

The Republicans Play Family Feud

Sen. Bob Dole is caught in the middle of a rancorous battle over the budget—and his party's future.

Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole has always been a politician both blessed and cursed with the gift of gab. His acerbic wit and tart tongue have often seemed at war with his astute instincts, his legislative goals and his raging ambitions. Caught in the cross fire over the budget, Dole has been feuding with virtually every Republican in government except his wife. Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole. He blasted supply-side superstar Rep. Jack Kemp for persuading the White House to disown a controversial Senate budget plan that would have frozen social-security benefits. He publicly warned White House chief of staff Donald Regan to stay away from Capitol Hill, after the president's top aide had castigated the Republican Senate as well as the Democratic House for the budget impasse. And in a particularly ill-timed outburst shortly before Ronald Reagan's surgery, Dole complained that the president had "surrendered to the deficit."

Last week Dole acknowledged that perhaps he had piqued too soon. He still feels betrayed by Reagan's retreat on social security, since he and 47 GOP colleagues thought they were doing the president's bidding when they cast politically risky votes in favor of the original Senate budget plan. But Dole recognized that it was impolitic for him to be so openly at odds with the leaders of his own party. The majority leader tried to downplay his differences with Kemp and responded warmly when Regan came to Capitol Hill bearing a 24-inch red ceremonial peace pipe. "I just wanted Senate Republicans to know I'm at peace with them," Regan said with a grin. Characteristically, Dole couldn't resist one final joke. "Is there anything ticking?" he chortled, holding the peace pipe to his ear.

But the rifts in the Republican Party are real. Dole, Kemp and Vice President George Bush make scant secret of their 1988 presidential ambitions, and perhaps it was not coincidental that the fireworks flared between Dole and Kemp just as Bush took

center stage during the president's hospitalization. Under way is nothing short of a struggle for control of the Republican Party in the post-Reagan era. The budget is the first battleground—and perhaps the first casualty. Dole and the Senate Republicans carry the banners of the GOP's traditional mainstream in their single-minded zeal to staunch the deficit. Kemp is the avatar of a new breed of House conservatives who view miracle-grow tax cuts as the painless panacea for the economy. These days the White House represents the pragmatic middle: Reagan and his advisers seem willing to accept virtually any budget compromise, no matter how pallid, just to get the issue behind them.

The recuperating president, clad in pajamas and bathrobe, expressed these budget blues himself last week when he told a delegation of congressional leaders, "Every village, every town, every municipality, every state has a budget. Yet the greatest economic entity in the world does not have a budget."

REGAN: 'I just wanted Senate Republicans to know I'm at peace with them.'

DOLE: 'Is there anything ticking?'

Sen. Lawton Chiles, Dole and Regan: Peace-pipe politics

Earlier, Reagan, still pale and a shade underweight from cancer surgery, greeted Chinese President Li Xianmin on the White House lawn—but he took Li's elbow to steady him as he escorted his 76-year-old Chinese visitor to his seat. Dressed in black tie at the state dinner that evening, however, Reagan seemed far more like his old robust self. In a toast to Li, the president joked about their respective ages. "President Li comes from a nation whose people are



known for their traditional respect for the elders," Reagan said. "President Li, I can assure you that I'm doing my best to re-establish that tradition in our own country."

Although the week was far from a fair test, Dole and the Republican Senate offered little deference to either the president's age or his health. Dole went through the motions of trying to win Senate approval for a two-year experiment granting the president a line-item veto, but the majority leader abandoned the fight after three futile attempts to break a filibuster. The president has frequently asked for the power to veto individual items in appropriations bills, but the issue was far from a major administration priority. Still, even though the experiment won the surprising support of Sen. Edward Kennedy, Dole did little to pressure recalcitrant Republicans to support the president. "We never thought there would be a sympathy factor," said a senior White House aide after the measure failed.

Tax Reform: Actually, if there is to be an outpouring of support for the president, the White House would clearly rather hold it in reserve for the tax-reform crusade than squander it on peripheral issues like the line-item veto. The hostage crisis, the president's surgery and the deficit donnybrook have all

diverted energy from tax reform, Reagan's top legislative priority. House Ways and Means Committee chairman Dan Rostenkowski now predicts that the House will not pass a bill until Thanksgiving, thereby dimming chances of Senate passage before the election year. The administration also had a scare last week when the influential Joint Committee on Taxation released a report stating that the president's proposals would cost the Treasury about \$25 billion in lost revenue by 1990, more than double the Treasury Department's original projections. Still, this would leave the plan within 1 percent of revenue neutrality—and the administration promised to offer revisions to recover the lost \$25 billion.

Far more exasperating was the case of the

missing budget as Congress stumbled toward this week's August recess with no agreement in sight. It was the Senate's turn to play red-ink roulette as Budget Committee chairman Pete Domenici, with Dole's support, drafted an ambitious new plan that would reduce the deficit by \$338 billion over three years. There was only one catch: its provisions seemed tailor-made to provoke the opposition of Reagan, Kemp and House Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill. The Senate plan respected the social-security issue by proposing cost-of-living adjustments in both benefit programs and income-tax brackets computed every two years instead of annually. "We want the classic COLA," deadpanned House Majority Leader Jim Wright, underlining Democratic opposition to tinkering with social security.

Ignoring Reagan's oft-stated opposition to higher taxes, the Senate proposal also included a \$5-a-barrel surcharge on imported oil. When reporters shouted a question to Reagan about it, during a brief stroll on the White House grounds, the president said, "I'm not for any taxes." But as unequivocal as that answer seemed, it may not have been the final word on the subject. White House aides argued that the president was speaking generally, not specifically about the import fees. Outgoing budget director David Stockman argued passionately that the administration should at least consider the idea—and Don Regan was leaning in favor of the oil-import surcharge.

Musical Chairs: Kemp, despite his brief truce with Dole, blasted the \$5-a-barrel fee as "regressive" taxation. O'Neill was equally adamant in opposition to the surcharge, reflecting the reflexive New England fear of any increase in the price of home heating oil. Yet the speaker was careful not to reject the Senate plan as a basis for further negotiations, piously stating, "I am determined to go the extra mile to achieve an agreement." It was all part of the never-ending game of musical chairs over the budget where everyone constantly scrambles to avoid being blamed for the impasse. Although Dole and O'Neill will meet early this week to break the logjam, compromise appeared as evanescent as ever—especially with Reagan still at half speed. But Dole purported to be satisfied with his latest budget gambit. "The Senate's back on the high ground," he told NEWSWEEK, "morally and politically."

Morality may actually have little to do with it, but Dole wins generally high marks for his performance during his first six

At the state dinner: Looking robust



Sen. Lawton Chiles, Dole and Regan: Peace-pipe politics

months as majority leader. "I'd rate Dole pretty high because he's had an extremely difficult task," says congressional scholar Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute. Far more effusive is Conservative Opportunity Society leader Rep. Newt Gingrich, who recently told Dole that he was "the best majority leader since Lyndon Johnson." Even Kemp admits that he prefers Dole over his moderate GOP predecessor, Howard Baker.

Perhaps the best measure of Dole's influence over the Senate is that almost none of his colleagues blames him for pressuring them to vote to freeze social-security benefits, even though the president later repudiated the idea. That vote, more than any other during this session, could far 16 GOP senators up for re-election in 1986. Yet Sen. Warren Rudman of New Hampshire—one of the vulnerable 16—says, "Bob Dole might be criticized for not protecting his political flank as well as he could have, but I honestly believe he did what was right."

Dole nurtures the belief that he can be both right and president. His near obsession with the deficit stems from an ideological belief in the economic virtue of a balanced budget and sober political calculation. "I think the deficit is a problem," Dole says, "and that's where I think Jack Kemp and others are at risk. And George Bush is, too, to a certain extent, because he's in a position where he can't do much. I'm in a position where I should do something."

'Inside the Beltway': Yet Kemp strategists, in particular, dismiss the deficit as a political issue. "It's strictly an inside-the-Beltway matter," sniffed political consultant Roger Stone. "Yes, people say in politics that they are worried about the deficit. But it doesn't have anything to do with the way they vote. Cutting social security is a real issue and, as we've seen, one people vote on." This theory, as much as anything, explains the continuing reluctance of both House Democrats and the White House to match Dole and the Senate Republicans in their efforts to cut the budget. Trimming the deficit jeopardizes popular programs—and the political calculus suggests that loses far more votes than it gains.

For more than four years Ronald Reagan has been the master of a divided Congress. The president's battles with Tip O'Neill have taken on a ritualistic quality where both sides strike familiar poses and swap shopworn charges—then, when the dust settles, Reagan almost invariably wins. In six months as Senate majority leader, Bob Dole has emerged as the wild card in this game of bluff and bluster. A loyal Republican, a doer, an activist willing to chart his own agenda, Dole could yet prove to be the president's most powerful antagonist—or his most invaluable supporter. Either way, the Republican Senate under Dole will be neither docile nor dull.

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Racers Rev Up Early for Journey to '86 Elections

Governor's Race Produces Fresh Slate

By Jack McNeely
Of Our Topeka Bureau
TOPEKA — For Attorney General Bob Stephan, it means riding in the Cowtown Days parade at Baxter Springs one afternoon and speaking to the Funk Aircraft Owners Association in Coffeyville that night. For Democratic Lt. Gov. Tom Docking, it means a parade at Cheney one week and a parade in Wilson the next. For House Speaker Mike Hayden, it's a Republican women's picnic in Oskaloosa one week and a Republican potluck dinner in Concordia a few weeks later. A year before the primary, the 1986 governor's race is already well under way, drawing more early contenders than any previous governor's race. "I think you can see gubernatorial campaigns following the pattern of presidential campaigns, starting

earlier and earlier," said Democratic Gov. John Carlin, whose second term ends in January 1987. Politicians see a reason for the unusual early start to the governor's race: a 1972 change in the state Constitution. Carlin is the first governor forbidden, by constitutional amendment, to seek a third four-year term. "I wouldn't be too surprised that you might see things start a little earlier anytime we have a case like we have right now, when the governor cannot succeed himself," said Dave Owen of Spring Hill, lieutenant governor from 1972 to 1974 and an unsuccessful Republican gubernatorial candidate in 1982. ● RACE, 14A, Col. 1



Dole Set But Challenge Unlikely

By Al Polczinski
Staff Writer
One year before the 1986 primary, Sen. Bob Dole is geared up to seek re-election. All he is lacking is a serious challenger. Only Rep. Dan Glickman, the five-term Democrat from Wichita, continues to show interest, but even he, as late as last week, said he is more likely to run for re-election. If Glickman does not run, Dole may win a fourth term as easily as his colleague, Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, won a second term with 76 percent of the vote last year, continuing a half-century Republican hold on Kansas' two seats in the U.S. Senate. One well-known Democrat, former state chairman Norbert Dreiling of Hays, acknowledged Dole's standing in the state. ● DOLE, 10A, Col. 1

"Dole is one of the few Republicans who is doing some real fighting for the farmers. I'm one who thinks he's doing as good a job as Senate majority leader as he can," he said. The one major challenge Dole has faced in his 17 years in the Senate was in 1974, when Rep. Bill Roy, two-term Democrat from Topeka, came within 13,500 votes of defeating him. Despite a post-Watergate purge of Republicans in Congress and his controversial reign as Republican national chairman in the early 1970s, Dole fought back with tough media advertising and dogged personal campaigning to beat the popular Topeka doctor. ● DOLE, 10A, Col. 1

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