



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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Remarks of Senator Bob Dole
Burlington County Lincoln Day Dinner
Cherry Hill, New Jersey
February 24, 1978

One of the genuine honors that comes to members of the Republican Party is the opportunity to join in the annual tribute to the father of our Party, to come together with others to reflect on our political heritage, and to try to interpret and to cast light upon and to derive from that heritage and that noble life a better understanding of contemporary events in our national life — of where we are and where we ought to go, and how we ought to go if we are to be worthy of our Republican heritage.

It is a task — it is, indeed, a hallowed opportunity — to which all Americans, and not just Republicans, might well commit themselves. I have no doubt that many do.

Age of Lincoln

The facts of Lincoln's time are simple. They are known to every American child — at least, I hope they are. A national Union was established by our Constitution in 1789, and we were a small nation. A part of that nation held to a pernicious practice of enslaving their fellow man, though we had established ourselves in the name of freedom. To resolve the contradiction implied in the pursuit of that those enslaved were less than men, were less than women, and were, therefore, neither worthy of, nor susceptible to, the simple rights — much less the ambitions and dreams — encompassed in the notion of freedom. To keep peace in our national family, this despicable fiction was maintained throughout the family, throughout the Union.

But as our country grew, there grew along with it the terrible question of whether the right to enslave others should be restricted in the new territories. And on that point our nation divided, with tragic consequences. Before those consequences came to pass, the merits of the question at issue were widely debated. Lincoln would not see that nation divided nor its Union broken, and would not accept the notion that freedom and slavery were made compatible in the land where all men were created equal, by the simple expedient of denying that slaves were men. He argued for compromise to let the institution exist where it existed, to deny its expansion where it did not exist. It was a solution which already existed in the Missouri Compromise. But that compromise was narrowly struck down by the Kansas-Nebraska bill, the supporters of which argued that the word liberty had no meaning at all if it did not include the liberty to enslave others.

Lincoln's Fight to Preserve a Nation

Lincoln came back into politics to contest that view. His first major statement on the point was in his series of debates with Stephen Douglas. And in that statement, he declared how he would proceed to argue a position he hoped would preserve a nation. He said this: "I wish to be no less than national in all the positions I may take; and whenever I take ground which others have thought, or may think narrow, sectional, and dangerous to the Union, I hope to give a reason which will appear sufficient, at least to some, why I think differently."

That's where it all began — with a nation at odds with itself on an issue of fundamental importance, with some men interested in dividing that nation to seek their own purposes, and with others, chiefly Lincoln, seeking to keep the United States united, to preserve unity, to preserve the Union, to save a great nation. It proved to be one of the epic struggles in world history, and a turning point in our own. Let me turn from those events to the events of our own time.

Current Administration Floundering

It's said that the misfortune of the incumbent Administration rests in the fact that it has no real crisis with which to deal — no war, no depression — and that this is the reason why the Administration seems so unfocused, floundering, drifting, seeking desperately for a place to stand, and something to stand for.

disagree.

In his State of the Union Address, Mr. 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 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; Farmers against Housewife; Black against Whites; the Cities against the Suburbs and Rural areas; and, the American people against their Government.

Man of Integrity Gives us Lance, Marston Cases

The man who claimed to have a corner on integrity and said he would restore it to a government gave us Bert Lance, and the Marston case, and a pet pollster who is making millions from clients who want to buy the information and insights to which he alone is privy as a result of his special relationship with the President.

He has been consistent in one regard. He came to office belittling, condemning, and degrading the Congress and he has continued to deal with the Congress as though it had no right to any role in governing America. He said the tax system in America was a disgrace to the human race and he would change it, and you can depend on it. He said he would never raise the taxes of lower and middle-income Americans, and you could depend on that, too.

Now Carter has proposed a phantom tax cut which, with increased social security taxes and with inflation, will see middle-income taxes go up -- not down. He has proposed a tax program, disguised as an energy program, which would cost the American taxpayers more than \$263 billion over the next eight years.

Why are our people frustrated and divided?

Because the contract which they thought existed between them and the man they elected has not been honored.

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 they want done, 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. The press and the people have much to say on this point with regard to Mr. Carter. He is fuzzy. He twists words. He obscures his meaning. He lacks credibility.

Lincoln's Standard Higher

The words of Lincoln call us back to a different standard. In the debate with Douglas, he stated that he would draw his positions in such a way that they would be "so clear that no honest man can misunderstand me, and no dishonest one successfully misrepresent me."

I think no person today, honest or otherwise, seeks to misrepresent Mr. 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 their President.

Let's take a look for a moment at some of those issues which have strained the element of trust and understanding between the American people and their President.

Panama Canal Treaty

The present Administration maintains that this is a time for concession and retreat around the globe - concession in Cuba, Panama, and China; retreat in Africa, South Korea, and Western Europe. Indeed, vital decisions about our nation's future course in foreign policy, defense, and trade matters are being decided right now. Major shifts in policy are underway. Only the restraining hand of Congress has prevented a wholesale reversal in the international image that brought this country respect and authority in the last three decades.

In some respects, the Panama Canal issue is a watershed decision in foreign policy. There are strong feelings on both sides of the issue. They spring from deep-seated personal convictions about the course this nation must follow in both foreign policy and national security matters in the years ahead.

Some would say there is no need for negotiation. Still others insist that we accept without question a new treaty that is based on apology and which offers little security for the future. I suggest there is a third option: to insist upon fundamental changes in the new canal treaties which will fully protect our national defense and economic interests -- without ambiguity, without uncertainty, without apology. That is the option that I have proposed to preserve the integrity and security of the United States.

There is no disgrace in renegotiating a faulty treaty. But there is lasting shame and remorse in rubber-stamping an accord which clearly jeopardizes vital defense and trade interests.

THE CONTINUING COAL STRIKE

The coal strike is now over 80 days old. We are on the verge of a serious national crisis. The leadership of the United Mine Workers and the Bituminous Coal Operators Association have been unable to reach an agreement and the Administration has been unable to use their influence to bring about a settlement. It now appears that President Carter will turn to Congress to enact drastic measures.

The real question is whether this Administration has what it takes to arrive at a solution without resorting to drastic measures. The Administration has waited too long and that has contributed to the worsening situation. Do they now consider it their only option to ask the Congress to take over where they have failed? It is unfortunate, but typical that Congress has been ignored until now. Furthermore, it is no surprise that Congress will soon be summoned to assume the leadership role that seems always beyond the reach of this Administration.

Certainly the Congress can help. But I hope that the Administration will not come to Congress merely to get our stamp of approval on actions that should only be considered as a last resort. Such measures should never be taken when other possibilities are still available.

ENERGY

Last April -- almost a year ago -- the President came before Congress to say that the energy crisis is the "moral equivalent of war". In great anticipation, many of us believed that we would take constructive steps toward solving our dilemma of rising oil imports. However, the President didn't send an energy bill to Congress -- he sent a tax bill. The so-called National Energy Plan, which may never again see the light of day, calls for \$125 billion in new energy taxes in the next seven years.

As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, I heard opposition to the Administration's energy plan from such diverse groups as the AFL-CIO, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Consumer Federation of America. Recently, the energy tax bill experienced another setback when the NAACP attacked the Administration's energy program as "being seriously deficient". The chances of truly comprehensive energy legislation this year are slim. It is, indeed, unfortunate that we have been struggling with legislation which will inflate our economy, cause unemployment, and, most importantly, will do nothing to increase and develop new energy resources.

There was a time when I referred to the energy tax bill as the single largest tax increase in American history. But the newly enacted Social Security bill -- more than \$227 billion in new taxes during the next ten years -- puts the energy tax bill as only the second largest tax increase in our country's history. At this pace, the 95th Congress will be known for only one thing -- the Congress that wanted to tax the American people into oblivion.

TAXES

The Administration last month finally unveiled its tax reform proposal. The tax package contains a mixed-bag of tax cuts and tax reforms. If I am correctly reading the mood of the Congress, little of the tax reforms are likely to be enacted and the size of the cuts will undoubtedly be enlarged.

There is an interesting philosophical battle now being waged on Capitol Hill. It concerns educational expenses. There is no question that the cost of education is skyrocketing. Many middle class Americans can no longer afford to send their children to college, but, unbelievably, are too wealthy to qualify for assistance. My colleagues in the Finance Committee would like to grant a tax credit for educational expenses. The proposal is simple, requires little bureaucracy, and is equitable. On the other hand, the Administration, who strenuously opposes the tax credit, suggests that we expand the current student loan program.

This would perpetuate paperwork and add another layer to the bureaucracy. It seems incongruous that a President who campaigned on a promise to reduce government now becomes the instigator of bigger and more intrusive government.

RECENT YEARS DIFFICULT

The years since President Eisenhower left office have been difficult years. They have been years of foreign war, and domestic turmoil, years in which our government lost the esteem of the American people. But our people never lost their own self-respect, their own love for their country, and their belief in its destiny and their own destiny as a free people.

This quality of tough self-assurance was the touchstone on which Lincoln tested his vision of America. It shaped and sustained him, and it was the capacity to act in harmony with the most deeply felt convictions of Americans on both sides of a difficult issue that earned him not merely his place in our history, but his place in our hearts. To restore America, we have only to restore contact with her people. The road back to our people is not a difficult one to find. And the credit and the virtue lie not in the finding, but in the seeking -- the reaching out.

One among us best understood Lincoln. Carl Sandburg wrote his biography. He put it all down there -- the prairie years, the war years, the loving and laughing, and the heartbreak -- put it all down so our children could understand and know Lincoln. And Sandburg, in his understanding of Lincoln, understood our nation and the people who built it, and told their story in The People, Yes.

"The people will live on," he wrote.

"The learning and blundering people will live on.

They will be tricked and sold and again sold

And go back to the nourishing earth for footholds,

The people so peculiar in renewal and comeback,

You can't laugh off their capacity to take it."

Sandburg knew our people were a star any politician could follow safely. He knew that they were wiser in the long run than any single man. He knew what Lincoln knew, and wrote and taught what Lincoln lived and led by.

And he wrote this line:

"This old anvil laughs at many broken hammers."

Today our national leadership breaks itself on the anvil of the American people; misled, fooled and confused, our people still know down deep what they are about, and where they want to go.

And we in this Party can still lead them, 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 because of disunity. Let us not neglect our historical role because of short-term conflicts within our party.

It doesn't matter if we are Reagan Republicans, or Ford Republicans, or Case and Mathias and Percy and Javitts and Brooke Republicans. If we are to meet our responsibilities to Americans, we must do it as Lincoln's Republicans acting together, motivated by what unites us and not inhibited by whatever differences we may have.

Because Mr. Carter speaks falsely or, at best, wishfully, when he describes our condition as one of "a growing sense of peace and common purpose"; because our people do wish for and deserve to have restored to them a "sense of peace and common purpose", I believe our responsibility to help bring that about is as great today as anytime in the history of our party. If we cannot move as one party to meet it, however, I think we shall not be able to move at all, and we shall fail in that responsibility and we shall be less than worthy of Lincoln.

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 friends in the Democratic Party now work, to make the purposes of American politics consistent with the purposes 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.