



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE BEFORE THE YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

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Following the 1976 elections, an unusually large number of political pundits were writing the political obituary of the Republican Party. A good many observers -- including many within our Party -- were preoccupied with the gloomy statistics: that we hold only twelve governorships, that our strength in the Congress is at the lowest level in decades, that you can count the number of state legislatures in which Republicans control both Houses on the fingers on one hand. Frankly, a lot of people expected our Party to go the way of the Whigs, to fade away into history.

Now, it's 1978. And instead of writing death notices, the pundits have been writing about Republican victories in special Congressional elections, about an increasingly unified Republican minority in Congress, and about vigorous new efforts by the party leadership to reach out across the broad spectrum of our population for new Republicans. And the American people have been hearing more and more about a badly splintered democratic majority in Congress, about a democratic President whose relations with his fellow Democrats in Congress can charitably be described as abysmal, and about an administration of broken campaign promises, ineffective leadership, a decreasing popularity.

YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY

1978 is a year of tremendous opportunity for our party. Under the leadership of Bill Brock, our electoral prospects are improving. And, most importantly, the focus of our electoral efforts is where it belongs: at the "grass roots" level. In the past, we have been a "top down" party, focusing our resources at the top of the ticket. If we are to build a strong Republican Party -- a potent and viable political force, we must attract outstanding candidates for the Court Houses, the State Houses, and both Houses of Congress. We need the Sheriffs, and Aldermen, just as we need State Legislators, Mayors, Governors, and Senators. We can be proud of the National Committee's efforts to recruit new members of our party. I think we recognize that people are not going to come beating on our doors begging to be Republicans. We have to go out and get them. We have to focus heavily on recruitment. We need more young Republicans. And we need the blacks, the hispanics, the ethnic, and the indians. We need working men and women. We need those on the farm and those in the city.

These groups may not be easy to reach. But how better to test the vitality of our Republican beliefs than by persuading these groups face to face as individuals that what we stand for best serves their interests? How better to demonstrate that we stand for the interest of all Americans than by reaching out across the whole broad spectrum of our population.

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Because ours is a Party committed to improving the quality of life for everyone, we are not now — and never have been — a cadre of elitists, of big business "fat cats", of the "country club" set. All too often we have let our opponents portray us as such. Today a good many Americans perceive us as a group which cares for the rich, not for the poor, those who can help themselves, not those who need help. In 1978, we must struggle mightily to overcome this image.

CARTER'S CAMPAIGN COMMITMENTS:

And we can. During this election year, we must help President Carter remember his 1976 campaign commitments. And we must not hesitate to point out the scores of broken campaign promises, the inconsistencies, and the failures of the Carter Administration. Frankly, that is not too hard a job. Because Morris Udall was right on target when he said in 1976; "On an amazing number of issues Jimmy(Carter)meets himself going through a revolving door".

On one issue, at least, we don't have to say much. As a candidate, Jimmy Carter indignantly denounced partisanship in the Department of Justice. He pledged to appoint U.S. Attorneys solely on the basis of merit without regard to their politics. That's a promise not just broken, but shattered. A number of outstanding Republican U.S. Attorneys have been fired by President Carter despite their widely praised efforts to ferret out political corruption wherever it exists.

The Administration which pledged non-partisanship at the Department of Justice now arbitrarily dismisses prosecutors because, in the words of Attorney General Bell, "There was an election last year." Let's remind American people that President Carter's campaign indignation has given way to the traditional spoils system at the Justice Department.

FARM POLICY

And what about President Carter's campaign guarantee that "We'll meet the production costs of farmers so they stand a 'chance of making a reasonable profit.'" Let's remind America's farmers and the millions of Americans dependent on a strong agricultural economy that the Administration has fought us every step of the way in our attempts to forge a national farm policy which keeps the family farm viable, which helps, not hinders, farmers.

And, let's talk about the economy in 1978, about President Carter's half-trillion dollar budget, about his opposition to last year's Republican efforts to enact permanent tax reductions for the American people. Let's remind the people of a candidate who said he would reduce both unemployment and inflation to 4% and balance the federal budget by 1980, and about a President whose first year has seen an increase in the rate of inflation and a slowdown in the rate of economic growth. And what happened to that talk of a balanced budget by 1980? If President Carter's new budget is approved, the combined deficits for 1976 and 1979 will approach \$125 billion — the largest in our nation's history. Apparently, we're supposed to wait until the second term for a balanced budget.

TAXES

Then, there's the matter of taxes. President Carter has been in trouble on this issue from the first day he got down to specifics. Everyone recalls this campaign proposal to increase taxes for everyone above the median income, then his quick denial that he ever said it. Well he did say it and it appears that's one campaign promise he intends to keep. Although he's not proposing modest income tax relief beginning late this year, during his first year in office he advocated the largest peace-time tax increase in our history — over \$250 billion in higher social security and energy levies. As a matter of fact, President Carter has really outdone himself on his campaign pledge to raise taxes. His program of higher energy and social security taxes coupled with the "invisible" tax inflation — even when offset by modest income tax reductions — could raise taxes for many people below the median income. As far as I'm concerned, that's one campaign pledge — along with his promise to slash defense spending — that the President should forget.

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PANAMA CANAL

And let's ask why President Carter is more reluctant than General Torrijos to agree to Panama Canal Treaty Amendments which would strengthen the position of the United States. As the Treaty debate approaches, let's insist on Treaties which best guarantee our interests. Where Amendments are needed to spell out the rights of the United States to insure the continued operation and neutrality of the waterway in the decades to come, we have an obligation to propose and support them. And so does President Carter.

Even in the Senate, where opinions on the Treaties vary widely, there finally seems to be a consensus that some Amendments are going to be necessary. It is a far different story last September, when I first proposed changes in the Treaty. Then, everyone from the President to General Torrijos, to the Senate leadership seemed firmly against modifications. But the tide has changed. Now, Treaty opponents and pro alike generally agree, for example, that the Carter-Torrijos "understanding" on defense and passage rights must be written into the Treaty. This is what we have insisted upon from the very first. And I'm frankly pleased that so many of my colleagues, including the Senate Majority and Minority leaders, have seen the logic in revising the Treaties to protect America's interests. I think the time has passed when the Senate will just blindly accept whatever international treaty or accord it is handed by the President, and that is consistent with our constitutional obligation to scrutinize these agreements.

Add it all up. The broken promises, the re-escalating inflation, the higher taxes, the apparent insensitivity to the needs of our farmers, the meandering foreign policy, the inability to get along with a democratic Congress. It's simply not a good record. It's not too much to say that the Administration is suffering from delusions of adequacy, that the President is not really pleasing anybody.

Every democratic candidate, especially Congressional and Senatorial candidates, must be prepared to defend this Administration. Our candidates must be prepared to point out the failings of the Administration and the democratic Congress. But negativism can be carried too far. We mustn't relish the negative role too much. It will be easy to stand back and blast President Carter's every move. But that is clearly not enough. And I don't think that alone will win us elections.

REPUBLICAN ALTERNATIVES

It is essential that Republicans offer realistic alternatives, not just negative criticism of democratic policy. We must be prepared to take the initiative to identify national needs, recognize where a governmental role exists in meeting those needs, and move ahead of the Administration and the democratic Congressional majority to call national attention to those needs and to propose sound, fiscally responsible solutions to them.

I'm not suggesting that we try to out-Democrat the Democrats by advocating a federal program to solve every national problem. Clearly, that is not in accord with our Republican philosophy, and is certainly not in the best interest to the nation. But, by the same token, we can't put our heads in the sand, seeming to stand for the proposition that all our problems — inflation, unemployment, the depressed farm economy, deteriorating cities — will be solved if only the government refrains from acting.

Times change, issues change, popularity polls can go up as well as down. We mustn't sit idly by in the complacent belief that President Carter and the Democrats will make a total botch of things and hand us the 1978 elections and the White House in 1980.

The minority status of the Republican Party isn't legislated. We don't have to remain a minority party. On the other hand, neither is our existence legislated. So, we have sacrifices to make. In 1978, we have hard work to do. Let us begin.