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Great Falls Rotary Club

Max S. Baucus

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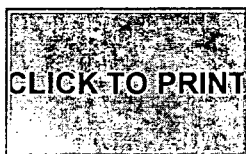
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BAUCUS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Remarks of Senator Max Baucus
Great Falls Rotary Club
Great Falls, Montana

December 6, 1994

Good afternoon. Thank you all.

A lot of water has gone under the bridge since I accepted your invitation to speak here today. So I want to spend a few minutes giving you my impressions of what's happened in the country since then and what it means.

THE 1994 ELECTION

This past election gave us all a lot to think about. The races for Senate and the State Legislature here. The changes in the Congress over in Washington. And the local races in other states. It is the biggest political shift, both here at home and nationwide, since Franklin Roosevelt was elected in 1932.

That is certainly a comment on the record of the Clinton Administration in particular and the Democratic party generally. There is no doubt of that. And there is no doubt that the President will have to work very hard if he expects to take another oath at the beginning of 1997. But I also think my Republican friends are fooling themselves if they think it was a standing ovation for their party.

Because America is not alone in the world. And what happened here last month is part of a very broad trend. All over the world people are rethinking old ways of doing business and running government. They are taking a new look at old political systems, and they do not like what they see.

You saw that in the last election here. But you also saw it in the rejection of President Bush two years ago. And you see it in other countries.

The breakup of the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan is one example. The disappearance of the Canadian Conservative Party, the French Socialist Party and the Christian Democratic Party in Italy are three more. That tells me something. All over the world, in all the industrial countries, the ordinary middle-class person feels powerless, insecure, pushed around -- and doesn't want to take it any longer.

A NEW GOLDEN AGE

Why is this happening? It is because Montana, and the rest of the world, are going through an era of dramatic change and elections are only the most superficial sign of it. The end of the Cold War. Rapid growth of trade. New forms of technology and communications. New skills required for good-paying jobs. More questions about job security.

Many of these changes are to the good. Consider a few basic facts.

We are prosperous. Our national economy creates millions of new jobs and grows by \$200 billion or even more, every single year. Here in Montana we've added nearly eighteen thousand jobs in the past two years alone. For the first time, Montana top-flight modern companies like CUC International can create jobs in Montana, because they use the Information Superhighway and no longer have to plant themselves in the big cities.

Science, technology and medicine are surging ahead. Today, a doctor with a tough case at Columbus or Montana Deaconess can get on the computer to search the most advanced diagnostic files in the world at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

And we are at peace. For the first time in sixty long years -- for the first time since Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 -- we face not one deadly foreign threat.

When you think about it, we are very lucky people. It may well be that when our children look back at the 1990s, they will see a golden age.

AN AGE OF DISCONTENT

But it is a paradox. If you spend some time traveling the state and talking to ordinary Montanans, you don't find happiness and contentment. You find very few who believe we live in a golden age. Instead you find anger. Frustration. Discontent.

Why is that? In part, I think, it is the feeling Alexis de Tocqueville called:

"that strange mood of melancholy which often haunts the inhabitants of democratic countries in the midst of their abundance, and the disgust at life which sometime seizes upon them in the midst of calm and easy circumstances."

There is something of that in our mood. After the Cold War, the country is a little tired. A little jaded. We are eager for a new purpose, but not yet sure what it will be. We respond to vague calls for "change" with enthusiasm, but balk at specific measures to cut the deficit or reform the health care system.

But that's not all there is to it. The anger George Bush faced in 1992, the anger Bill

Clinton faces now, the anger that brought about last month's election results, is more than a passing thing.

It is a growing conviction, stronger all the time, that something basic is wrong. Something has cracked in our nation's foundation. The system has become stacked against the ordinary, honest, hard-working, middle-class Montana family.

GOVERNMENT TOO INEFFICIENT AND WASTEFUL

Everywhere I go, all over the state, ordinary men and women feel the people in power are pushing them around. Making decisions without asking their opinion. Telling them what to do.

Whether it is Congress, the national political parties, or big Washington agencies, people feel government is too big and too bureaucratic. It gives you too few straight answers and too many forms to fill out. It ignores the people who pay the taxes and listens to the people who take the taxes.

And it does stuff that's just plain dumb. The Superfund law causes more lawsuits than cleanups. The Safe Drinking Water Act imposes a forest of paperwork on local government without making the quality of the water any better. The Army Corps of Engineers year after year taking the water out of the Missouri, draining the money out of our tourism and recreation for the sake of a barge navigation industry that's been obsolete for forty years.

The waste and paperwork is incredible. I looked into overspending on federal courthouses, and cut \$120 million out of the courthouse construction budgets. We've cut \$50 million from the CIA's National Reconnaissance Office, when we caught them wasting money on a building with a fountain and a sauna.

Here's one I found out just a few months ago. The Office of Personnel Management has a ten-thousand page Federal Personnel Manual.

Can you imagine anything more useless than a ten-thousand page book? War and Peace is about fourteen hundred pages. The King James Bible I keep in my office is only eighteen hundred -- and it's a big type version. Who could read ten thousand pages on "personnel management"? Well, you'll be happy to know we made them throw it out. Right in the trash.

SOME THINGS GOING RIGHT

I don't want to overstate the case, because government does a lot of good things. The best example may be highways. People here in Cascade County, and up north on the Hi-

Line, will get real, solid benefits when we start to build the National Highway System.

The NHS will succeed Eisenhower's Interstate Network as the largest and best transportation system in the world. It will upgrade the Hi-Line, Route 87 up to Havre, and Route 200 over to Lewistown, Circle and Glendive.

That means agricultural producers in Blaine County will get their products here and to the market faster. Tourists and sportsmen will get to Glacier and the CMR more quickly and easily. As the highway money comes in -- \$80 million a year -- working people will get new job opportunities, outmigration may slow down a bit and the tax base will firm up.

Only government can put up the investment to build these roads. If we just give up on government -- if we burn it down instead of cleaning it up -- people here in Cascade County and the whole state of Montana will lose big.

ELITES FAILING THE COUNTRY

And I've found that it is more than government that raises anger. It is the whole American elite.

Take the media. The entertainment industry has to be more responsible, to show less sex and less violence to their teenagers in prime time. And the news ought to be a little less sensational and a little more factual. Not too long ago, a network anchorman -- Walter Cronkite -- was called "the most trusted man in America." Hard to imagine that today.

And it is educators. American kids lag behind the Asians and Europeans in math and science. High school graduates don't know whether World War II came before or after the Civil War. But if you listen to a lot of the think tankers and university presidents, you find they care more about exotic side issues like "political correctness" than the basics.

And it also is business. Montanans want business to think a little more about Montana. Yes, we want business. And we will do whatever we can to bring good jobs to Montana. But in return, we want business to invest in us. To come to Montana and be a part of Montana. There's no better example of this than CUC International. At the same time, though, we see some of the timber companies cutting as fast as they can, then shutting the mill and leaving loyal communities flat. Grain companies as happy to fill the elevators with Canadian as with American grain. And a lot of Montanans feel more suspicion than pride.

REFORM -- NOT CYNICISM

From government to business to the media, to education, medicine, the law and beyond, ordinary people believe the elites are ignoring them and failing the country. These

feelings are not altogether wrong. And they will not go away easily.

They can be good, healthy feelings if we use them to push Montana and the country in the right direction. Voter registration in Montana is way up this year, and that is great. But they are dangerous if they're ignored.

Because democracy requires idealism. It requires participation. It requires faith. And when those qualities are replaced by cynicism and indifference, democracy dies.

RETURN TO BASIC VALUES

How do you stop that from happening? Ultimately, it is just basic values and common sense. Things we still have out here in the "last, best place."

It is promising no more than we can deliver, and delivering on those promises we make.

It is understanding that in most cases, ordinary people don't need laws and regulations and paperwork to do the right thing.

It is listening to people instead of telling them what to do.

The country and the world are changing fast. That makes it more important than ever to remember these things. But really, they should be easy to remember. Because they are no more than the basic principles of life in a free country.

Washington got a reminder of that last month. The Democrats ought to learn something from it. The Republicans should take a warning. And we all ought to pay attention.

Thank you.