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Office of the Vice President
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REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
PUBLIC FORUM ON DOMESTIC POLICY
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

(AT 9:20 A.M. PST)

Thank you very much indeed to those distinguished representatives of local government who have so graciously welcomed this meeting representing the President, the Cabinet, and the Domestic Council.

I think that as each one of them touched on the questions that will be discussed today, and as one looks out at this wonderful gathering, we see the vitality of our free society that people -- and government simply represents people -- people are interested. They are concerned. They are looking for the answers, and they have got their own ideas. And government certainly does not have any corner on either perception, understanding, or basic wisdom. That wisdom is throughout the country.

(Applause.)

I agree with you.

(Laughter.)

We are off on the right note at the beginning.

So I am deeply grateful to all of you, as is the President, for your participation.

This is the sixth and last meeting we have had around the country. Mr. Hayes was good enough to mention Critical Choices. When I had the pleasure of being Governor of the State on the other coast, which used to be, when I started, the largest State, but under your present Governor's father, you passed us, and we now are the second State in New York.

But anyhow, we used to have town meetings in the fall preparatory to the legislative programs of this kind throughout the State. It was one of the most useful experiences that I found we could have because it is very difficult, whether it is the State capital or whether it is the national capital -- I think it is different for the Mayor. I think he is pretty available to the people all the time. I am sure that is true of the County Supervisor.

But anyhow, Governors and Presidents get a little isolated. So to get out to the people and have a chance to exchange views I think is invaluable.

I would like to make a few comments about what we have been finding. Just very briefly, we have been talking, as you know, to State and local officials, to businessmen, local leaders from all walks of life, the north and south, east and west.

While each region has special problems, there is a remarkable uniformity on certain issues. Everywhere we have gone, people are concerned about the economy, about high unemployment and continued inflation, about the ability of our economy to grow and provide more job opportunities. And everywhere we found that Americans are deeply concerned about our environment.

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I couldn't help thinking as the Secretary of State was making her very perceptive remarks at the opening that basically in this free society of ours that the economy, the private sector, if we want to call it that, free enterprise, private enterprise, produces 85 percent of the revenues of all levels of government, directly or indirectly.

Therefore, when we talk about social problems or meeting human needs, the government can only do it with money. That money comes from the taxes, and those taxes form the vitality, strength and dynamism of the economy.

Therefore, basic to achieving our social objectives is getting the economy rolling again and getting jobs through increased opportunity and getting the revenues that come from that. So that we have not a segmented society but an inter-related society. I think this comes out very strongly in these discussions.

We found that people want economic growth that does not destroy this country's environmental heritage. I think that is very fundamental. I happen to feel very deeply, and I know this is felt in Washington, that these two objectives are not inconsistent, that we have the scientific and technological ability to achieve growth, to produce energy, and raw materials, and manufacture goods, and at the same time have the expertise to protect our environment.

Only by combining these are we going to have the opportunities for employment that have to be achieved. We need 2 million 800 thousand more jobs right now, and then a growth of jobs of about 1 million 600 thousand a year every year to take care of the opportunities that are being sought by young people coming out of school and college.

At the same time, people want sensible, balanced environmental protection that does not obstruct economic growth and job opportunities.

Everywhere we found people concerned about social programs, whether the truly deserving, the old and the sick and the poor were getting enough help and whether the undeserving are taking advantage of these social programs at the taxpayer's expense.

We found people concerned -- after the billions this Nation spent on private medicine, on Medicaid and Medicare -- that we still do not have a comprehensive system assuring the health care of all Americans.

Everywhere we went we found people concerned about the energy crisis. I thought perhaps the best description of our handling as a Nation of the energy crisis was the Governor of Texas, Governor Briscoe, who said that had we responded to the attack on Pearl Harbor as we have the energy crisis, we would all be speaking Japanese in the United States now, which was a pretty dramatic way I think of expressing the situation.

I think that this is one of the areas that our country has got to pull together on between the Executive and the Legislative and the American people and really get going if we are going to have the basic vitality for our economic growth.

We found people confused and critical, too, because of the fact that after two years have elapsed since the embargo, and despite the President's urgent recommendations in his State of the Union message that we become independent in energy by 1985, the Congress still has not been able to respond with an effective act.

Quite frankly, wherever we went we found the American people are fed up with government bureaucracy and red tape. If there was one message we have gotten, ladies and gentlemen, that is it, that people are really fed up with government bureaucracy and red tape.

(Applause.)

We found people fed up with waste and duplication, with confusion and contradiction in Federal aid programs. We found people, as one local official put it, fed up with the mountain of Federal paperwork that is necessary just to move even a molehill of a project.

(Applause.)

I guess you all feel the same way the people do in other parts of the country.

We found people fed up with government over-regulation of State and local governments, of individuals, of businesses -- regulation that tragically stifles initiative, the willingness to take on responsibilities at whatever the level of activity happens to be, ever changing regulation that makes it unnecessarily difficult for local government, individuals and industry to plan for economic expansion and job growth.

And we learned, as we expected from the beginning, that there are creative ideas, invaluable experience and enormous talent all over America. This pluralism of our system has been of course its vitality and its strength and we want to keep that so that we have the same drive and creativity that built this Nation during the past 200 years for the coming 200 years.

That is why we are here today. The West beckoned to Americans from our very beginnings. The West fulfilled America's manifest destiny. The West still possesses those qualities we most associate with the American character: a sense of adventure, a continuing exploration of the new possibilities of life, and the strong creative and entrepreneurial impulses. In short, the West personifies the qualities that powered America's growth to greatness.

In today's forum we will hear from representatives from Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, American Samoa, Guam and Micronesia.

The President asked me as Vice Chairman of the Domestic Council to conduct these public forums as part of the domestic policy review process. The major areas that will be discussed today are as follows: first, economic development and job opportunities; second, resource development and the environment; third, social policies and the quality of life.

Before calling on the witnesses, I would just like to say a word of background; namely, that we are living in a period of accelerating change and in a period of growing interdependence. These two factors are making it extremely complex and extremely difficult for us to deal with rapid change and the impact growing out of our independence in actions in other parts of the world and other parts of the country.

I think that perhaps one illustration, and I speak of this as a former Governor because I feel very strongly about it, that because of the desire of government and the desire of our country to meet people's needs and because politicians

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particularly are responsive to finding ways in which that can be done, as they should, during the past 50 years unfortunately we have overpromised and underdelivered to the American people as government at all three levels. We have spent more money than we had. We found ourselves in financial difficulties at all three levels of government.

And to illustrate the complexity of the situation, there are now 1,009 categorical grants. Those are grants that are given by the Federal Government, passed by the Congress, to State and local governments. Each one requires matching funds. Each one has to live within restrictions of the congressional legislative action, plus added administrative decisions which are constantly changed. And the result is that States and local government increasingly find themselves unable to be responsive directly to their own people or responsible for the administration of the programs because they have to do it within the framework of these laws and these restrictions.

Therefore, we are losing, I am afraid, the vitality and flexibility of our Federal system of shared responsibilities between three levels of government, losing the concept that the government closest to the people is the best government because it is the most responsive.

I think these are the kinds of problems we have to face. I just want to really let you know we are aware of the problems, and what we are looking for, though, is the answers. How do we have the courage as a free society, how can we develop the self-discipline as a free society, to make the tough changes that are necessary to respond and restore the strength and vitality of this system?

I think without any further ado I would like to now go to the first subject, which is that of economic growth and employment, and call on the Secretary of Labor, who is not only a professor but dean of the school of economics at Harvard, to open this session. Then we will have the other commentators from the community.

So I call on Secretary Dunlop.

(Applause.)

END (AT 9:32 A.M. PST)