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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED AT THE
ROBERT A. GEORGINE TESTIMONIAL DINNER

WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL

I am delighted to join tonight with the officers of 17 international unions representing three and a half million workers, with the leaders of industry, with distinguished members of the Congress and with others gathered here tonight to honor Bob Georgine.

There is a very encouraging symbolism in the fact that just as labor, industry and government are joined together here tonight, so the American people are coming together to take charge of our own fate.

Bob is taking on a great challenge as President of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO. Construction workers are among those Americans feeling the heaviest impact of inflation, recession and the energy crisis. Bob has an awesome responsibility -- and I wish him well and offer to him every cooperation the United States Government can accord.

I particularly want to thank President George Meany for the statesmanship, energy, and vision he has demonstrated in helping to develop solutions to our national difficulties. I commend George for his forthright and constructive involvement. George and Bob and other problem-solvers of the labor movement know how to negotiate around a table in the great spirit and tradition of American labor.

As we move to solve the common problems facing us, let us not get hung up on differences over details of the program now before the Congress. The problem is too pressing. Too many Americans are out of work. Let us join together in starting the process, in maintaining forward momentum, in getting the Congressional subcommittees meeting and getting down to cases.

To put it another way, let us start the train in the right direction and then reconcile concerns over the fare and the speed -- and even over rebates on the tickets. But let's get started.

Tonight, I want to issue a special invitation to George Meany and Bob Georgine and all the great leaders of labor. The White House door is open to you. I need your help. But more important, the country needs it. And I say to the construction and building trades tonight: Let us construct and build rather than debate and denounce. And let me add that we have all been guilty of this in the past.

I ask you tonight to join with me in pressing for action to get our economy moving again, to open new construction and new jobs across America.

I ask you to put your efforts and your forces behind the drive for American energy independence. I call on you to volunteer -- as labor has always volunteered in times of national emergency -- to work in every community to install energy-saving home insulation with the materials we will make available free to poorer Americans.

(MORE)

I congratulate Bob Georgine on his new leadership role.

I understand, incidentally, that Bob plays gin rummy. I won't say how well. Let me put it this way: Bob Georgine has done for gin rummy what the Titanic did for ocean travel.

And so, Bob, to help you with this problem -- I'd like to give you a little gift. A copy of "Cohen's Complete Book of Gin Rummy."

It should do wonders for your game. The next time you play George Meany or Lane Kirkland, you'll be able to lose much more convincingly.

But whether you win or lose, Bob, you and the other great leaders of labor and all Americans are going to be winners in the struggle over the real problems that face our Nation. For when America wins, labor wins. And all Americans are in this together. And together we will forge a new direction for America.

I am honored to attend your testimonial, Bob, and to make this presentation.

I thank you.

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