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Montana Democratic Party Mansfield-Metcalf Dinner

Max S. Baucus

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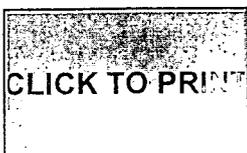
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(2) Subject* **Montana Democratic Party Mansfield-Metcalf Dinner**

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Remarks by Senator Max Baucus
Montana Democratic Party
Mansfield-Metcalf Dinner
April 25, 1992

* * *

Thank you Mike (Cooney) for your gracious introduction. I was once told that in politics, the loftiness of one's rhetoric is often inversely proportional to the depth of one's friendship. In Mike's case, however, I've always been pleased to count him as a great friend.

I'm pleased to be home tonight to begin the celebration of what I know will be a great year for the Democratic Party.

Before I begin, let me recognize some good friends and great Democrats who are here tonight: our Secretary of Education Nancy Keenan, our wonderful party Chairwoman Donna Small and Executive Director Nancy Hart. (other statewide candidates)

And last, but certainly not least, our Congressman Pat Williams.

Before I introduce Pat, I'd like to spend a few minutes talking with you about where we are and where we are going as a political party and as a country. To me, this is a very exciting time.

All of us in this room tonight know about the incredible changes taking place in our country. The shape of American politics as we have known it for the last three decades is changing right before our eyes. The results of the recent Democratic and Republican Presidential primaries have sent a very clear message to all of us: the status quo is no longer acceptable:

A four hundred billion dollar budget deficit, a health care system that is broken, millions of Americans out of work, and a Government that can not seem to get its act together -- the American people are telling us loud and clear - Enough is Enough! Do Something! We want change, and we want it now.

Americans have begun to realize that the Reagan and Bush Administrations have led this country down the wrong track. This year's primaries demonstrate that the American people are finally rejecting 12 years of Reagan-Bush economic policies. Policies that have created a colossal budget deficit and a crippled economy. Policies that have left millions of Americans out of work.

Americans now recognize that in the 1980's, the Republican party led this country on a spending binge. Only it wasn't tax and spend, it was charge and spend.

Government, business, individuals. None were immune from this siren call. We didn't invest, we spent. We didn't save, we spent.

The way the Reagan and Bush Administrations saw the economy, it was one big party of champagne and cake and dance 'till you drop.

Now, the party's over, and a lot of people who never even got an invitation are out of luck and out of work.

And what we are left with is not simply a normal recession. It is the result of 12 years of mismanagement and mistakes. Mistakes that could have been avoided if there had simply been a long-range plan, and real leadership to follow it through.

So when I read in the paper about Boris Yeltsin saying to angry Russians: "We lost time. If we had started [the] reforms two years ago, we would be living normally now," I think to myself, "Boris, at least you're one president who learned fast."

There's no question that the Russian Republic is in a lot worse shape. But I also believe that this country is headed in the wrong direction.

The question that we are now left with is this: Have WE learned enough from the dissolute, aimless 80's to rebuild the economy into something sound and solid -- not just for today, but for tomorrow as well? Not just for ourselves, but for our children and their children, as well?

I believe we've learned some important lessons during the last 20 years.

In the 1960's we elected Presidents who believed in using the power of government - Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon. America was much more wealthy, and optimistic then. In the 1970's -the Post Viet Nam and Watergate era -- and in the 1980's -- the big party -- voters went the other way and elected Presidents who questioned the very essence of government. They believed the less government, the better. Ford, Carter, Reagan and now George Bush.

But now the American people are searching for something new. They do not want re-runs. We can't turn back the clock to the 60's, and, we certainly can't continue on our present path.

We are at a very different place in American politics. One that provides great challenges and great opportunities for our party and more important, for all Americans.

Americans have now begun to realize that the future of our nation, compared with that of others, is less secure. They are wondering if we have the wherewithal to solve all of our problems. Have we learned enough from our failures so we can finally get on with solving this country's problems.

I think the Democratic Party has learned plenty: First and foremost, we have learned that we need to invest:

We've learned that we need to invest in an economy that creates well-paying, secure jobs. The type of jobs which will allow families to buy their own homes, save for the future and send their kids to college.

We've learned that we need to invest in a health care system that controls soaring costs and provides quality, affordable care for all Americans, not just the privileged few.

We've learned that we need to invest in our public schools and give them the resources and support to educate our kids so they can compete in the global economy.

We've learned that we need to start investing in our people once again through job training and family leave policies.

But we've also learned that we can't just lob money, and hope it hits where it can do some good. That's already been tried and it hasn't worked. The result?

For more than a decade, the federal deficit's been grazing like Babe the Blue Ox. And now, unless we consume less and invest more in strategies to make us stronger, that ox is going to eat us alive. So its time we start making focused choices and investments.

Investment. Saving. Building. Discipline. And people. Those things are real. They're essential virtues that must be the bedrock of our long-term economic strategies.

And there's one more thing I'd like to mention that we Democrats have known for a long time - we've known that a society as good and as just as ours MUST guarantee women the right to choose what they will do with their bodies, without government interference. Unfortunately for all of us, the Republican party still just doesn't get it. And the Supreme Court showed us just a few days ago that they just don't get it.

Which means this year is so vital to all of us who value the right to privacy. If we are going to stop government interference in the personal choices that women must make, we need to elect public officials who believe that pro-choice is the only choice.

Before I introduce Pat, let me offer you one final thought about the many divisions which plague our country:

A while back, the historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., wrote a small book called The Disuniting of America. It's about the centrifugal tendencies in our society, the things pulling us away from one another.

We're all conscious of them, from the larger racial, cultural, religious and ethnic divisions among us, to something as basic as 100 channels on our television sets. We as a people and as a society are constantly being pulled from one another.

A lot of authors in the last few years have said pretty much the same thing. They say we've lost our center, and wonder how we get it back.

I think one way we start to get our center back is by defining very clearly who we are as Democrats and where we want to lead this state and this country.

People ask me often Why do Americans hate politics? Well, I don't think Americans have ever loved politics. But they do like to hear straight talk about where we are and where we must go, so they can make a choice.

I think restoring this sense of clarity of purpose -- even over our differences -- is a unifying force. It gives people confidence that they aren't being jerked around.

This year, the Democratic party must once again define itself for the American people. We need to say what we think is right, and provide the leadership to deliver. We have a solid message to deliver and the leadership to follow it through.

It's not partisan to disagree, as long as you've got a legitimate case to make. And we certainly do.

I think the country is ready again for this kind of Democratic leadership. It's up to us, now, to be ready for them.

* * *

Now, I have the pleasure of taking on my real task this evening. The introduction of our featured speaker Pat Williams.

Just as this is an important year for this country, its an even more important year for Montana. This will be the first year since _____ that we have been represented by only one member of the House of Representatives.

The last time this happened our representative was Jeannete Rankin.

You know, and I know, that we cannot let Ron Marlenee try to follow in her footsteps.