

STATEMENT OF REP. JOHN M. ASHBROOK
BEFORE THE PLATFORM COMMITTEE
REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

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Ladies and gentlemen of the Platform Committee, I wish to begin my presentation by reading to you from the platform we adopted in this city four years ago:

"New Republican leadership can and will restore fiscal integrity and sound monetary policies, encourage sustained economic vitality and avoid such economic distortions as wage and price controls." (P. 16, Paragraph 4)

"Welfare and poverty programs will be drastically revised to liberate the poor from the debilitating dependence which erodes self-respect and discourages family unity and responsibility." (P. 11, Para. 1)

"Improved relations with Communist nations can come only when they cease to endanger other states by force or threat. Under existing conditions, we cannot favor recognition of Communist China or its admission to the United Nations." (P. 27, para. 3)

"Nations hostile to this country will receive no assistance from the United States. We will not provide aid of any kind to countries which aid and abet the war efforts of North Vietnam." (P. 24, para. 2)

And finally, ladies and gentlemen: "In a world where broken promises become a way of life, we submit that a nation progresses not on promises broken but on pledges kept." (P. 31, Para. 6)

Have we, as a party, kept the pledges we made in 1968? That is a question which I, a Republican, who as a delegate supported that platform and believed its words in 1968, had to decide late last year, when people I respect came to me and asked me to run in the primaries against an incumbent President of my own party.

Have we restored "fiscal integrity" to the Federal Government? The first three deficits of this Republican Administration--an estimated total of \$90 billion--are more than the cumulative deficits of the eight years of the Kennedy-Johnson Administration, deficits our party deplored at the time.

Have we avoided "such economic distortions as wage and price controls"? We have not.

Have we liberated the poor from dependency? The numbers of dependent poor have grown alarmingly in the last four years, and the solution proposed by our Administration--still not passed by Congress--is to include 15 million Americans from working families in the structure that has already made dependents of 12 million.

Did we support admission of Communist China to the U. N.? We did. Did we cut off aid to a single country that is helping our enemy in North Vietnam? We did not. Did we restore, in the words of President Nixon in 1968, "our objective of clear-cut military superiority"? We not only did not do that, but by our support of the SALT agreements we condemned the United States to inferiority in every category of weapons covered by the agreements.

Ladies and gentlemen, I could go on much longer than any of us would wish listing the ways in which the bright promise of our 1968 platform and campaign have turned to ashes. In making my decision to run for President eight months ago, I can't deny that there were some bright spots on the balance-sheet. The development of Vice President Agnew into an eloquent spokesman for Middle America, President Nixon's excellent judicial appointments, and his commitment, so far, to an honorable settlement in Indochina--these are worthy of praise, and I have never attacked the Administration concerning any of these matters.

But there is a broader context, and there is a total picture which is clear. If anyone in this room reads with attention our 1968 platform, and the campaign statements of the man we elected President, I think that you will come to one unavoidable conclusion: that in 1968, the Republican Party promised change from the policies that had gone before, the policies of New Deal welfarism at home and appeasement abroad, and that those policies have not been changed but extended and refined. I would go so far as to say that President Nixon has done things--I am thinking of the SALT agreements, the admission of Red China, and the proposal of a guaranteed annual income--that a President Hubert Humphrey would not have done, even if he had wanted to.

All this leaves the Republican Party in general, and you the members of the Platform Committee in particular, with a difficult and (in my view) important choice, between two kinds of consistency. You can write and approve a platform which is consistent with the policies of the Nixon

Administration, or you can write a platform in language which is consistent with the 1968 and earlier platforms, statements that embodied the views of most of the people in this room and the reasons for which our party was founded.

I know that many people will tell you that this choice is not important; that platforms, however useful in stirring the troops, have little or no importance once a party wins power and takes office. That platforms are seldom read and quickly forgotten.

There is some truth in this view--as our own party's recent history all too clearly shows. But in a much deeper sense, in writing a platform you will be shaping the soul of our party, for good or ill.

Every year, in every state and municipality, the business of the party is carried forward. We form committees, elect party leaders, nominate candidates, and bring structure to the seats of government once elected. But only once in four years do we define the overarching objectives for which all these activities are undertaken. Only then do we nominate two men who are in our judgment best equipped to serve the ends we define.

A President, once elected, is free to ignore the platform he has been elected on. But he does so at the peril of alienating his own political base, and of planting a seed that can grow to destroy his party in the longer run. A party whose platform and candidate have been rejected by the people cannot, in our system, impose its goals by other means. But a platform of a defeated party can stand as a rebuke and check to government. More important, it can come to symbolize a road which, though not taken on one occasion, can be followed on another.

It is only here and now, and primarily by you, that the very soul of the party is defined. If you, the Platform Committee, write language which celebrates acts which, at the very best, were born of grim necessity, you will injure the party at its heart and endanger its future.

In particular, I hope you reaffirm the following Republican beliefs:

--That Communism in whatever variant is a blight to the people it rules, and a threat to those it does not; and that the United States must take the leading role in resisting its spread and reducing its sway.

--That in order to do this, our aim as a nation must be nothing less than restoration of clear-cut military superiority.

--That government must be limited, and above all must not interfere with the freedom and self-reliance of the average citizen.

--That any form of guaranteed annual income is unacceptable.

--That the only proven way to end inflation is for the government to live within its means, and that a structure of wage and price controls, however attractive temporarily, creates more problems than it solves.

If we reaffirm them, the way will be open for a future Republican President--perhaps President Nixon himself in his second term--to recognize reality and to take strong and effective measures to give our ideals flesh.

The truth is that the world has not changed very much since we adopted our platform four years ago. If it is true, as I strongly believe it is, that traditional Republican principles are the best hope for our recovery as a nation, then those principles must be kept alive for future governments to turn to. You, the Platform Committee, can do that job this week.

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