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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE
AMERICAN RETAIL FEDERATION

THE HYATT REGENCY HOTEL

1:30 P.M. EDT

Thank you very, very much, Mr. Secretary.

I was hesitant about interrupting and I am sure you all understand, but I did want to say hello to all of you again and indicate the pleasure and privilege that I had in meeting with your group some time in the middle of March when I met with a number of you, at least, in the White House.

I appreciate that you are giving the Secretary of Commerce an opportunity to discuss with you some of the major problems that we feel that you face and that we want to try and solve.

It is my understanding, Mr. Secretary, that there was a briefing held this morning with those that are filling you in on the new deregulation proposal that we sent to the Congress an hour or so ago which, I believe, is a very far-reaching and could be, if the Congress will respond, a very effective way of really getting an honest to goodness review in a thorough and an objective and a proper way of the manner in which some of these regulatory agencies and commissions have operated.

It is my observation that some of them have been going on and on and on. Like an old friend of mine up on the Hill used to say, "Going on and on like Tennyson's brook." (Laughter)

So I do hope that you will get an opportunity to get a very broad briefing, not only on regulatory reform, but the other matters that are of deep concern to you.

I recall very vividly the discussion that we had concerning representation from your group on the Advisory Committee of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and it was the thought that following our get-together that somebody from this organization itself should be with those that are advising our negotiators what they should or should not do.

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It is my understanding that Mr. Stanley Goodman of your organization, the May Corporation, is the person that will be your representative. I have had the privilege and pleasure of knowing Mr. Goodman and I think that his selection will benefit us, help our negotiators and immeasurably be beneficial to your industry, and I congratulate you.

A final comment, if I may. The meeting that you attended in mid-March where we had an opportunity to sit down and talk is only indicative of the kind of meetings that we hold very frequently, very regularly in the White House. I was talking to Bill Baroody a day or two ago and I asked him for a summary of how many organizations, how many people actually of this kind had been able to sit down with the top people in the Administration and the Government and exchange views that might be very beneficial and very helpful on both sides.

As I recall, Bill said that the number of organizations was around 100 and some 15,000 people had come into the White House, sat down, told us their problems, indicated their concerns and made recommendations as to what might and should be done.

This, I think, is the way to approach the solution to the problems that we both have, and I welcome you back again some time I am sure during the next four years. (Laughter)

It would not disappoint me if it was every year. (Laughter)

So I thank you for the opportunity to say a few words and I commend you to the wisdom and the experience and the fine job that Elliot Richardson has done. I think he is a great Cabinet member. I think you will find that he is an outstanding member of the team.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 1:35 P.M. EDT)