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MARCH 15, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
WILLIAM SCRANTON
UPON BEING SWORN-IN AS
THE UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

THE EAST ROOM

2:10 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Governor Scranton, Mary, Mr. Justice Stewart, Governor Ray, Members of the Congress, Cabinet, Diplomatic Corps, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a very great personal privilege and a very high honor to participate in the swearing-in of an old friend, Bill Scranton, as the new representative of the United States at the United Nations and as the newest member of my Cabinet.

I knew Bill as a strong internationalist when we were fellow students at Yale Law School. I knew him as a fellow Congressman who strongly supported such concepts as the Peace Corps and foreign aid. I knew Bill as a special assistant and an international troubleshooter for Secretaries of State John Foster Dulles and Christian Herter. I knew him as a Governor of a great State who broke deadlocks in disputes between differing interests and, therefore, I have the greatest confidence in him as our new Ambassador to the United Nations.

Bill Scranton is the man who performed so effectively on the transition team during the tumultuous days when I first assumed the Presidency. He will now be our United Nations Ambassador when the entire world is in transition.

As Chairman of the President's Committee on Campus Unrest, Bill Scranton showed great initiative and independence of spirit. Now he takes over a very difficult post at a time of widespread unrest in the world.

From Bill Scranton's record of achievement and from my own years of very close personal friendship with him, I know him to be a man of depth and of vision. He personifies the old American virtue dating from George Washington and Pennsylvania's Ben Franklin of balancing conciliation with great personal strength.

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The United States of America is the world's best hope for peace with freedom. Universal aspirations for a better life depend substantially on our strength, our perseverance and our prudence throughout the world and at the United Nations. These qualities will be ably demonstrated by our new Ambassador.

The United States retains the idealism that made us the driving force behind the creation of the United Nations over three decades ago as a worldwide system to promote peace and progress. Americans are convinced that the world can be a better place.

Reason and goodwill can triumph over prejudice and arrogance. That is why we remain committed to the support of the United Nations. The opportunities arising from interdependence are positive and very creative. We remain guided by principles expressed in the Secretary of State's speech to the Seventh Special Session of the United Nations last autumn. We will continue to stand up and speak out for the good name of the United States and against pursuit of narrow interests.

Bill Scranton will have very heavy responsibilities. He has my complete confidence and trust in the discharge of those responsibilities. I know that he will not only advocate America's views with great strength and great skill but that he will listen respectfully to all other delegates who speak in good faith.

I know that he will work, as he has in so many past endeavors, to improve the efficiency of the United Nations and its agencies.

The challenge facing Bill Scranton is immense; conflicts are inevitable in the United Nations. In recent years the world has witnessed unfortunate and excessive concentration on irresponsible resolutions and the manipulation of procedures. This has happened at a time when the legitimate and crucial issues on the United Nations' agenda require all the dedication and statesmanship the world can muster.

Our new Ambassador, with the people and the Government of the United States firmly behind him, will demonstrate the goodwill, determination and serious purpose that have characterized American participation in the United Nations.

We will listen with respect to all genuine grievances. We will deal with all problems on their merits. We ask only that others show reciprocity and cooperation. The United States will defend the United Nations against any effort to use it for cynical tests of strength that subvert the ideals of the United Nations Charter.

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I am grateful that our Nation will have such an able spokesman. I know Bill, as I have said before, as a very close personal friend and have called him Governor for many years. Today, I address him as Mr. Ambassador and ask all of you to join me in wishing Ambassador Scranton every success.

(Associate Justice Stewart administered the oath of office.)

AMBASSADOR SCRANTON: Mr. President, Justice Stewart, Mr. Secretary, my family, distinguished guests one and all:

Mr. President, the majority of the people that are here today, I think as many as two-thirds of them, come from Lackawanna County (Laughter) which may in a lot of people's minds be a rather obscure place. But in my mind, it is home, and the last time that there were this many people from that county at the White House was 50 years ago when Calvin Coolidge, the notorious reticent, was President of the United States.

At that time, the Scranton Chamber of Commerce had annual trips which were supposed to help anthracite coal, then king, and when they found out on this particular trip that they were coming to the White House grounds, it was the biggest delegation they ever had in the history of the county and they all came and they were placed in the Lower Garden down here and they waited and they waited and they waited.

Finally, the President came out and he walked down the steps of the White House and he looked them over and he kept walking and kept looking at them, and he would stop and look some more and then he got down almost to where they were and just stood there and looked some more at them and he didn't say anything.

Finally, he turned to my father, who was the head of the delegation, and he said, "Anybody left in Scranton?" (Laughter)

I thank you, Mr. President, very kindly for this appointment and I think it is an obligation and a duty and a responsibility which will not only bring enjoyment, I am sure, but a tremendously difficult task, as you have just propounded.

The United Nations now is, like most of the rest of the world, in one of the most transitory stages of its existence, and we are hearing big words which mean a great deal but which are changing the whole nature of diplomacy.

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One of them you used in your own comments, which is "interdependence," which Secretary Kissinger has described as the central fact of our diplomacy, and if we didn't know it before, I think we must know it now as a result of the economic stresses of this recent recession and of how interdependent we are with the rest of the world, and they are with us, and certainly with the now famous oil embargo and the rise in the price of oil. The world is nearly one, maybe not in agreement on many issues, but it certainly economically has tremendous interdependence.

May I also say that I think one of the finest propositions that has ever been made at the United Nations since its beginning is the one that was made by Secretary Kissinger at the Seventh Special Session last year, with the aid and abetment of so many people within your Administration, sir, and a great many Members of the Congress, and the result of that speech has been, I think, a reawakening and new opening, not only for this country but for all the countries of the world, and it will be my honor and my privilege to work with him and you and all the others in attempting to implement this to its fullest degree.

The other big word that we are hearing so much about these days is another change in diplomacy. This is "multilateralism." In the near past and the far past most of diplomacy, as we all know, was carried on on a bilateral basis, or at least on a regional one, and now, because of the tremendous changes in the world, all of a sudden there is a coming into vogue, and a meaningful one at that, and it will be more meaningful in the future than it even is at this stage, which is multilateralism because of the many new centers of power, not just of military power, or economic power, but of all other types of power.

The United Nations has a great many organizations. All of us in the United States and from around the world hear all the time about what happens in the General Assembly and the Security Council. These make headlines.

But there are a great many other things that go on up there that relatively few Americans, at least, are well aware of, and we would hope we would be able to accentuate these because they are tremendously important for the world and to the people of the United States, and I am referring primarily to the work of the special agencies in spreading education and science and technology around the world, in combatting hunger and disease everywhere, in promoting safety and international travel and our new mobility, in the laws for outer space and for the oceans, in protecting the environment, in a workable global strategy on energy, in controlling nuclear proliferation -- that in itself is worth what we have put into this organization -- and last, but by no means least, the advancement of human rights.

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There have been a lot of comments and questions about America and Americans and about their national resolve. There is no doubt in my mind that we are going through some changes in thinking. We certainly have been through some very traumatic periods but there isn't any doubt in my heart or in my soul or in my mind about the resolve of the American people. They are just as determined that there will be peace in this world as we have ever been. They are just as determined that liberty will reign and that independence is possible for peoples everywhere. And last, but by no means last, they have been the most generous people in the world and are still tremendously interested in human betterment, not just for themselves.

So I say to you, sir, that I accept this responsibility with joy and with the determination to do the job that I think all of us feel must be done, in order to better the world, yes, but to bring to the American people as well the real issues before the General Assembly and the Security Council and, far more important, the real work that is being done by that organization.

I thank you very much and I appreciate everything.

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