



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

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Remarks of Senator Bob Dole
Lincoln Day Dinner
Greensboro, North Carolina
February 17, 1978

February is the traditional month for Republicans to come together, to re-examine our posts as a Party, and to consider their meaning for the future. We take pride in the fact that our Party was founded on Lincoln's noble and timeless principle of human liberty.

In an ever more complicated world, the quest for liberty takes different forms, and is never ending. Just as Lincoln spoke of a "Rebirth of Freedom" in this nation, we must commit ourselves to that attainment of less fundamental, yet far-reaching freedoms which elude our people today -- the freedom which permits the impoverished in our land to escape their poverty, the freedom for businessmen and women to rid themselves of bureaucratic strangulation, the freedom for all peoples, here and abroad, to live their lives as they see fit, not as government would dictate.

The Republican Party has historically been and can continue to be the focal point for achieving these freedoms in our cities, our states, and our nation. But Republican rhetoric alone will not achieve these goals. In our nation, public policy is established by representative government. And the men and women who make up our government are chosen through free elections by free people.

Just as Lincoln sought to preserve this nation by unifying it, we must unify our nation and our Party for a common purpose. Consistent with our Republican principles of individual freedom and liberty, we must make our Party responsive to the needs, the desires, and the concerns of the American people. If we really want the kind of government Lincoln envisioned, we must turn our attention to new voters, to new groups of Americans, to the vast numbers of our population who view us as a Party that cares for the rich, not the poor, those who can help themselves, and not those who need help. We must establish policies which recognize that the problems on the North Carolina farm will directly affect inner-city dwellers, that the plight of our great cities will sooner or later come to roost on the plains of Kansas, that the problems of any one group of Americans shape the lives of all other groups in one way or another.

No Crisis for Carter?

It is said that the misfortune of the Carter Administration rests in the fact that it has no visible crisis with which to deal -- no war, no depression -- and that this is the reason why the Administration seems to unfocused, floundering, drifting, seeking desperately for a place to stand, and something to stand for. I disagree.

In his State of the Union address, President Carter said: "There is all across our land a growing sense of peace and common purpose."

I disagree.

There is, instead, across our land a growing sense of frustration, and it is fueled by the absence of any sense of common purpose at all. And that is the crisis of our time. It is not a crisis which the President and his people can meet; it is, rather, a crisis of their own creation.

The Miracle of national unity preserved for us by Lincoln -- a man who would be no less than national in all the positions he would take -- is in the hands of one whose ambitions were served by dividing and not by uniting.

Today, we see East set against West; North against South; Labor against Management; Producer against Consumer; Farmer against Housewife; Black against White; the Cities against the Suburbs and Rural areas; and, the American people against their government.

The very essence of self government resides in the process by which men declare what they stand for and what they will do. The people determine what it is that they want, and they vote for the man who has committed himself to do those things. If the commitment is broken, the principle of self government is violated. And if the people elect a man because they think he intends to pursue one course of action, when he really intends to go in some other direction entirely, then they have been misled.

In his debate with Douglass in 1858, Lincoln stated that he would draw his positions in such a way that they would be "so clear that no honest man could misunderstand me and no dishonest one successfully misrepresent me."

I think no person today, honest or otherwise, seeks to misrepresent President Carter. But it is the saddest fact of our time that our people do not share a common understanding of his purposes. And we cannot suppose that this is by accident. It is not a failure of our people. It is a failure of the President.

On too many issues, on too many occasions, President Carter has abandoned his campaign commitments.

Arms Sales

The Candidate who denounced the United States Government as the "arms merchant to the world" announced this week that his Administration would sell F-5B fighter planes to Egypt, F-15's to Saudi Arabia, and F-15's and F-16's to Israel. Now, that may or may not be a wise decision. The Congress will have to examine it. But it is a far cry from the righteous campaign indignation of the Democratic candidate in 1976.

Panama Canal

The candidate who declared on May 21, 1976 that "I will never relinquish actual control of the Panama Canal by this country" has now proposed Panama Canal Treaties which do just that. And he has fought efforts by those of us in the Senate who want to strengthen the Canal Treaties, who insist on Treaties which represent the best possible interests of our nation.

After four U.S. Administrations negotiated for over thirteen years, the candidate who would "never relinquish control" of the Canal Zone gave in to Panama after only six months of negotiation. And the reason is simple. President Carter's negotiators receded to Panama on nearly every point on which the negotiators of previous Administrations had resisted — on the right of the United States to defend the Canal in perpetuity, on the right of U.S. warships to go to the head of the line in transiting the waterway, on the right of our nation to build a new Canal anywhere in Latin America.

Cuba and Vietnam

The candidate whose campaign literature asserted that "We have made highly publicized efforts to woo major Communist powers while neglecting our natural friends and allies" now plunges forward in a campaign to curry favor with the Communist regimes in Havana and Hanoi.

Farmers and Energy

The candidate who said his credentials as a farmer gave him a natural sympathy for the needs of our farmers has turned his back on them as they hover near the break of economic collapse.

And the candidate who wrote letters to the governors of gas producing states promising to support a free market in natural gas accuses those who insist he honor his word of money-mongering at the expense of the national interest. Instead, he wants tens of billions of dollars of new energy taxes, a multi-billion dollar bureaucracy to administer the nation's energy supplies.

Republican Opportunity

No, President Carter, there is not across our land a "growing sense of peace and common purpose."

But there can be. And the Republican Party — The Party of Lincoln — can be the catalyst for attainment of this goal.

We in this Party can still lead the American people, if we will. We need not be afraid or inhibited by our minority status.

Being the majority Party does not confer wisdom or righteousness on a cause; wisdom and righteousness confer their own virtues. Lincoln was often a majority of one. This majority rested on his wisdom, on being in step with the American people and with their future. As the legatees of his achievement, we have a responsibility to live up to it.

It would be a bitter irony if the Party of the man who preserved the Union should falter in its efforts to unite the American people because of disunity within our own ranks. If we are to meet our responsibilities to the American people, we must do it as Lincoln's Republicans, acting together, motivated by what unites us and not inhibited by whatever differences we might have.

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I ask for and work for unity in a common purpose, and if you will do the same, together we can achieve it. We can work, even as many of our freinds in the Democratic Party now work, and make the purposes of American polities consistent with the principles of the American people, and never again to see the great force of American politics diverted to serve the singular interests of a single individual.

February 7, 1978

The Honorable Robert Dole
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Dole:

This will confirm my telephone conversation with your Legislative Assistant, Bob Downen, regarding your letter of February 3, 1978 received in our office yesterday.

As I indicated to Mr. Downen, I will be pleased to brief you personally with respect to the two documents which were included with your letter. The two files in question reflect hearsay information which I am available to review with you in person and at your immediate convenience.

I also indicated to Mr. Downen that I felt your characterization of February 2, 1978 on the floor of the Senate with respect to withholding information from you and other Senators was less than fair and candid. Our agency is conforming to the specific request and direction of the Senate leadership of both parties that files regarding Panamanian officials and the family of General Omar Torrijos be made available specifically to the Senate Intelligence Committee. Furthermore, the release of information on individuals is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and our response is governed not by personal arbitrary decisions, but by that Act.

On October 6, 1977, Attorney General Bell and I briefed the Senate leadership of both parties and Senators Byrd, Inouye, Baker and Goldwater directed us to work with the Senate Intelligence Committee. We have complied fully with that directive and have furnished them complete file information. As we indicated at that time, General Omar Torrijos has never been a target of investigation.

I have been advised that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has received a briefing on this matter from the Senate Intelligence Committee. I want to again reaffirm that I will be available to meet with you at your convenience in the immediate future.

Sincerely,

Peter B. Bensinger
Administrator