

TEXT OF THE REPUBLICAN RESPONSE

W Post

He says Clinton is all talk!

Following is the Republican response to President Clinton, as prepared for delivery last night by Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.):

Good evening. I'm Bob Dole, and I'm here to reply to the president's message on the state of the union. But a reply need not be an argument. Instead, I want to present another view, another way of thinking about the problems we face.

A few years back, I met with a group of 100 high school seniors, one young man and a woman from every state. During the meeting, one young man stood up and said: "Senator, everybody has somebody who speaks for them, but who speaks for us?" he asked me. "Who speaks for the future?"

That's what I want to talk with you about tonight. The future, and the values that will shape it. Those values are at the heart of our disagreements with the president.

President Clinton says our differences are few, the budget numbers are close and that we should try to find common ground.

We have tried and tried, again and again. But such a place appears to be elusive. For while we share an abiding love of country, we have been unable to agree. Why? Because we have starkly different philosophies of government and profoundly different visions of America.

So all the talk and fighting in Washington can seem very remote. And we political figures can seem detached, and petty, and far removed from the everyday struggle of American citizens and families.

'We Cannot Ignore the Future'

But the truth is, we cannot ignore the future. The point of our lives, after all, is to raise children who are smarter and healthier and nobler than we are; to contribute to a country that is better than today's America; to make a world that is better and finer for all of God's creation.

America's greatness—all that we take such justified pride in today—America's greatness was built by men and women who sacrificed ease and comfort and the joys of today, to build a better future for those who came after.

How many pioneers faced a hostile and threatening frontier; how many immigrants gave their bodies to the mines; how many soldiers lost their lives on distant battlefields, to secure a better future for their children and their children's children.

In every generation, Americans have made these sacrifices, and found in their making a purpose and a direction to life.

Now, we have to do that, in this generation.

Thanks to God and fortune, and to those who went before, we don't have to conquer a dangerous frontier, we don't have to fight another great war. What we do have

to do is face the fact that we cannot give in to all of our own desires.

As we have just heard, President Clinton, and those who share his vision of America, have chosen their ground.

The Lines Clinton Has Drawn

The president has chosen to defend, with his veto, a welfare system that no one can defend—for it is a daily assault on the values of self-reliance and family.

He has chosen to defend an education establishment run by liberals whose goal is to operate every school in America by remote control from Washington.

He has chosen to veto a defense bill because it provided for defending America against weapons of mass destruction.

He has chosen to defend the status quo in Medicare—a system on which lives depend, and a program in urgent need of rescue.

President Clinton has chosen to defend and increase a tax burden that has pushed countless families into their own personal recessions.

And he has chosen to veto the first balanced budget in a generation, offering only a fantasy in its place.

If you have a child asleep in your home tonight, you'll probably check on him or her before you go to bed. As you bend over to tuck your child in, think about this:

If we continue down this path we will place a tremendous burden of debt on every child in America.

How can we betray them, their parents, and grandparents? How can we fail to act?

We cannot, and we will not.

Every political movement, and every public official, must locate a place in his heart where compromise ends—a core of conviction where we keep our conscience.

'Refuse to Bend or Yield'

There comes a time when even practical leaders must refuse to bend or yield. For Republicans, and countless Democrats and independents, we have arrived at that time.

America's troubles are real but our choices are clear and our will is strong. We must rein in our runaway government. Return power to the people, reduce the tax burden, put parents back in charge of our schools, untie the hands of our police, restore justice to our courts and put our faith once again in the basic goodness, wisdom and self-reliance of our people.

The president spoke with great eloquence about a future with unlimited possibilities. It is a vision we all share, for it is the story of America.

But while the president's words speak of change, his deeds are a contradiction. The president claims to embrace the future while clinging to the policies of the past.

For three years the administration has valued dependence on government over self-reliance, federal power over community, federal planning over individual enterprise.

It has tried to place government experts in charge of our economy, our health and our lives. It has put liberal judges on the bench to war with our values and questions the participation of religious people in public life, treating them as fanatics out of step with America.

Clinton's Elitist View

President Clinton shares a view of America held by our country's elites: A nation of special interest groups, united only by a dependence on government, competing with each other for hand-outs, held back by out-dated values.

For those who hold this view, there is only one answer for our problems: More government. Bigger government. More meddlesome government.

If you listened closely, that's what President Clinton talked about tonight. President Clinton may well be the rear guard of the welfare state. He is the chief obstacle to a balanced budget, and the balanced budget amendment. He is almost the last public defender of a discredited status quo.

We Republicans will not give up the struggle because America will round the corner to a brighter future if we prevail. I come from Russell, Kansas. There's not much money there, but the people are rich in many other ways. Life isn't easy, but the values are durable. Love of God and Country and family. Commitment to honesty, decency, and personal responsibility. Self-reliance tempered by a sense of community.

Those values made America the greatest nation on earth. And there is no doubt in my mind that we can get our country back on track if we reassert them again as a people. And if our government returns to them as a matter of national policy.

Just like the debate over the budget this winter, our arguments this spring will seem a maze of conflicting numbers, assertions and high-sounding words. But what we're really arguing about are the values that will shape our nation, our government, and the future of your child sleeping down the hall.

'Hijacked by Liberals'

Some people try to make these matters complicated, but they're simple in my home town—and probably where you are as well. Americans know that handouts without responsibility destroy human dignity.

We know that the help of a neighbor is preferable to that of a bureaucrat. And we know that wealth is created by free individuals with their smarts and their sweat. Government programs can only spend it. I am a practical man but I believe in the miracle of America. I have never

gone in for dramatics, but I do believe we have reached a defining moment. It's as if we went to sleep in one America, and woke up in another.

It's as though our government, our institutions and our culture have been hijacked by liberals and are careening dangerously off course.

We know the way back, but we must act now. My promise tonight is that we can, and we will.

If there is no agreement, we will send President Clinton another balanced budget, with tax relief for American families, regulatory relief for small businesses, farmers, and ranchers, and real welfare reform.

We will always be mindful of the poor and disadvantaged, education, and the environment. But we will begin the defunding of Big Brother by unfunding wasteful programs and meddlesome departments.

We will send the president bill after bill, returning power and programs to the states. We will challenge President Clinton again and again to walk the talk he talks so well.

As we do, remember this: Our battles will not be about numbers. They'll be about the character of our nation.

Yes, the country has problems. But we can handle them.

Whether it's deficit spending or the welfare bureaucracy or our liberal courts or the trouble in our schools—what's wrong is that the elites in charge don't believe in what the people believe in.

That, we can fix.

We know what made America great. All we need now is the resolve to lead our country back to her place in the sun. And the courage to speak for the future.

'It's Not Too Late'

When you close the door to your child's room tonight, remember that it's not too late.

This is a great country. Our strength has always come from the truth, and from sacrifice and honor, and from the bottomless reservoir of hope and work and courage that is the American people.

Always, we have built for the future, with a half-silent consciousness that we were doing the work of the Lord.

Today, we feel ourselves beset by many difficulties.

By violence and resentment, by racial and partisan divisions, by economic storms, by dizzying changes of every kind. Yet, the blood of greatness, of noble forebears, or men and women of incredible achievement, still runs through us all.

That birthright is what it means to bear the name "American."

In this time, in this generation, in this year, we—like they—can and will overcome. We need only rededicate ourselves to earning the name we have inherited.

Thank you very much, God bless America and good night.