

We need a President who can make us proud.

I don't like people helping me. Self reliance ...



THE FIRST TRY Dole and wife Elizabeth campaign in the 1980 presidential race



THE SECOND TRY The Doles celebrate their win in the Iowa caucus in 1988

In 1990 Dole resisted a congressional resolution calling for the Administration to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Dole argued at the time, might harm the Middle East peace process. Now Dole is the driving force behind that very same resolution. "His people told him to neutralize that issue and get ahead of the other candidates," says a Dole adviser. "American Jews like it, you know."

The incident ordinary voters recall most easily when asked why they view him unfavorably involves Dole's recent flip-flop over a contribution from gay members of the G.O.P. who call themselves Log Cabin Republicans. Dole's campaign solicited the money and then returned it without Dole's knowledge. "I did it," says campaign manager Scott Reed. "I was thinking down the road, and all I could see were the ads from

Phil Gramm talking about how we'd asked for money from gays." Dole initially supported Reed's decision but recently declared that his staff was wrong. "It kept eating at me," he explains. "I'm against all discrimination. I've supported civil rights legislation my whole career. It was wrong to return that money, and I finally said so." It took him two months to speak out, says Dole, because "I thought loyalty to the staff was more important than standing up for what I believe. I was wrong to wait."

Maybe so, says a senior Dole adviser, "but he looks even worse now. He said what's on his mind and in the process added fuel to the charges of expediency."

Dole isn't pandering to the right, Reed insists. He is "simply emphasizing" some of the thousands of positions he's taken over the years. The problem, Reed explains,

"is that Dole is popular, but you draw blanks if you ask people why they like him. We're just trying to sharpen the message." But that's not how Dole's moves are being perceived among some of his most prominent supporters. Many of them have been with Dole for years, specifically because they view him as principled. The journey from candor to pandering troubles them greatly and could affect the energy of their efforts as they seek to rally others to the Dole cause. "The shame is they're robbing Dole of what makes him Dole," says Governor Voinovich.

VAINOVICH AND OTHERS would have Dole attempt to move the party toward his own brand of pragmatic conservatism. They pine for the old Dole, the Dole who joined with George McGovern to start the food-stamp program; the Dole who pushed for AIDS-research funds; the Dole who worked with Hubert Humphrey to turn the school-lunch program into a federal entitlement; the Dole who keeps a prayer celebrating tolerance on his desk.

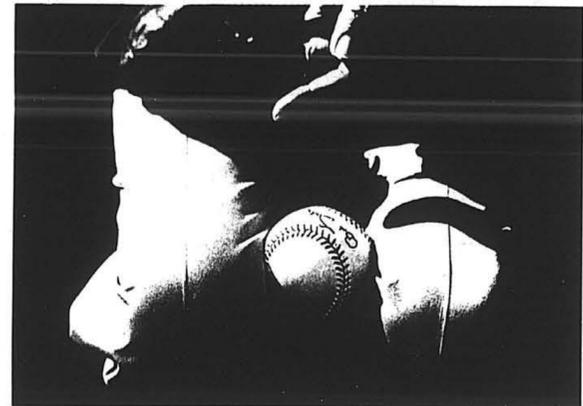
Consider another example of the real Dole vs. the campaign Dole. On the stump and in his video, Dole urges a more muscular effort to stem drug imports. Privately, Dole has little respect for that policy. "Interdiction is something you can't give up on," he says, "but it'll never do the deed. We've got to get serious about rehabilitation—use our abandoned military bases for facilities—and direct money to educate kids about drugs, starting in the second grade."

When asked recently to reconcile the contradictions between such views and his stump declarations, Dole looked away and spoke softly: "You've got to learn from the guys who beat you in the past, and you have to let the pros do their thing."

"But there's got to be a line that he draws," says Voinovich. "A line where he says, 'No more.'"

On occasion, Dole has drawn that line, as he did Sept. 8, when he appeared before the Christian Coalition's annual "Road to Victory" convention. Phil Gramm had spoken earlier and challenged the audience to demand that Dole, like Gramm, sign a pledge promising to support an antihomosex plank in the G.O.P.'s 1996 platform. When Dole arrived, several dozen members of the audience waved photocopies of the pledge and shouted, "Sign it!" Dole refused. "Don't look at pledges," he said. "Look at records."

The story behind that story is instructive. Dole's campaign staff had been alerted to Gramm's stunt, and urged Dole to



STILL HURTING Dole's crippled hand reminds him of his war injuries every day

comply. "What they wanted," says a friend of Dole's, "is for Bob to have said something like 'I've been waiting to sign this pledge before friends, and you're friends.'" But Dole said no. Chief campaign strategist William Lacy tried to reverse Dole's decision. When Lacy appeared at Dole's Capitol Hill office, Dole stiffed him.

It was this incident that Dole had in mind as he flew back from South Dakota on Nov. 4 to join the U.S. delegation to Yitzhak Rabin's funeral. "I told them, 'No more of those pledges,'" he said. "That's it." And then, for the second time in three months, Dole mentioned a man named Rick Smith. Richard Norton Smith directs the Ronald Reagan presidential library, and has been close to Dole since helping the candidate write his book, *The Doles: Unlimited Partners*. Smith is one of a small cadre of Dole friends and Senate staff members who have been doing a slow burn about the campaign's course. They call themselves the "Let Dole Be Dole Committee." They are among those who have heard Dole complain that the "campaign wants me to pander to everybody." It is they who suggested that Dole make a strong statement about race relations at the time of Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March—an idea the campaign nixed, saying the topic was "too hot" to touch.

"Rick is someone who really has my interests at heart," Dole said that night on the plane back from South Dakota. "He wrote me a memo. Maybe you should see it. I read it about once a week."

"Oh, it's nothing really," said Dole's

press secretary Nelson Warfield, and since then Dole's political aides have claimed they can't locate Smith's memo.

No wonder. In five single-spaced pages, Smith asks Dole to return to his roots, to say what he really believes about himself and the nation. He implores Dole to end his pandering and identify what it is he will not do to win the White House.

"You were a better candidate in '88," Smith wrote. "Yet somehow along the way your authenticity has been sacrificed in the pursuit of ideological purity. The ironic result of trying to placate the right is to undermine those very qualities of personal courage and plainspoken leadership which are among your greatest assets and your greatest source of appeal to the vast majority of non-ideological voters who want things to work."

"It isn't enough to say 'I have been tested ... [I tell people] that true vision consists of doing the right thing, not with an eye to next month's straw poll ... You need to say point blank that there are some things more important than the Oval Office ..."

"I realize that people around you must be constantly reminding you to hold your tongue ... There is a difference between meanness and simple candor ... I don't want you to be so spooked about the former that you shy away from the latter. For one thing, people expect you to say what's on your mind. On your mind, not what some consultant or focus group tells you an audience or interest group expects to hear. You can buy applause lines at the expense of basic credibility. You can tarnish the qualities of honesty, trust and the Midwestern

grit that have got you this far. By refocusing your campaign on the true nature of leadership and Bill Clinton's failure to provide it, you can also unite the vast majority of Republicans. Better this approach than appear to pander, which is the antithesis of leadership and which amounts to little more than what Churchill called feeding the crocodiles. In the end they come after you ..."

"Leadership is more than a slogan, more than the synthetic politics of hot-button issues and feel-good rhetoric devised by focus groups. Tempered by experience, broadened through historical perspective, a leader is willing to take the long view and to risk short-term unpopularity in pursuit of long-term objectives. He is someone comfortable with himself, sure of his core values ... In short, someone very much like you and someone very much unlike Bill Clinton."

ON THE PLANE TO NEW HAMPSHIRE last week, Dole seemed less interested in Powell's decision than in the results of the previous day's off-year elections. He was looking for good news and found little. The message seemed to be that voters are growing leery, even scared, of where Newt Gingrich's revolution may lead. In this environment, says Tom Korologos, a Washington lobbyist and longtime Dole friend, "there may be some room for Bob to be flexible," by which Korologos means that Dole may have "more space" to revert to his truer, less ideological self.

But even with his huge lead in the polls, a wholesale change in strategy and theme seems remote. The reason is simple: while everyone else thinks Dole's nomination is inevitable, Dole's campaign staff members don't. Of the other contenders, they are particularly worried about Gramm, whom most pundits and political consultants view as too crass to present a serious challenge to Dole for the nomination.

"He's not dead by any means," says Reed, who fears a strong Gramm showing in next February's Iowa caucuses, the first significant contest of the long primary season. "Whoever wins or is said to do better than expected," he explains, "gets a bounce from Iowa" as the media demands an alternative to the front runner.

Gramm unexpectedly tied Dole in the Iowa straw poll last Aug. 19. It was a fake contest, because participants had to pay \$25 to attend (and therefore to vote), and anyone from anywhere—even outside Iowa—could play. Many did, as Gramm's campaign, especially, bused in hundreds of its faithful from out of state. "I spent \$30,000 on the

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s been sacrificed in the pursuit of ideological purity.

1980 Iowa straw poll," Dole recalls, "and I came in third. I know all about buying that thing, and I should have bought it this time." What Dole didn't say is that the Doleites didn't want a poll at all and offered the Iowa Republican Party a \$100,000 contribution if they would call it off.

Dole's real problem in Iowa is that his core support isn't any deeper than the rigged straw poll revealed. Internal Dole campaign surveys have found that among "likely caucus goers," Gramm and Dole tie with about 26% of the vote. The reason, again, is message. The respondents to Dole's poll were asked if they had been contacted by the various Republican campaigns. Many had. Those reached by the Doleites mostly recalled being asked to contribute money to the campaign. Those contacted by the Gramm forces remembered Gramm's hard-core conservative message. In a contest where activists predominate, Gramm is doing far better than Dole in communicating a coherent ideological message. From this data, the campaign has concluded that Dole needs to emphasize his more conservative themes, a view that opposes Rick Smith's advice.

With time to improve their prospects, the Doleites are indeed sharpening their pitch. "We'll take Gramm's bark off in Iowa," says Reed, confirming that a series of negative TV spots have been tested before focus groups. One of them, a Dole staff member says, highlights Gramm's 1974 investment of \$7,500 in an R-rated movie titled *Beauty Queens*. (It never actually got made.)

"I've told Phil that we've got a lot to do around here [in the Senate] and that we ought to cool down," says Dole. "I'm all for burying the hatchet," he chuckles. "In him."

Getting mean, Senator?

"Just joking. But, you know, there's only so much you can take. Phil wants it too much." Actually, Dole maintains, "I think I've been pretty good at not letting him get the better of me. But he won't stop. He's relentless. He doesn't value being responsible. He's like a bug you step on that keeps crawling around no matter how hard you squish him."

ON THE STUMP AND PRIVATELY, DOLE DESCRIBES his problem-solving ability as the rationale for his candidacy—as well as the core of his ideology. "It's all about getting things done," he says. "You can have all the vision you want, but you have to translate that into real laws and real programs. I know how to get things done. It's what I do."

On this score there is scant dissent. No one since Lyndon Johnson has been a more effective Senate leader. Dole is the master of the half loaf. He trades with those who hold high cards for whatever he

can extract in policy or political terms. In the past few months of high drama, as Congress sought to enact the G.O.P.'s budget, Dole's work on welfare reform displayed both his mastery of the process and his underlying ideology.

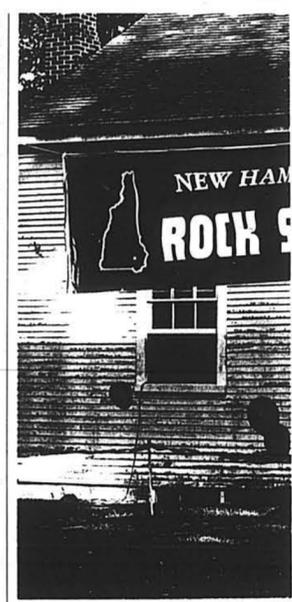
By cleverly lining up the support of the nation's G.O.P. Governors and the U.S. Conference of Bishops, Dole was able to save several nutrition programs as federal entitlements and modify three of the harshest provisions of the House's welfare-reform bill. His changes: Dole managed to ensure that the states would have to maintain a hefty chunk of their own welfare spending as a precondition for the receipt of federal funds; by leaving it to the states to decide, he blunted the House's insistence that cash assistance be denied to welfare moms under 18; and the "state option" compromise was invoked again on the question of denying money for additional kids born to women already on welfare.

All Dole's work is now in jeopardy as the House and the Senate massage their differences—and no one knows how the President will react to the final bill. But Dole is relaxed. "The key, I think, is to keep your head," he says, speaking generally of the wave of reform sweeping the Congress. "Things like the welfare-reform stuff will last only five years if they become law at all. If they're not working, we'll change them then. And if things get bad before then, if there are horror stories of kids on the street—not just stories but real evidence—then we'll move to stop that immediately."

This, says former Representative Vin Weber, another Dole-for-President supporter, is the "art of softening" the revolution's hardest edges.

"I don't know about softening," says Dole. "But I've often wondered if those who are wealthy, including almost everyone in Congress, even understand the problems out there. Sure, they send checks to charities—or some of them do, at least. But they don't get their hands dirty. I mean, how many of them have ever sat down for a cup of coffee with someone on welfare, or with others trying hard to make it? Where I came from, we knew who we were and how everything was on the edge. We looked out for each other and helped when there was trouble, which there often was. Maybe you just can't get it if you don't have those kinds of roots. All I know is that in America we're not supposed to do some of the really rough things some people are proposing."

IT IS THE MORNING OF NOV. 1, AND "NEWT-SIE," as Dole affectionately refers to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, has thrown a fit. Gingrich and Dole are only hours away from their first serious sit-

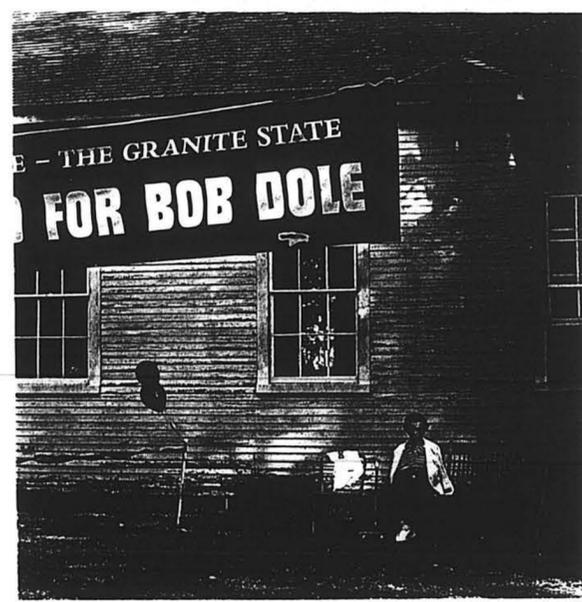


"NO PICNIC" Dole has portrayed himself as

down with Bill Clinton to discuss the Republican budget. But Gingrich is threatening to scrap the long-awaited session. The morning's *New York Times* has quoted White House spokesman Mike McCurry describing the planned session as an "encouraging" concession on the part of the Republican leadership. "That's enough," Gingrich cries. "I'm not going down there [to the White House]."

Apprised of Gingrich's pique, Dole takes the Speaker aside for a huddle in the Senate cloakroom. "It didn't take much more than a pat on the head and a few words assuring Newt that he's still in charge," says a congressional aide privy to the conversation—although the soothed Newt is reported to have exploded again at the start of the White House meeting when he said, "You've got a chicken-shit operation here, Mr. President."

"Yeah," says Gingrich, "I didn't want to go to the thing. Left alone, I wouldn't have gone. I yielded to Bob's judgment because I concede that in certain circumstances my judgment is not as mature as his and that I am often likely to make the mistake of being too aggressive. I'm capa-



ative than he is, but his support is shallow and unenthusiastic

ble of taking risks that are ultimately destructive. So I've come to the point where I'll almost always defer to Dole's judgment about decisions that involve certain kinds of tactical risks. I now know that I am a very risk-taking conceptually because I know that Bob will modify it and keep me in a framework that yields a high probability of success."

"All I really said," Dole offers judiciously, "is that it's my view that if the President of the United States asks you to come to a meeting, you go. Period. But Newt said that, huh?" Dole asks with a smile. Well, that's kinda interesting, isn't it?"

Yes, it is. To Dole's campaign staff, which scoffs at the possibility that Gingrich might challenge Dole for the G.O.P. nomination, the incident confirms that they've on the "Newt primary," the battle they describe as the first crucial test for Dole on the road to the White House. "We've opened all along on the premise that we need to win over Newt before we could have real shot," says a Dole aide. "If Newt put at the word that Dole wasn't on board with the Contract with America, we could've packed our bags and gone home.

Their work together in Congress has given Dole the opportunity to reverse some of the past animosity between them. He's done it well." Well enough for Gingrich to snarl. "Come on, that was 11 years ago," when asked about his having labeled Dole the "tax collector for the welfare state."

"Two down, one to go," says a Dole friend. "We've won Newt, and Powell's out. Only Clinton's left."

But what if Dole finally does win it all? What kind of President would he be? Gingrich, of course, has his own view. "I bring clarity and a long-range focus to a broad set of conservative principles Dole has been fighting for his whole life," the Speaker says. Reaching for a military analogy to envision the "partnership" he expects if Dole makes it to the White House, Gingrich fastens onto the relationship between two World War II generals, George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower. "I'm Marshall," says Gingrich. "Not in the sense that I'm the one who doesn't get to be President. But Marshall and Ike worked as a team. Marshall set the overall strategy, and Ike got it done. Dole can get it done because he knows the nation-at-large better than I do.

I'm a natural teacher. I believe in ideas. But without implementation, ideas are just academic. Dole is a natural implementer. He wakes up each morning thinking, 'How do I get there?'"

But isn't Gingrich describing the reverse of the U.S. governmental model? Isn't the President charged with proposing and the Congress with disposing? "That's only the modern model," Gingrich says. "For most of our history, it was the other way around. And it just makes sense. In the information age, 435 Congressmen and 100 Senators are by definition a larger system of information than one elected President."

Dealmaker for the revolution? Put to Dole, the thought provokes the characteristic response he offers when he doesn't want to answer. "Hmmm ... ughhh." Dole mutters as his lips pucker, a cringe preparatory to their rapidly moving up and down for a second or two—a disconcerting gesture his aides call "the lip thing."

One has the sense that Dole may have a different view, that his own plans for who proposes and who disposes might require a bit of negotiating with Newt. But that's a process problem. The core question remains, as Rick Smith put it: What exactly would Dole do with the presidency?

"Well, we've got to do serious health-care reform, and the tax code needs fixing," Dole says. "And there's some environmental stuff and Social Security. But you've got to get it done. You've got to be able to mediate among different factions. You've got to be able to say no, especially to friends and supporters."

Suddenly Dole seems tired of such inquiries. "It's getting it done," he says again, this time emphatically. "And, oh yeah," he adds, "on that age thing. You know, some say that I'm generationally gifted."

Dole seems to understand instantly that the only sane response to such nonsense is "Ughhh." So he offers a bit of deflection. "You hear that Imus song?" he says. "Pretty good, huh? Hmmm."

Well, perhaps at this point, when Bob Dole can't seem to decide where exactly to stand in order to reach his dream, the best rationale for his candidacy can be found in the satirical lyrics sung on the Don Imus radio show by a Rush Limbaugh impersonator to the tune of Bob Seger's *Old Time Rock 'n' Roll*:

Call him a relic, say he's over the hill/ But he's still better than that imbecile Bill/ No sex and violence at his movie show/ Vote for that old guy Robert Dole ...

You'll never see him with a binho/ No knees knockin' with a five-dollar ho/ Ain't got a prostate but he's sure got a soul/ We love that old guy Robert Dole. Hmmm. Ughhh.