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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND

JOHN T. DUNLOP
AT THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY
OF

JOHN T. DUNLOP
AS
SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

THE EAST ROOM

2:12 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: John, Mr. Vice President, Members of the Congress, members of the Administration, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Perhaps this is telling tales out of school, but I understand that a few months ago, when John Dunlop tried to attend the dedication of the new Department of Labor headquarters, he could not get in because he did not have a ticket. (Laughter)

Today, John, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to present you with that ticket.

I am very, very pleased to welcome the new Secretary of Labor, who is so uniquely skilled in obtaining practical solutions to the most complex of problems. The issue of jobs for Americans is the number one problem on our agenda.

I will rely on John for sound, practical programs that will bring jobs and assistance the very quickest to those who need the help the most. His career, as many of you know, is distinguished by the ability to innovate and generate cooperation, to solve disputes and to break through the most difficult of situations.

John, we need you in the Department of Labor. We need the genius that made you the head of the Economics Department at Harvard University. We need you to obtain voluntary restraint without guidelines.

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John brings, as many of you know, to Washington a career of experience in achieving practical solutions to problems that have frustrated many others. I can think of no one better able to meet today's broad challenges than John Dunlop.

I knew this before he told the United States Senate that what we need most is a tax cut. The Labor-Management Committee he chairs told us that even before I asked for a tax cut in my State of the Union Message in January.

John has worked at the top level in labor-management negotiations, in every Administration since the days of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He has helped with deep, human sympathy and understanding, to bring people together and to solve the most critical disputes.

His efforts have assisted the wages, the working conditions and the collective bargaining relationships of countless of Americans, especially in the critical construction industry.

John is not only a man of academic wisdom, but a man of action. I am told that he has told colleagues that "When I want to discuss theories, I stay at Harvard. When I want to do things, I go to Washington." (Laughter)

I am told John has come to Washington, he estimates, 1600 times since 1938. Welcome to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, on your 1601 visit to the national capital. There are plenty of things to do here, John.

Judge Fahy, will you now administer the oath to the Secretary, please.

(Judge Fahy administered the oath of office.)

SECRETARY DUNLOP: Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, Judge Fahy, members of the Cabinet, distinguished Members of the Congress, long-time associates at the labor-management fraternity, family and friends:

I am honored to have Senator Williams and other Members of the House and Senate committees here today. I am delighted to begin with instant oversight. (Laughter)

Mr. President, if I may comment on your observation about my trying to get into the building previously, I would have thought your solution to that problem rather drastic.

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I am deeply honored by the trust and confidence placed in me by the President and by the Congress. You have my commitment in all things to seek to carry out my responsibilities and to fulfill opportunities in a manner deserving of that trust.

Mr. President, last Thursday evening at a commemorative stamp ceremony, you said, "Our strong, flexible bargaining system stands as a tribute to millions of men and women of both labor and management who have devoted themselves to building a better and better America."

I firmly believe that our American industrial relations arrangements have been a pragmatic response to the aspirations of our workers and our managers, to the competitiveness of our economy and to the values of our society.

It was not created by intellectual visionaries, nor invented by the government in 1935 or 1947. Its strength is its provision of maximum substantive decisions by private parties and minimal governmental intervention procedurally. Free collective bargaining and concomitant labor organization and management are the hallmark of a free society.

The group here this afternoon, Mr. President, is symbolic of the diversity of our country -- labor and management, academics and practitioners, old hands and young specialists, both sides of the legislative aisle, and active minority groups -- and no one can neglect the historical tensions of geography.

These and other divisions lead to paralysis, or they serve their historical purposes of building genuine strength. The people of this country have great reservoirs of energy and dedication to bring to the problems of our times.

Mr. President, we are a "can-do" people. Again, as you said Thursday night, Mr. President, our people cannot live on islands of self-interest. We must build bridges and communicate our agreements as well as our disagreements. Only then can we honestly solve the Nation's problems.

A corollary of that theme is that a great deal of government needs to be devoted to improving understanding, persuasion, accommodation, mutual problem solving and informal mediation.

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Legislation, regulations and litigation are useful means for some social and economic problems. I have a sense, however, that in many areas the growth of regulations and law has outstripped our capacity to develop consensus and mutual accommodation to our common detriment.

I recognize that the very first priority is to get the economy moving and to restore people to work and improve business conditions so that enterprises will have the incentive to create new jobs. I dedicate myself to that high priority.

This short-run imperative also calls, I think, for a keener sensitivity to long-term direction and necessities. My experience teaches me that as people, we have been much too prone to place short-term considerations over long-term objectives in the fulfillment of our national destiny.

This is a bipartisan sign. The dependence on foreign sources of energy, critical capacity shortages in basic material, the degree of food and medical inflation, and the inadequacy of unemployment compensation are illustrations of our recent hard lessons. We do not fix the roof when the weather is good, but find it is most difficult to do it in foul weather.

It is my hope that business, labor and government, working together, can address the immediate problems of the Nation while having a deep appreciation of our longer run necessities and opportunities, not only for the economy as a whole, but in individual sectors and industry and regions as well.

Mr. President, as a matter of law, I have taken this afternoon the prescribed oath. As a matter of the spirit, which is even more important to me, I should like to affirm the injunction of my parents on the occasion of my graduation from college.

"Study to show thyself approved under God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." I so affirm.

END (AT 2:25 P.M. EDT)