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AUGUST 8, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
DR. FORREST DAVID MATHEWS
AT HIS
SWEARING-IN CEREMONY AS
SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE

12:24 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary designate, Members of Congress, Mr. Chief Justice, distinguished guests, including, as I understand it, three former Secretaries of HEW -- Wilbur Cohen, John Gardner and Arthur Flemming -- ladies and gentlemen:

Cap, I am very grateful for your more than generous and very kind introduction. Now that you are leaving, Cap, I would like to take just a moment to tell you and to tell all the people here what I really think of you. (Laughter) I was hoping the day would never come when I had to tell you this. (Laughter) But since you insisted on leaving, you asked for it.

Cap, you are terrific. Those of us who have known you for a long time know that in each of the important positions that you have held in the Federal Government -- Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, Director of OMB, Secretary of HEW -- I think you have demonstrated the commitment, the talent, the tireless hard work and a very deep sense of patriotism that represents the very highest order of public service. And we thank you very, very much.

With your retirement from public life, we are losing, as I see it, a leader of uncommon ability. You have earned the respect and admiration of your colleagues and your country, and we in Government will miss you, Cap, and this city will certainly and surely miss your lovely wife, Jane.

Betty and I, all the people assembled here, and so many more throughout the country, join in wishing you both a very happy and a very successful return to the private life in your beautiful State of California.

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(OVER)

Having said that, I want to add a postscript. You have been tremendously helpful to me in a very tough year, and for that I am most grateful.

But I have come here primarily to swear-in David Mathews as the new Secretary of HEW.

In Sunday's Washington Post I read an article about David Mathews, and in this one piece alone he was described as innovative, captivating, exceptional, persuasive, gifted and brilliant, and a man of Presidential stature. (Laughter)

Nevertheless (Laughter) I have still come here today to swear David Mathews in as the new Secretary of HEW.

In the past, many Cabinet members have come to the White House for ceremonies similar to this. But I feel very strongly it is important for the President to see as much as he can of the people he serves and of the workers in Government agencies who serve the people. And that is one of the reasons I am here today.

Actually, it is my second visit here as President. I was here nearly a year ago -- less than two weeks after I was sworn-in -- to sign the Education Amendments of 1974, in keeping with my personal philosophy favoring appropriated assistance to education.

As Secretary of HEW, David Mathews will be filling a most important job, and a big pair of shoes. His swearing-in will add another first class officer to a Cabinet of first class men and women.

He moved into a big job, one of the most important in Government. HEW will spend an estimated \$150 million in the fiscal year and through the transitional quarter.

It has a staff of more than 128,000 men and women. The decisions and actions of this vital Department of our Government affect the lives of every man, woman and child in the United States. HEW has a major influence on the education Americans receive, under health care and on the entire range of social services.

I consider David Mathews the right person for this very important job. He is young, but is an accomplished thinker and leader, a man who understands both concepts and action, ideas and implementation.

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Since 1969 he has served as an outstanding President of the University of Alabama, one of our Nation's great State universities. And at the same time, he has been an effective writer and leader in a wide range of civic activities.

Dr. Mathews brings to this new mission the strength of youth, a sense of purpose, the skills of a scholar and the tested record of a successful leader and administrator. That is an impressive inventory by any standards.

I am confident that his achievements will speak for themselves in the months and years ahead. I look forward to working closely with Dr. Mathews, as I have with my good friend, Cap Weinberger, to whom we all wish the very best.

I am sure all of you join with me in wishing David Mathews the very best as he assumes his heavy, new responsibilities as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

Thank you very much.

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SECRETARY MATHEWS: Mr. President, Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. Secretary, our distinguished guests and a room of lifetime associates and friends:

I would say, before I begin my formal remarks, that I particularly appreciate the Chief Justice coming. He and I normally go fishing about this time in the summer, and this seemed to be the only way to get together. And I am grateful to him and grateful to Mr. Ford for arranging this occasion. (Laughter.)

This occasion, this ceremony, this hour, are all temptations to bold rhetoric, but I have the strong sense that rhetoric should be avoided. Simplification seemed to me inappropriate in coming to a department whose issues are shaped so much by the inevitable conflicts in our good intentions, so much by the difficulties inherent in all that we hope for, so much by the ambiguities in our ambitions as a people.

And grand promises -- grand promises seem to me insensitive to both the deep fears and the fragile hopes that are at the heart of the matters this Department is charged to address.

My impressions over the last several weeks have lead me to the conclusion that we badly need to be more accurate about what this Department can, in fact, do about all of the problems that fall into its orbit.

The hard truth is that we are far from being the sole arbiter of all matters of health, education and welfare. We are one among many, along with the Congress, the other Departments of the Executive Branch and a host of State and local agencies that have a responsibility in these matters.

Quite possibly, that is as it should be, but it follows that the strength of the Department is necessary in building partnerships and alliances and bridges.

That course may be especially appropriate for this particular time in our history. Every age lends itself to some characterization. The Colonial Period has been called the age of religion, The Jacksonian Era, the age of democracy and so on. But the last decade in our own lifetime defies easy characterization.

It may be simply remembered as the age when things didn't work out like we thought they would. And if that is so, even if it is partially so, we may be tempted to become disinterested or cynical. But the obligation, the great obligation in such a time is to reassessment and to reevaluation and to a common rethinking.

So many pessimistically see the end of the American age in such introspection. I more optimistically see the end of American innocence. After all, we must remember that this Nation was not formed as much by the fiery slogans of the revolution as it was by the hard and quiet work in the decade that followed.

This Department has an obvious responsibility, a serious responsibility for the sound management of a budget that dwarfs the treasuries of most of the nations of the world. But if this is indeed to be an architectural era, a time when we are beginning to redesign our national stance on human and domestic affairs, then perhaps this Department has an obligation to contribute perspective as well as decisiveness. And despite the great variety of programs and agencies that make up the Department, there must be some common theme, some unifying idea that gives focus to our work and character to the part that we are to play.

Perhaps it is in our responsibility for the preservation and development of the human resources of the country -- to borrow a bit from an analogy to our natural resources.

Certainly it is the oldest of bromides to say that the strength of the Nation is ultimately and most basically in the people, particularly in their self-reliance. But the saying still has an indisputable wisdom to it.

Mr. Jefferson, even as fierce champion of limited government, argued that the care of human life and happiness is the first and only legitimate objective of good government.

We today have few illusions left about happiness, about building a heaven on earth. But we can still hope for a better earth.

I have few illusions about what I can do even to that end. But I have some considerable hope for what we might do together.

Thank you.

END

(AT 12:30 P.M. EDT)