committee "has totally fallen apart," according to a House Republican source.

"You have a bunch of Democrats being confronted with raising \$99 billion in taxes," a Democratic source said. "A lot of people choked and gagged."

The Democrats have insisted for months that any tax bill would have to be perceived as a Republican bill.

"The Democrats are insisting we carry all the water," the Republican source said.

ONE POSSIBILITY is that the Ways and Means Committee will not come up with a bill. Instead, the Senate bill would be sent to a conference committee in the House with an agreement that it can be modified.

"That way no Democrats would have to vote on it," the Republican said. "They don't want their fingerprints on it."

"If it came out of the committee, it might look something like a Dole or Reagan bill, but it would become a Democratic bill if we had to take it to the floor," a source in the Democratic leadership said. "The Democrats are worried about getting blind-sided by Reagan and being blamed for tax increases."

The source also cited "the terror" instilled by special interests. "They will focus over here with unheard-of ferocity," he said.

THE TAX BILL has something for everyone to fight. It institutes a 10 percent withholding tax on dividends and interests. This upsets banks and savings and loans, which would have more paper work and less cash.

It increases excise taxes on cigarettes and telephone use. It allows deductions on medical expenses only beyond 7 percent of income, though Dole said that might be changed to 5 percent during the conference. The deduction threshold line is now 3 percent.

It raises the employer-paid unemployment tax, puts federal workers into Medicare, costing them 1.3 percent of a base wage, and strengthens the minimum tax on individuals.

It cuts in half and then phases out the controversial safe-harbor leasing plan that allows unprofitable firms to sell their tax breaks, and it tightens or increases several tax provisions affecting corporations.

And then there is the "three-martini lunch."

Helms was able to get through an amendment to reduce the tax by 8 cents in 1985.

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JAMES I. HOUCK, Managing Editor • REG MURPHY, Publisher • J.R.L. STERNE, Editorial Page Editor

The Year of Bob Dole

Senator Robert J. Dole, the quick-on-the-quip Kansas Republican, is one of the year's best examples of growing into a tough job. Mr. Dole is chairman of the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee, and that's one of the toughest jobs in Washington right now. He has become a champion of fairness in tax policy and has shown skill, leadership and courage in selling colleagues on tax hikes that might spark a stampede in any other election year. No matter how his efforts end, 1982 has been Bob Dole's year.

He's been trying for some time now for such a year—the kind that brings broad-based respect and recognition. In 1976, he was Gerald Ford's vice-presidential choice on a losing ticket. In 1980, he made a run for No. 1 but quit early, saying he had neither money, momentum nor media attention. What he had in 1976 was the reputation of an acerbic wise-guy. In 1980, many saw him as a good conservative senator but not presidential material. Besides, there was Ronald Reagan.

Well, Senator Dole has proved this year that he has leadership qualities. In fact, he has altered the Reaganesque image of the GOP as the party of the country club set. He got behind the big Reagan tax cut last year and steered it through the Senate, but

became one of the first to admit that provisions of the bill may have gone too far. He has devoted this year to correcting those provisions in a way that brings more equity to the tax system, and to raising funds for the Treasury to hold down massive deficits. These efforts have not only helped the GOP, they have disarmed Democrats who saw a ready-made election issue in the overdue tax cut of 1981.

Mr. Dole has played his leading role on other important issues. His compromise on extension of the Voting Rights Act got the White House out of the unnecessary corner into which it had backed. He has been a key player on agriculture issues and supported the food stamp program in clashes with super-conservative Jesse Helms.

Although the senator from Kansas has told reporters he hasn't changed, the Bob Dole of 1982 seems to have grown by leaps since Gerald Ford had to deny he was a "hatchet man." He has also proved he is a good deal more than he offered an audience at the 1980 Iowa debate—"a younger Ronald Reagan—with experience." He has experience all right, but he also has the ability to be practical rather than rigid. This year, he has been good for his party and good for the country.

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