

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE

T.V. IN THE SENATE--MAKE IT PERMANENT, WITH CHANGES

LATER TODAY THE SENATE REACHES AN HISTORIC CROSSROADS: WILL THE TELEVISION CAMERAS AND MICROPHONES THAT HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO ENTER THIS CHAMBER AFTER SO MANY YEARS BE PERMITTED TO STAY, OR WILL THEY BE SWITCHED OFF.....PERHAPS FOREVER?

THAT IS EXACTLY THE QUESTION WE FACE AS OUR GRAND EXPERIMENT WITH THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA COMES TO ITS CONCLUSION TODAY. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE WE CAN TELL THE SENATE TECHNICIANS THEY WON'T HAVE TO ROLL UP ALL THAT CABLE, OR THAT THE LOCAL TV GUIDES WILL HAVE TO SCRATCH-OUT NEXT WEEK'S LISTINGS--IN MY VIEW, TELEVISION AND RADIO ARE HERE TO STAY.

MEETING THE GOALS

OUR FIVE-MONTH-LONG EXPERIMENT HAS BEEN A GOOD ONE. WE SET OUT--FIRST WITH RADIO, THEN WITH TELEVISION--TO BUILD AN ELECTRONIC BRIDGE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE; TO OPEN THIS CHAMBER TO THE ELECTORATE; AND TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE DEBATES THAT HELP SHAPE THIS NATION ARE ONLY A DIAL AWAY. THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF MANY OF MY COLLEAGUES AND SCORES OF PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCENES, WE ARE MEETING THOSE LOFTY GOALS, SLOWLY BUT SURELY.

IN MY VIEW, THE SOONER WE VOTE TO MAKE THE CAMERAS AND THE MICROPHONES PERMANENT, THE SOONER WE ENSURE THAT THE EYES AND EARS OF THE PEOPLE WILL HAVE A PERMANENT PLACE IN THE HALLS OF THEIR DEMOCRACY.

SOME GLITCHES

THAT'S NOT TO SAY WE HAVEN'T HAD SOME GLITCHES ALONG THE WAY--WE HAVE, AND THEY'LL NEED FIXING. THE DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC STUDY COMMITTEES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE HAVE DONE A SPLENDID JOB BRINGING SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS TO OUR ATTENTION.

FIRST, THERE ARE SOME TECHNICAL QUESTIONS: WE KNOW THAT THE SOUND SYSTEM IN THE CHAMBER SHOULD BE A LOT BETTER. WE KNOW THAT THERE HAVE BEEN COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE COLOR OF THE WALLS AND HOW IT MAKES SOME MEMBERS LOOK LIKE THEY'RE STANDING IN SPLIT-PEA SOUP; AND THAT THE CAMERA ANGLES FOR MANY MEMBERS--PARTICULARLY THE LEADERSHIP DOWN IN FRONT--ARE NOT EXACTLY FLATTERING. BUT THESE ARE MAINLY COSMETIC CONCERNS.

WE ALSO HAVE REAL LEGAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES TO ADDRESS: WHO CAN USE THE VIDEOTAPES OF THESE PROCEEDINGS? POLITICAL OPPONENTS? NEWS ORGANIZATIONS? NOBODY? ANYBODY? WE NEED ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS AND QUICKLY.

THERE ARE ALSO QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT KINDS OF VISUAL AIDS SHOULD BE PERMITTED ON THE SENATE FLOOR. BECAUSE OF TELEVISION WE HAVE SEEN A PROLIFERATION OF GRAPHS AND CHARTS, ALMOST TO THE POINT THAT WE MAY SOON CONSIDER SELLING ADVERTISING SPACE ON THE BACK WALLS.

IN ANY EVENT, THESE QUESTIONS WILL BE ADDRESSED ON A CONTINUING BASIS BY THE LEADERSHIP, THE RULES COMMITTEE AND OTHER CONCERNED COLLEAGUES. I KNOW THAT THE DISTINGUISHED MINORITY LEADER AND THE CHAIRMAN AND RANKING MINORITY MEMBER OF THE RULES COMMITTEE HAVE BEEN REAL LEADERS ON THE T.V. ISSUE AND I WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THEM TO TURN OUR EXPERIMENT INTO A DAY-TO-DAY FIXTURE ON CAPITOL HILL.

T.V. AND RADIO FOR THE PEOPLE

ABOVE ALL, LET'S KEEP IN MIND OUR BOTTOM LINE: WE ARE HERE TO SERVE THE PEOPLE, AND IN MY MIND, MAKING TELEVISION AND RADIO PERMANENT IS THE WAY TO GO.

LET ME READ JUST A BRIEF EXCERPT FROM ONE OF THE MANY LETTERS I HAVE RECEIVED ON OUR EXPERIMENT. IT COMES FROM A GENTLEMAN IN NEW YORK WHO WRITES: "WE AMERICANS HAVE THE RIGHT TO SEE AND HEAR OUR PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON..."

THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT. LET'S NOT PULL THE PLUGS.

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