

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

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CONTACT: WALT RIKER, DALE TATE
(202) 224-3135

REMARKS OF MAJORITY LEADER ROBERT DOLE
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE
JULY 22, 1985

WASHINGTON -- IT IS A PLEASURE TO ADDRESS THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE. SEVERAL WEEKS AGO I ASKED VERNON JORDAN IF HE WOULD HELP ASSEMBLE A SMALL GROUP OF BLACK LEADERS TO MEET WITH ME AND OTHER REPUBLICAN SENATORS. HE DID -- SO ON LAST WEDNESDAY WE MET WITH VERNON, JOHN JACOB, BEN HOOKS, EDDIE WILLIAMS, JULIUS CHAMBERS, AND JOE LOWERY. FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS WE TALKED ABOUT A NUMBER OF THINGS -- POLITICS, REPUBLICANS, DEMOCRATS, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE TALKED ABOUT HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER.

A NEW RELATIONSHIP

BECAUSE OF THAT MEETING, I HAVE A NEW HOPE. IT IS A HOPE THAT WE CAN DEVELOP A TRUE UNDERSTANDING OF ONE ANOTHER AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF CONFUSED PERCEPTIONS. IT IS A HOPE THAT WILL MATURE INTO UNDERSTANDING WHERE WE CAN SET ASIDE THOSE THINGS THAT DIVIDE US, AND JOIN TOGETHER IN AREAS THAT UNITE US.

I'VE BEEN TOLD BY YOUR LEADERS THAT THE ONE BIG OBSTACLE TO A NEW RELATIONSHIP IS THE PERCEPTION BY MANY THAT THE REPUBLICAN PARTY HAS TURNED ITS BACK ON THE PRINCIPLES FOR WHICH ITS PATRON SAINT, LINCOLN, FOUGHT. I'VE BEEN TOLD BY REPUBLICANS THAT THE ONE MASSIVE OBSTACLE FOR A BETTER RELATIONSHIP IS THE WIDESPREAD PERCEPTION AND SOME REALITY THAT BLACK AMERICA HAS FOREVER TURNED ITS BACK ON OUR PARTY.

I CAN DO LITTLE TO DISPEL THIS PERCEPTION WITHOUT HELP FROM BLACK AMERICANS AND THEIR LEADERSHIP, AND ONLY YOU CAN SAY WHETHER YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS ARE TRULY OPEN. BUT PERHAPS I CAN DO A LITTLE SOMETHING TO CHANGE YOUR PERCEPTIONS, BY DEMONSTRATING THAT THE LIGHT OF CONSCIENCE HAS NOT GONE OUT IN MY PARTY. IF YOU BELIEVE WE ARE A MONOLITHIC GROUP, INSENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE DISADVANTAGED AND POOR, IN MY VIEW, YOU ARE WRONG.

WHEN I WAS A COUNTY ATTORNEY OF RUSSELL, KANSAS, ONE OF MY RESPONSIBILITIES WAS MONTHLY APPROVAL OF WELFARE CLAIMS AND CHECKS. TWO OF THE WELFARE CHECKS WERE MY GRANDPARENTS. PARTLY BECAUSE OF THIS, I'M MORE THAN A LITTLE SENSITIZED TO PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE ALL THEIR LIVES BUT CANNOT MAKE ENDS MEET.

THAT'S WHY I TRY TO UNDERSTAND ISSUES LIKE FOOD STAMPS, AND VOTING RIGHTS, AND ISSUES AFFECTING THE POOR, THE HANDICAPPED AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS. THAT'S WHY I BELIEVE THAT BUDGET DEFICITS CANNOT BE REDUCED SIMPLY BY SLASHING PROGRAMS AFFECTING LOW INCOME AMERICANS. THIS DOES NOT MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT ANY PROGRAM SHOULD BE EXEMPT FROM FISCAL SCRUTINY.

A COMPASSIONATE PARTY

IF YOU BELIEVE REPUBLICANS LIVE ONLY IN WHITE SUBURBS AND SPURN INTEGRATION, THEN TELL ME WHY MAC MATHIAS HAS DEVOTED SO MANY YEARS TO PUTTING REAL TEETH INTO THE 1968 FAIR HOUSING ACT? WHY IS HE WORKING WITH SAM PIERCE RIGHT NOW TO COME UP WITH A BILL THAT CAN BE ENACTED INTO LAW THIS CONGRESS? HE CARES.

IF YOU BELIEVE REPUBLICANS DISLIKE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, THEN WHY HAS SENATOR ARLEN SPECTER OF PENNSYLVANIA BEEN ONE OF THE FEW IN EITHER PARTY TO SPEAK OUT FORCEFULLY ON THIS TROUBLESOME ISSUE? HE CARES.

IF YOU BELIEVE REPUBLICANS ARE SELECTIVE IN THEIR SUPPORT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, WHY HAS SENATOR MACK MATTINGLY OF GEORGIA BEEN WITH YOU ON EVERY MAJOR CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE? WHY DOES HE WORK CLOSELY WITH THE MARTIN LUTHER KING CENTER? HE CARES.

IF YOU BELIEVE REPUBLICANS ARE CALLOUS AND INSENSITIVE TOWARD THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY, WHY HAS SENATOR PAULA HAWKINS OF FLORIDA LED THE CHARGE FOR FEDERAL PROGRAMS TO PROTECT SUCH CHILDREN FROM CRIME, DRUGS, DISEASE, AND MALNUTRITION?

IF YOU BELIEVE REPUBLICANS IGNORE THE PROBLEMS OF OUR INNER CITIES, WHY DOES SENATOR ALFONSE D'AMATO OF NEW YORK PUT URBAN CRIME, MASS TRANSIT, AND ILLEGAL DRUG PEDDLING AT THE TOP OF HIS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA?

IF YOU BELIEVE REPUBLICANS AREN'T CONCERNED ABOUT BLACK TEENAGE JOBLESSNESS, WHY HAS SENATOR DAN QUAYLE OF INDIANA MADE IT A TOP PRIORITY OF HIS EMPLOYMENT SUBCOMMITTEE? THEY ALL CARE.

REPUBLICANS UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE THOSE WHO MUST LOOK TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR HELP IN OPENING THE DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY. BUT WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT COMPASSIONATE GOVERNMENTS DON'T IMPOSE DOUBLE DIGIT INFLATION ON THE POOR AND GIVE THEM WELFARE CHECKS INSTEAD OF JOBS IN A HEALTHY PRIVATE SECTOR. WE BELIEVE THAT A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS, BUT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND, AS VERNON JORDAN ONCE SAID, THAT SOME BOATS ARE STILL IN THE "DRYDOCKS OF AMERICA'S ECONOMY" AND WILL REMAIN STRANDED WITHOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S HELP.

REPUBLICANS DON'T OFTEN QUOTE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, BUT FDR SAID SOMETHING IN HIS SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS THAT SUMS UP WHAT I THINK THE VAST MAJORITY OF AMERICANS BELIEVE. "THE TEST OF OUR PROGRESS," HE SAID, "IS NOT WHETHER WE ADD MORE TO THE ABUNDANCE OF THOSE WHO HAVE TOO MUCH; IT IS WHETHER WE PROVIDE ENOUGH FOR THOSE WHO HAVE TOO LITTLE."

ENDING THE STANDOFF

I CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT EVERY REPUBLICAN SUBSCRIBES TO THIS VIEW, ANY MORE THAN YOU CAN BE CONFIDENT THAT ALL DEMOCRATS DO. BUT LET ME ADD THIS. IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU SEE IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY (AND NOT MANY GROUPS ARE PERFECT), THE BEST WAY TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE IS TO JOIN THE INTERNAL DEBATES.

THE POLITICAL REALITY IS THAT THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IS MOVING TOWARD MAJORITY STATUS, EVEN AS THE DEMOCRATS MAINTAIN A STRANGLE-HOLD ON THE BLACK VOTE. SO NOW SOME EXPERTS SAY, "WHY BOTHER? THE REPUBLICAN PARTY DOESN'T NEED THE BLACK VOTE ANYWAY, AND BESIDES THEY'RE TIED PERMANENTLY TO THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY." NOW I DON'T SUBSCRIBE TO THIS THEORY, AS I BELIEVE THAT OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS, WE CAN MOVE MORE QUICKLY TOWARD MAJORITY STATUS IF INROADS ARE MADE INTO THE BLACK VOTE. IF WE DO, THAT WOULD MEAN LONG-TERM POLITICAL CLOUT FOR BLACK AMERICANS AND A STRONG EFFECTIVE VOICE IN THEIR GOVERNMENT.

I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT VERY FEW REPUBLICANS TAKE PRIDE IN THE LACK OF PARTY SUPPORT AMONG BLACK VOTERS. WE DO WANT TO REACH OUT; TO BE RESPONSIVE -- BUT IT MUST BE A TWO-WAY STREET. IF YOU GIVE US AN OPPORTUNITY, WE WILL DEMONSTRATE, AS WE ARE NOW, THAT BEING A REPUBLICAN CAN BRING POSITIVE RESULTS FOR THE FUTURE, AND FINALLY AS TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY ELIZABETH DOLE -- A PERSON I DEEPLY RESPECT -- SAID TWO YEARS AGO IN ADDRESSING THIS CONVENTION:

"IF WE HAVE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION -- AND NO TWO HUMANS ARE EVER COMPLETELY IMMUNE TO SUCH EXPRESSIONS OF THEIR OWN INDIVIDUALITY -- THEN LET US AT LEAST ACKNOWLEDGE THE HARMONY OF OUR BASIC OBJECTIVES. AND THEN LET US GO ON FROM THERE, TO NARROW THE DIFFERENCES AND EXPAND THE COMMON GROUND ON WHICH WE MARCH TOWARD BETTER DAYS."

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.