

NAM
Field Staff Training Session
March 22, 1977

Good Morning, Gentlemen --

It's great fun to join you so early in the morning.

I lie about women too.

My own view is that this practice of business breakfasts, with speech attached, is the American form of acupuncture. It leaves you numb when it happens. But later on you know you've been had.

Nonetheless, here we are, so let's make the best of it.

I do hope the time you spend here in Disneyland East will be fruitful. I hope your meetings will give you solid answers about your role and its importance not only to NAM but also to the entire enterprise system.

I have no question at all that yours is a very important job. I am sure you are as much aware of that as I am. Without your efforts to join business people together in order for them to consult effectively with their elected representatives in Congress, our job -- the job of industry in Washington -- would retrograde from always tough to well nigh impossible.

The practice of politics is, I suppose, about the second oldest profession.

I've heard it said it's akin to the oldest, in that it too beckons and beguiles and subsists on dispensing relief.

Be that as it may, the practitioners of this arcane business have talked and written about their heady experiences since time immemorial. Many have been subjected to biographical research, others psychological. a few pathological. "How to do it" books litter the library shelves. Seems like the precinct and the Congressional District are rediscovered about every five

years. The legislative process and the techniques of political campaigns have been discoursed upon from almost everyone's perspective. The campaigning process has been masticated, ingested and regurgitated by commissions and committees so many times that it has turned into administrative and legislative mush, about like Mr. Carter's grits but without the benefit of red-eye gravy. What every candidate needs most today is first of all an accountant, next a lawyer, and third a straitjacket.

But I confess to a bit of overemphasis. The situation is not quite that bleak. I think 1976, our bicentennial year, found all aspects of American society with more unifying positives than divisive negatives -- really quite a contrast from the tormenting days of not long ago.

My feeling about it is that one of the most powerful of those nationally unifying positives is our self-correcting, public-serving, progress-assuring competitive enterprise.

And the task you fellows perform -- the task of getting across the fact that business is not a concern for only some of us -- is crucial to this general national good.

Business -- we must keep reminding people -- is just about everyone.

It's the workers, of course, who depend on business for jobs.

It's stockholders who depend on it for growth and revenue on investments.

It's suppliers, large and small, who depend on it for their own prosperity and growth.

And it's also the government which leeches upon business for billions of tax dollars to spend, among other things, for toeing us in.

So our image is just a bit out of focus. Business is not a separate, selfish, special interest -- it's a universal interest and an indispensable reliance for Americans of all walks of life.

You folks, out there on the person-to-person cutting edge of this problem, know that in spades, and you know it's not all that easy to gain general acceptance of what I've just said. The

point is, though -- we have got to press on with this thesis, or else, in this push and shove society, individual fulfillment in freedom -- which is the name of the American game -- will go down the tube as it has for so many other peoples over the centuries.

Here allow me a brief digression. Fate has had it that I be thrust up close with a whole swatch of Presidents -- believe it or not, I even used to attend press conferences of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in this town 38 years ago. The boys around town accuse me of coming here with Franklin Pierce.

Based on those years of snuggling with and sometimes against the Presidency, I have a thought or two about the new Administration that's just come to town, and it's been suggested to me you might find that of interest.

So far this new Presidency remains a riddle within the Washington business community and within Congress as well. President Carter remains as enigmatic, as ambivalent, as unpredictable, as unidentifiable as in his campaign, and one searches in vain for a theme, a pattern of thought or deed, which could give a clue as to his long-term thrust for business and our country. To many here he seems almost whimsical in foreign affairs and could easily bungle our country into serious difficulties as his on-the-job training continues. This city is genuinely concerned over the march of events in Africa, the growing Soviet influence there, the Ambassador Young pronouncements which even the President has had to tone down, the growing prospect of total alienation of South Africa, and the dangerous possibilities of critical race riots there, with back-reach into our own country. Korea and Japan are now profoundly troubled, Latin America abraded by the human rights issue, the Middle East agog over almost flip Presidential ramblings in press conferences about highly sensitive issues there, Germany and

Brazil both offended over our high-landed interference in their commercial relations, and now the Soviets become truculent as well.

At home the President's programs remain embryonic and ill-defined at this early stage, which is hardly surprising, but the town begins to agonize over the apparent White House preoccupation with imagery instead of hard substance. The colloquialism here is that the President and his key staff are still compulsively campaigning -- that they've been running for President for four years and just can't turn their motors off. One Democratic Senator told me last week that he hasn't met President Carter yet, but has had several Oval Office sessions with a Presidential candidate by the same name.

All in all, it's a conundrum which none of us can decipher for another two or three months. Meantime I imagine we will continue to see maximum image-making and minimum signals on basic direction.

The greatest Washington business concern, let me finally say, goes to the orientation of the people being put all across the government in the third and fourth levels particularly. In very high proportion these people appear not even to be Carterites, but McGovernites, and as a group far from enchanted with business. People all around town are very troubled by this, and puzzled as well. It seems fairly predictable that a lot of business strain and harassment will evolve out of these people as they get in saddle.

Nevertheless, there's Bert Lance, Mike Blumenthal, Mrs. Krebs, the senior White House staffers, Attorney General Bell, and Mr. Kirbo still in Atlanta -- all insisting the President is at worst a moderate, and by most standards a conservative. We'll just have to wait and see. I suspect we'll find he's a mix.

Well, meantime, the Congress too has a different hue. Speaker O'Neill is far more forceful than Speaker Albert, and Senator Byrd is more cantankerous than Senator Mansfield. Over a third of the House members are brand new since 1974. The Presidency and the Congress are politically unified once again, after eight years of endless and largely empty partisan wrangling. Most of the executive branch leaders downtown are new to Washington, and many of them something less than friendly.

So we have a problem. Many business reps here are finding it very tough to adjust to this dramatically altered environment. Many old relationships can no longer help. Old ways just don't cut it anymore.

It hurts me to concede it, but the truth still is that, no matter how good he is, a Washington lobbyist can do only so much in the best of circumstances. Today the going is even tougher for most of the crowd here. I suppose this tells us that, like it or not, it has to be up to you good people to help take up the slack -- to do an even better job back home where it really counts in each Congressional District. More than at any time, you see, in the last 8 years, an awful lot rides on your success in getting your business folks out there energized and joined together to get their views clearly and powerfully before their Congressmen.

Knowing that, it makes me especially proud to have joined you here.

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