



U.S. Department of  
Transportation

# News:

Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Contact: Jennifer Hillings  
Tel.: (202) 426-4570

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY  
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE  
AT THE LAIRD YOUTH LEADERSHIP DAY  
STEVENS POINT, WISCONSIN  
MAY 1, 1985

I have been looking forward to this afternoon for quite some time and I am delighted to be in Stevens Point. There are very few people who have had as distinguished career in public service as Mel Laird. And while he has served with distinction in both the legislative and executive branches of government, he has always found the time for the programs he really believes in -- such as the Laird Youth Leadership Foundation.

I was privileged to participate in a Laird Youth Leadership Day early in my career while I was serving in the White House Office of Consumer Affairs. I came away from that day 14 years ago with a great deal of respect for this forum and for the invaluable experience gained by the students who have been chosen to join in this event. For you -- top students from 70 of Wisconsin's finest high schools, including Mel Laird's own alma mater, Marshfield Senior High School -- there will be many challenges in the years ahead, but even more opportunities.

Indeed, life requires of us continuing flexibility, creativity, and adaptation to ever changing conditions. If there is one thing that's constant in our dynamic world, it is change, and I want to spend a few moments pursuing this theme with you today. In this lovely Wisconsin countryside -- known for its green fields, sparkling lake areas and abundant pine trees -- snow covered the ground only two weeks ago. Today, crocuses are blooming and trees are beginning to bud. Spring may be unpredictable in Wisconsin, but what is predictable is the promise of its youth. And spring, for some of you who are seniors, will bring graduation ceremonies and many words of advice.

When I was Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, it was my privilege to welcome members of many diverse interest groups to the White House. Once I was hosting a ceremony in the Rose Garden. On that day, several hundred members of the Future Farmers of America were present. Many government officials shared the podium, including Terrance Bell, then Secretary of Education, and the President of the Future Farmers of America. But as the speakers imparted their messages, I couldn't



help but notice how the members of the audience were constantly looking to one side -- or the way one young person would subtly nudge another. Eventually, the meeting ended. The group started for their buses. Then I heard shouts and applause off to one side of the Garden. The doors of the Oval Office swung open, and there, joining the group, was the President of the United States.

You've heard him called "the Great Communicator." Well, all during the ceremony, with waves and smiles, he had managed to communicate silently with the young people even as he worked behind his desk. The President strode to the podium and spoke briefly to the group. Then, a representative of the young people gave an impromptu -- but very impressive -- response to the President. For me, this exemplified you in this audience -- our youth -- eloquent, adaptable and capable of handling any situation. President Reagan told me later how proud he was that our country produced such bright, articulate, enthusiastic young people. "Ours," the President said, speaking of America's youth, "is truly a nation of champions." Looking at the talent in Wisconsin alone, I know he is right.

And speaking of change, there is indeed a quiet revolution going on in this country, as a tidal wave of qualified women enter the work force in record numbers. More than half of all American women now work, a significant shift from 20 years ago. My own experience is a testament to this very real change.

And I must say, I can identify with the frustrations Marjorie Karowe must have felt when, as a young attorney, she stood before the bench to enter a not guilty plea on behalf of her client, a man accused of a minor crime. "Well, who are you?" the judge demanded, "His mother?" Today, Marjorie Karowe is a partner in a New York law firm and a former President of the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York.

I can identify, too, with Sandra Day O'Connor, who -- upon completing law school -- was offered a job as a legal secretary and, of course, went on to break the type -- as the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. I remember vividly a day in September 1962 when I entered Harvard Law School, one of 25 women in a class of 550 eager students. I'll never forget being accosted by a male classmate on my very first day at Harvard, who demanded to know what I was doing there.

"Don't you realize," he said in tones of moral outrage, "That there are men who'd give their right arm to be in this law school? Men who would use their legal education?" Obviously, he felt I was taking the place of a man. And come to think of it, some may have felt that way when I became Secretary of Transportation.

I know there are a lot of men in the audience today, but these facts are important because they affect all our lives. Today, 66 percent of women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 work. The number of women receiving masters degrees in business administration has soared by 2400 percent in the last decade alone. In my own experience, I have seen the number of women entering Harvard Law School increase from 4 percent when I was there in 1962, to almost 40 percent today.

Yes, much has changed since then and the impact of this change has been tremendous. In the foreseeable future, we will hopefully even graduate from the misguided perfectionism best described by author and social critic Marya Mannes, who wrote: "Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if, at



the same time, she manages to be a good wife, a good mother, good-looking, good tempered, well-dressed, well-groomed and unaggressive."

Let me make it clear -- I think women should be able to choose their path in life. Some seek their own careers in business. Some run for political office. Others focus on the home and family. No role is superior to another. What's important is that every woman has the right and opportunity to choose the role she wishes. But if a woman chooses a career, she should be able to get the education she needs and the opportunity to go all the way to the top.

As the first woman Secretary of Transportation, I'm doing all I can within my own Department. Yet, we realize that our efforts, to be successful, must permeate every agency, every department and ultimately, every manager and planner. When I first arrived at the Department, I asked how many of our employees were women. I was told 19 percent. Then I asked, what was the percentage when the Department was established in 1967? The answer: 18.5 percent. What's more, women in upper grade positions made up only one percent of the entire Department's work force. It didn't take long for us to design a program to change all that. Now we are helping more women enter our work force, and we're preparing more women than ever before to assume managerial responsibilities and expand existing skills. For example, we are helping women become air traffic controllers -- a traditionally male profession --and move into higher paying jobs. And we are working to enable employees in the lower grades -- the large majority of whom are women -- to enter career fields with greater opportunities. In a Department of over 100,000 people, that vision of change is indeed a challenge -- it takes many women to move that female percentage up even one point. But I am totally committed to the task.

I feel I've found my own little footnote in history. I am the first woman to head a branch of the armed services -- the U.S. Coast Guard. The Coast Guard's search and rescue efforts save thousands of lives every year. For example, in one recent 24-hour period in Florida, the Coast Guard pulled 31 people off two troubled vessels, searched for three people who had been aboard another craft and found a helicopter under 20 feet of water.

The Coast Guard is also a proud member of America's defense team. And the Coast Guard's role in drug interdiction is vital in our efforts as a nation to end this traffic which results in so many tragedies. The Coast Guard just recently completed Operation Blue Lightning, a 17-day effort near the Bahama Islands and the southeast Coast of Florida, which has historically been the import area for drugs smuggled into the United States. This effort involved 26 agencies of both governments and 775 people using 85 vessels and 30 aircraft. The idea was to intercept those smugglers approaching the Florida coast from the Bahamas who had been "flushed out" by the pressure being applied in the islands. This operation resulted in the interdiction of 5500 pounds of cocaine and 33,000 pounds of marijuana, with a combined street value of almost \$1 billion. I am privileged to serve as a member of the Drug Enforcement Board. I firmly believe we must do everything in our power to make sure drugs are kept out of this country.

One of the most exciting -- and forward looking -- programs we're working on in the Department involves our national airspace system. We are presently in the midst of an \$11.7 billion airways modernization program. The National Airspace System Plan, when completed, will double the capacity of our airways -- meeting aviation's needs



into the next century -- "weatherproof" air operations, and improve the precision of airport landing systems, allowing a pilot to land so accurately that on final approach he is within one tenth of one degree of the centerline. This multi-year program is the most extensive non-military aviation undertaking since the Apollo man-on-the-moon project.

The Department recently became a "space agency" in addition to responsibilities on land, sea and in the air. Recognizing the potential for private sector opportunities in space, the President has asked the Department to take the lead in space transportation. Free enterprise has a role in space -- remote sensing to assist in mineral exploration holds great promise. We already know what meteorological satellites can do in plotting weather patterns, and we're using satellites to pick up signals generated by transmitters aboard aircraft that have been lost in the ocean. And we may be on the threshold of a global monitoring system capable of tracking pollutants in the air and oceans.

I have often said, that as Secretary of Transportation, my highest priority is safety. Perhaps our biggest challenge is on our nation's highways, where 92 percent of the fatalities occur, and where approximately 43,000 Americans die each year and hundreds of thousands are seriously injured. This tragedy is avoidable. I have been especially concerned by the high incidence of teenage involvement in alcohol-related highway accidents. Motor vehicle crashes, in fact, are the leading cause of death among teenagers -- and many of those involve alcohol.

I meet with young people who share my concern over teenage drinking and driving. I have great admiration for young people who have the courage to join together in an organization called SADD (Students Against Drunk Drivers) to reach their peers with the message that drinking and driving can be deadly. There are now more than 6,000 chapters of SADD nationwide -- and their impact is being felt all across this land. There is even one group called BADD (Bartenders Against Drunk Drivers). Students in Stevens Point and Wausau are forming committees with parents and teachers to put together after-the-prom parties to reduce the likelihood of celebrants drinking and driving. I urge each of you to join me in this campaign.

Of course, the best protection against the drunk driver is the safety belt. Safety belts are proven lifesavers. Studies show that safety belts can cut moderate to serious injuries in half. But, for people who won't wear them, their effectiveness is zero. When you get in a car, please remember -- safety belts do save lives.

Michael Jackson has joined us in the fight against drug and alcohol abuse, and he has donated the rights to his hit song, "Beat It," for use in the most effective public service ad I've ever seen. Sugar Ray Leonard recently visited the Department after he was involved in a serious car accident. Luckily, he was wearing his safety belt. His injuries might have been more severe if Ray hadn't buckled that belt as a normal part of his driving routine. And we're working with race car drivers in Indianapolis on this issue because no one believes more in the use of safety belts than those experienced drivers.

In America, when we work together, there is no limit to what can be accomplished. A few years ago in Newport Beach, California, there were some lovely beachfront homes that were threatened by abnormally high tide and heavy surf -- homes in danger of total destruction. And all through a cold winter day and night, volunteers worked filling and piling sandbags in an effort to save the homes. About two o'clock in the morning, a newscaster grabbed a young fellow in his teens, attired only in wet trunks. Along with several of his friends, he'd been working day and night. No, he told



the reporter, he didn't live in one of those homes they were trying to save. Yes, he was cold and tired. Why then, were he and his friends doing this, the reporter wanted to know. The young man stopped for a minute and then he answered, "Well, I guess it's the first time we ever felt we were needed."

There are no limits on the creativity or the talent of one man or woman fired with an ideal or filled with the knowledge that they, too, are needed. One of the greatest Americans was a woman who knew great adversity, yet one whose spirit and example inspired millions. Her name was Helen Keller -- and she summed up her philosophy in a single sentence. "One can never consent to creep," she said, "when one feels an impulse to soar."

We have an impulse in America to soar -- to achieve new heights and to go as far and rise as high as our national will and competitive skills will take us. I know those of you in this audience stand ready to join us.

Thank you very much.

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