

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE

1972

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL PLATFORM COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers
of America

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the invitation to appear before this body. Certainly America's great political parties fulfill an important and fundamental role in our Democratic system of government. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters considers it a privilege to submit our thoughts to the Republican party. We believe our message to be USEFUL - - - perhaps more importantly, however, we sincerely hope it will be USED.

Much has been said in recent years about the meaning and usefulness of party platforms. While many of the comments have been negative, we contend that this process need not be perfunctory.

I speak to you today as a representative of over 2 million working men and women -- serious and concerned men and women, who, in addition to being employees, are mothers, fathers, consumers, and certainly concerned tax payers. Our members have serious thoughts and questions about how our government is being administered today. They question why their taxes have been increased at the local, state and federal levels of government in recent years. They question why, after moderate wage increases, their income still buys only the same amount of goods and services. They question why, after several years of debate at all levels of government, they must continue to live with severe pollution of our air and water.

Thus, you see, we share the problems of this nation and we share them seriously. Our problems are more clearly identifiable than ever before. Also more clear than ever before is the fact that the nation's work force comprehends the problems and is ready to act for sound and equitable solutions. Gone are the days when working men and women will stand idly by and watch their government legislatively subtract from their income, their freedom and their rights.

America's workers are looking for solutions to their collective problems, and they are looking ever more intently. While we at times object to the political process, we nonetheless recognize its meaning to this country's free democratic tradition. We do have faith in our system of government. We can keep this faith, however, only as long as you share in our seriousness of concern.

Thus, I speak to you with an air of urgency. If you will reciprocate by accepting these comments in that light, this platform will not be meaningless, it will not be perfunctory, and it will not be subjected to the identification of mere "window dressing."

We know from years of experience that legislation which hinders the collective bargaining process, creates an encumbrance, not only to trade union objectives, but also to the free enterprise system which is the bulwark of America.

Although it may often seem, in our day-to-day contacts with Senators and Congressmen of the Republican Party, that the International Brotherhood of Teamsters is concerned only with issues relevant to organized labor, let me assure you that we realize that the welfare of our members is directly related to the welfare of the entire nation.

The balance of my testimony here today deals in specifics. The following will demonstrate to you that we are not only interested in those issues which will perpetuate our existence as a labor organization, but that we come to you with proposals which we think are important to the welfare and the survival of the entire nation as a free society.

It is in this spirit that we appeal to this drafting committee for the 1972 Republican National Platform to deal boldly with the problems facing this nation.

Now I would like to outline specifically to this committee, proposals that represent the serious and good-faith concerns of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

ECONOMIC CONTROLS

In the face of strong objections from other sectors of the labor-movement, the Teamsters Union has supported the notion that a voice from labor should be heard on the Pay Board. We chose to stay because we believe that the President is sincere in his attempts to control inflation. We gave this support at a

considerable cost, believing it our duty to participate in a policy that hopes ultimately to be of benefit to all. However, the burden of sacrifices demanded by the controls, is not shared equally. As long as this disparity exists, the measures will be ineffective. The controls today impose an unfair and weightier burden on the average working man and woman; and bear down with an even greater injustice on the low-income wage earners, and the unorganized workers.

Equal sacrifice must be realized. It must be realized in areas other than wages. Prices, interest rates and profits must be placed under equally stringent regulations. To provide for this future goal of equity, we must recognize the singularly acute status of the working poor. The recent exclusion from coverage of wage-earners making less than \$2.75 per hour is just and commendable. This is a step in the right direction.

As a further constructive means of reducing federal deficits and boosting federal revenues and national employment, we advocate an expanded program of public service jobs, especially in high unemployment areas, and a general overhaul of the inequitable tax structure now in existence.

TAX EQUITY

The existing tax structure subsidizes private corporations with the hard earned money of the low and average income individual and deprives the federal treasury of an estimated \$20 billion

through tax shelters given to the rich and the powerful. This not only imposes an unfair burden on working men and women, but unnecessarily curbs the country's ability to meet its social and economic obligations. This lopsided system must be restructured to provide a more equitable form of taxation. Corporate tax shelters, such as the depletion allowance, international tax preferences, state and municipal bonds, investment tax credits and capital gains tax credits must be critically reassessed. Rank injustices for the average wage earner and family must be ended by a tax system based on the ability to pay and not on the ability to evade. The need for a substantive and complete overhaul of our tax system has never been so acute as it is today.

UNEMPLOYMENT

The dismal dimensions of the unemployment picture are economic waste, personal tragedy and social ills of disaffection, crime and drug abuse. From a 3.6% unemployment rate in 1968, joblessness has exploded upwards to 5.5% in July 1972. Close to 5 million individuals are without jobs. For minorities, and teenagers, the picture darkens even more: 9.9% minority unemployment and 14.8% teenage unemployment. And these statistics do not register the discouraged many who have stopped looking for jobs and have subsequently not been recorded. While joblessness persists, cost of living has risen. The future looks bleak for a family without a sufficient wage-earner; who must pay rising food and medical costs.

We must reaffirm the right of all Americans, able and willing to work, to an opportunity to be employed at a livable wage, and at a decent job.

We advocate a program of work opportunities provided by private industry with federal assistance where necessary.

We advocate public service jobs which would not only create employment but also meet the nation's critical shortage in social services and facilities, such as housing, hospitals and schools.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 is a fine piece of legislation. We must deplore, however, the abysmal gap between the goals of the Act and its achievements. This gap has been a result, in large part, of the poor enforcement and implementation mechanism. The enforcement staff of little over 300 to cover 4.1 million workplaces means that each work site can be inspected once every 170 years. Now the Act is threatened by further dilution. Pending legislation in Congress would exclude employers of 15 or fewer persons from coverage under the Act. This would mean that 90% of all work places and 30% of all workers now covered will be beyond the reach of lawful health and safety requirements. The provisions of the law must be made a reality for the 80 million working men and women who sustain and nurture this country.

EDUCATION

In our highly technical and mobile society the basic incultation of the 3 R's do not equip our youth to carve out a satisfactory livelihood in society. Educational reform must be made in terms of the quality of education. Social critics have pointed out that the level of education is closely related to the level of income. This means that working class youth have not only been the victims of poor education, but also poor educational opportunities. Indeed, 44% of the youth from working class families never make it to college. Economic opportunity for these youth in turn becomes severely limited.

We advocate expanded funding for needed educational facilities; and reform that would provide opportunities to each and every child to develop to his maximum capability. We would particularly urge the upgrading of vocational and technical education so that they may no longer be treated as way stations for drop-outs. Furthermore, we advocate the creation of jobs for those so trained, so that none may be under-employed or jobless.

AGRICULTURAL LABOR

Three-million farm workers continue to be excluded from the basic rights and benefits given other workers. We advocate extending to agricultural workers the coverage of the provisions

of the Labor-Management Relations Act, the protection of the fair labor standards and the benefits of social security, unemployment and workmen's compensation

It is not right that our nation's farm workers should be denied a just and fair wage because they lack education and sometimes insight into organizing techniques. It is these people who built the foundation of America and it is these people who must now be recognized. Their request is for little more than economic and social equality and it must now be answered in the affirmative.

FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Compulsory arbitration is incompatible with industrial democracy and private enterprise. Permanent legislation which calls for bargaining in the shadow of government intervention must be disavowed because it:

1. politicizes labor-management relations, making the average worker a political pawn and captive,
2. it infringes on the basic right of working people to refuse to work,
3. it compels workers in private employment to work under terms and conditions dictated by the government,
4. it removes the ultimate responsibility from the parties for the outcome of a dispute, and
5. it seriously questions the legal responsibility of Congress by shifting consideration of serious confrontations from the legislative to the executive branch.

In the past five years, proposals attempting to undercut free collective bargaining have come dangerously close to success. The transportation industry in particular has been seriously threatened. There is no evidence to support the alleged need for such proposals. The nature of the transport industry is such that no one mode of transportation maintains a stranglehold on the industry to cause a major national emergency dispute. The Teamsters Union, in particular, is noted for a history of responsible collective bargaining: As of 1965 and since 1947, the motor carriers have had only six strikes, none of which demanded governmental intervention above the level of federal mediation. Nor has there ever been a work stoppage in which the industry has activated the National Emergency provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act.

Free collective bargaining must be preserved and industrial disputes in this democracy must not be settled as in a totalitarian state by executive fiat.

FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT

The Fair Labor Standards Act as it now exists, is obsolete and inadequate to meet its declared purpose of providing workers with an adequate minimum standard of living.

Nothing less than a sweeping improvement of the benefit and protection structure would be effective to alleviate the deteriorating position of the working people; and in particular the working poor.

In the legislation now before Congress, we find an acceptable up-dating of the minimum wage to \$2.20 per hour. However, we feel that the coverage of the Act must further be extended to include the 16 million workers presently without its protection. We call for the inclusion in particular, of the following:

- some 2 million domestic workers
- 3 million state and local government employees
- 4 million workers of small retail firms
- 2.5 million workers in general services
- and more than 3 million agricultural employees.

In addition, we urge the elimination of overtime exemptions in certain industries, that because of technological improvements, no longer have need for these exemptions.

NATIONAL HEALTH CARE

Health care systems in America today suffer from a number of critical shortcomings which have meant death for some and destitution from exorbitant medical bills for others.

In the last decade, health care costs have risen 600% and continue to spiral beyond the reach of millions of citizens.

Added to this, is the inaccessability of the delivery system. This is acute in urban as well as in the rural areas where veterinarians are more in abundance than a general practitioner. The system also lacks coordination; and waste and duplication result from the irrational fragmentation of medical services. Together, these factors mean higher costs for inadequate and spotty health care. Furthermore, the focus of health care in this country is on cure and not prevention. Too much money goes into getting people well and too little into keeping people health in the first place.

We advocate a comprehensive health care program to be financed through Social Security, for all Americans as a matter of right, without deductibles or co-insurance, without arbitrary cut-off points in dollars, and without arbitrary provisions in the number of days of coverage. Effective cost controls and expanded health manpower training and facilities must be part of an improved health service system.

PRIORITY ISSUES FOR ORGANIZED WORKERS

We advocate the repeal of Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act. We favor the guarantee to all employees, the freedom to negotiate a "union shop" clause in collective bargaining agreements.

We advocate repeal of Sections 8B(4) and 8E of the Taft-Hartley Act. These are commonly referred to as the "secondary boycott" and "hot cargo" provisions. Experience has shown that they are the

instruments of strikebreaking and constitute a denial of the right of one working man to help another in the exercise of his legal right to organize and bargain collectively. The refusal to handle or patronize "unfair goods" or "hot cargo" is not a new doctrine. On the contrary, this doctrine has been followed by countries in all parts of the world and in all forms of social and economic relations.

We advocate equal and fair treatment for construction workers employed on multi-employer sites; as part of this equal treatment we affirm their right to picket and make known their disputes.

TRANSPORTATION

The ultimate test of an effective and equitable transportation policy is whether or not it provides fast and expeditious service to the consumer. The latter qualification is the goal of the trucking industry and we believe it should also be the goal of our National Transportation guidelines.

Continual stress must be put on up-dating our transportation system. In so doing, we must make allowances for all modes of transportation -- truck, rail, air, and water. Recent proposals for de-regulation of the transportation industry do not make such allowances and we therefore oppose them. Important sectors of this nation's great transportation system would be unnecessarily jeopardized by such legislation and consumers would bear the ultimate loss.

This administration has often suggested legislation for the transportation industry that admirably calls for more free competition. I appreciate the importance of "free competition" and recognize its fundamental role in a free democracy. I also, however, understand that in a technological and capital intense economy such as ours, free competition without regulation can lead to the elimination of small producers who are unable to compete with their larger cohorts. Such elimination must be avoided and legislation that involves this possibility must be reassessed.

WINDING DOWN THE WAR

The people of this country face a difficult position in assessing the war in Vietnam. It is an issue that has proven as divisive as it is explosive. I have supported the President in his war efforts because I believe that his objectives are worthy.

However, this support does not diminish our strong belief that once the war has been concluded, we must reassess our military and domestic spending priorities. We cannot question the drain that this unfortunate war has caused on critically important social programs. As we near its conclusion we must reorient ourselves toward a new focus on the problems of working Americans.

One of these domestic priorities which we must immediately turn our attention to is an off-shoot of our efforts in Vietnam. I refer to the 4 million-plus Vietnam veterans. Their sacrifice has been monumental and their burdens unquestionably write a new chapter in the history of this country's foreign involvements. It is the Vietnam veterans who, for the first time in our nation's history, face a hesitant and equivocal welcome home. Some question their dedication and some question their choice to fight in such an unpopular war. This is not right ladies and gentlemen. We must go out of our way to recognize their sacrifice and see that it is rewarded both spiritually and economically. Our national employment policies must begin to reflect our deep concern for their welfare. In addition to creating jobs for these men, we must provide proper rehabilitation programs to bring them back into the mainstream of American life.