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OCTOBER 18, 1974

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
DEDICATION OF THE
NEW DEPARTMENT OF LABOR BUILDING

11:28 A.M. EDT

Secretary Brennan, Secretary Weinberger, Administrator Sampson, former Secretaries of Labor, distinguished leaders of organized labor, Reverend Clergy:

It is really a great privilege and pleasure for me to have the opportunity of saying a few words this morning and to subsequently participate in the cornerstone laying.

Now let me at the outset say that at the White House this morning I received an honorary membership in the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers, from Tom Murphy. This was the shortest apprenticeship that any bricklayer, mason, or plasterer ever went through. But I thank them, nevertheless.

And may I add to what the Secretary of Labor said a moment ago. He gave me, as I came to the podium, this wonderful resolution signed by those who were here, and some are here this morning -- the Vocational Industrial Youth Organization. I thank them, and express my deep gratitude for their resolution.

Well, Mr. Secretary and distinguished guests, this building will house the administration of programs that vividly demonstrate America's sense of concern, compassion and equity.

Enormous progress, as you have mentioned, Mr. Secretary, has been made since 1913 when the Department of Labor started its work. Its most urgent concern then, as we look back on history, was child labor. Unemployment insurance and workmen's compensation did not exist at that time. Neither did the dozens and dozens of other programs of assistance to America's working men and women.

Since 1913, which, incidentally, was the year that I was born, the United States has protected workers with a very broad network of legislative and administrative safeguards.

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In recent years we have sought to attack the problems of hard corps unemployment. We have sought to assist the chronically unemployed who lack the skills required for today's job market.

Over the past ten years, the manpower training programs of the Department help provide over nine and a half million workers with the skills needed to move up that important job ladder. Working standards have been upgraded as they should have been, and job discrimination has been curbed, although I think we have to recognize not totally ended. We will work on that, we will continue to make a maximum effort in that regard.

I am very, very proud, Mr. Secretary, of the 13,000 people who work in this Department, and I am told some 5,000 will work in this new building.

In demonstrating the competence and the creativity of their work, they help State and local governments cut through Federal red tape and afford these units maximum latitude in adopting programs to local needs.

The 13,000 people that work for the Department, not only here but all over the world--primarily, of course, in our country--they help to build a constructive State-Federal relationship.

In short, they help the working people of this country who we all recognize are the indispensable ingredients of America's greatness.

During the economic summit meeting last month, I got some good advice from Secretary Brennan and from our national labor leaders on how to cope with our number one problem, a problem which affects every citizen, every worker, every one of us. And, of course, I refer to Public Enemy Number One -- inflation.

What is needed to whip inflation, it was suggested, are compassionate, sensible, equitable policies presented to the American people with honesty and with candor.

In outlining my programs to Congress to overcome this threat, I tried my very best to meet this standard, to offer policies that are compassionate, that are sensible, and of course are equitable.

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In calling on the American people to join in this effort, I used the very same yardstick. And let me, if I might, emphasize this particular point. Whatever they deal with, whether the economy at home or our foreign relations abroad, the programs and policies of this Administration will continue to be predicated on these same basic principles.

Now, Mr. Secretary and distinguished guests, the building we dedicate today demonstrates that Labor Day is not confined to a single day in September. Every day is Labor Day in the view of this Administration toward America's working men and women.

I thank you very, very much.

END

(11:37 A.M. EDT)