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Excerpts from a speech by Rep. Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich)
10th National Legislative Conference
Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO
May 3, 1965--Washington Hilton--11:30 a.m.

FOR RELEASE AT 11:30 A.M. EDT
MAY 3, 1965

I want to talk to you this morning about the needs of our traditional two-party system, as they relate to American labor. But first, let me make this point regarding President Johnson's statement of last evening on the situation in the Dominican Republic.

As House Minority Leader, I can say with some assurance that the overwhelming majority of Republicans in Congress stand solidly behind the President's declared purpose of preventing the establishment of another Communist regime in the Americas.

By his timely action in meeting the threat of life, property and hemispheric security which has been posed by disruptive forces in the Dominican Republic, President Johnson has avoided a repetition of the debacle of indecision at the Bay of Pigs.

All evidence indicates that had the President hesitated to act, the results would have been tragic in terms of human life and the long-range security interests of the Western Hemisphere. If the Dominican Republic were to go the way of Castro's Cuba, the Caribbean itself would be converted into a Communist-held lake.

When the national interest is at stake, partisanship under our system ends. No President need ever fear that Republicans would fail to support firm and decisive action in defense of American life or property, or to meet our responsibilities as the leader of the Western Hemisphere nations.

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There is an urgent need for leadership of organized labor in the United States to reappraise its role in the political affairs of our country.

Just as organized labor's political voice has become more powerful in recent years, so has the danger posed by the existence of a one-party labor movement increased.

The country cannot maintain its free institutions under one-party rule. And, organized labor must beware of the danger of hitching its aspirations to the star of one party, no matter how ascendant at the moment.

To have the labor movement a hip-pocket adjunct of one party is neither in the country's interest, nor is it in the interests of the working man.

By the same token, it is not in any of our interests to have a political party a hip-pocket adjunct of organized labor or of any single economic or social grouping.

In making a careful, new appraisal of its role, the labor movement might consider that political positions fixed by conditions of a former time do not necessarily reflect the realities of American political and economic life in the fast-moving Sixties.

Business and industry appear to be adjusting their sights to what they consider the needs of the time. I do not credit this change to the blandishments of our consensus-minded Administration, as do some others.

Is it not time then that organized labor's leadership seek a similar adjustment to its political needs, not only for today, but for the future?

It is indeed. For the free institutions of our country rest on the strength of a two-party system, not merely on Capitol Hill--- but in labor, business and every area of America's social and economic life.

Building and Construction Trades Organization
Your ~~union organization~~ has long taken pride in being politically non-partisan. I see this position as really being a reflection of a strong two-party ~~system~~ philosophy, which it seems to me should be adopted by many other organized labor groups.

This practical outlook is one strong way to overcome powers which use one-party influence, millions of dollars paid by rank-and-file workers in the form of dues, and the strength of centralized control to command legions of American workers.

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