2-11-1983

Montana State Legislature

Max S. Baucus

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus_speeches

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus_speeches/232

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives and Special Collections at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Max S. Baucus Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
Senator * or Department*: **BAUCUS**

**Instructions:**
Prepare one form for insertion at the beginning of each record series. Prepare and insert additional forms at points that you want to index. For example: at the beginning of a new folder, briefing book, topic, project, or date sequence.

**Record Type***: Speeches & Remarks

**MONTH/YEAR of Records***: February-1983
(Example: JANUARY-2003)

(1) **Subject***: Federal Issues
(select subject from controlled vocabulary, if your office has one)

(2) **Subject***: Before the Montana State Legislature

**DOCUMENT DATE***: 02/11/1983
(Example: 01/12/1966)

* "required information"
Speech by Senator Max Baucus
before the Montana State Legislature
February 11, 1983

Mr. Speaker, Majority Leader Vincent, Minority Leader Marks, members of the House, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to return to the Legislature today.

A full decade has passed since I took a seat as a newly elected member of the Montana Legislature. Some faces are no longer around. Some familiar faces that were fresh and new in 1973 show a little more wear and experience. And some faces, like the distinguished Speaker of the House, are even a bit fuzzier!

A Shared Legacy

Though the times have changed, and some faces are different, this Legislature continues to be a vivid reminder of our political roots...a reminder of what can be accomplished by a forward thinking, common sense approach to government.

We Montanans looked to the future and wrote an extraordinary new Constitution.

We save for the future with a Coal Tax Trust Fund.

We conserve for the future with strong environmental protection laws.

We build for the future with a solid economic development program.

These accomplishments are this Legislature's legacy...a source of pride in our State and a reminder of the potential of responsible government.

Our shared legacy, however, has a dark side which we remember all too well. Joseph Kinsey Howard captured that part of our legacy in his book Montana: High, Wide and Handsome.

The underlying theme of Howard's book is that too often Montana has not been the master of its destiny, but a helpless victim.

We know the litany well:
The Copper Kings suffocated competition and sucked the mineral wealth dry.

The railroads colonized their right-of-ways and then callously exploited the land and its people.

Wall Street lured farmers with easy money and then swallowed them up in hard times.

A Voice in Our Future

But the copper collar is broken. Today we are not silent partners in shaping our nation's future or our state's future. We insist on being active in building Montana and America.

In 1980 Ronald Reagan promised Montanans that we would play a role in moving government in the right direction and restoring prosperity.

The President pledged to bring federal deficits under control.

The President outlined a "New Federalism" that would lead to a stronger role for state government.

And the administration proposed a "Good Neighbor Policy" to redefine the relationship between the federal government and Western states.

These were policies that we all hoped would benefit Montana and the rest of the country. Two years ago, in the spirit of cooperation, we decided to wait and see.

Well, we have waited and, sadly enough, we have seen.

Perhaps no federal policy has had a more devastating impact on Montana than this administration's economic program.

The 1981 tax cut provided some needed relief, but went way too far, and has certainly not brought prosperity to Montanans.

Just last night in Butte, I spoke to a woman with three young children whose husband is unemployed. I felt her panic.
SHE knows it's gone too far.

I listened to Union leaders. The copper collar may be broken, but they still feel the pinch.—THEY know this administration has gone too far.

In Billings at a Social Security forum, I could see the frustration in the eyes of the elderly, who are trying to just get by. THEY know this Administration's policies are not working.

Crippling interest rates and unprecedented deficits have depressed the housing industry and the auto industry and cut deeply into the heart of Montana's economy.

38,000 Montanans wait in line at employment offices.

38,000!

Ask any farmer who can't afford to buy a tractor, but can't afford to be without one.

Ask any logger who's spent more time recently in doors than out doors.

Ask any carpenter whose hammer has been resting in his tool box.

(PAUSE)

Meanwhile, you in the Legislature have the unfortunate task of grappling with a federal budget so tight that cutbacks are the order of the day.

Once again Montanans are the victims of decisions made thousands of miles away.

The "Good Neighbor" Policy

As if the federal economic policy was not difficult enough, we also have had to deal with federal land policy. Uncle Sam is the largest land-owner in the state. Our federally owned timber, coal and grazing land is vital to this state's future.

Because of our historic problems with the Federal Government, Secretary Watt's announcement of a "good neighbor" policy was as welcome as a rainstorm in a drought.

Uncle Sam has been anything but a "good neighbor".

But saying you are a good neighbor doesn't make you one. In fact, under Secretary Watt's leadership the federal government is acting more like an arrogant absentee landlord than a neighbor.

Let's look at a few examples.
Public Land Sales

The administration's "privatization" policy is the most blatant. With its eye on some 35 million acres of public lands for sale to private buyers.

Uncle Sam would collect some $17 million.

Sounds like one way to cut the deficit. Or is it?

Ranchers facing tripled grazing fees, if stripped of their leases on public rangelands, don't think so.

Hunters facing "No Trespassing" signs don't think so.

Landowners facing depressed values due to a glut on the real estate market don't think so.

Selling massive chunks of federal land is grossly shortsighted. Public resources that are critical to the future of Montana would be sold at rock-bottom prices to a handful of big corporations.

Montanans have seen that kind of greed before.

Energy Giveaway

The Powder River Basin coal sale is another example of the Good Neighbor Policy gone wrong.

Brushing aside the concerns of communities throughout Eastern Montana and Wyoming, the Department of Interior, held the largest coal lease sale ever on April 28, 1982.

The bidding was predictably low.

The average bid was only 3.5 cents a ton.

These bargain basement bids may have surprised the Department of Interior, but they didn't surprise us. With enough federal coal leased to last from now to the end of the century, Montanans could have predicted the results.

We always lose when speculators are allowed to play fast and loose with our natural resources.

Water Resources
The federal government, unfortunately, has been far less enthusiastic when it comes to water resource development.

The administration claims that in 1982, "we made great progress in ensuring proper investment and management of the West's water resources."

But the record tells a different story. For example, when the dust settled, the Water Resources Council had been put out of business, leaving state officials across the West wondering how to influence water management in the future.

Furthermore, the Administration has not sent Congress its promised cost-sharing proposal for investment in water projects.

The Sensitivity of a "Good Neighbor"

Talk is cheap. Criticism is easy. And reasonable people differ on such complicated public policy issues.

But much is at stake here. Secretary Watt has crossed an important line. He is violating our most basic western value: protecting our natural resources from wanton misuse.

We must end the folly of massive public land sales. I will introduce a resolution calling on the President to revoke his Executive Order on these sales.

I, for one, am prepared to absolutely resist recently introduced legislation that would rob Montana of its legitimate right to levy a reasonable coal severance tax.

In addition, we must resist the needlessly hostile and provocative attitude of Jim Watt toward Congress, conservationists and the public, and continue to make it clear to Jim Watt that he is not going to push the people of Montana around.

Conclusion

These are challenging times. And the opportunities are great.

We have met the challenges before. And if we work together with our shared passion for the state we love, we can do it today.

We will only achieve our goals if there is a partnership between states and the federal government. The Montana Legislature can lead the way.
I believe in the people of Montana and I know you do too.

Working together we can live up to the challenge and the trust they have placed in us.

Montana's Bud Guthrie believed in Montanans,--believed in you-- and said it well:

"Here in the Mountain West, space and nature shape us. Despite our differences, we are made a hopeful people, as the mountain men and the overland travelers and yesterday's homesteaders were hopeful. As the gold seekers and the mining magnates and the cattle kings were hopeful. Not always honest, mind you, not always capable or wise or successful, but almost always hopeful (PAUSE) and hence astride of life."

Thank You.