



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE  
TO THE ALLENTOWN-LEHIGH COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, HOLIDAY INN,  
ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 1972, 7:00 P.M.

As a former contractor, I have long been aware of the need for a good solid foundation -- the need for roots that go right to bedrock. And each of you -- members of the Chamber of Commerce -- are also builders in a sense. Some of you may be carrying on the family business, but I venture that most of you started from scratch. Or you started on a much smaller scale than you operate at now. You have built your businesses. And if you have gained a measure of success, it is because your business was built on a solid foundation.

\* \* \* \*

After accepting your invitation, I could not help but think of another Bostonian who came to Pennsylvania at an early age; he went into business for himself and prospered. But he was not satisfied. He took on new lines, and later, in sort of a franchise operation, opened up new businesses in other cities. He was so successful that he became, early in his adult years, independently wealthy and was able to turn to a career of public service. And the secret of his success? Listen to this: "I grew convinced that truth, sincerity and integrity in the dealings between man and man were of the utmost importance ..." The writer was, of course, Benjamin Franklin.

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What was remarkable about Franklin were not just his accomplishments -- organizer of the first fire company, the first library, the first militia, inventor of the Franklin stove, bifocal lenses, a military officer, statesman and ambassador. Beyond this, he still had time and energy to keep himself actively engaged in seeking moral perfection. He practised virtue and character building.

How lucky we were to have men like him when our nation was founded!

I am particularly impressed by Franklin's attitude to public service and I should like to pass it on to you. It is magnificent in its simplicity. Said Franklin, "I shall never ask, never refuse, nor ever resign an office."

\* \* \* \*

Our nation has grown and thrived -- and not because of what government did, but because of what people did:

Henry David Thoreau observed long ago that "the character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished" by the United States in the cause of mankind. And as President Nixon said in January in his Proclamation of National Jaycee Week, "Character remains our greatest national resource and developing character -- and mobilizing it through community action -- remains our most vital work."

There are those, however, who would forget the importance of this national character. There are those who scorn individual effort. There are those in this nation who feel they should not do any more building -- that government can do it for them -- that government ought to do everything.

Now, I have no intention of returning to those so-called "good old days" when the bywords were hardship, lawlessness, drudgery and poor health. We live in a vastly different world in 1972 than the world of 1776. There are many things a Federal government must do -- initiatives that the states, or the cities and towns, cannot do for themselves. And if it weren't for the broad-brush support of the Federal government, we would no longer have the solid foundation we need to give us the good life.

Right here in this area, our Federal Aviation Administration is working with your ABE Airport to make the field more efficient and safer. Our Federal contribution of over a million dollars comes from funds under the new Airport and Airways Development Act of 1970. President Nixon submitted this legislation to the Congress to enable our airways and airports systems to keep pace with growing needs. It is right and just that we make these Federal contributions because your airport is an integral part of the National Airport System.

Could the states -- individually -- have built the great network of interstate highways by themselves without the foresight of President Eisenhower back in 1956, or without the Federal government coordinating that foresight, giving supervision, and paying 90 percent of the bills?



And the interstate system, I might add, has contributed immeasurably to the economy. It has broadened everyone's horizons, opened up job markets. It has given all of us a greater working potential. It has truly, tied the nation together.

There are segments of the interstate system -- usually relatively small segments -- that are sometimes controversial. And don't worry -- I'm well aware of the controversy surrounding Interstate 78 as it passes through this area. There are many considerations that have to be taken before a final decision can be made concerning the location of this route.

I can assure you that I would like very much to discuss it with you tonight -- but I also hope that you recognize that when a matter like this is before the courts for a decision, I am constrained from making direct comment on an individual case.

I want to emphasize here that our highway projects -- like our other transportation operations -- benefit all the people. Transportation is a service industry on which all other industries depend. And as a service industry, it adds value to the products it carries. The products of Bethlehem Steel, Mack Truck, Western Electric and General Electric take on value by virtue of being able to be transported to the markets of our nation. What would happen to the textiles and chemicals of Lehigh Valley Manufacturers if they could be sold only in this area? What would happen to the payrolls? Good transportation helps industry grow and expand. That's why I am in it. That's why I am here today -- to help you!

And we have been working with you. In the past three years -- since President Nixon took office, our Department of Transportation has undertaken some 25 projects in the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Area. Our grants for these projects -- some of which are still underway -- total nearly \$14 million.

One of these projects is an Urban Transit Technical Studies Grant -- and here I want to salute you members of the Chamber of Commerce. You took the lead in helping to resolve the problem of your deteriorating local public transit. You set up a committee and you went to work. This is rare. In most cities with public transit difficulties, we have had to go in and convince the people to work to save their transit. The fact is that without a vigorous public transit system, no community can survive. The decline in public transit is the forerunner of the decline of the community.

The important thing here in the Lehigh Valley, it seems to me, is that you undertake your work on a regional basis -- that the various authorities begin working together to reach common objectives. We in the Department have already met with your committee to brief you on how we can help. And we want to help! And let me add my own personal endorsement.



I have learned from my work as Governor of Massachusetts and from my present work in transportation that public transit is the focal point of the community's economic and mercantile superstructure. Without good transit, the city strangles. And so we stand ready, willing and financially able to come to the assistance of communities like yours that need help in public transportation.

This support of mine for public transit represents both my own personal conviction and the policy of the Nixon Administration. President Nixon realized early that the cities of the nation needed help in sustaining their local public transit services. He proposed -- and the Congress enacted, on a solid bi-partisan basis -- legislation that for the first time in the history of the nation enables cities to develop long-range plans with long-range assurances of financing for saving public transportation. This is a \$10 billion program with \$3.1 billion available for immediate obligation. Once the technical studies grant now underway here in Allentown is complete, these are the funds that would be available to this area for saving the bus system.

And again on the National scene -- another very important part of the Department of Transportation provides a service that only the Federal Government could provide -- and I'm referring to our great United States Coast Guard. Could the states -- and the cities and towns along our coasts -- provide the services we get from the Coast Guard? Vessel inspection, port security, and close to 50,000 search and rescue missions a year?

Obviously, our founding fathers understood the National interest when they established this nation as a republic -- a federation of states.

Obviously the superstructure built on the foundation -- had to be a superstructure that encompassed national goals.

But to get back to my earlier theme, National initiatives must be flexible. The superstructure often needs to be rebuilt -- streamlined. A very good example is President Nixon's proposed re-organization of the Federal government, under which the Federal agencies, mine included, would be better aligned to better serve the needs of the Nation. Already the President has established 10 common regions through the country, with 10 common headquarters cities. He did this by Executive Order -- with the stroke of the pen. Something any other President could have done years ago, but no one thought to do it.

This Administration has also displayed flexibility and adaptability in solving some of our most pressing problems.

The President's bold moves last August -- putting the clamp on prices as well as wages -- were (according to some newspapers) "surprising and unprecedented." But something had to be done. There's not one housewife in this room who doesn't agree that a \$10 raise in a paycheck doesn't mean much if her weekly shopping bill goes up by \$20.



And there's not one retail merchant -- or industrialist -- in this audience who doesn't agree that American-made products deserve a better shot at international marketplaces, and we are heading for that goal through the moderate devaluation of the dollar.

And I think I speak for all of us when I endorse President Nixon's recent great journey of peace to China. As I heard him say on his return to Washington just one week ago tonight, "We have demonstrated that nations with very big and fundamental differences can learn to discuss those differences calmly, rationally, and frankly, without compromising their principles." Such beginnings as this, he said, form the "basis of a structure for peace."

There are other points I could touch upon. The fact that in the three years prior to 1969, some 300,000 American fighting men went "that way" -- to Vietnam; while in the three years since 1969, 400,000 of our boys have come "this way" -- back home to their families and their jobs. (That's right -- in 1971 alone, over 435,000 Vietnam veterans gained gainful employment.)

I could talk about the unemployment situation, but 5.7 percent unemployment without a war is a lot better than 4.3 percent unemployment with a war. Of course, we'd have less unemployment if the men fighting in Vietnam and Americans making implements of war were still doing this -- some 2 million of them by the way.

But the President doesn't want this kind of prosperity. He wants prosperity without a war.

Let me add this. And I say it as a former businessman, a former Chamber president, as an officer of the United States Government, but most of all as an American citizen.

Individual character and competence, individual determination and experience are "foundation" qualities -- in government as well as business.

We must continually seek such qualities in all of our public actions and responsibilities. If we do this -- together -- then we as a people will have built a great nation; we will have done our part for good government.

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