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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESSMEN

THE STATE FLOOR

5:11 P.M. EST

Carl and John Condon and Mr. Skutt, members of the National Alliance of Business:

It is always a pleasure to get together with this organization and to welcome you to Washington and, particularly, to welcome all of you here to the White House in the East Room.

From the many meetings I have had with this group and with individuals from the group, I can say again and say it with conviction that I am particularly proud of the fine work that you have done and particularly at a time when we are all so concerned about finding more and more jobs for American men and women.

The Administration -- I don't have to tell you, either -- is fully aware of the fact that the economy of the Nation during the past year has not made your task one bit easier, that of placing Vietnam veterans, the handicapped, the disadvantaged in jobs in the private sector where they have had the greatest opportunity to enlarge their capabilities, their opportunities and their natural talents.

I think we all recognize that people will always be America's greatest single resource and people working in rewarding, permanent, meaningful jobs are the country's greatest strength and the assurance of future progress and prosperity.

This organization has formed a very unique partnership with American business, American labor and American Government to accomplish your goals, and the success of your efforts shows that this can happen when combinations such as these work together. The millions and millions of jobs that you have found all over the country for men and women in the United States must make you deservedly proud, and let me say I applaud you wholeheartedly for it.

I looked at the records before coming over here and found that the NAB had found jobs for 4.5 million disadvantaged adults, Vietnam veterans, ex-offenders and disadvantaged youths. I think that is a tremendous record. I just hope and trust that the American people will appreciate it. I can assure you that I am extremely grateful.

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What also makes it significant is, since the inception of the summer youth placement program, which also started in 1968, 1,475,000 young people have found work through your efforts. This coming summer I am told that your goal, or your objective is another 200,000 youths for your placement program. This is an unbelievable, an excellent way to help guarantee that our disadvantaged youths won't grow up to be disadvantaged adults.

So let me take this opportunity to thank you and the many thousands of others associated with your organizations who have really made this program work. You have made an invaluable contribution for the betterment of all America.

I think it is also encouraging to note -- and you probably know it as well as myself -- we have had a very steady improvement in the economy and that is a relief to each and every one of us. But it must be particularly gratifying to all of you, gratifying to know that more Americans are working now than ever before in the history of the United States -- 86,700,000, an all-time record -- gratifying also to you, as well as to myself, that we gained 375,000 more jobs in the month of March alone and gratifying to you, as well as to myself, to know that the jobless rate dropped again in the report that came out last Friday to 7.5. Now, that is not good enough but it is a substantial improvement over what it was less than 12 months ago.

But the principal task for all of us, it continues to be the creation of meaningful, rewarding and permanent jobs for more and more Americans.

I am delighted to have an opportunity to say to you directly that this Administration will work with you wholeheartedly to achieve that objective.

Now, the fact that spring is brighter, far brighter this year than last year is in no small way, in my judgment, due to the efforts that many of you here and literally thousands associated with you have accomplished over this period of hard going for this country. I think it also depends upon your devotion to and dedication to the free economy that has been the backbone of America from its inception.

As a result of what you have done, your dedication to it, your belief in it, I expect you to pay the price for having done the job so well. I am asking you to keep on doing it. I know, and I think you also know, that next year America will be even stronger because of your determination, because of the pride that you have shown in the job that you have done, because of the success that has been achieved and accomplished, and if we come back here next year--and I hope we are all here--(Laughter) we can say that April of 1976 was good but April of 1977 will be even better.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 5:18 P.M. EST)