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Montana State AFL-CIO Convention

Max S. Baucus

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REMINS BY SENATOR MAX BAUCUS

MONTANA STATE AFL-CIO CONVENTION

BUTTE, MONTANA

Saturday, August 20, 1988

Thank you Jim (Murry), and thanks to all of you for the invitation to attend your convention.

It's great to be back home again, and in this city of hard work and good people. Don Peoples, one of the top mayors in the Nation. And folks who won't take "no" for an answer.

Much has happened in a years time since your last convention. Both in Montana and across the country. Now we are on the verg of what many think is the most important Presidential election in recent history.
For seven and a half years our government has been in the hands of ideologues and public relations specialists.

For seven and a half years the nation's treasure has been squandered to help the privileged, while the middle class and less fortunate are left to grasp tattered strings of a weak and thin "safety net".

We've had to sit through a double feature with this Administration. And all of us know the second showing has been no better than the first.

But now we are on Reagan's last reel. And this November America will make it clear that the Reagan era is over.

It has been a tough year since your last convention -- dominated by the "three D's" -- drought, deficit, and drugs.

No one understands better the devastating effects of the drought -- the worst on record -- than the people of Montana. This year Congress
acted with remarkable speech and bipartisanship to pass drought relief legislation. It’s not the same as a good rain, but it will help save many farmers from economic ruin.

The U.S. continues to set records as the world’s greatest debtor nation. The Reagan era will not be remembered for red, white and blue -- but red, red, and red.

The record federal deficit, created and supported by the Administration’s borrow and spend policies, is slowly stealing the future away from our children, and their children.

And even with the lower dollar, the trade deficit is likely to remain at well over $100 billion per year for the foreseeable future.

No nation has ever run a trade deficit even approaching $100 billion. The U.S. trade deficit in 1987 was actually larger than the GNP of all but 18 nations. Such a tremendous transfer of U.S. wealth to other countries is historically unprecedented.
And there was new awareness of how of drugs are shaking the very foundation of our society. And while Ed Meese moved from one photo opportunity to another, and Vice-President Bush announced he was leading the Administration's anti-drug campaign -- the President cut the budget for the Coast Guard and did business with drug-running Panamanian dictators.

But while it has been a tough year, there have been important successes -- thanks to, in part, a Democratic Senate.

At the top of the list, and the one of which I am most proud, is our passage of legislation to give every working and woman 30 days notice before their factory is closed or before mass layoffs.

Nothing has demonstrated the Administration's callous attitude toward working men and woman than the President's veto of the trade bill because of the plant closings legislation.
I was proud to vote for it the first time, and I was even more proud to send a veto-proof bill back to the White House with a little note attached saying "go ahead, make our day!"

After much debate, compromise and negotiation, Congress passed a major trade bill -- the most sweeping trade legislation ever passed by Congress.

Japan and Germany are not happy with this bill. Nor are South Korea and Taiwan. The bill creates tough new procedures to force other nations to play fair.

We will no longer allow other nations to lock out U.S. goods while they freely sell their products here. And we won't stand for foreign nations dumping or subsidized products on our shores and driving honest U.S. companies and workers out of business.

The trade bill isn't going to solve all our problems. We'll need a strong president at the helm. But the bill put our trading partners on
notice that the U.S. will not stand by and watch American industry picked apart by unfair foreign competition.

The U.S.-Canada Trade Agreement, at first glance, was a bad deal for Montana and a bad deal for the United States.

Our negotiators had traded away the store -- lowering tariffs across the board but taking no action to force Canada to dismantle its domestic subsidy program.

And, unfortunately, there was a stampede in Congress to support a free trade agreement. Educating my colleagues about the flaws in the agreement was an uphill battle.

I became a leading opponent of the Canada Trade agreement in its initial form. It did not address the problem of Canadian subsidies. For example, under the agreement, the ASARCO plant in Helena would have to face competition from subsidized smelters north of the border.
Something had to be done to correct the flaws in the agreement. So an amendment was drafted -- the Baucus-Danforth Amendment -- to correct the agreement's mistake.

The amendment said that the United States would comply with the agreement ONLY if two conditions were met: 1) that Canada work to eliminate its subsidy programs and that 2) if Canada did not resolve the subsidy problem then the United States would have every right to use its trade laws to counter Canadian subsidies.

We will take whatever steps necessary to protect U.S. industries from Canadian subsidies if Canada does nothing to eliminate them.

Working with Lloyd Bentsen, the Administration agreed to accept this key amendment. You could hear the howls in Ottawa all the way in Washington, but the deal was done.

With this important provision to force Canada to eliminate its subsidies -- and to allow the U.S. to counter those subsidies if Canada doesn't
comply -- the U.S.-Canada Trade Agreement is a deal I can now support. ASARCO will not be forced to face subsidized Canadian competition. The playing field will be level, whether Canada likes it or not.

The same goes for wheat, lumber, coal, and other natural resources industries. It was made very clear to the White House that no trade agreement with any country will be supported by this Senator unless its fair. Unless it's honest. Unless it works for -- not against -- the people of Montana.

The Finance Committee also considered an important tax bill this year, and again with the support of Lloyd Bentsen I was able to include a provision that protects the solvency of the Railroad Retirement program.

Taxes collected from railroad retirees will continue to be plowed back into the pension fund, making sure the fund is there for those who need it. This provision gives Congress time to craft a permanent solution to the Railroad Retirement
Funds problems. Time to keep this important program in good working order.

Protecting workers shouldn't be limited to their retirement. They deserve to have full knowledge of the hazards in their workplace. That's why this year I was a strong supporter of the high-risk notification bill. Men and women should not be exposed to dangerous chemicals and toxins only to learn years later that their job was robbing them of their health everyday.

And while these issues haven't come before Congress yet, and may not before the end of the year, I will continue to support increases in the minimum wage and the elimination of double breasting.

But no matter how many bills we pass in Congress that are good for working men and women, we cannot make progress unless we have a President who cares about you.

We need a President that will appoint people to the ICC that know what they are doing, not just
do only what they know. I voted against the appointment of Karen Philips to the ICC, and I will continue to oppose nominees who of this or any Administration that doesn't show concern for the folks on the job.

But the key is not to change the nominees, it's to change the nominator.

We need a President that would never believe the likes of Ed Meese should be the chief law enforcement officer of the United States.

We need a President who understands workers. During the campaign George Bush offended American autoworkers by joking that Soviet mechanics should be sent to Detroit "because we could use that kind of ability."

Ted Kennedy asked in Atlanta "where was George?" Today I ask, George, where are you?

We need a President who will challenges all Americans to reach for the stars. George Bush told a group of Hispanic East L.A. high school
students that they didn't "have to go to college to achieve success. We need the people who do the hard physical work of our society." I ask, George, where are you?

We need a President who is proud of his heritage, proud of his roots, and won't claim -- like George Bush -- to be a Texan although he was born in Massachusetts, grew up in Connecticut, lives in Washington, D.C. and pays taxes in Maine. I ask, George where are you.?

The answer is nowhere. On the issues. On the concerns of you and I. On what future we must build for our nation.

This year, Democrats do have the answer.

The answer is competence. The answer is character. The answer is economic growth and opportunity for all Americans, not just a select few.

The answer is Mike Dukakis for the next President of the United States.
The answer is to exchange *voodoo* economics for *can-do* economics. To stop investing in weapons that don't work and start investing in people so they *can* work.

The answer is to balance our budgets -- the hard way. By rolling up our sleeves and working together to solve the problem. Not by submitting seven budget deficits to Congress and then calling for a balanced budget amendment.

The answer is to instill pride in our government. Not by just waving the flag, but by giving every American an opportunity to contribute to the American dream. And the opportunity to build one of their own.

The answer is the party that does not look for tokens, but the party that has embraced the message of hope of Jesse Jackson.

The answer is to elect *competence*, not ideology; to elect people who are prepared to govern, not people who are prepped; to elect
people who respect the truth and the law, not just the "art of the deal".

The answer is for Montana to join with the rest of America in electing Mike Dukakis our next President.

Instead of exporting jobs overseas, Mike Dukakis will work with us -- here in Montana -- to create good jobs that you can raise a family on, jobs you can build a future on, jobs you can count on.

He has told me that he is committed to helping our region grow with the rest of our country. Committed to helping Montanans work together to bring new opportunity to our state and help keep our children home.

A few weeks ago, in Denver, Mike Dukakis came to Denver, Colorado to meet with western state leaders. He's reaching out to us -- seeking our advice, learning how we talk. Learning about us.
It is a big job. Learning about America.

But Mike is up to the task. He can pull us together. It happened in Atlanta. It will happen again in November.

And it will happen in the year to come.

Jesse, Lloyd, Mike, Ann -- they all spoke of vision last month in Atlanta. A vision of a nation blessed with freedom and hope for the future.

A vision that says all of us count. All of us can make a difference. All of us can, together, build a new era of greatness for America.

Mike Dukakis closed his speech recalling the pledge taken by the people of Greece after important occasions. It was timely 2000 years ago, last month, and now.

"We will never bring disgrace to this, our country, by any act of dishonesty or of cowardice. We will fight for the ideals of this, our country."
We will revere and obey the law. We will strive to quicken our sense of civic duty. Thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this country greater, stronger, prouder and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."

That is our task here in Montana. It is a task we can all be proud to undertake.

Thank you.