



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
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Welcome to Washington on the Decennial of the death of the Republican Party. As you know, ten years ago we were being told we were on the brink of extinction, due to go under any minute.

NOT ALL SETBACKS

We have controlled the Executive branch of the government for six of those ten years. We ended Kennedy's War, pretty much the way Barry Goldwater said it should have been ended back in 1964. We are still wrestling with Johnson's Economy and it's hard to say how that is going to work out. The Supreme Court has stopped listening to port. That is a Republican achievement and one which I hope we will build on as we go along.

We have reversed the flow of political power into the Federal City. So far, that is a marginal accomplishment, but the effort to decentralize power will continue and, I believe, is irreversible. All things considered, we aren't doing too badly for a dead party.

But we have to be realistic and recognize that we are doing badly enough.

ONE MAJOR SETBACK

The events of Watergate hurt the Republican Party badly. It would be foolish to pretend otherwise, after seeing the results of the '74 elections. Watergate is history, and as Republicans, we can't change history.

Some can pretend that Kennedy's War was really Nixon's War, or that Johnson's Economy is really Ford's Economy, but we can't pretend that Watergate was the culmination of a lot of abuses that had been indulged in by both parties for a long, long time. In the case of Watergate, we can't even learn anything from history that we didn't already know before it all happened.

HANGING THE FUTURE

But we can change the future. We have an excellent opportunity to do that.

We can do it precisely because the Democrats are the majority party. They have started the majority of the wars in our history. They have ensured that the majority of the power which our Constitution gave to the people has been moved to Washington and passed down to the bureaucrats. They have sponsored the majority of the spending programs that have bought a majority of the votes that have brought us to the edge of bankruptcy.

And at the present rate, I expect that before long a majority of them will have declared for the Presidency -- at least a majority of those in the Senate.

CONGRESSIONAL POWER LOSS EXPLAINED

As a result of this mob-like yearning to get out of the Senate and into the White House, a majority of the time that ought to be spent working on legislation is spent working to get a nomination that is fifteen or sixteen months away.

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Any objective observer must find it curious that so many can express so much concern about getting power back into the Congress, while at the same time, they are themselves spending so much time trying to get out of the Congress. Anybody who wonders why the Congress has lost so much power in recent years and why the White House has acquired so much, should just look at the absentee records of the members of a Congress that has been Democratically controlled for a period coinciding with the loss of Congressional power.

So when you put the Democrats in perspective, they haven't got a great deal to brag about when they consider their majority status. At the same time, for that same reason, all Americans have a great deal to worry about.

SOME CAUSE FOR HOPE

But, as for we Republicans, I think we make a mistake to wallow in our misfortune, to wring our hands about our future, and to entertain dark self-doubts about why we are Republicans in the first place.

Obviously, many of our fellow Republicans show signs that they are going through such a political identity crisis.

We would do well to ask how do our opponents answer the analogous question-- why be a Democrat? Is it to pursue such lofty goals as:

--coupon gas rationing;

--continuing indefinitely our Government's spending binge;

--continuing the growth of Federal power at the expense of private freedom;

--giving Federal Government power to decide who can buy a car or a house, as one of their credit allocation programs would allow!

--or to decide which doctor will treat you and how, and for how much, as their national medical programs would suggest?

Why be a Republican indeed.

If that's why Democrats are Democrats, then two easy answers immediately come to mind about why we are Republicans.

First, to oppose the Democrat's program.

Second, because, if they really do pursue these goals, then in six months, or maybe a year, the American people are going to wake up to the reality of what the current majority party has in mind for them and the country. And then, it isn't necessarily dreaming to predict that others who are not now Republicans are going to start asking themselves some pretty basic questions.

Like why not?

The Democrats -- no matter what the size of their Congressional majority -- cannot lead. But they are demonstrating they can obstruct.

NEED FOR LEADERSHIP

Make no mistake about it. We are in a dangerous period. The Congress is bent on retrieving some of the power that has been siphoned off by the White House. And it should retrieve that power. All things being equal, that is a positive move. But all things are not equal.

The country needs attention. It needs leadership. And the Congress which proposes to take back power and provide that leadership, doesn't know what to do with the power, has no legislative leadership, and is trying to buy time while they figure out where the leadership is going to come from, where it's going to go, and what to do with the power.

Unfortunately, we don't have that kind of time.

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ENERGY POLICY OBSTRUCTION

Consider the energy situation. President Ford proposed a very comprehensive program for dealing with our energy needs. The Congress has responded by singling out one small part of that program, condemning it, offering nothing in its place, and ignoring the rest of the program. The Democrats have promised a program of their own, and as soon as they can get enough people back in Washington, they may come up with a program. We could be running our cars on rubber bands by then, however.

It ought to be clear that the Democrats are not going to have a very pretty record to take to the nation in 1976, in spite of their present optimism. But that doesn't mean we can sit back and wait for them to step in their own chewing gum.

We all have a lot of work to do, and the nuts and bolts part of that work is going to have to be done by people like yourselves, in conjunction with the National, State and Local Republican Committees.

ORGANIZATION THE KEY

Political success, like genius, is 90 percent perspiration and 10 percent inspiration. The key to everything is organization. You can always find people who are willing to attend meetings, and you can usually find people who are willing to do some speaking. But that gets to be a pretty circular process, because you are meeting with people who are already committed to what you believe in, and you are speaking to people whose souls are already saved.

The real work consists in plowing through registration lists, computer runs, and telephone books, and then going to the people. That is the nuts of politics, and there has never been any substitute for it. The pollsters and media experts, and the campaign directors and all the rest can't do a thing for you unless you have people registered to vote, and willing to vote Republican.

I think there was a period when we forgot that. When you control the White House, there is an inevitable sense of complacency within the Party. One of the unfortunate things about the White House during the past six years was that there were so few people in it who understood the political process. You could have counted on one hand the number of people on the White House staff who had ever run for office. You could have counted on two hands the number who would have known how to get their name on the ballot if they had wanted to run.

MISPLACED EMPHASIS

That isn't a crime, but it does suggest why there was not the same impetus in recent years toward building the party.

We say too much effort placed on building a mandate, and too little on building a constituency. We saw too much reliance placed on the fact that we controlled the White House, and not enough effort expended on putting more Republicans in Congress.

One of the most important things demonstrated during the Nixon Presidency was that there are a lot of Americans who are Republicans -- whether they ever knew it before or not. They stand for fiscal responsibility, they stand for a strong national defense, they stand for Government restraint, and they will no longer fall for pie-in-the-sky programs that produce little more than a bigger bureaucracy and a higher national debt.

Your task is to go out and bring those people in. Don't be discouraged by Watergate, don't be misled by those who tell you the Republican Party is in disgrace, and don't be dismayed by those who say we are a dying party. The party of Lincoln has not come this far into America's future to perish just because a handful of commentators and self-proclaimed pundits say we should.

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ONE CAUTION

I want to leave you with one more cautionary "don't". Don't get caught in the trap of encouraging or participating in a lot of divisive ideological squabbling, and threats of third or fourth party activities. Airplanes can't fly on one wing, and neither can the Republican Party. We need all factions. We need conflict because it leads to progress. But it only leads to progress when it ends in resolution and not in dissolution.

Remember, it is the Democrat Party which is the most divided. It doesn't have just a liberal wing and a conservative wing. It has 'McGovernites, populists, radical fringe groups of all descriptions, cold warriors, on-worlders -- call them what you will, it is factionalized, polarized, split, divided.

And yet, we never hesitate to talk about the Democrats as just that -- THE Democrats. Their divisions are worse than ours, yet their ability for coalescing behind a candidate who shares their political label is seldom in question.

We can do the same, and ought to do it better because we are divided by less. It is significant that the talk of imminent formation of a third party has quieted down because, as yet, no one has come forth to accept the mantle of leadership for a third party movement.

There are all sorts of good pragmatic arguments against third parties. Adverse campaign finance laws, difficulty of mounting a nationwide organization, you know them all.

But, first of all, there is the hard reality that no third party is going to get very far off-the-ground unless it shows the general population that it knows how to lead. And for that it needs a leader. At present, it doesn't have one, and all those whom it has wooed, have politely discouraged the courtship.

FORD DESERVES SUPPORT

On the other hand, President Ford has said he will run again. Maybe he will and maybe he won't. We should take him at his word, and give him every possible bit of support as our President and our Party leader, because he is our Party's leader and he is doing a commendable job as our Nation's leader, given the obstacle of an obstructionist Congress. That doesn't mean he is sacrosanct. When the time comes, the primary process and the convention process will provide us with a good Republican candidate, whether it's President Ford or somebody else, and we better be prepared to support him. The point is to avoid getting posured in a way that produces bitterness, intransigence, and political splits.

Whatever our internal differences, we are all agreed that the Democratic majority does not serve America's best interests. We need to continue to hold the White House, We need more Republicans in Congress, in the State Houses, in the State Legislatures, and in local government. And the only way we can do all this is by coming together, staying together, and working together.

If you do your job, and I have worked with enough of you for long enough to know that you will, you will end up with holes in your shoes, and calluses on your thumbs, and you'll be so sick of telephones that you won't care if you ever see one again. Sometimes it will look like it's not paying off, and sometimes you may feel as though others have let you down. But in the end, the results will be positive. And you will have a large share in them.