

Isn't there something better for Bob Dole to be doing?

By ROBERT RENO
Newsday

Those of us who have always immoderately admired Bob Dole would like to imagine there is a better, more heroic role for him to play in the post-Reagan, post-Bush world that he has inherited than the filibuster of a miserable little stimulus package that, even by Democratic standards, is fiscally inadequate to the needs and suffering of America's unemployed.

I suppose his Republican predecessor, Howard Baker, said it best when he described the "self-financing" Reagan tax cuts of 1981 as a "riverboat gamble." It was a gamble, all right, that we all lost, had

our pants taken down, as it were, and now here we are in 1993 with the Senate quibbling and mincing about whether the richest nation on Earth can afford a \$16.3 billion stimulus package that, laid alongside the WPA, the TVA, Lend Lease, the Marshall Plan or Eisenhower's interstate highways, looks ungenerous to a fault.

That the party of Lincoln should be reduced to yelling their lungs out, like a bunch of Southern segregationists yakking against a civil rights statute, over a sum less than it would cost to buy Kansas, is not, surely, what Elizabeth Dole would have her husband be wasting his time on. If I've said it once I've said it a hundred times. Put Elizabeth and

Peatsy Hollings and Hillary Rodham Clinton in a room and those women would solve the fiscal problems of this world in a Tennessee minute.

Somebody must get ahold of Elizabeth and suggest that she have a stern talk with the minority leader of this nation. I mean here she is, the president of the American Red Cross, cooking for some guy who can't understand that there are millions of people, Kansans and Americans, who are suffering because nobody cares about them.

If Sen. Dole knows a better way of spending \$16.3 billion — subsidizing the timber or farm interests, for instance — most of us would be glad to hear it. But the wives of this country understand, in the sense that

Grace Coolidge understood, why it is important that people have jobs, why it's disgusting that middle-aged wage earners are scared witless of the loss of their livelihood and do desperate things.

If, for even a minute, the Senate minority can be persuaded that Americans are scared, that consumer confidence has been declining for three consecutive months, that we are a nation horrified by what confronts us, then maybe we will be a better place. But what do I know? We will, in the end, be what our mothers raised us to be. And if old Mrs. Dole were lecturing her son right now, who among us has any doubt that she'd be saying, "Bobby, what in the hell has got into you?"

Dole Attacks Clinton Budget

WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leader Bob Dole Thursday issued the following statement regarding the release of President Clinton's budget:

"The Clinton budget stands for everything the American people thought they were voting against in November — bigger taxes, bigger spending and bigger government. There's nothing about 'change' in this whopping tax-and-spend budget.

"I've just returned from my home state and I know the Clinton budget will flunk the Main Street test: People out there in the real world just don't understand how record-setting tax increases and a taxpayer-finance spending spree by Congress will solve the deficit or put Americans back to work.

They won't like it, and they'll be counting on us to bring the Clinton tax-and-spend plant back to reality."

Dole: Just 'passing through'

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — Senate Republican leader Bob Dole revealed in a campaign-style New Hampshire visit Thursday, but billed it as a stop in his current battle with President Clinton, not a warm-up for a 1996 fight.

As if to prove his point, Dole balanced his harsh criticism of Clinton's stalled \$16.3 billion jobs package with high praise of the president's Russia aid plan and promises to work with the White House on a free trade agreement with Mexico, and perhaps national health care reform.

Dole managed to weave in a few humorous references to New Hampshire's prominent role in presidential politics, and his busy schedule left little doubt he wanted supporters here to know he hadn't ruled out a 1996 campaign.

"I think it's a little early yet" to think about the next presidential election, Dole said after a luncheon speech in Manchester, even as he headed to Ohio, Minnesota, Nebraska, Missouri and Iowa for visits this week that include meetings with past campaign supporters.

"I'm just here passing through town," Dole quipped earlier in Concord, where he met with Republican legislators and the state's GOP governor. He had dinner with 1988 supporters Wednesday night, breakfast with Republican contributors Thursday and worked the crowds like a candidate at every stop, even chatting with Clinton supporters outside one event.

Dole is due back in May, and several other potential 1996 Republican prospects are visiting the leadoff primary state soon, too, including Texas Sen. Phil Gramm, former Housing Secretary Jack Kemp and former Defense Secretary Dick Cheney.

It's early, but state Republicans couldn't be happier for the attention.

"Some of the activists are already picking sides but most aren't at this point because it's too early," said New Hampshire Republican chairman Stephen Duprey. "The activists enjoy the New Hampshire tradition of being courted and aren't going to make decisions for another year or two."

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., with cap on, waves to supporters in Concord, N.H., Thursday. Despite the "Dole for President" sign in the car window, bottom of photo, Dole said it was too early to think about running for president in 1996.

buster blocking Clinton's job package, trying to convince the public Republicans are right in blocking the measure because of deficit spending just as Clinton tries to turn public pressure on the GOP for blocking job creation.

Dole spoke with Clinton twice Wednesday but no progress was made in the search for a compromise, suggesting neither said was ready to give ground yet in a "very basic, fundamental difference between our political philosophies."

New Hampshire is familiar territory for Dole, whose 1988 campaign stalled here when he lost to then Vice President George Bush.

"I'm going to keep running until I win New Hampshire," Dole joked at the start of his speech to the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce. "I don't know how long it will take."

Dole clearly enjoyed the New Hampshire spotlight and did nothing to dampen the hopes of local supporters who want him to run again.

"New Hampshire is a nice place to visit," Dole said during a question and answer period after the luncheon. When the moderator added, "And to live," Dole laughed and said, "Maybe part time."

But while enjoying the partisan jousting, Dole also appeared sensitive to Clinton's charge that Republicans were perpetuating Washington gridlock for partisan gain.

"It's not gridlock — we have a difference of opinion," Dole said. "This is just one little bump in the road. ... I understand that President Clinton certainly deserves a chance."

Congress will not enact a health reform plan this year, but "it could happen next year," Dole said.



Associated Press

A future sign? Bob Dole waves to supporters in Concord, N.H., on Thursday. The Kansas Republican billed his campaign-style visit as a stop in his battle with President Clinton, not the start of a campaign for the 1996 presidential nomination. "I think it's a little early yet" to think about the next presidential election, Dole said after a luncheon speech in Manchester, even as he headed to Ohio, Minnesota, Nebraska, Missouri and Iowa for visits this week that include meetings with past campaign supporters.

Dole reveals in visit to New Hampshire

He claims it's not campaign swing

By The Associated Press
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Dole criticizes, praises Clinton

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Dole offers support for 'surgical' strikes in Bosnia

ALTOONA, Iowa (AP) — Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole on Saturday said he has written to President Clinton, offering support for surgical air strikes in the Bosnian conflict.

Dole, who has long taken a tough stance on the ethnic rivalries, ruled out support for any use of U.S. ground troops in the conflict, but he said Serbian leaders must be "sent a message" of U.S. resolve.

"I wrote President Clinton a letter yesterday which he received last night, suggesting I would support him if he found it necessary to have a surgical air strike to send a message," said Dole, R-Kan. "No U.S. troops, but maybe an air strike."

Dole said any U.S. action should be taken in concert with NATO allies, but said the United States would have to lead the effort to organize a response.

"The Europeans have demonstrated they don't have the will to do this," he said. Dole made his comments during a taping of Iowa Public Television's "Iowa Press" program to be aired on Sunday.

He was in Iowa to meet with party activists at a GOP fund-raising dinner, part of whirlwind tour by Republican leaders in an attempt to generate public opposition to Clinton's economic stimulus program.

Dole has led a Senate effort where minority Republicans have kept the \$16 billion plan stalled, and he said differences between the two sides may not be resolved.

Dole said he would meet with Clinton on Monday to discuss the president's offer to trim the

package by \$4 billion but declined to label that meeting a bargaining session.

Clinton is hoping to win support from enough Republicans to win passage of the bill.

But Dole did not see much significance in Clinton's offer to reduce the package, saying Republicans are worried that Clinton is offering no way to finance the plan.

"There's some misunderstanding, our message isn't getting through," Dole said. "It's still not paid for, that's where the bone of contention is. I'm not certain how we can resolve it."

Dole said he will exchange ideas with Clinton at the meeting but said Republicans aren't willing to begin putting compromises on the table yet.

"Before that's done, I'll want to meet with all Republican Senators and see what they picked up during the recess," said Dole.

Dole, who won the 1988 Iowa precinct caucuses before his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination faded, had caused considerable political speculation when he scheduled visits to both Iowa and New Hampshire during his swing to attack Clinton.

Iowa's precinct caucuses are the first test of a candidate's strength, followed quickly by the New Hampshire primary.

"It causes a lot of stories to be written and comments to be made, but it's too early," said Dole. "Don't read anything into it."

Dole's visit came three days after Texas Sen. Phil Gramm — another Republican with presidential ambitions — campaigned in the state.