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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY
FINANCE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON INTERNAL REVENUE
TAXATION
SELECT COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND
CONDUCT
CHAIRMAN OF REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE

December 19, 1975

Dick Cheney

The Honorable Gerald R. Ford
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

A great many of us in Congress were shocked and dismayed to read in the press yesterday reports that attribute inflammatory and highly irresponsible remarks to Labor Secretary Dunlop about your possible veto of common situs picketing legislation.

Apparently, the Secretary had a press conference at which he issued a written statement analyzing and commenting on H.R. 5900, the common situs bill. We are not in a position to vouch for what the press tells us he said. However, the comments attributed to him by the Associated Press, United Press International, the Bureau of National Affairs, the Washington Post and the Washington Star all suggest an appalling level of arrogance and irresponsibility. Mr. President, more than 230 Members of the House and Senate, Republicans as well as Democrats, are convinced this legislation is not in the public interest, will increase rather than diminish labor strife in construction, and are very hopeful that you will veto the bill. Also, Mr. President, as a distinguished Member of the House of Representatives for 25 years prior to assuming the high office you now hold, you personally opposed common situs legislation. With many of us who still serve in Congress, you were successful in that opposition.

Yet, if we are to believe these astonishing press reports, the Secretary now sees fit to impliedly denounce you and us together as part of the "the same group of characters" that has opposed this legislation for years. Worse even than this effrontery, however, is his reported thinly-veiled invitation to violence in this violence-prone industry. The Secretary says -- if we are to credit these news reports -- that contract negotiations in construction will be "unmitigated hell" if you veto this legislation. He promises, the press reports tell us, "... the most serious strife in this strife-torn industry for ... years to come" if the construction union leaders are not promptly accommodated by having you sign this bill. This kind of transparent invitation to violence -- by any special interest

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group that doesn't get its way -- has to be the most irresponsible of possible conduct by a Cabinet level officer. It is grimly reminiscent of other irresponsible urgings a decade ago, where people were told to redress grievances in the streets. The very suggestion reported here debases the dignity of the high office to which you appointed Secretary Dunlop.

Mr. Dunlop is quoted as saying he sees no reason why "the President shouldn't sign this bill solely on its merits." Well, more than 230 Members of both Houses are currently on record as convinced this bill does not have merit to warrant its signing. Your own stand on common situs for so many years as a Member of the House suggests you would support this latter view. And we must wonder, as we read what we're told the Secretary said, on just what basis he suggests you as President either veto or sign any legislation that comes to your desk. He implies all too clearly in his reported remarks that if you veto this bill you will do so on some basis other than its merits. As far as we can read, he doesn't go on to say what your basis will be -- just that you won't be acting on the merits. We suggest that he explain more fully to us, and to you, precisely what standard he thinks you will use if you veto this bill.

Mr. President, the cause of orderly government and the cause of amicable relations between the Legislative and Executive Branches are ill-served by arrogant and irresponsible temper tantrums such as are reflected in these remarks attributed in the press to Secretary Dunlop. We can all hope most earnestly that he has been misquoted. Regrettably, the evidence appears strong that this is not so.

With every good wish, we are

Respectfully,



CARL T. CURTIS, USS



PAUL J. FANNIN, USS

