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APRIL 8, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESSMEN

THE EAST ROOM

5:30 P.M. EDT

Chairman Rockwell, Carl Hartnack, John Condon,
and my old friend, Bob Wilson, members of the NAB:

It is a great privilege and pleasure to welcome you all to this White House reception. It is the least, I think, we can do, to thank you individually and collectively for the work that you and your organization are doing for America.

Last summer I had the privilege of speaking at your national conference here in Washington and predicted that you would not let the problems of inflation and economic downturn prevent you from meeting your objectives of finding jobs for America's disadvantaged Vietnam veterans and our many, many needy American youngsters.

After the reports that I have heard on the progress you have made during the first half of this fiscal year, I am convinced that my prediction of last summer was one of the most accurate I could have made -- maybe a bit more accurate than some others I have made.

Anyhow, in spite of the present economic conditions, you are right on target on providing jobs and training for some 485,000 adults this fiscal year.

Last summer, and I commend you for it, you exceeded your goal of 200,000 summer jobs for needy youngsters by more than 25 percent, and that is a great accomplishment and I commend you and thank you for it.

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(OVER)

The key to the American success story, as I see it for nearly 200 years now, has been a single word, and we should emphasize it and re-emphasize it -- opportunity.

Generation after generation, that opportunity has been expanded, and it can and it will be expanded in the years ahead.

That opportunity has been made available to more and more people with, thank goodness, fewer and fewer barriers. We have not eliminated them all. Some still remain -- barriers of poverty, ignorance, prejudice, just to mention a few.

We don't like them. We won't tolerate them. We are going to eliminate them. However, thanks to the National Alliance of Businessmen, great progress is being made, and all of you who are here today should be thanked by those who have been blessed by what you have made available.

The productivity partnership you have formed with American business, labor and government has proven what can be done when all segments of our American system work together toward common objectives. Over the past seven years, and I can recall with some accuracy the work that was begun and the work that has been achieved, you have developed the skill, the know-how and the commitment necessary to help those least likely to succeed under normal and previous circumstances.

I think you are fortunate. Your objective is a very simple one -- to place veterans, the handicapped and the disadvantaged people in private sector jobs where they have ~~the greatest~~ opportunity to do for themselves, with your help, to enlarge their arena, to enlarge their opportunities -- private sector jobs that will be their first step up the ladder of dignity and prosperity.

Specifically, we are taking the lead in finding jobs for veterans and we have literally hundreds of thousands of them -- as a matter of fact, more than 650,000 to date.

And you also conduct an enormously successful summer jobs campaign for needy youngsters. I think these two alliance programs are extremely important. I can't emphasize it sufficiently. We cannot and we must not forget the veterans of the Vietnam War, nor can we ignore America's youngsters today.

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I understand that you have achieved all this with only 35 professional staff members paid by Federal funds. That is an awful lot of results with a minimum of Federal participation.

All of the thousands of other people who made this program work were on free loan from the private sector, which has been an invaluable contribution to the betterment of America, and may I thank those in the private sector who have made these people available to supplement the minimum contribution made by the Federal Government. It really is a tribute to the free enterprise system and the people who are deeply involved in it.

I am particularly pleased to see your current slogan, "Help America Work." That is really the goal of our country today, and it has been in the past, and I suspect it will be so in the future. I am deeply appreciative of what each of you has contributed toward making that slogan a reality.

Today, you are faced with a reward that so often goes with the job well done. I ask you to do more, and I am confident that you will.

As representatives of the American business system, our economy, our government and our people need your efforts more than ever before. I am sure you have heard that on many, many occasions in your local communities, in your states and here now. But, I say it with deep conviction, it is true.

Therefore, I urge you to join with me in renewing and reaffirming our commitment and our dedication to the purposes of the National Alliance of Businessmen in order to truly help America work.

You, by your own success, have set an example. You, by your own contributions, can help others achieve what you have achieved by work, and that makes America work.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 5:37 P.M. EDT)