

The Nation

Clinton's Fatal Mistake: Underestimating the Power of Bob Dole

■ **Politics:** While the President focused on other issues, the Senate minority leader was able to frame the debate on the jobs bill—and present it as ‘pork.’

By John Ellis

The first clear indication that Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) had President Bill Clinton's “economic stimulus plan” on the ropes came the day after Easter Sunday, at the traditional White House Easter Egg Hunt. Clinton summoned the press to the Oval Office to lambaste Dole and his motley crew for their filibuster of the \$16.3-billion legislation.

Outside his office, children searched for painted eggs. According to Clinton, those children were “hostages” of the GOP, because tucked away in the “stimulus” bill were funds for child immunization. “When I go out there on the lawn and I think about those kids picking up Easter eggs,” said Clinton, “I want to be able to think about them all being immunized.”

Whenever the Clinton White House is having a hard time explaining itself, and the scribes are rolling their eyes as the President speaks, “the children” are often introduced as the compelling moral reason for whatever proposal or scheme needs a quick rationale to carry it through the next news cycle. It was hardly surprising then that as the President's economic-stimulus package staggered toward its demise, the White House sought

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MATT MAHURIN / for The Times

to recast the issue as Clinton, defender of the little children, vs. Dole, hardhearted hatchet man from Inside the Beltway.

Children or no children, the package collapsed Wednesday in the face of Dole's unbreakable Republican filibuster. It was a clean kill for the Kansas senator. The White House was forced to accept a revised \$4-billion bill that extended unemployment benefits. Total surrender.

The White House legislative defeat was as embarrassing as it was complete. With a comfortable Democratic majority in the

Senate and an even larger margin in the House, an important part of the Clinton grand economic strategy had, nonetheless, gone down in flames, just 90 days into the Administration. Worse, there were few, if any, of Clinton's Democratic allies on Capitol Hill who seemed upset. “We need to move on to something else,” said Sen. John B. Breaux (D-La.).

The plan's demise was the result of dubious economics, self-important politics, partisan tactics and poor execution. White House political operatives, often

portrayed as the new wizards of Washington, were arrogant in their assessment of the situation. And they underestimated the character of the man across the table. Underestimating Dole is a mistake professional politicians should never make.

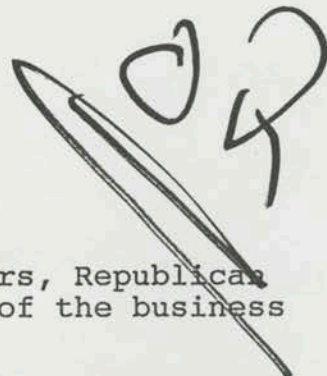
Start at the beginning. Both Clinton and Dole, as leaders of their respective parties, understand that the struggle over the next four years is for the hearts and minds of the 19% of the electorate who voted for Ross Perot. Win them and the winner gets the White House in 1996.

At the outset, the Clinton “economic stimulus plan” was the opening gambit in an overall political strategy to consolidate the President's tenuous political position. The package was aimed at the Democratic Party base (minorities-urbanites-labor-liberals) and was advertised as a “jobs” program. Its passage would have coincided with the economic recovery that had started gathering steam during the last months of the Bush Administration. It would have enabled the Clinton Adminis-

Please see DOLE, M6

TO: Senator Dole
FR: Kerry

RE: Remarks to Headliners Breakfast
Capitol Hill Club
Thursday, April 29



*You will be speaking to 200-250 RNC staffers, Republican Hill staffers, members of Congress, and members of the business lobbying community.

*They have asked for 10-15 minutes of remarks on Clinton's first 100 days, followed by 15 minutes of Q&A. Your remarks will begin at 8:30, and the event ends promptly at 9:00.

*They are billing this as a "waffle breakfast," with the menu offering "middle class tax cut waffles," "Haitian refugee waffles," etc.

*You will be introduced by Pat Roberts.

*Possible talking points are attached.



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Washington, D. C. 20003
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FAX (202) 479-9110

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Thurs, April 29
8:30 a.m.

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March 9, 1993

Capitol Hill Club

The Honorable
Robert Dole
United States Senate
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Bob:

One of the other hats I am wearing these days is Chairman of the Headliner Breakfast Group here at the Club. We are entering our 23rd year and since our first speaker, Vice President Agnew, we have heard from practically every Cabinet member in Republican administrations, leaders of Congress, plus a smattering of folks from the media.

You have done it, but not in recent years, so I would like to invite you to speak to the group on Thursday, April 29, 1993. That will be approximately the end of the first 100 days of the Clinton administration. The bill of fare will be waffles and we plan to offer a number of choices, such as the "middle class tax cut waffle," the "Haitian refugee waffle," and so on down the list.

To refresh your memory, the group is made up of members of Congress and staff, Republicans in the executive branch, folks from the business community, and the general membership of the Club at large.

We meet here, in the main dining room of the Club at 8:00 a.m., have breakfast, our speaker begins at about 8:30 a.m. and then takes a few questions. We have an excellent record of adjournment promptly at 9:00 a.m.

I know that you are swamped with speaking invitations but since the Club is so handy and since these are Republican stalwarts who need a morale boost every now and then, I hope you will be able to join us.

We need at least ten days notice so that we can notify the membership. My direct line is 457-4854.

Sincerely,


Ralph Vinovich

SENATOR BOB DOLE

"HEADLINERS BREAKFAST"

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL

COMMITTEE

APRIL 29, 1993

***THANKS, PAT. AND LET ME
BEGIN BY SAYING THAT PAT
ROBERTS IS DOING AN
OUTSTANDING JOB AS THE NEW
RANKING REPUBLICAN OF THE**

HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE.

90 DAYS OF BARBOUR ADMINISTRATION

***I KNOW THAT ALL THE TALK
THIS WEEK IN THE MEDIA IS
ABOUT TOMORROW BEING THE
100TH DAY OF THE CLINTON
ADMINISTRATION...BUT I ALSO**

**WANT TO NOTE THAT THIS IS
THE 90TH DAY OF THE "BARBOUR
ADMINISTRATION" HERE AT THE
R.N.C.**

***AND IF I WERE ASSIGNING
GRADES FOR THE PAST 90 DAYS,
THEN I'D DEFINITELY GIVE HALEY
AND JEANNIE AUSTIN AN "A."**

***WHEN THE RNC GATHERED
IN ST. LOUIS IN JANUARY TO**

**ELECT A NEW CHAIRMAN, THE
MEDIA WAS WRITING ABOUT A
DIVIDED AND DEFEATED
PARTY...A PARTY THAT WAS
READY TO SPLIT APART.**

***INSTEAD, THANKS TO
HALEY'S LEADERSHIP...AND
THANKS TO SOME HELP FROM
PRESIDENT CLINTON, THE
REPUBLICAN PARTY IS MORE**

UNITED THAN AT ANY TIME IN
RECENT YEARS.

*AS I TRAVELLED AROUND
THE COUNTRY THESE PAST
WEEKS, I HEARD FROM MEN
AND WOMEN WHO WERE
EXCITED TO BE
REPUBLICANS...EXCITED ABOUT
WHAT OUR PARTY STOOD
FOR...AND THE DIFFERENCES WE

**HAD DRAWN BETWEEN
OURSELVES AND THE
DEMOCRATS...EXCITED ABOUT
THE FUTURE OF THE
REPUBLICAN PARTY.**

***LET ME BE CLEAR IN SAYING
THAT THE FUTURE WE NEED TO
FOCUS ON IS NOT 1996--IT'S
THIS SATURDAY IN TEXAS...AND
THIS NOVEMBER IN VIRGINIA**

**AND NEW JERSEY...AND THE
MID-TERM ELECTIONS IN
1994....BY THE WAY, I AS PROUD
TO TAKE THAT MESSAGE TO
NEW HAMPSHIRE LAST WEEK,
AND WILL TAKE IT THERE AGAIN
THIS WEEKEND.**

PERFORMANCE NOT MATCHING PROMISES

***LET ME RETURN TO THE
FIRST 100 DAYS OF THE
CLINTON ADMINISTRATION...I DO
SO KNOWING FULL WELL THERE
IS NOTHING "MAGIC" ABOUT 100
DAYS.**

**PRESIDENT CLINTON'S
CONTRACT ISN'T UP FOR**

**RENEWAL UNTIL NOVEMBER OF
1996, AND THERE AREN'T ANY
PROVISIONS FOR RE-
NEGOTIATING OR FOR A RE-
COUNT. HE STILL HAS THREE
YEARS AND NINE MONTHS
LEFT...PLENTY OF TIME TO
CORRECT ANY MISTAKES OR TO
MAKE SOME NEW ONES.**

***BUT, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT,
THERE IS MORE REASON THIS
YEAR TO ENGAGE IN A BIT OF
"100 DAY QUARTERBACKING,"
BECAUSE CANDIDATE CLINTON
PROMISED THAT THIS PERIOD
WOULD BE NOTHING LESS THAN
A "LEGISLATIVE BLITZKRIEG."**

***CANDIDATE CLINTON TOLD
THE L.A. TIMES THAT--AND I**

**QUOTE--"I INTEND TO HAVE A
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM ON THE
DESK OF CONGRESS THE DAY
AFTER I'M INAUGURATED. IT
WILL BE THE MOST PRODUCTIVE
PERIOD IN MODERN HISTORY."**

***EVEN GIVEN THE NORMAL
LEEWAY ALLOWED CAMPAIGN
RHETORIC, THAT WAS A BIG
PROMISE.**

**AND THE MOST ARDENT
CLINTON SUPPORTERS WOULD
HAVE TO ADMIT THAT
PERFORMANCE HAS NOT
MATCHED THE PROMISE...AND
NOT MEETING PROMISES HAS
BEEN SOMETHING OF A THEME
OF THE CLINTON
ADMINISTRATION THESE FIRST
100 DAYS.**

***CANDIDATE CLINTON
PROMISED HE WOULDN'T BE A
"TAX AND SPEND" DEMOCRAT,
YET THE CENTERPIECE OF HIS
ADMINISTRATION IS THE
BIGGEST TAX INCREASE IN
HISTORY.**

***HE PROMISED SPENDING
RESTRAINTS AND DEFICIT
REDUCTION, YET HE REFUSED**

**TO TERMINATE EVEN ONE
FEDERAL PROGRAM, AND HE
WENT TO THE MAT TO RAISE
THE DEFICIT BY \$19 BILLION TO
FUND ADDITIONAL SPENDING
PROGRAMS.**

***HE PROMISED TO KEEP
AMERICA STRONG, YET HE IS
SLASHING THE DEFENSE
BUDGET WAY BEYOND WHAT**

**THE EXPERT SAY IS PRUDENT,
COSTING AMERICANS ALMOST
TWO MILLION JOBS ALONG THE
WAY.**

***PERHAPS, MOST
IMPORTANTLY, HE PROMISED TO
PUT AMERICANS BACK TO
WORK, YET HIS POLICIES AND
DAILY PROPOSALS FOR NEW**

TAXES HAVE AMERICAN BUSINESS SCARED.

***I HEAR DAY AFTER DAY
FROM BUSINESSMEN AND
WOMEN WHO WANT TO HIRE
NEW EMPLOYEES, BUT WHO ARE
TOO SCARED TO DO IT. THEY
DON'T KNOW WHAT TAXES OR
MANDATES ARE COMING NEXT.
THEY DON'T KNOW IF THEY WILL**

**BE ABLE TO AFFORD NEW
EMPLOYEES.**

***IF YOU LIKE EMPLOYEES AND
YOU LIKE EMPLOYMENT THEN
YOU HAVE TO LIKE EMPLOYERS.
AND BY CONSTANTLY
PROMOTING AND ADVOCATING
NEW TAXES AND NEW
MANDATES, THE CLINTON
ADMINISTRATION HAS GIVEN**

**THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY
SIMPLY DON'T LIKE
EMPLOYERS...AND THEY SIMPLY
DON'T LIKE TAXPAYERS.**

**UNDERESTIMATING THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE**

***THE BIG EVENT OF THE PAST
100 DAYS WAS THE SO-CALLED
SENATE "GRIDLOCK" OF THE**

PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC STIMULUS BILL.

***THERE HAS BEEN A LOT
MEDIA RE-HASHING OVER WHO
IS DUE THE CREDIT FOR THE
SUCCESS OF THE REPUBLICAN
EFFORTS ON THE STIMULUS
BILL.**

***AND I NOTICED THERE WAS
A HEADLINE IN THE L.A. TIMES**

**LAST WEEK THAT SAID
"CLINTON'S FATAL MISTAKE:
UNDERESTIMATING THE POWER
OF BOB DOLE."**

***WELL, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD
APPRECIATE ANY GOOD PRESS I
GET, BUT I THINK THE HEADLINE
HAD IT WRONG. WHEN IT CAME
TO THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS
PACKAGE, PRESIDENT**

**CLINTON'S FATAL MISTAKE WAS
UNDERESTIMATING THE POWER
OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.**

***THE PEOPLE SENT A
MESSAGE LOUD AND CLEAR
LAST NOVEMBER--IT WAS TIME
TO TAKE REAL AND
MEANINGFUL ACTION ON THE
DEFICIT. AND IF PRESIDENT
CLINTON HAD PRESCRIBED**

**TOUGH MEDICINE, HE WOULD
HAVE FOUND AN ALLY IN BOB
DOLE...AND HE WOULD HAVE
FOUND AN ALLY IN THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE.**

***IF THE PEOPLE HAD RISEN
UP IN SUPPORT OF THE
PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM...AS
THEY DID IN SUPPORT OF
PRESIDENT REAGAN'S FIRST 100**

**DAYS PROGRAM TWELVE YEARS
AGO...THEN I DON'T BELIEVE
OUR FILIBUSTER WOULD HAVE
LASTED.**

***BUT THE PEOPLE DIDN'T
RISE UP...IN FACT, IT DIDN'T
TAKE THE PEOPLE LONG TO
FIGURE OUT THAT PRESIDENT
CLINTON'S PLAN WAS BUSINESS
AS USUAL...THAT IT WAS JUST**

MORE TAXES TO PAY FOR MORE SPENDING PROGRAMS.

***AS REPUBLICAN SENATORS
VISITED THEIR STATES DURING
THE EASTER RECESS WE ALL
HEARD THE SAME THING FROM
OUR CONSTITUENTS...FROM
TRUCK DRIVERS, FARMERS,
HOUSEWIVES, BUSINESSMEN
AND WOMEN...WE HEARD THAT**

**WE SHOULDN'T RAISE TAXES
BEFORE WE CUT
SPENDING...AND WE SHOULDN'T
FUND ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS
UNLESS WE PAID FOR THEM.**

NOT SEEKING GRIDLOCK

***I'VE SAID MANY TIMES THAT
THE DEFEAT OF THE
PRESIDENT'S STIMULUS**

**PACKAGE WAS NOTHING BUT A
"BUMP IN THE ROAD."**

***BUT THE BUMP CAN TURN
INTO A SERIOUS ROADBLOCK IF
THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION
DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THAT
THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY ARE
SERIOUS ABOUT DEFICIT
REDUCTION.**

***99 DAYS AGO I SAID THAT I
WISHED PRESIDENT CLINTON
WELL AND WANTED HIM TO DO A
GOOD JOB. I STILL DO. THERE
ARE TOUGH PROBLEMS OUT
THERE--HEALTH CARE, RUSSIA,
BOSNIA...AND IT'S IMPORTANT
FOR AMERICA AND THE WORLD
THAT HE MAKES THE RIGHT
DECISIONS.**

***BUT WHEN HE MAKES
DECISIONS I BELIEVE ARE
WRONG, THEN I EXPECT TO SAY
SO, AND TO DO WHAT'S
NECESSARY TO STOP HIS
POLICIES OR CHANGE HIS MIND.**

***DO REPUBLICANS SEEK
GRIDLOCK? WELL, LET ME
SHARE SOME WORDS OF A
FRIEND OF MINE:**

**"WE SEEK COOPERATION, BUT
WE ALSO SEEK TO MEET OUR
RESPONSIBILITIES AS A CO-
EQUAL BRANCH OF
GOVERNMENT. WE WELCOME
THE PRESIDENT'S
INITIATIVES...BUT IT IS NOT OUR
INTENTION TO MERELY SIT BACK
AND WAIT TO SEE IF THE
PRESIDENT PROPOSES**

**SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS
FACING OUR SOCIETY. WE
INTEND TO ACT WHERE
NECESSARY--HOPEFULLY, WITH
THE PRESIDENT. IF NECESSARY,
WITHOUT HIM."**

***THOSE WORDS WERE
SPOKEN IN 1989 BY GEORGE
MITCHELL.**

***AND I SUSPECT THAT IN THE
COMING MONTHS, THAT WHILE
THE DEMOCRATS CONTINUE TO
HOLLER "GRIDLOCK," THE
SENATE REPUBLICANS WILL
CONTINUE TO PROPOSE
SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS
FACING OUR SOCIETY--
PROBLEMS LIKE THE DEFICIT,
HEALTH CARE, AND CRIME.**

***THANK YOU, ENJOY YOUR
WAFFLES, AND I'D BE HAPPY TO
TAKE SOME QUESTIONS.**