

REMARKS OF SENATOR JOHN HEINZ  
AFL-CIO STATE CONVENTION  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA  
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President Boyer and Delegates:

It is, as always, an honor and a privilege to address your State Convention. You have invited me every year and I am grateful for your continued friendship and support. I am especially honored to share this podium with your next speaker, my good friend - and the strongest and year in and year out the most consistently effective political operative in America - Al Barkin.

I am also deeply appreciative of the excellent working relationship I have with you -- both with the state officers . . . Harry Boyer, Jim Mahoney, Harry Block and Bob McIntyre . . . and with individual unions here in our State, as well as with the AFL-CIO and national union representatives in Washington, D. C. As many of you know, I have also made a point of meeting county and area councils whenever possible.

Another reason I'm proud to be here with you today is that time after time we have identified problems together and worked together to make a better country for all Americans.

We've fought for help for those in need . . . to try to preserve what's left of the "civil" in our civilization.

We've battled together against discrimination in all its forms. That's why we fought for legislation to establish clearly that discrimination against pregnant women is indeed sex discrimination. That's why, in 1978, we supported extension of the deadline for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. And that's why we oppose today the attempts of those who seek to gut affirmative action.

We have worked hard for the full political rights of all Americans, whether they live in Alabama or the District of Columbia . . . and this year, we will re-enact the Voting Rights Act and maintain a community legal services corporation, whether Jesse Helms likes it or not!

We've fought especially hard to protect the American worker . . . especially in such vulnerable industries as apparel and electronics. As Chairman of the U. S. Senate Steel Caucus, my highest priority is to shield our steel from unfair foreign competition . . . and last year we succeeded in having the Senate vote unanimously to strengthen the "Buy American" provisions in federal contracts. And one of the reasons we did so was because right here in Philadelphia . . . SEPTA actually bought Japanese light rail cars when the only remaining American manufacturer was a Philadelphia firm -- the Budd Company! -- an intolerable affront to the American worker that must never be allowed to happen again.

To spur trade and create jobs and revive the economy of our state and region, we've promoted development of the Port of Philadelphia and of our inland waterways all important to our ability to move and ship coal. Isn't it ironic that with all our coal -- the U.S. is the OPEC of coal and Pennsylvania a Saudi Arabia in both bituminous and anthracite -- isn't it incredible that we still haven't converted some 80 utility power plants now burning expensive imported oil that within a matter of months could be burning coal . . . because that is what they used to burn just a few years ago!

As a member of the Senate, I consider it an important part of my job in Washington to work to create a climate favorable and responsive to working Americans . . . you and your members . . . because what you do improves the lives of all Americans.

Today, Americans are better fed, better housed, and better clothed than any other people on earth. All of us in this room know that our standard of living doesn't just happen. It is created, above all, out of productive work . . . the day-to-day commitment of the worker who actually drives the nails, stitches the garments, or rolls red hot ingots into steel. Who builds our housing? Who makes our clothes? Who actually keeps our trains running, and who makes our steel? It is the Union Worker. It is you!

But it's not just what you produce that uplifts all Americans, it's what you've won in the way of better pay, better hours, and better working conditions. Samuel Gompers was right when he said in 1918 and I quote: " I know that the American trade union movement has done much not only for the working people but also for the American nation. There is not anything that the organized labor movement can do for its members that will not improve the conditions of all other workers." (unquote) For your commitment and success in gaining for labor the recognition so well deserved, I salute and congratulate you.

Now let me take a moment to comment on the present climate in Washington, D. C. . . .

I think you know and understand why the Congress is seeking to bring the federal budget under control. There are two reasons.

The first is that the size and cost of the federal government has been growing and more especially grown beyond the willingness of people to pay for that cost. The result is huge deficits, and record high interest rates and runaway inflation and a sick economy . . . not to mention a trillion dollar national debt!

The second reason is that we must have an economic plan for this nation. Under the last administration there were seven economic plans in just four years. We have got to get this nation's economic act together and the thrust of the plan that President Reagan has proposed is the best chance we have to rescue this country.

No one, including myself, agrees with everything the President proposes. And where improvements can or must be made I and others will attempt to do so.

What I want to emphasize is this: There are two forces at work in reshaping the economy. Some of us seek a responsible, if sometimes painful solution, to our economic problems. Others frankly hope to return this country to a darker, more desperate time.

As one small example, as some of you may know, the Labor Department has just issued sweeping regulations to permit industrial homework. These regulations are nothing less than an attempt to undercut the economic and health and safety protections of the worker, and the union movement itself. We cannot and we should not tolerate such efforts to roll back the necessary gains we've made together in the past.

And, as I think many of you, such as Tom Miller realize, there are those who seek the repeal of Davis-Bacon. I believe in the principle that government should never use its massive spending power to raise or lower prevailing wages, and that those who seek to undercut this principle by the wholesale repeal of Davis-Bacon are wrong and must be defeated.

The people in this country who want to return working America to plantation hours, wages, and working conditions serve special interests, not the public interest. Their primitive approach to public responsibilities must be fought and defeated.

To the contrary, my approach was summed up by the late George Meany when he said that "The fight on inflation must be on the basis of equality of sacrifice -- not on the sacrifice of equality."

That's why I oppose spending cuts that call for an unequal sacrifice on the part of the industrialized Northeast-Midwest region. . . and why I got the Senate Energy Committee to agree to take \$200 million from Western programs to use instead to support conservation and youth jobs programs critical to the quality of life in Pennsylvania and other eastern states.

That is why I and Senator Chafee of Rhode Island proposed and fought for a floor amendment to the budget that sought over two billion dollars -- at the expense of the oil companies -- to restore cuts to five programs we believe essential to our region and its cities: (1) funds to primary and secondary education . . . What is more important than our children's education? . . . (2) low income energy assistance to help the poor and the elderly with their exorbitant heating bills . . . (3) the urban development action grant program . . . (4) preventive health services . . . (5) and for mass transit for our cities . . .

Because I believe in the equality of sacrifice not the sacrifice of equality, I have opposed the break-up of Conrail. I will continue to do so not only because this would cause the loss of 45,000 rail workers' jobs, but also because it's both wrong and fiscally irresponsible for the government to sell out the over 5 billion dollars the taxpayers have invested in Conrail, and sell it to private interests for as little as 15 cents on the dollar!

And for the very same reason, we are - successfully - moving our Steel Caucus legislation to save jobs in older industrial regions like ours . . . by allowing the steel companies to delay compliance with the Clean Air Act . . . so long as they invest their savings in modernizing and expanding existing steel facilities, not greenfields in the sunbelt.

Because I believe in the equality of sacrifice, not the sacrifice of equality, I have and will continue to oppose the Administration's proposal to emasculate Social Security early retirement benefits. We should not and we will not penalize those just about to retire . . . and that's why my colleagues and I resoundingly rejected the scheme -- 96-0 -- on the Floor of the Senate.

We can and we will make every effort to ensure that all sacrifice equally. And we must keep in mind that it is not the poor or the union worker, but the economy, that is our real nemesis. It is high interest rates and inflation that undercuts the private sector and the public sector alike . . . It is the economy that shrinks state and local tax bases and backs governments into the corner of having to cut services and lay off employees. It is the economy that throws steel workers and rail workers and construction workers out of work.

It's in the interest of all of us to get our country back on the right track. We need to get federal deficits down in order to get interest rates and inflation down. And if we fail because we enact a tax cut that's too big or the wrong kind, or unfair to working people, we'll face even more severe pressures to cut the budget in the future, and that would mean eliminating many good and worthwhile programs. My friends, these are trying and difficult times for us all. They place a particularly important burden on elected officials -- especially the Congress -- to use judgment and act responsibly. This I believe we must do.

For my part, I am committed to our working people, our state and our region.

I will continue to fight for the rights of working people.

I will continue to speak out in opposition when I see a wrong.

I will continue to work for a consistent, responsible economic policy for this country .

And I will continue to resist the zealous voices that seek to return working people to plantation conditions of bygone days.

In these efforts I know I can, as always, count on your support. So for all your hard work, for your concern, for your commitment to the working people of this great country I thank you sincerely.

For the opportunity to address you here today, let me express my appreciation.

And let me take this opportunity to congratulate you and your officers on this great convention;

I wish you well today, tomorrow and in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you very much.