

News from Senator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE
RADIO/TELEVISION TEST PERIOD BEGINS
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 1986

TODAY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CAN TUNE-IN TO THEIR DEMOCRACY. AS THE SENATE MAJORITY LEADER, I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF AN HISTORIC TEST PERIOD FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION IN THIS CHAMBER. DURING THE NEXT 126 DAYS, THE PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO HEAR FOR THEMSELVES -- WITHOUT TRAVELING TO THEIR CAPITOL -- WHAT'S GOING ON IN WASHINGTON. THANKS TO RADIO, YOU, THE PEOPLE...ON THE GREAT PLAINS OF KANSAS, IN OUR CITIES AND ON OUR FARMS, AND UP AND DOWN MAIN STREET AMERICA, YOU ARE NOW LISTENING TO THE SOUNDS OF THE SENATE.

BECAUSE OF TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS, RADIO GOES FIRST; TELEVISION IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. ACTUALLY, AFTER VIEWING US ON TELEVISION, THE PEOPLE MAY DEMAND THAT WE STICK WITH RADIO! IN FACT, RADIO AND POLITICS HAVE COME A LONG WAY TOGETHER. HISTORY TELLS US THAT THE FIRST RADIO SHOW BROADCAST THE RESULTS OF THE HARDING-COX PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RETURNS OF 1920. BUT WHILE RADIO MOVED FOWARD INTO THE SATELLITE ERA, THE SENATE STAYED BEHIND IN THE DAYS OF THE CRYSTAL SET. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THERE ARE A HALF BILLION RADIOS IN THE UNITED STATES, NOT ONE OF THEM YESTERDAY COULD PICK UP THE SENATE.

I WANT TO SALUTE THE MANY CHAMPIONS OF THE LEGISLATION THAT HELPED OPEN THIS INSTITUTION TO THE MICROPHONE AND CAMERA. MY PREDECESSOR, HOWARD BAKER OF TENNESSEE, WAS A TIRELESS ADVOCATE OF RADIO AND TELEVISION IN THE SENATE, AS WAS SENATOR MAC MATHIAS, THE DISTINGUISHED CHAIRMAN OF THE RULES COMMITTEE, AND SENATOR BILL ARMSTRONG, MY DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUE FROM COLORADO. BUT TODAY IS, IN PARTICULAR, A TRIBUTE TO ALL OF THEIR LEADERSHIP AND VISION. MY GOOD FRIEND, THE ABLE MINORITY LEADER, SENATOR BYRD OF WEST VIRGINIA, HAS BEEN A REAL PIONEER ON THIS ISSUE AS WELL. THERE ARE MANY OTHERS WHO DESERVE CREDIT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE FOR THEIR HARD WORK AND PERSEVERANCE.

YES, RADIO HAS BEEN HERE BEFORE. MOST RECENTLY TO BROADCAST THE DEBATE OVER THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY IN 1978. BUT FOR TOO LONG, THE SENATE HAS BEEN OFF LIMITS TO MODERN TECHNOLOGY. THAT'S WHY, STARTING TODAY, THE AMERICAN PUBLIC WILL HAVE ITS EAR TO THIS CHAMBER; LATER, ITS EYES, WHEN TELEVISION PLUGS IN ON JUNE FIRST. FOR THE FIRST TIME, OUR PROCEEDINGS WILL BE HEARD BY THE PEOPLE UNEDITED: ALL THE DEBATES, THE FILIBUSTERS, THE ROLL CALL VOTES AND, OF COURSE, ALL THE BLEEPs, BLOOPs AND BLUNDERS.

THIS TEST WILL RUN UNTIL JULY FIFTEENTH, AFTER WHICH TIME SENATORS WILL TAKE TWO WEEKS TO EVALUATE THE GRAND EXPERIMENT. WE MAY DECIDE TO PULL THE PLUG; OR CONTINUE THE TEST; OR MAKE RADIO AND TELEVISION COVERAGE PERMANENT. YOU THE LISTENER WILL HELP US MAKE THAT DECISION AND WE LOOK FOWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU.

MANY OF US HOPED THAT THE ARRIVAL OF BROADCASTING WOULD ALSO BRING WITH IT SOME MUCH-NEEDED RULES CHANGES -- CHANGES THAT WOULD MAKE THIS BODY MORE EFFICIENT. IF RADIO AND T.V. COVERAGE HELP US REACH THAT GOAL, SO MUCH THE BETTER. SOME MODEST RULES CHANGES HAVE BEEN ENACTED FOR THIS TEST PERIOD, BUT TRUE TO THE GROUND RULES OF THIS INSTITUTION, WE ARE STILL WIDE OPEN TO DEBATE. WE ARE NOT THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AS YOU WILL SEE AND HEAR. MILLIONS OF TELEVISION VIEWERS HAVE BEEN WATCHING THE HOUSE FOR YEARS AND HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE NUTS OF BOLTS OF CONGRESSIONAL PROCEDURE.

LET ME EXPLAIN THAT THE SENATE IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT BALLGAME, AND YOU CAN'T SUPERIMPOSE THE TWO HOUSES -- IT'S APPLES AND ORANGES: WE'RE THE APPLES, THEY'RE THE ORANGES. WE ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE HOUSE WITH REGARDS TO THE RULES OF DEBATE. IN THE HOUSE, ITS RULES COMMITTEE CAN STRICTLY LIMIT DEBATE ON A MEASURE. NO SUCH COMMITTEE PREVENTS MEMBERS ON THIS SIDE FROM SPEAKING AT LENGTH OR OFFERING A GREAT MANY AMENDMENTS. THERE ARE RULES AND PROCEDURES HERE THAT MOST LIKELY WILL BAFFLE, CONFUSE AND FRUSTRATE OUR RADIO AND T.V. AUDIENCE. BELIEVE ME, THEY WILL HAVE MY SYMPATHY. NEVERTHELESS, THESE VERY RULES OF THE GAME MAKE THE SENATE A UNIQUE AND IMPORTANT VOICE IN THE SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES THAT ARE THE FOUNDATION OF OUR GOVERNMENT. THESE SPECIAL RULES PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF THE MINORITY AND ALLOW ONE MAN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF OUR DEMOCRACY.

TODAY THERE IS MUCH WORK TO BE DONE, AND WE COULD BE IN SESSION LATE THIS EVENING. BEFORE US IS A VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE -- WHETHER OUR CONSTITUTION SHOULD REQUIRE THE FEDERAL BUDGET TO BE IN BALANCE EACH AND EVERY YEAR. I BELIEVE IT MUST. I LOOK FORWARD TO SHARING THIS DEBATE TODAY WITH YOU, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. ABOVE ALL, I WELCOME YOU TO THIS HISTORIC MOMENT IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE.

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