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Max's Speech in New York (1)

Max S. Baucus

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February-1978

Politics

(Max's Speech in New York)

02/06/1978
Max's Speech in New York on February 6, 1978 - Mrs. Barrie Berns

I want to thank you all for coming here tonight.
I especially want to thank my hostess, Mrs. Barrie Berns, for her thoughtfulness and generosity in providing her home this evening.
I also would like to thank George and Jean Green for all of their work in coordinating the activities here tonight.

Next, I would like to thank my old friend and colleague, Ed Koch, for taking the time out of his busy schedule to be with us. Ed, I wish you well in your work here in this great city. If there is anyone I know who can "keep it together," you are the one.

Incidentally, while on the subject of Ed, I would like to tell you about ... [Max, this would be a good place to fill in a story about Ed. One that comes to mind is the fact that you were one of the first members of Congress to start calling him Mr. Mayor. That was about one year before he took the position of mayor, and you only hope that he returns the favor by calling you Senator tonight -- roughly one year from the date that you should be sworn in to that new position.]

Lastly, I would like to thank all of you for coming here tonight. It is a great vote of confidence, and I will do everything I can to show you that it was confidence well placed.

When I was flying up here, I was mulling over what I would say to you this evening. I was reminded of an incident that occurred to me some weeks ago at a fundraiser in Chicago. My host had prepared a long and elaborate introduction for me, which he preceded by asking
The question, "I suppose all of you are wondering why I invited here tonight a person from Montana?" Before he could continue, some smart aleck from the audience shot back, "Because the guy from Nebraska didn't show up."

Actually, we Montanans are a proud lot. We think we are different from folks in other states, and in many ways, I really believe we are.

Who are Montanans?

- We're a quiet but hardy stock;
- We're unsophisticated, but we're not without our own culture;
- Basically we're hardworking, but we're funloving;
- Also, we're a patriotic but democratic people -- small D, that is. I hope our large D tradition will continue this fall;
- Finally, Montanans are thrifty, but compassionate.

There are many contrasts between Montanans and New Yorkers. These contrasts can be seen in our elected representatives who, by definition, represent the people.

Basically, Montana's representatives have been soft-spoken and ungregarious.

We've had our share of strong people in the Senate, but they have had quiet votes.

Remember Mansfield and Metcalf? I believe Mike still holds the record on "Meet the Press" for the most questions asked. Don't you recall the frustration that Lawrence Spivak must have had when Mansfield exhausted all of his carefully prepared questions with a long chain of responses of either "Yup" or "Nope." And Lee
Metcalf held the record for the fastest gavel in the Senate. I am told that at one time he convened and recessed the Senate in less than 30 seconds. But Lee was a quiet man, too. Although he was one of the more effective legislators in Congress, I don't think his office ever issued a press release on his accomplishments. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, one of the only releases ever issued was sent out to the press a few weeks ago announcing his death and stating that there would be no public funeral. That was the kind of man Lee Metcalf was.

Unlike New York, Montana is basically an importing state. We import your goods and your technology. Yes, we have some exports, but those consist mainly of trained people, minerals, food and fiber.

Montana is a big state. To give you an idea of how big our state is, I bet you would be surprised to learn that my Congressional district, which is less than half the size of the Montana Congressman's to the East of me, is still larger than the entire state of New York.

But Montana is a sparsely populated state. Your city alone has ten times the number of people in our entire state. And the largest town in my district is probably smaller than the population of many of your high-rise apartment buildings.

We don't want to isolate Montana from the rest of the nation. We are an integral part of the nation, and we have great responsibilities to the rest of the states.

I was surprised to learn recently that for every dollar Montana pays in taxes to Washington, the state receives $1.25 in return.
Compare this to the situation here in New York where for every dollar each of you pays to Washington, the state receives change in return.

I am not suggesting that the tables be turned and that Montana should export its tax dollars to New York state. What I am suggesting is that our nation's tax and spending policies be reexamined to be sure that national programs are not shortchanging states with great needs.

I think that the state of New York -- and the City of New York in particular -- has great needs that are not being well attended by the federal government.

One such need I have in mind is the subject of welfare. Personally, I believe the greatest -- and most unjustified -- fiscal burden on the City of New York is that caused by welfare payments.

I'm not opposed to welfare. What I am opposed to is the continuation of national policies which have shifted the welfare burden from the family to the city.

I believe that government has a responsibility to look out for the welfare people. But the federal government has failed to adequately shoulder the responsibility -- delegating it instead to the city.

It is true that some states have assumed that burden, but that is an academic question in New York. In short, I believe that our national welfare system has long been in need of a substantial overhaul. To the extent that poor, unemployed and infirm people are in need of government support, I think that is a national problem which demands national solutions.
Furthermore, I believe that the federal government has a continuing responsibility to maintain a financially viable New York City.

As I said earlier, Montanans are a thrifty but compassionate people. Two years ago when the New York financial crisis rose to a national issue, I was not surprised to learn that many of my constituents wanted the federal government to provide loans to New York City. At the same time, I was not surprised to learn that most of these people wanted strict conditions to be placed on those government loans to insure that the city would work to put its own house in order so as not to become dependent in the long haul on government loans.

But tonight I don't want to concentrate only on national policies. I would rather say a few words about my feelings toward the City of New York.

It's true, I love Montana, but I love New York as well. My wife, Ann, a long-time New Yorker, has taught me to appreciate this extraordinary city.

I love its contrasts ... its people ... its sights ... its food ... its culture ... its art.

Yes, New York is really quite a place. As I say, Ann has taught me to love it, and it was really an easy lesson to learn.

The history of New York is longer and more varied than that of Montana. Much has happened here -- most of it good -- and some of it unexcelled in the world.

I would like to see New York continue to change and continue to improve. We can't bring back the good old days. I'm not sure they were all that good, after all.
But the federal government can't do everything to help New York -- or Montana, for that matter.

Government has its limits. But that doesn't mean that government shouldn't do anything.

In deciding what to do, I would like to think that a wise decision would be to combine the joy and optimism of our late friend, Hubert Humphrey, with the skepticism and reserve of my tough and knarled stepfather in Helena, Montana.

We have extraordinary resources in this nation, but they are limited and we must deal with them wisely.

- We must optimize those mighty resources;
- We must pick and choose the most effective programs;
- We must balance the need for regulated and constraining conduct against the value of more productive, but in some cases, more rapacious activities.

In short, we have very tough decisions facing our nation. Personally, I like tough decisions -- I don't shy away from them.

Indeed, with your help, I hope that next year at this time I will be in the Senate facing those tough decisions and helping this nation, this city and my state of Montana to move into the 21st century with a continually improving lifestyle for all Americans.

Thank you once again for coming here this evening, and I would like now to answer any questions that you might have about my views on any issues and the progress of my campaign for the U.S. Senate.