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PROCEEDINGS

of the

NINTH NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES DEPARTMENT

AFL-CIO



March 23-26, 1964

SHERATON-PARK HOTEL

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES
DEPARTMENT
AFL-CIO

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PRESIDENT HAGGERTY: Thank you, delegate.

I would request the delegates remain, if they possibly can, after you make your reports, for a little while longer, for two reasons. One, we expect Senator Humphrey, who, we are informed, is on the way from the Capitol. He will try to get away from that very busy body. I know you want to hear him.

Number 2, we want somebody here when we get to the Wyoming report. It is rather difficult to be reporting just to me and an empty auditorium. I would appreciate your assistance.

Illinois.

MR. ASHER: I'm Lester Asher, and I'm reporting for Earl McMahon, the President of the Chicago and Cook County Building and Construction Trades Council.

In Illinois, twelve of our Congressmen are in full support of the legislative program of this Department, with but a few occasional deviations. These Congressmen constitute the Democratic delegation from Illinois. Twelve other Congressmen were in support of many aspects of our program, but they opposed other phases, such as Federal Aid to Education and the Public Works Acceleration. But even these Congressmen demonstrated a favorable response to the Department's program in connection with the Davis-Bacon amendment.

Our Senator, Paul H. Douglas, is favorable to our entire program, although he has some doubts concerning legislation to require a mandatory 35-hour week at this time.

Senator Dirksen expressed himself as friendly to the Davis-Bacon fringe benefits bill. He also said that he favors civil rights legislation with some reservations.

PRESIDENT HAGGERTY: Thank you, delegate Asher.

(Applause)

Our good friend, Senator Humphrey.

(Standing ovation)

PRESIDENT HAGGERTY: Delegates, as promised, the Senator has stretched his schedule and left, I'm sure at a precarious time, the United States Senate where he is handling and leading the bill for civil rights.

I know that there are no words I can use that you haven't heard before with respect to this gentleman, who has talked

to us on many occasions and always constructively and informatively. So without trying to gild the lily, let me just say it is my pleasure to present to you the senior Senator from Minnesota, Hubert Humphrey.

(Standing ovation)

SENATOR HUMPHREY: Thank you very much, Brother Haggerty.

I know you have had a very busy convention. I understand full well that you are at the point now of winding up your deliberations. I don't intend to keep you here very long, at least for my part of the program.

I am sorry that all those good souls I saw outside are out there. I would like to have them in here. We have undoubtedly the best of the trades here anyhow. They always stay.

(Laughter and applause)

Before I proceed another moment I want to pay my respects to an old friend, Walter Mason, who was kind enough to escort me into this hall and permit me to join you today. He has done a marvelous job on Capitol Hill. Sometimes we almost think he does too good a job. He is always on the job.

I also want to take this moment to publicly salute the building and construction trades from the State of Minnesota, undoubtedly the outstanding group that attends any conference like this.

(Laughter and applause)

You have had a marvelous meeting, and the press coverage of your meeting has been good. The address of the President of the United States to your gathering was outstanding. I am fully convinced that President Johnson's message to your conference will become one of the important presidential messages of all time. It was a moving address. It was one that was filled with good, solid thought, constructive purpose, and deep conviction.

President Johnson recited to you a phrase that he has used so many times, and which I know governs his life, that passage from the Prophet Isaiah: "Come, let us reason together." And oh! if only more people would abide by that thought and that conviction. But this is the theme and it is the motivating force I know in the life of the President of the United States, a man

who does want to sit down and reason, one who understands the importance of reason to the problems of our time, and yet one who understands also the importance of conviction and dedication.

I will take a few moments to tell you just a few thoughts that I have, and I quickly ran over them as I came here to you this morning. Needless to say I wanted to be with you much earlier, but I find it is rather difficult to do several things and do them well at one time.

I have a responsibility in the United States Senate as the Majority Whip, the Senate Majority Leader, but an even greater one right now: I am the floor leader for this important and yet very controversial and complex legislation known as the Civil Rights Act. This takes time and thought; it takes patience and forbearance; it requires tolerance and understanding. But above all it requires determination if we are to succeed.

And I don't come here to say that we have designed a perfect piece of legislation. I come here to say that we have before us the best that we know how to produce. And we shall attempt to the best of our ability to bring this legislation to final passage and to establish a legal framework of constitutional guarantees and civil rights in which men and women can work out their problems through reason and through judgment, and through persuasion, and through accommodation within the law, and not outside the law through violence and through disorder or through the suffering and pain of injustice and abuse.

And that is what we are seeking to do, namely, to provide a legal framework that will give us the guidelines and the standards by which we shall judge our conduct, the legal framework within which we can work out our problems, the legal framework in which men and women of good will, and those who are willing to come let us reason together, can find some answers to these very, very grave and difficult problems of human relations.

I want to say a word to you about building a better America, because I am talking to the right people. You are builders. And what Washington, D. C. needs to see more of is people that want to build and to construct, that want to build a better America and a better world.

The President spoke to you about the kind of a world that we ought to live in, and the kind of a world that we do live in. He

talked more common sense to this gathering than this city has heard for many a year, in talking to you about the world that is ours and the world that we need to give and to build, give to and build for others.

I want to say a word about this country of ours that we need to work on and that we need to build. What we need to do is to seek to build a better America, better education. Everybody knows we need this. And every dollar we invest in it will come back tenfold. There is no such thing as an expenditure for education. There is such a thing as an investment in education, for your sons and daughters, for your grandchildren, for yourself, and for your future; because education is power, and education is wealth, and education means new schools for elementary, secondary, and higher education. And your government this last year passed the most comprehensive and far-reaching program of Federal Aid to Higher Education that this nation has ever known.

It will not only mean jobs for the men in the building trades, it will not only mean products from our factories and our processing plants: this within itself will be important enough to justify it; but it will mean better education, it will mean better facilities, it will mean better faculties, it will mean better students.

So you build a better America. And the Building Trades Construction Department of the AFL-CIO is helping to build that better America every time that you put down a brick, every time that you put mortar and plaster, every time you put in a stick of wood, every time you add a hammer and a saw. Every time you build a classroom you build a better America.

(Applause)

We are going to build a healthier America. We are going to do it by adding to our health facilities, to our great medical institutes, to our collections of medicine which we authorized aid to this year.

And we are going to do it by building more and better hospitals, hospitals that can care for more people and care for them at less cost, modern hospitals that are scientifically designed, and I am talking to the men in the room right now that are going to build those hospitals.

(Applause)

You know you must get a great satisfaction out of that—

(Applause)

—because modern medicine requires modern facilities. And as important as the doctor and the surgeon and the technician and the nurse, may I say that the craftsman, the artisan, the artist that you are, the building tradesman that you are, you, too, are important.

You are a part of that health team just as much as the man or the woman that cares for the sick patient. And you ought to get a great sense of lift from knowing that you are building something, something tangible, something that people can use, and it makes their lives happier and better.

And we are, before this year is through, going to provide better hospital care at much lower cost for our elderly. We are going to have a program of Medicare so that when someone is at age 60 or 65 and needs hospital care and nursing home care, they don't have to become a pauper to get it. They can have it.

(Applause)

And we are going to build better roads, better transportation, improve our ports. By the way, one of the great programs that I think is needed in America is a modernization of every port facility we have at every seaboard in every harbor.

I would like to see the Government of the United States—

(Applause)

—I would like to see the Government of the United States and the state governments and the local governments and the building trades and the Construction Department of the AFL-CIO and the maritime unions and the maritime industry join together to see to it that our ports are modern and clean. This is a great new endeavor. We haven't even talked about it. We need to do something about it, just as we need to strengthen our own merchant marine.

And we need more roads for our growing population, safer roads, better roads. And the automobile industry, the automobile workers, the general citizenry of the United States, the government of every level, local, state and federal, has a responsibility here. And what it means for the trades, what it means for industry, there is unbelievable opportunity here.

Better airports. We are just beginning the air age. When

you talk of a supersonic transportation, gentlemen, you also talk about better runways, better airport facilities, and you are going to build them, and the people who come after you.

You are in the process of building a stronger nation, and we need better houses in order to have better homes, because the house you live in, the home, is the spirit that is in the house, and we are going to need millions of homes.

We haven't even scratched the surface of the housing possibilities of this country, and the building trades, all the associated groups, the contractors, all that are involved in this great building industry, have an unlimited future.

We need to make sure that every American has a decent home in which to live. And we have the means to do it. And we have the skills to accomplish it. And we are going to build better cities, because people have to live and they ought to live in a friendly environment, and the cities of yesterday are not built for the life of today.

We are going to have to clean out the whole heart of many a city, clean out its fringes, rebuild it, redesign it for living. Architects can dream of a better city. Designers and planners can chart a better city and a better living environment for humankind. But you are going to build it, and you are going to have the opportunity to build a city beautiful all over America and in many places of the world.

And then, my friends, we are going to build a better social structure. And that is what we are talking about when we talk about government law. This is what we are talking about when we fight the war against poverty.

We can't afford unemployment. We can't afford poor people for the kind of world obligations we have, for the kind of demands upon us, and we can't afford to be anything but the best. We can't afford to just get by. We can't afford pockets of unemployment and distress and economic depression.

It is to our advantage, to everybody's advantage, to the nation's advantage, to the world's advantage to have everybody in this country aspiring to live a better life and to reach a little higher on the ladder and to have better economic opportunity and more social justice.

(Applause)

This boils down to one thing, and I leave you with this.

Sometime ago, on a television program, President Johnson was asked this: Well, now, Franklin Roosevelt had the New Deal, Harry Truman had the Fair Deal, President Kennedy, the New Frontier. What do you call your Administration? President Johnson, in a quiet and humble way, said in thoughtful and restrained terms, "All I seek to do as President of the United States is to give our people a better deal." A better deal. And that is what we are talking about right now.

(Applause)

I am convinced that every resolution that you passed—and I haven't talked about them—I am fully aware of them. People from my state, building trades people who are here, have brought them to our attention, and you don't need to worry about where Humphrey stands, I will tell you that.

(Applause)

I come before this audience to tell you that I was privileged in the first day of my public life to have the support of the building trades, to have the support of the labor movement.

I remember when that dear good man, Bill Green, came to my city of Minneapolis and backed me for the United States Senate in October, 1948. I remember when he had me out at San Francisco and, in a sense, actually launched my campaign for the Senate.

And I am proud to have been a Senator that has enjoyed the high honor of the support of organized labor, and I proclaim it wherever I go, because I can honestly say that I have never known of organized labor to ask America to do anything that wasn't good for America. Not once have I ever known it.

(Applause)

There were others who didn't see the menace of Fascism. And when others couldn't see the menace of Communism, the leaders of the workers, the workers, themselves, in America, and the building trades, above all, saw this menace and came to grips with it and met it head-on.

And long before some of the intelligentsia, so to speak, were resolutely against Communism and Fascism, the American labor movement and, particularly, the building trades was in the vanguard leading the fight for freedom and democracy and leading the fight against Communism and totalitarianism in any

of its forms and, believe me, I am proud of it.

(Applause)

Let me leave you with this note of thanks. Thanks for what you have been doing. Thanks for your constructive position on legislation. Thanks for your willingness not only to give your point of view with reference to items of legislation that directly affect your craft, your skill, and your organization, but the fact that you share your views about a total program for all America and for every American.

Because you are a part, a very significant part of this American family. Your sons and daughters may not follow your trade. They may go into other areas of human endeavor. And you want them to live the good life and to live in peace, and you want them to live in a land of opportunity.

And if anything has ever happened in the last few years that tells the story of America, it means that the more and more we seek to open up the avenues of opportunity for more and more people. We are not afraid. We are not afraid of the future. We are not afraid of the problems of the future. All that we ask is a chance to come to grips with them.

I want to commend the building trades and construction department of the AFL-CIO for coming here to Washington and once again giving us that sense of courage and that sense of determination, sort of pumping up our enthusiasm to get on with the job of making this a better America.

Thank you very much.

(Standing ovation)

PRESIDENT HAGGERTY: Senator, your reception by this delegation, their response to your address speaks for itself eloquently. We want to offer you our sincere thanks for coming this morning.

SENATOR HUMPHREY: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT HAGGERTY: We will now proceed with the reports of the delegates.

I apologize to the delegate from Indiana. Is the delegate from Indiana ready to make his report now?

MR. HAGBERG: Mr. Chairman, H. P. Hagberg, president



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