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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
AT TRANSPORTATION '84
BENEFIT DINNER FOR THE MYASTHENIA GRAVIS FOUNDATION
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
MAY 18, 1984

I am delighted to share in this benefit on behalf of the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation. You can be justly proud of your support of this worthy cause, just as I am proud to work with an industry that really knows the meaning of benevolence. You are demonstrating again tonight your ability to pull together -- just as you have always responded to our nation's needs for safe, reliable transportation.

You in the transportation industry have joined voluntarily to fight the crippling disease, Myasthenia Gravis. With your help, more progress has been made toward its study and understanding than with any other neuromuscular disease. It's fitting that an industry dedicated to mobility is committed to those afflicted by limited motion. You are giving people hope for a better day.

The spirit of serving and helping has made America great. Before government presumed it could do the job better, the people of this country--individually and collectively--reached out to those in need. The volunteer citizen has long been an indispensable force for social good in America. Nowhere else is philanthropy so much in evidence or more broadly based. The spirit that Alexis de Tocqueville found here a hundred and fifty years ago still flourishes. "If I were asked," he said "what the prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed, I should reply ...to the voluntary association -- that unique American institution whereby people associate to strengthen their cause as well as their voice."

Early in his Administration, President Reagan made a firm commitment to a program of private sector initiatives, setting up a task force to carry out his goals -- a partnership between government and free enterprise to help those truly in need, not in lieu of Federal efforts, but in addition to them. The President believes in the volunteer spirit of our people, and puts great confidence in private initiative. This Administration marks a return to those fundamental principles that first gave character to our land and hope to all who came here.

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What a contrast to our recent past. For half a century, government in America swelled in response to public needs. At the same time, it behaved as if the creation of new wealth were somehow an affront to those most in need. It dulled the cutting edge of free enterprise -- that remarkable machinery that has raised the standard of living for more people in more places than any other system in the history of mankind. But as government grew, many Americans began to wonder if individuals counted any longer -- or if our best efforts and most philanthropic impulses were doomed to be crushed by forces beyond our control.

All that has changed. The economy is prospering and you are both a propelling force and a beneficiary of that prosperity. Whether it be our airlines, truckers, railroads, or buslines, American transportation is back. And that's very good news for everyone.

This Administration has also said to the transportation industry "you know more about your business than we do." Competition is a far more effective force than regulation. The industry's goals and the national interest are best achieved, we have found, when government involvement is minimal. That's why this Administration is committed to freeing the industry from the red tape that has strangled it for the past fifty years. We believe those in the transportation business deserve an environment encouraging innovation, fostering competition and promoting growth. Not everyone, unfortunately, agrees. Some sentiment for reregulation can still be found in certain corners of the capital and in pockets of the industry. But deregulation today stands on its merits. It has produced far more winners than losers, infinitely more friends than opponents. American producers and consumers are benefiting from increased competition and a wider range of services in all areas of transportation.

Nowhere can this be found more than in the aviation industry. Deregulation has transformed an industry long shielded by the government from real price competition and new competitors. It suggests the continuing validity of at least one economic theory -- that a little competition is a good thing -- and a lot is better still, especially for today's air travelers who have a far wider choice of carriers, fares and services than ever before -- including bargain prices in many markets. Passengers favoring all the amenities of flight can still fly in the lap of luxury. Travelers looking for air transportation shorn of its frills, but safe and reliable, can readily find that kind of service. And since some carriers, including those born of deregulation, have lower operation costs, they can offer lower fares and still turn a profit.

In the midst of all this change, one thing remains constant: our commitment to maintaining the safest skies in the world. Our national air system is first and foremost a safe system, and I will spare no effort to keep it that way.

Let me return now from the skies to more earthly pursuits. There too, old patterns are yielding to new possibilities. The Motor Carrier Act of 1980, partially deregulating the trucking industry, has been in effect now for over three years. By and large, industry response to its basic reforms has been positive. Deregulation of the industry is beginning to produce dividends for carriers, shippers and consumers. With the free entry permitted under regulatory reform, there are now more trucking firms in business than ever before -- 18,000 three years ago to 33,000 today. New price and service options have been introduced. Established carriers have become more efficient and innovative. All these changes are leading to shipper rates lower than they would have been otherwise, and to savings for customers.

With the economy far stronger than the most optimistic had predicted even a year ago, I expect a continuing increase in demand for freight services. And I believe this greater freedom to compete, together with productivity improvements in the industry, will mean higher earnings for many truckers.

The rail industry is also enjoying economic growth. The Staggers Rail Act of 1980 can be credited for the turnaround of the rail industry in the midst of a recession. Since the Act was passed, more than 13,000 rate and service contracts between shippers and railroads have been signed. Such contracts didn't exist at all before then. Both rail carriers and shippers are reaping the benefits. Railroads now have business they can count on and shippers are assured dependable rates. And traffic is growing. Rail "piggyback" business has grown to record levels, up nearly 20 percent since 1980.

We have moved ahead in other areas to free transportation industries from unnecessary constraints. The intercity busline industry has been deregulated. The President recently signed a landmark ocean shipping regulatory reform bill to revitalize the merchant marine. Finally, to lift your thoughts to the stars, the President has recognized that space represents our new great frontier, and that America's ability to develop it will depend on the initiative and creativity of private industry. As exotic as space technology may appear, the fact is that we are talking about yet another mode of transportation -- the newest one -- the transporting of satellites from Earth to orbit. It's an industry with a 10 billion dollar potential over the next ten years. And I am proud to be the President's agent to deregulate and commercialize it, so free enterprise may take over. We are applying DOT's long experience in transportation deregulation to the space transportation industry.

So we are seeing positive results of deregulation across-the-board. Our industries are being recharged with the spark of competition. Consumers and shippers are back in the driver's seat where they belong. They will decide through the marketplace who is efficient and who is not. It is up to business firms to adapt to the new age and develop methods to fulfill the public's needs. The most innovative and responsive firms will surely be the most successful. And America's transportation industry, I am confident, will continue to fill an ever-growing national need for hauling the goods we produce, assemble and consume as a nation. I will be taking this message to Europe tomorrow when I begin a series of meetings with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the European Conference of Ministers of Transport and other officials in London and Oslo. There's a great deal of interest overseas in learning about the American success story of deregulation.

I have tried to set my priorities so that in the limited time one has to serve as a cabinet officer, I can make a real difference in people's lives. That's the joy of public service. I am proud of our record on deregulation--which has given the traveling public more choices and lower prices. And I gain a tremendous amount of satisfaction knowing that our safety initiatives are making the difference in saving lives. Through all the changes in our transportation industry, safety is my number one priority as Secretary of Transportation.

Tonight, however, we focus on your role in meeting another human need -- your concern for individuals suffering from a disease still in search of a cure. United in a common cause, your efforts help make the difference between success and failure, between hope and despair.

In closing, let me share with you the story of Kathy Miller. Struck by a car when she was thirteen, she lay paralyzed and brain damaged. She had to learn even the simplest tasks over again. Barely able to walk, her one dream was to run in a 10,000 meter race.

Kathy struggled back. She trained vigorously, not just for any race, but for the Boston Marathon. With hundreds of others, she entered that race. And though her body ached and she was soon so far behind all the others that she could not see them, she continued to run. She fell countless times. But she always got up. Nearing the final stretch she was ready to quit. But then Kathy heard the crowd -- the cheers of her high school friends--and their encouragement spurred her on.

Kathy Miller finished that race. She finished because she had the will to win. She finished because she knew friends were behind her, believing in her and supporting her.

Kathy's story reminds me of another great American who struggled against seemingly hopeless odds. Yet she prevailed. Her spirit and her example have inspired millions. Her name was Helen Keller, and she summed up her philosophy in a simple sentence: "One can never consent to creep," she said, "when one feels an impulse to soar."

Your presence here tonight and your support for the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation demonstrates your commitment to those who seek to walk, to run, to soar -- but who, without your help, cannot finish the race. There are 100,000 people depending on our industry to help find a cure for the disease we call Myasthenia Gravis. Let it be known throughout our land that this industry will go the distance for those who can't run the race themselves. We won't stop until we cross the finish line in victory.

Thank you very much.

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