

REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY DAY

GREENVILLE URBAN LEAGUE

GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

MARCH 10, 1983

TRANSCRIBED VERSION OF DOLE'S REMARKS TO THIS GROUP
March 17, 1983

Thank you for that very warm welcome, and thank you, Carroll, for that lovely introduction. I want you to know that Congressman Carroll Campbell is turning in an outstanding performance for you in Washington. His genuine commitment to equality and to justice for every individual, and his effective leadership in Congress toward those ends, are truly worthy of our admiration.

And two other fellow Carolinians, both of whom are good friends of mine -- I want to mention tonight -- because they are also ably representing your state: Senator Thurmond, who is Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and Senator Hollings, who serves as the ranking member of the Commerce Committee -- which happens to be the Committee that oversees the Department of Transportation -- and was also responsible for my confirmation.

And speaking of confirmation, following my two day confirmation hearing (I went before two different Committees that had jurisdiction), after I completed that second day I was feeling pretty good because the bulk of the hard questions were behind me -- at least for the time being. And so I went up to the Department of Transportation to see Secretary Lewis -- he and I had been working together on a number of the issues -- and I thought, well, I'll drop over and talk with Drew about some of the questions that I still have because he'll be leaving soon. When I got to the Department, he was running around the office with his sleeves rolled up and he was packing boxes. And he turned to me and said, "Elizabeth, I've got all these elephants, would you like some of these elephants?" And I said, "Listen Drew, when I married Bob Dole I inherited so many elephants, I don't need to ever see another one."

But anyway I figured Drew really wasn't in the mood to talk issues right then, so I went back to my other office -- the Office of Public Liaison at the White House -- and

you know everything was just humming along beautifully. It's amazing how dispensable you are. It really is. It's not very long until they don't even know who you are. So I didn't feel like I was fish or fowl. I just sort of didn't belong. So I figured, well I'm going to call Bob and see if I can convince him to take the afternoon off and let's go celebrate. I really felt good and the confirmation hearings were over. So I got Bob Dole on the phone and he said, "But remember, I told you I have to leave for Kansas this afternoon. I've got constituents out there who are expecting me in Kansas and I'm leaving in an hour." So then I thought, ok, I'm going to call my mother down in Carolina because I usually talk to her about once a day anyway -- she's about 82 now --and I knew she would be interested in what had been happening to me the two days that I hadn't had a chance to call her. Well, I want you to know that I called home and she said, "Elizabeth, would you mind if I call you back later, Channel 7 is here right now." That was really a tough day.

But she was amazing. She's always been pretty shy of the press, and when my nomination came along, suddenly the press was calling her from all over the country. And so this was a little bit baffling to her and she called in her 79 year old friend -- Del Newman from across the street, in Salisbury -- and said, "Del, you've got to answer the phones for me and be my secretary." Then she called me and said, "What should I do, should I take some of these interviews with the press?" And I said, I think you'll do just fine; just answer the questions in a straightforward way. You don't have to go into a dissertation on every question they ask -- she's real long-winded -- just give them an answer and move on. So, I called her that night to see what had happened. I said: "Well how did your newspaper interviews go, Mother?" She said, "Newspapers? I had 14 news crews in here this afternoon." So I don't know what you all have been reading in Carolina, but I'm still trying to find out what she's been saying down here over the last month or so. But we have had a lot of fun, with this nomination and all the things that have been happening.

And one of the letters that my husband got was amusing. This was from a Mr. H.K. Bate from California. And he wrote to my husband and said, "Dear Senator Dole, about that picture of you and your wife in People magazine. He said, --and this is one where we were making the bed together: "I'm now making the beds. Please don't show any more of that domestic cooperation with the Secretary or you'll get all us fellows out here in a heck of a lot of trouble." So, Bob wrote back and said: "Dear Mr. Bate, you don't know the half of it! The only reason she showed up was because the cameras were there."

Well I'm kind of betwixt and between tonight, because when I was invited to speak to you, I was Assistant to the President for Public Liaison. And now, I do find myself in a new capacity -- as Secretary of Transportation -- for just one month. And so I thought, now which way should I go in terms of what I'm speaking about tonight? And this sort of reminded me of the young man who clerked in a grocery store.

He was faced with a tough customer who came in and said: "I'd like to buy a half a grapefruit." And the clerk said: "half a grapefruit?" He said: "Yes, I'd like to purchase half a grapefruit." Well this young man had never had an experience like that. So he ran into the back room to the manager and said: "You know, there's this crazy man, this nut out here who wants to buy half a grapefruit." And as he said it, he noticed out of the corner of his eye that the man had followed him into the back room. Well, without missing a beat he turned and he said: "And this gracious gentleman has agreed to buy the other half."

So, I'm going to talk a little bit about each half of the grapefruit tonight, if you don't mind. But let me just begin, seriously now, by saying that I am deeply honored that I was asked to speak to this very special group. I know you're special because

Vernon Jordan told me so. I spoke with Vernon just this morning and he said the Greenville Urban League holds a special place in his heart, for you were the first Urban League to be formed under his leadership. And he also said it's hard to believe that was about ten years ago. Vernon asked me to personally convey his warmest greetings to each of you here tonight, who have helped make this organization such a strong presence in the South Carolina community.

It was Martin Luther King who warned us that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." It was Dr. King and a generation who reached maturity in his shadow who taught us all that to be alive is to be attuned to the potential for justice. America's deep and rich Black heritage has been rooted in religious faith and unshakeable hope. Without these two spiritual elements, a great people could not have made such an overwhelming contribution to our society. That faith, that hope as embodied in your dreams and aspirations, is, I feel sure, something which all of us here tonight have in common. We share a commitment.

I know something about your struggle though your burden may have been heavier. I know what it was like to be a member of the generation of women who broke through economic and political barriers at the same time that millions of Black Americans were sitting down for the first time at lunch counters and in the front seats of a bus in Birmingham. In many ways our causes are the same.

I recall the day in September of 1962, when I entered Harvard Law School. I was one of 25 women in a class of 550. And I'll never forget one of my classmates coming up to me that first day of school, one of the men, who demanded in tones of moral outrage to know what I was doing there. And I can remember this perfectly. In fact that man is in Washington right now. And someday I'm going to remind him of this. He

said to me: "What are you doing here, Elizabeth. What are you doing here taking the place of a man? A man who would give his right arm to be in this school! A man who would use his legal education." Well, that was my first, but by no means my final, exposure to chauvinism, in the shadow of Frankfurter and Pound.

Once each semester, I remember too, Professor Leach held Ladies Day when our otherwise ignored cadre of female scholars would sit before the class and answer questions. We were called up once a semester and the rest of the time we were totally ignored. But, we had to sit at the front of the room and the professor and the men would throw questions at us. And we had to start this by reciting a poem. Now I don't think the women in law school today would put up with that for a minute. But back in 1962, we dutifully wrote our poem and presented it to the class.

And it was at times like that when I gained a uniquely personal insight into how the early Christians must have felt while performing for the good people of Rome -- in the Coliseum. My colleagues at Harvard seemed oblivious to the psychological barriers they had erected, ignorant of the fears they inspired or the doubts they nurtured.

I don't pretend that my experiences as a woman in achieving equal opportunity in middle class America are as significant as the struggle of some impoverished Americans seeking just the chance to support themselves and their families. But it has helped me understand. It's helped me to be sensitized -- and it has increased my determination to fight the remaining vestiges of discrimination in our land.

I was delighted that the President signed into law, last year, the longest extension yet of the Voting Rights Act and that my husband -- Bob Dole -- played a key role in the passage of that landmark legislation.

But I believe we have learned that we cannot totally eliminate discrimination from our society until we have stamped it out in our economy, as well. Just as Whitney Young went into the board rooms of corporate America 20 years ago to win economic opportunity for Black Americans; we continue to strive to make equal opportunity for all a moral imperative and an economic reality.

Listen to the eloquence of Langston Hughes, and I quote

"What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up -- like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore -- and then run?

Maybe it just sags, like a heavy load,

Or does it explode?

What happens to a dream deferred?"

My friends, too many Americans have tragic firsthand knowledge of what happens to dreams deferred. For most of the last decade, the Black family has too often been subjected to enormous stress. Double-digit inflation made a trip to the grocery store or gas pump a painful lesson in economic mismanagement. The flight of business from our center cities, especially the small businesses that provide 75 percent of all new jobs, struck hardest in those neighborhoods where the existing economic fabric was weakest. High taxes, persistent high interest rates and excessive Federal regulation all combined to make a mockery of Government's promise of better days ahead.

Today's leaders confront the challenge of reversing all that. And in fact, in many areas, that trend has reversed. Inflation has declined from a high of 11.5 percent in 1980 to 3.9 percent in 1982. Some \$63 billion in Federal taxes have been reduced this fiscal year alone. The prime rate, as you know, has declined from 21½ percent two

years ago to 10½ percent today. Thousands of burdensome regulations, a trial to any business but particularly to small business, have been lifted. The nation's economic index has registered its greatest improvement in 33 years, soaring 3.6 percent in a single month. In fact, one private analyst that I read recently called it: "A strong confirmation that we're in for a solid and sustainable recovery." But unemployment, which so drastically impairs the energy and the spirit as well as the financial ability of those whom it overtakes, remains a critical problem.

The President, like you, like all of us who believe in the almost unlimited potential of the human spirit, is anxious to tap the reservoirs of talent, to fashion the tools, human and economic, that will finally lift minority Americans -- one and all --out of the depths of dependence and into the joys of independence.

The \$4.3 billion jobs bill and benefits package President Reagan recently sent to the Congress is another step in that direction. It is legislation designed not as a substitute for growth in the economy, but as a transition from the now fading recession to the sustained real growth that will occur over the next five years.

The President's jobs bill is no make-work proposal. It includes programs to help people find work -- meaningful work in the private sector. It offers incentives for employers to hire the jobless. It provides resources to help train and assist workers in this time of economic transition. It extends benefits -- temporarily -- for an estimated 1.3 million workers who would otherwise exhaust their checks between March and September of this year.

Together with this bill and related items in the fiscal 1984 budget proposal, the President's program amounts to a ten-fold increase in funds for training and job-search

assistance for displaced workers. It proposes \$638 million for the Federally-funded summer jobs program for young people. In addition, the President's Job Training Partnership Act, which was passed last year, provides training for up to one million poor and young people each year. Significantly, 70 percent of the \$1.9 billion in block grant funding to the states must be used for training, compared to the less than 20 percent that actually was spent on training under the CETA program. CETA had a heavy component of overhead, as you know. Our job training bill will help equip people with the skills they need for the changing American job market.

Now, in my former capacity, as the President's Assistant for Public Liaison, I sponsored literally hundreds and hundreds of meetings with private sector leaders. Many of those meetings were with the President, the Vice President, relevant Cabinet members and senior White House staff in attendance. And as was mentioned earlier tonight, it is so important that we have those key private sector groups like yours, who are giving input at the centers of power and government -- providing views on key issues which are on the drawing-board. And that to me is the only way to develop really good public policy -- to hear from the people who are going to be impacted by your policy while that policy is on the drawing-board. And, again and again, these organizations were so very helpful, whether you were talking to business groups, labor unions, agriculture groups, Hispanic leaders, Black leaders, leaders of women's organizations, veteran's groups and many, many others. My first priority, during that two year period, was to keep the White House door open, because an open door -- in my view -- is symbolic of an open mind; and to ensure that the views of these key groups were heard at the highest levels of government. John Jacob, Maudine Cooper and many others have been extremely helpful aids to Vernon Jordan in giving the input. And it was my privilege to work with small and minority businessmen and women on many different issues and to have input on key problems which we were dealing with. Let me mention just one that was a very interesting little case history or vignette.

Small businessmen and women came to me and said: "You know, the Federal government doesn't pay its bills on time and when you're a small contractor this is a real problem. For 10 years we've been trying to get the Government to pay its bills on time. Can't you help us do something about this?" Well that made a lot of sense to me. And so I put them in touch with our Office of Management and Budget and our White House Policy Office and together we forged a proposal, which we took to Capitol Hill. And we were able to work with Congress to get that bill through. And it involved a period of 45 days after which the penalties would start to run. So that it provided an incentive for the Government to pay its bills on time to small businessmen and women. And when we had that signing ceremony, those very people who had brought the problem to us were there -- on the front row -- because here were the people who had pointed out the problem, and had provided suggestions as to what the solution should be. And we were the catalyst to help get it done.

That's the kind of thing I did day-in and day-out for that two year period. And I am certainly going to continue to do that at the Department of Transportation. And I hope that you will continue to work with me there and to give me your ideas and your suggestions as I launch into my new job.

I was also involved in the White House in shaping the President's Executive Order on Black Colleges, and also in his very strong statement, in December, on Minority Business policy. As Secretary of Transportation, I am deeply committed to implementing those policies.

In keeping with the President's directive last year, the Department of Transportation has achieved a 158 percent increase in support for Black colleges. The nation's historically Black colleges and universities, and I believe that a number of them are

right here in South Carolina, are invaluable national resources and treasures. They offer opportunities to develop skills and talent, training for service to our professions, to our communities, and our nation. I have worked very closely with the Black college presidents and I know how important these institutions are. Black colleges have produced 50 percent of Black business executives, 50 percent of Black engineers, 75 percent of Black military officers, 80 percent of Black Federal judges and 85 percent of the Black physicians. These institutions must be preserved, and we at the Department of Transportation will continue to provide strong support.

The Department has an excellent track record with respect to contracting with minority business. Last year, we awarded \$140 million in direct procurement contracts to minority business enterprises. That amounted to over 10 percent of direct procurement dollars to minority business and our grantees awarded over five percent of their financial assistance dollars to minority business.

- Our goal this year, in the Department, is \$162 million in direct minority contracts -- and I have passed the word throughout the Department that I will be disappointed indeed if we fall even one dollar short of that goal. In fact, I hope we exceed it.
- The Department's technical assistance outreach also has been expanded by the opening of 14 new minority business program management centers to assist MBE's on a regional -- and on a more personal -- basis.

In summary, I believe that what we have to offer in carrying forward the nation's transportation programs is not just equal opportunity but unequalled opportunity to be an integral part of this nation's new prosperity.

Now, as you know, a very important piece of legislation was signed into law January 6th of this year -- the legislation to increase the gasoline tax for users of our highways (this is the first increase since 1959) in order to repair and rehabilitate our badly deteriorated roads and bridges.

But what is more important for us tonight, the Act assures that small and disadvantaged businesses will get an opportunity to pour the concrete and smooth the asphalt. The law provides that 10 percent of the contracts be set aside for small and minority business. And I'm hard at work, right now, implementing those provisions of the law. In fact, I have the statistics as to how many millions of dollars come to South Carolina in the way of highway funds generally and also under the minority set-asides if you're interested in those figures. We are putting people back to work and providing for growth in travel and commerce.

Yes, the time has come to move beyond purely legal rights -- to shoulder economic and social responsibilities. The time has come to realize all those dreams deferred because our economy refused to grow. The time has come to take a fresh look at the problem and the potential of Black America. For 10 years you have been turning equal opportunity from a promise into a reality here in South Carolina. You have made the Urban League a force for positive change in the civic, industrial, economic and community life of this state. The Greenville Urban League has undoubtedly done as much, if not more, to ensure equal opportunity as any organization in this country. You have good reason to be proud of your achievement as you mark your 10th year of service to Black citizens and to all the citizens of this community of this state.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible and one that I keep on my desk in the office is Isaiah 40:31: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They

shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Ours is neither the time nor is this the place for those with faint hearts, feeble courage, weak commitments, confused in purposes and ambitions or those with selfish motives.

I want to take just a moment to tell you about an experience that Bob and I had last November. He was attending a US-USSR trade conference in Russia, and 24 hours before he left with the delegation which he was leading I decided to go with him. I wanted very much to do it but wasn't sure I could be away that long. But I did go for a week and it was an unbelievable experience.

First of all, we visited in a home of a woman whose son had been away for some time but he was going back to the country to visit his mother, and he let us go with him to the home. And do you know, she had to play the radio very loud to drown out the voices of the Westerners because she was afraid for anyone to find out that she had Westerners in her home. And then I went to one of the several seminaries now left in that country. And I talked to some of the priests about the lack of opportunity for freedom of religion in that country.

But I had an even more impressive experience when I went to our embassy in Russia and talked to the Pentecostals who were living in the basement of our embassy. And I'm sure you all have read about them. They were two families who came from Siberia. They very simple, good people who just wanted to bring up their children in an atmosphere of religious freedom. And they were not permitted to do so. And so these people (one family had 13 children) decided that if they were not going to be permitted religious freedom they were going to have to leave Russia. They were very poor people, though. And so in trying to figure it out they decided that they had to come to the U.S.

embassy. There were Russian guards standing out in front of our embassy gates. And they were not able to get through, and they decided to rush the guards. Well, in doing this the young son of one of the families was caught by the guards. And the mother and the father and the rest of the children who had made it through to our embassy property had to stand there and watch while those Russian guards beat and beat and beat that young man. And, finally, they watched him being dragged away. They didn't know what was going to happen to him, and they didn't find out for three weeks that he was beaten further and flung on a train back to Siberia.

Four-and-a-half years later, those people are still in the basement of our embassy. Separated from their families. And the only way that they can leave Russia is with the permission of the Russians. Now we're taking care of them while they're on embassy property, but it is a very, very sad situation. All of this because they simply wanted to be free to practice their religion.

Well, when we drove back to the airport, to leave for the United States and I looked at the airplane sitting there on the runway with 'United States of America' on the side I just thanked God that I could leave Russia and come back to this country. We have so much to be thankful for -- so many blessings.

Last May I had the privilege of delivering the commencement address at Livingstone College in my home town in Salisbury, North Carolina. I reminded the graduates that the founder of that College, Joseph Charles Price, was a black leader of great intellectual stature who always looked beyond the trials of the present to the triumphs of the future. And I think that is what we have to think about. No matter how many problems we may have we still have it a lot better than most people in this world.

"I don't care how dark the night," Price once wrote, "I believe in the coming of the morning." For years the National Urban League and its chapters have been dedicated to the 'coming of the morning' for black Americans. In that capacity you have stood in the forefront of the American tradition of self-help and self-reliance. But the task is not complete. We do still have problems. We do still have a lot of issues facing us. I pledge to join with you to ensure that while the night has been dark, now -- at last -- the morning will come.

Thank you very much.

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