



U.S. Department of  
Transportation

# News:

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Contact: Dale A. Petroskey  
Tel.: (202) 366-4570

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY  
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE  
HARRIMAN MEMORIAL AWARDS INSTITUTE  
MAY 12, 1987  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

This is National Transportation Week and we've just had a wonderful celebration at the Department. We had three of our former Secretaries back with us, Alan Boyd, John Volpe, and Brock Adams. I am delighted to have an opportunity to be with you on this very special occasion. This is a very special occasion for me, ladies and gentlemen, as it must be for anyone who loves the marvelous colorful history and beckoning future of America's railroads. From the dawn of this century, rail transportation and safety have been synonymous with the name of Harriman. Back in 1905, E.H. Harriman, for whom these awards are named, raced from one end of the continent to the other, breaking the old speed record and eliciting considerable newspaper comment in the process.

It seems that Alice Roosevelt, Teddy's slightly rambunctious daughter, was on board the Harriman express, leading the President to write the great railroad magnate with the following message:

"Please take care of the safety of my daughter on your train."

To which Harriman replied that there was no cause for alarm.

"You run the country," he told Teddy Roosevelt. "I'll run the railroads."



Within three decades, Edward Harriman's lanky patrician son would break his own father's rail speed record, crossing the United States in under 57 hours aboard the City of Salina. This by no means exhausted Averell Harriman's list of firsts.

For it was Averell Harriman who first proposed to serve meals on board his trains. He was the first to hire stewards to see to passenger comfort. The youth who began his career as a trackwalker, straight out of Yale went on to carve a distinguished niche in the history of his times. He lived to be 94. But he never grew old. At 92 he was tackling the surf off Barbados. Called back to the State Department in the turbulent Sixties, he muttered over and over the words "We need young blood." And so long as Averell Harriman lived to serve his country, America could rely on his youthful energies and impatience with the status quo. Governor Harriman -- the title he loved best -- is no longer with us. But his example will remain a source of inspiration for as long as men and women ride the rails. Averell Harriman, best known for his government and diplomatic service, followed in his parents' footsteps in pursuit of rail safety. He took an active part in this memorial award until a year before his death. And his tireless and talented wife, Pamela, does the same.

I am delighted to note, Bob, that you have chosen to also name an award for Harold Hammond. I can't think of a more appropriate way to honor a man who has labored long and hard in the vineyards of rail safety. Today, the man who in many ways is the Harriman Awards finally has one in his own name. It is only his due.

This afternoon's ceremony marks the 56th time that leaders in the rail industry -- in the boardrooms and in the engine rooms -- have gathered to remember Mary and Edward Harriman and rededicate themselves to safety on the tracks. We meet at an auspicious time. Last year, train accidents were down markedly, from the year before -- from nearly 3300 in 1985 to barely 2600 in 1986 -- the safest year by any measure in rail history.

If you'll forgive me for saying so, transportation safety is, quite literally, no accident. It is, rather, part of a trend that began seven years ago with the first, partial deregulation of the railroads.

I know I don't have to tell anyone in this room that deregulation has revitalized your industry. Since passage of the Staggers Act in 1980, railroads and shippers have signed over 50,000 contracts tailored to shippers' specific needs. Under the straight jacket of federal regulation, such contracts were prohibited. While rates per ton mile have fallen significantly, there has been a dramatic improvement in service. We see faster, more reliable delivery, reduced loss and damage, and more competitive options for both operations and rates.

Meanwhile, the rebirth of competition has allowed railroads to generate the capital necessary to upgrade their infrastructure and enhance their safety. Train accidents during this period have been reduced by two-thirds.



There's not a doubt in my mind that deregulation was a major reason Conrail became profitable, allowing us to return the railroad to the private sector and confound skeptics who questioned its very survival.

All this is progress. But however far we have journeyed, we have a ways to go. Last year, we barely beat back an effort to gut the Staggers Act and substantially reregulate the railroads. This year, we will be tested again. And I appeal to you to help make sure that we don't turn back the clock to those, "not so good" old days when Uncle Sam wore a conductor's uniform and competition was a vehicle that never left the station.

Another issue cries out for our swift, yet sensitive, attention. Drug and alcohol abuse are a national tragedy. This problem permeates every aspect of our society, every walk of life. So when I address the subject, let me make it clear that I am not singling out transportation workers.

But as Secretary of Transportation, charged with protecting the railriding public, I would be derelict in my duty if I were to look the other way while drug abuse threatened travelers' safety. And I must do every thing to make sure we conquer this problem for the traveling public expects, and deserves, a drug-free transportation system. Public transportation is after all a public trust.

Drug abuse is a debilitating personal problem, for which we must provide counseling and the means of rehabilitation, while preserving one's job. By the same token, drug testing can and must be conducted with care and maximum regard for the dignity of our employees. Sensitivity and safety are not mutual enemies, but mutual objectives. I don't want to see the first test until we have confirmation of that test, of gas chromatography, which is virtually 100 percent certain. And then we'll ask the doctors to take a third step to see if there is any other alternative that could have account for the results.

Because of a rule we implemented last year for the first time, the crew of the Conrail train that derailed outside Chase, Maryland last January could be tested for drugs and alcohol. In the meanwhile, the Federal Railroad Administration has joined forces with management and labor to promote "Operation Red Block," a successful voluntary program that lends a helping hand before drug or alcohol abuse can pose a threat to public safety. Such preventive treatment marks a milestone in management-labor cooperation. By stressing awareness, education, and treatment, and by enlisting the active participation of union-organized prevention committees, Red Block seeks to change attitudes that govern individual behavior. So successful has it been that roughly half the nation's major rail lines have followed in the path of the Union Pacific and its labor organizations. And how great it would be if we could all work together -- labor, management and government -- providing much needed assistance and rehabilitation to people who have a problem without the loss of a single job.



Yet I believe we need to go a step further, and give the FRA authority to impose statutory sanctions where appropriate on those found guilty of violating federal safety rules. It is one thing to declare a standard -- quite another to enforce it. The time has come for all of us to demonstrate to the American people that we, too, have some of the vision and boldness that characterize the Harrimans. We can break records for safety enforcement as E.H. and Averell shattered the barriers of time and motion. And working together, labor, management and government can build on the remarkable comeback of recent years, to win the trust and secure the patronage of millions who have never forsaken the romance of a whistle in the night, and the majesty of America as seen from a train window.

Thank you very much God bless you all.

###