



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA FEDERATION OF REPUBLICAN WOMEN
HILTON INN
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA
FRIDAY, MAY 2, 1975

It is my pleasure to be here this evening with all of you and to share some reflections about the Republic and about the Republican Party.

There are people today, I realize, who think both are in decline. But, as for me, I am an optimist in spite of recent setbacks, and I hope in the course of these remarks, to describe some of the grounds for that optimism.

Let me say right at the start that the good judgement of the American people is the bedrock of my hope. And I say with sincerity that so long as the American people retain a capacity for the kind of insight which the people of North Carolina have shown in sending a man like my good friend and colleague, Jesse Helms, to the Senate, then truly there are grounds for optimism.

I serve with him on the Senate Agriculture Committee. I know firsthand his commitment to the interests of the farmers and people of North Carolina, and every member of the Senate knows quite well his commitment to the important principles of this country that have made and kept her strong, prosperous and free.

I mean to insist on my optimism about the future of this country and of our Republican Party. I know that 1974 was not an encouraging year here in North Carolina, as it was not for Republicans anywhere. But keep it in perspective. You have made great strides in ten short years, and you will go farther. You have Jesse Helms. You have a fine Governor in Jim Holshouser, and two very effective and respected Members of Congress in Jim Martin and Jim Broyhill. And, most importantly, you have people throughout this state who, like yourselves, are willing to work hard to further Republican prospects, and Republican principles.

It isn't easy. I know that. And it won't get easier overnight.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

Every way we turn these days, it seems, the same uncertain note is sounded. The same question seems to confront us -- where do we go from here?

Where, for example, do American economic policy-makers go from here, now that inflation has begun to recede and recession has replaced it as our major and most immediate economic challenge.

Where does American Foreign policy go from here, after our recent setbacks in international affairs and after our most profound disappointments in Southeast Asia?

And, within our more immediate political family, where do we Republicans go from here in light of the recent polls suggesting that many Republicans have gone away? Our percentage of the voting population is now smaller than it has been since the Party's earliest days.

Each time that question is raised -- where do we go from here? -- in whatever context it is raised, I offer the same basic answer. I trust it is not an oversimplification. Either we go nowhere from here, or we go back to basics, back to beginnings, back to first principles.

IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

A WASHINGTON STAR-NEWS columnist writing recently about foreign policy, said it was an "awkward time" to be talking about it. In a real sense, he is right.

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It is awkward because of our uncertainty about where we are headed. And awkwardness is a characterization that applies to a broader range of discourse than foreign policy.

Take economics. One gets the feeling these days, if he talks about America's great free enterprise system, that nobody's listening.

Take foreign policy. Talk about maintaining America's place as leader of the free world and, it seems, nobody's listening.

Or talk casually with friends. Mention patriotism. All of a sudden, it may seem, nobody's listening.

And again, to get politically closer to home, talk about Republicanism, and it seems nobody's listening.

STORY NOT GETTING THROUGH

But, if nobody's listening anymore, it just might be because they don't understand what we are trying to say. And maybe that's because we aren't saying it very clearly.

We are certainly not saying it very persuasively.

You can't apologize for something and defend it at the same time.

You can't defend our free economic system as the one which works best if, at the same time, you are apologizing for the fact that it doesn't work perfectly. You can't defend America, if at the same time, you apologize for the things that make her unique, her wealth, her power, her free system.

And certainly, you can't defend Republicanism if, at the same time, you apologize for its principles.

WRONG DEFENSE

Back to economics for an illustration. Here it may not be so much the fact that nobody's listening as it is the fact that they are listening with suspicion.

When we Republicans defend our system -- we always know what we mean. We mean that it is a good system, primarily because it is a free system. And we mean to say that we think that it is because it is a free system -- not a controlled one -- that it does a good job of making it possible for free people to make a living, to earn a living, through the exercise of their own particular talents and energies.

We know what we mean when we defend that system. But a lot of people don't. The polls show it. Our experience shows it. We defend the system, but when we do, people hear a defense of big business.

In a country which, because of that free economic system, has extended a higher degree of prosperity to a more nearly universal segment of its population than any in history. It is obvious that the defenders of the system are just not telling their story well.

We aren't making ourselves understood by the people we want to hear us.

U.S. CAN'T WITHDRAW

It is the same with foreign policy. If we debate whether it is right or wrong for America to hold her present place of influence in the world -- as if we could change that -- we have chosen the wrong terms for the debate.

As Secretary Kissinger recently described it, there is an attitude in this country that "suffering is prolonged by American involvement ... That defense spending is wasteful, at best, and produces conflict, at worst; that American intelligence activities are immoral; that the necessary confidentiality of diplomacy is a plot to deceive the public..." Not only is it argued that we have been doing these wrong things in foreign policy. Now the argument is beginning to be made that it is wrong for us to do anything in foreign policy -- that is, it is wrong for us to try to influence international events at all.

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These arguments are based on the assumption that we can alter our position in the world; that we can draw in upon ourselves; that America, in one famous phrase, can and should "come home" to itself and leave its neighbors alone.

Such debate is an empty exercise. America's place in the world is fixed by our condition. We are a great power. We are wealthy. We are strong. And therefore, we are involved and our influence is major.

Nothing we can do can change that. Even if we should try, if we decide to pull out, our very decision not to be influential in world affairs would, itself, have a most profound influence on the shape of the world for generations to come.

STOP APOLOGIZING

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, in a recent article on foreign policy, offers at least a partial prescription. I think it applies as broadly to public discourse in a positive way as does the characterization of "awkwardness" in a negative way.

Moynihan asserts "it is time for America's spokesmen in international forums to come to be feared for the truths they might tell."

It is indeed time. It is time for us to stop apologizing, to stop beating our breast to stop being defensive about being strong, or timid about seeking peace. It is time for us to stop being reticent about the miracles our system has accomplished, or hesitant about proclaiming our belief in freedom as a desirable condition for all.

BECAUSE OF AMERICA ...

If the world, by and large, is at peace today -- and it is -- it is because of America.

If the people of the world, by and large, are better off today than they have been in the past -- and they are -- it's because America has helped.

If we have avoided World War III for the last thirty years -- as we have, although sometimes narrowly -- it's because of America.

If all this is true, and I believe it is, then let's reassert it proudly. And begin to be feared in international forums-- not for our strength and power, not for our wealth -- but "for the truths we might tell."

OPTIMIST'S BURDEN

I fully appreciate that in today's world, an American who is an optimist, a Republican who is an optimist, finds the burden of truth on his own shoulders.

But, as I said, I am an optimist because I believe not only that it is time we begin to reassert ourselves, but I believe that many of us are prepared to begin that activity.

If the defenders of the free enterprise system begin to assert themselves, then the truths they will tell can change the world.

It is certainly long past time -- fully forty years past time -- for Republican spokesmen to stand up and begin to reassert themselves about the truths they hold -- that is to say, the principles they believe in.

REPUBLICAN COMMITMENT

One more cite from Moynihan. He says -- and I think he is right -- that those who lay greater stress on freedom end up doing better by equality than those who stress equality do by freedom.

He observes that in the community of nations, the United States of America is of the freedom party.

And I remind you that in the American political community, we Republicans have no future, make no sense, unless we are the freedom party.

That is what we stand for. Shall we apologize for it, be defensive about it? I think not.

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ATTRACTING MORE REPUBLICANS

Talk about broadening our base:

What could attract more adherents to Republicanism than for this population -- now so terribly concerned about threats to individual freedom and the daily encroachment of big government into more and more of the details of their personal lives -- than for them to come to understand, finally, what we stand for as Republicans.

Freedom and the dignity and the integrity of the individual.

Are we concerned that this gathering, like most Republican meetings I have attended, lacks what they call socio-economic diversity? That, in plain words, there still aren't very many blue-collar Republicans, or poor Republicans, or Republicans among minorities?

We should be. We should be disturbed especially because what Republicanism stands for is not just our best hope, but theirs. But they don't know that because they don't really know what it is we stand for. Or they don't understand what it is we stand for. It's not their fault. It's ours, because we haven't been telling them.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

We Republicans, I think, stand for all that I have been talking about tonight. We stand for a strong America, proud of her strength and proud of her freedom, and ready to carry her message forcefully and convincingly to the world. I don't question the sincerity of our Democrat opponents, nor their commitment to their country. What I do question is how deep is their appreciation of America's uniqueness. Do they share with us Lincoln's sense of urgency about preserving America's integrity because it really is the last, best hope of mankind?

We stand for an American concept of freedom that universally permits individuals to rise above the "common man" status our friends, the Democrats, would assign to them, and as a consequence, we find it no surprise when the American citizen -- the American "common man" -- performs uncommon deeds.

My message in all this is a simple and not very profound one. If you believe you are right, don't hesitate to assert it.

PAST DEFEATS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Come out of your shells, Republicans. Watergate is over. The elections of 1974 are a reality -- an unpleasant one -- but a reality that we can't change. Come out of your shells and stop wallowing in the defeats of the recent past.

Things are bad. There is no gainsaying it. But I've been there before myself. On October 1, 1974, my own polls showed me trailing my opponent by more than 10 percent. Everyone said our chances were dead. But we didn't give up.

And I think it's appropriate to mention that it was the Republican women of Kansas who made a difference in my re-election -- as they do in most GOP victories -- that was far out of proportion to their numbers. From writing the blueprints of campaign tactics to the nuts and bolts of yard-signs and envelope stuffing, they were there.

They were there in force, in good spirit, and in dedication to one purpose -- furthering the prospects for Republican victory, the progress of Republican programs and the promise of Republican principles. The Republican Party is dead only if that spirit dies.

The Republican Party in North Carolina is not dead, surely, unless that spirit no longer lives among the Republican women of North Carolina. And I gather from your presence and your attitude here today that nothing could be further from the truth.

So I say to you, keep your spirit alive, keep your hopes alive, and you will keep our Republican Party alive -- and much more than that -- prosperous again.

And let me stress that in the world we live in today, with the forces arrayed against the survival of our system and our principles, it is essential that you -- the Republican women of North Carolina and the nation -- do so. In a very real and vital way, it could make all the difference.

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