



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE AT THE KANSAS DAY BANQUET TOPEKA, KANSAS JANUARY 29, 1977

Two years ago, we gathered here on Kansas Day, in celebration of the 1974 elections which had solidified our position as the most Republican state in the Union. Today, in the wake of the 1976 elections, things don't look so bright and we don't have much to celebrate.

We've temporarily lost control of the State House of Representatives, the Democrats control the White House and both Houses of Congress, and the Republican party registration is at a low level.

We must not dwell on past elections and gloomy statistics. If we look back at all, it should be to learn, so that we can plan for the future, focus on the positive, and engineer our comeback.

Opportunity to Contribute

In the days, months, and years ahead, we, as a party, have a tremendous opportunity to contribute to the betterment of our nation, our state, our counties and cities. And if we work for the best interests of our neighbors, putting forth positive solutions to real problems, I think we'll see our electoral prospects soar. Because I am convinced that the party of Lincoln is still the party of the people, that our philosophy -- of limited government, reduced spending, and lowered taxes -- best represents the views of most Kansans and most Americans.

As the minority party, we have a responsibility -- to ourselves and to the American people -- to articulate our views. Too often in the past, the people have perceived us as a party of political "againsters", a party that cares for the rich and not the poor, the businessman and not the consumer, the industrialist and not the environmentalist, those who can help themselves and not those who need help. You and I know that's not true, but a lot of people seem to hold that view, even though most of them share our fundamental philosophy.

Perhaps we have spent too much time talking about what we are against, not what we are for. That's clearly not productive. And it isn't winning us any elections.

Party of Opposition

How do we go about this? In the national arena, at least, the Democrats now have ultimate responsibility. But as the party of opposition, we share this responsibility, this public trust, with them. We can and must formulate Republican alternatives which demonstrate to the people what Republicans already know: that we do stand for something, that we do have a vision for the future, and that we do not advocate burying our heads in the sand when there is a legitimate need for government action.

On any number of issues, our positions are sound, our programs responsive and politically appealing.

Our stand on taxes and government spending is a good case in point. As the party of individual freedom, we have consistently advocated lower federal taxes and reducing the growth of federal expenditures. This is an issue which makes sense -- economic, philosophical, and political sense. Here, we have an opportunity to express our Republican philosophy in concrete legislative terms and reap the political benefits. We, as Republicans, should attempt to improve upon President Carter's economic

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stimulus package when it comes before us. Republican Senators intend to propose amendments which would provide meaningful, permanent tax reductions to all Americans, with particular emphasis on middle- and lower-income taxpayers. I think the American people will welcome this approach. It will be good for the country. And it will be good for the Republican Party.

The energy crisis and recent critical shortages of natural gas offer us another opportunity to put forward a positive program. Senator Pearson and other Senate Republicans are already out front on this issue. And I was pleased to note that President Carter has included -- at least temporarily -- a deregulation of natural gas prices as part of his short-term response to the current crisis. Let's let the American people know where we have been on this issue, that if we had been listened to two or three years ago, the present crisis situation would most likely not have occurred.

We Republicans should continue to speak up for the best interests of the American farmer -- to ensure that he has an adequate supply of natural gas for irrigation, to provide him with unfettered access to world markets, to set reasonable target prices and loan rates.

Lead Reorganization

And we must continue our push for a scaled down, more rational federal bureaucracy. While we wish President Carter well in his efforts to reorganize the Executive branch, I think we should take the lead in the drive to alter programs, abolish those that are unnecessary, modify those that are inefficient and wasteful, and consolidate those that are duplicative. Again, we need to be out front on this issue. And again, our position makes sense, and it will be politically attractive.

Future is in Recruitment

So, the issues are there. The opportunities are there. The future of the Republican Party in Kansas and across this nation can be bright. But it won't be unless we let the people know where we stand, why we stand there, and convince them that we have their best interests at heart. We must recognize that people are not going to come beating on our door, begging to be Republicans. We have to go out and get them. I think we should focus heavily on recruitment. We need the women, the young, the blacks, the Hispanics, the ethnics, and the Indians. We need working men and women.

These groups may not be easy to reach. But how better to test the vitality of our Republican beliefs than by persuading these groups, face to face, as individuals, that what we stand for best serves their interest. How better to demonstrate that we stand for the interest of all Americans by reaching out across the whole broad spectrum of our population for new members and new candidates.

But strong candidates and Republican elected officials are not enough. They are not the key to making our party strong. Anyone who has ever run for public office knows that the battle is won or lost in the trenches -- when the housewives, farmers, businessmen and women, and laborers are together. It's the grass roots effort that it takes to win. And it's going to take just such an effort to restore the GOP in Kansas and across the United States.

We don't have to wait to make our comeback. If we work hard, act constructively, talk in a positive manner, and if we begin now. Indeed, if we don't begin now, we may not have a comeback.

So, we have sacrifices to make. We have tremendous opportunities. We have hard work to do.

Today, Kansas Day, is a good day to begin.