

REMARKS OF SEN. JOHN HEINZ (R-PA)
NATIONAL CONVENTION OF INTERNATIONAL LADIES GARMENT
WORKERS UNION
MAY 6, 1983
WASHINGTON, D. C.

It's a great privilege and pleasure to address your annual legislative conference.

One of the reasons I'm proud to be here is because the International Ladies Garment Worker Union helps people. You have always been in the forefront of providing entry level jobs to Americans who might never otherwise enter the mainstream. Today your union is the leader in fighting to open the door to opportunity for all Americans ... to establish a way in and a way up for the economically and socially disadvantaged. The results of your profound understanding and, most especially, the inspired leadership of Chick Chaikin is the pride and dignity found in the homes of millions of Americans. A second reason I feel privileged to be here is because of your President, Chick Chaikin. He is at once scholarly and knowledgeable as well as worldly and forceful. And he has the same deep pride in this union, as deep respect he is held in here in Washington.

I think most Senators are proud of where they come from and where they stand. I'm proud of my State and its workers. And I'm proud of my voting record on civil rights and on issues of concern to labor. Last year was an election year for me, a Republican in a heavily Democratic State. Organized labor scrutinized my record and virtually every important union in my state, including the AFL-CIO, the UMW, the Clothing and Textile Workers, the hospital workers, the food and commercial workers, and other national unions endorsed me. I was proud that labor not only endorsed me, but backed my campaign with both workers and political action support as well.

As it ought to, most of organized labor doesn't just look at a party label, they look at a candidate's record, meet with the candidate, and they hear him out. A narrowly partisan line by organized labor or a political leader ill serves the constituents of either.

I was pleased, but surprised, when Evie Dubrow extended the invitation to speak to you today. Despite the AFL-CIO endorsement, your union didn't choose me. For a while I was afraid the ILGWU didn't want me around anymore. Now, I wasn't so concerned about my opponent, but, the endorsement raised some frightening possibilities --- did it mean that I'd never again have the opportunity to hear Sol Chaiken elevate speech to art? Would it mean the end to Evie Dubrow's weekly phone calls to my staff?

Fortunately, none of those horrifying prospects came to pass, and I'm sure we'll still be fighting on the same side because we share a common vision of where America should be headed.

Today, I want to discuss with you how we can make that vision a tangible reality.

It was F.D.R. who said in the depths of the great depression, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

Today, this description would understate the nature of our current troubles, but it is true that people's fears are real and part of the problem.

With unemployment so high, so long, for so many, the grasp on the American dream -- a better life for ourselves and our children -- seems to be slipping away. For too many of our neighbors, especially those without a job, the promise of America has disappeared, and the present has become a nightmare.

I come, as do many of you, from an urban industrial state, Pennsylvania, proud of our garment, steel, and other essential industries. We all remember 1975 when many of our mills shut down. People worried, but they knew they'd get their jobs back.

Today, people aren't worried.

They're desperate.

You can go down to the Salvation Army and see young couples and their children. They have been unemployed, not for months, but for one or two or more years. They've seen their savings dwindle and become depleted. Their health insurance is gone, and they are scared to death of the hospital bill should a child or themselves become ill. And, maybe they've seen the "for sale" sign nailed to the door of the home they struggled to save for.

In better times, these are hard working, taxpaying, proud Americans. We will serve these Americans if we permit fear to destroy their faith in America, and we will serve America by allowing the destruction of all they have built.

We are going to need the help of these Americans in building a better future for this country. Ignoring their hopes and perpetuating their fear is irresponsible. National stewardship demands of us a higher standard.

Part of banishing fear ... part of helping keep faith in America is having an unemployment compensation program adequate to meet the problems of this severe recession, and, that's why I and others have fought to extend unemployment compensation benefits. At first, last July, the Administration

Import relief is needed now, while there is still something left to relieve.

But, even as we propose such relief, we must not lose sight of our larger goal -- restoring competitiveness and promoting a return to economic health in our industrial heartland. That means shaping a national industrial policy that will work.

Not everyone agrees. Some people say we shouldn't worry about our basic industries, that high-tech is going to solve all our problems. Others say, "Just be patient," that, in time, maybe a few years, our textile and auto and steel workers will be back in the mills. Still others say we shouldn't care, that we should be indifferent to whether Americans drive Chevrolets or Toyotas.

Well, this is one Senator that does care, and thinks you do too.

Saving the might of industrial America is important to every American, be they steel, garment, or hospital workers.

I say, if we ever allow the sun to set on our heartland industries, we will see the sun set on America's future as well. And this we must never allow.

Let's get practical about imports.

I'm no protectionist, but there is nothing in the rule book, GATT, or any other treaty, that says you or I have to stand by while American jobs in vulnerable industries are sacrificed by inaction and indifference.

Frankly, there doesn't have to be a choice between a trade war and strong American industries. There's no reason why we can't provide reasonable import relief married, through legislation, to a comprehensive plan -- agreed to by management, labor, and government -- that will make an industry strong and competitive again.

In many ways, this is exactly what the legislation did that helped the Chrysler Corporation, only we provided loan guarantees instead of import relief. As a condition of government help, we required self-help as well. We required Chrysler stockholders to make investments, its bankers to put up more money, its workers to make contract concessions, and its management to take pay cuts. Chrysler has been a very big success-- but, it's only one industry, and only one company.

We need to enact legislation .. like S. 849 my Industrial Revitalization Act, .. that will allow any or all of our hard pressed industries to get import relief, modernize, and regain the strength we used to have, so we can fight, and win, and be second to none once more.

Providing substantial import protection while industries revitalize is one way we can fight to get America back to work. But we must also address the unfairness of trade practices, and the heavy price our nation and workers are being forced to pay because others have stopped playing by the rules of the game.

Like all of us, I believe in the concept of free trade, but I also believe that we have become virtually the only nation left to practice it.

It is the exception in the United States, but protectionism is becoming the rule elsewhere in the world.

That's why last year I introduced reciprocity legislation. Indeed, I was the first Member of Congress to do so. It is reassuring that reciprocity legislation at long last passed the Senate 3 weeks ago. I believe the legislation is very moderate, perhaps even too much so. It provides the President with broad discretionary authority and flexible new tools to attack trade barriers. It does not force action. It does not require automatic sector-by-sector retaliation.

But, even so, some have attacked it as protectionist and irresponsible.

How can it be irresponsible to give the President of the United States authority to overcome intransigence with appropriate action?

How can it be protectionist to provide leverage and a means to use it in order to open and expand markets that are closed abroad but open here?

In my view, American jobs should not be sacrificed because we lack the will or the means to retaliate against the protectionist policies of Japan and other nations.

Until those other nations play fair, until other nations stop exporting their social and economic problems to our shores, we should lower the speed limit on their imports, and even put up a stop sign as well.

Ladies and gentlemen, this morning, you have allowed me to share with you our hopes and plans for America. But that agenda would be incomplete if it ignored preserving our national commitment to the dignity of each working man and woman.

We must not ignore the fact that there are those who would deprive American workers of their rights to organize, to bargain collectively, and to safeguard the workplace. To those who seek retrenchment on OSHA and the health and safety of the workplace, I say, there can be no retreat.

To those who say labor pickets should be tried under the Hobbs Act for incidental picket line spats, I say no.

The criminal code should be used to stop crime, never as a tool for union busting.

And we should not forget that the threat to the freedoms of working people extend beyond our shores. We must continue to fight for the rights of working people ... whether its the right to organize at J.P. Stevens or the freedom of Lech Walesa and the right of Polish workers to join solidarity.

Some people say it will break the country if we provide for our unemployed. They say we can't find a way to revitalize our basic industries, and that acting against unfair trade practices will surely start a trade war. They say our national leadership and the Congress doesn't have the answers or ability to address our problems responsibly.

I can't agree with the pessimists. Just two weeks ago, I was present at the White House when the President signed the Social Security solvency bill. And let me tell you, last year people said there wasn't going to be any such bill for the President to sign.

People said that Social Security -- on which 35 million Americans depend -- was doomed because the Congress couldn't even agree on how big the problem was, let alone solve it.

Well, it wasn't easy. It took ten months just to agree on the size of the problem. For a solution, everyone had to give a little, every special interest had to yield to the public interest. We even came to the eleventh hour, and almost didn't do the job ... but we did. And with the bill signed last month, we have taken the most important step in two decades to ensure that the retirement security promise made to working people today is a promise kept to the workers and retirees of tomorrow.

Solving our problems won't be easy, but what worthwhile is easy to achieve?

I believe a brighter future is within our grasp. Not because the road is level, not because the wind is at our backs, not because the sun is shining, but because our people have the spirit to overcome obstacles, to dream of a better America, and to build it.

Our job is not done. Indeed we are only beginning.

And for my part, I will continue to challenge my Party and our country to fulfill the promise of America, the promise of full employment and fairness, of jobs and economic justice. And in this I will continue to rely on your advice and support.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you here today.