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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND

FREDERICK B. DENT
AT THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY
OF
FREDERICK B. DENT
AS

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

THE CABINET ROOM

10:53 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Secretary, this is a really great occasion. You become, after the official swearing-in ceremony, an official member of the White House family.

Unfortunately, it means that you have to leave the Department of Commerce, and you will go from Mr. Secretary to Mr. Ambassador, but you did such a fine job over in the Department of Commerce that when we were looking for someone who would take on this new responsibility, you were a person that I knew and everybody knew would do a first-class job.

You have great difficulties ahead of you. You have to deal in this new capacity as a Special Trade Representative with some 100-plus foreign countries, negotiating the very delicate trade problems between other countries and ourselves and between all countries together.

You also have an added difficulty, and that is convincing the Congress that you are carrying out the mission that was given to you and to this Administration to make the trade legislation work for the benefit of the United States and the world as a whole.

I don't envy the difficulties you have, but I am confident that you can carry them out in an outstanding way.

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It is a great privilege and pleasure for me to participate in the swearing-in. You have had some outstanding predecessors -- such as Chris Herter, who is known by many here.

You follow in the footsteps of Bill Eberle, who did a fine job in working with the Congress to get the legislation through, but now you will undertake -- as a businessman, as a top government official and as a representative of our country -- a very momentous mission.

I congratulate you on the job you have done, and I wish you well in your new responsibilities. We are mighty proud to have you in this great and important responsibility.

Judge Chapman, will you kindly proceed and see that Fred Dent is properly sworn in?

(Judge Robert Chapman administered the oath of office.)

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MR. DENT: Mr. President, Senator Thurmond, Judge Robert Chapman of South Carolina, members of the Cabinet, and friends:

I am highly honored on this occasion to assume this new responsibility.

Mr. President, I recall on December 3rd you addressed the American Trade Conference and said, "I am here tonight to call on you, my fellow Americans, to come with me on an even greater journey, a journey that could be, without question of a doubt, the most important in our lives -- yours and mine -- and will affect countless of Americans for many, many ~~years~~ years to come. It is, very simply, to redefine, to reshape the role of the United States in world trade."

Following that charge, the Trade Act of 1974 was passed and little did I, on that night, believe that I would be signing on board as a first mate in this journey with you.

But it is a high honor and I am delighted to join with you in this tremendous effort.

The Trade Act of 1974 restructured this office and requires that the negotiators report directly to the President and to the Congress. I intend to follow not only the letter, but the spirit, of this law, working with the Congress and with you to develop a structure of economic relationships around the world, which will contribute something to the many efforts which you are making across the broad array of responsibilities to establish peace throughout the entire world.

For 25 years, before coming to Washington, I was in the private sector in an industry where we negotiated with our trading partners to as close as one-eighth of a cent a yard. I propose to negotiate just as closely on behalf of the United States as in those days.

And apropos of those days -- it was in an agribusiness related to agriculture -- the hearings before the Senate Finance Committee clearly brought home to me the importance of agriculture in the forthcoming negotiations.

It is with this background, not only with agribusiness, but living in a rural community -- a county which, with due respect to the Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, produces more peaches than the whole State of Georgia (Laughter) -- that I look forward to working with business, industry, agriculture and labor to achieve the all-important aspect of increasing United States trade.

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Unfortunately, I took office several days after the announcement of a \$6.3 billion trade deficit. One of my major responsibilities and initiatives in the Commerce Department has been in international trade.

In this respect, we have met with 84 ministerial or higher level representatives of foreign governments during the past almost 26 months, and it is with a sense of this experience that I move into the new job.

As you know, in 1973, our trade deficit switched into surplus much sooner than anyone thought, but last year, due to the oil embargo, fell into deficit.

I look forward to working with you and the Congress, and negotiating with these almost 100 nations in trying to build an economic structure for continuing peace in the world and more importantly, prosperity and more jobs at home.

I want to express my deep appreciation for the implied confidence in this nomination.

Thank you.

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(AT 11:06 P.M. EDT)