

June 29, 1982  
Labor Convention Speech  
Coos Bay

This year, more than ever before, there is a purpose for you and me to be here today. I want to say that it's not very complicated -- not very complicated or very hard to understand.

That purpose is that we intend to come out of this convention with a commitment to say something loud and clear, at the top of our lungs, come November of this year. And that is that we the people want to take the government of this country back into our hands again.

And my friends we're going to take it back again. We're going to take it out of their hands.

We're going to take it out of the hands of fat cats who have no conception about the pain or misery or hopelessness or joblessness and we're going to put it back in the hands of those very people who built this country and all want a chance to go to work again.

Back, if I might say so, into the hands of the taxpaying, middle-American person who has been given by this Administration the shaft for entirely too long. And we're going to turn it around come November of this year.

I don't think any of us ought to make any mistakes about it. That's exactly what this election year is all about. This House ran from the fight -- a fight over who is going to run America. Is it going to be rich men who live through an unemployed world and have no understanding over what it means to be a construction boilermaker, who today, the ranks of whom today are 90% unemployed? Is it going to be run, is it going to be run by rich men and ultraconservatives who have no conception of why Reagonomics are going to devastate the community, and soundly, across this state and across this country?

Or is it instead, is this a country instead, that will be run by you and by your neighbors, and by workers everywhere who do understand only too well what Reagonomics means because this administration has been taking it out on workers for the last 18 months and we're not going to take it any longer.

You know I have no doubts whatsoever about what the outcome of that fight between now and November is going to be. I know what the outcome of that fight's going to be and I think you do too. The outcome is going to be that we are going to win. We're going to win! We're going to win because we're going to work like the devil and like never before. Isn't that right?

But we ought to make no mistake about it in the meantime. In the meantime, let's be very clear, for ourselves and for the people of Oregon who hear our voices. Let's be very clear about who is running America today. America is being run today by an administration and by a President, who vetoed last week the only piece of anti-recession legislation that had a chance of passing in this session of Congress, and that's the housing bill I introduced one hundred days ago.

Vetoed a man who said, and I just happen to have a copy of his veto message, just happened to bring it along with me.

It says right here, "according to our budget, that this housing bill would have created 400,000 jobs for Americans, 50,000 new jobs for Oregonians, and come to 3 billion board feet of lumber production. It says right here in his veto message, "that the administration can't justify this piece of legislation." That it can't be justified. It can't be justified!

I think that's an incredible political fact, it's certainly a very interesting way to look at the economics of this country today. Can't they hear themselves? I just read, had in my hands on the day when I was going toe to toe, against the President of the United States, in sustaining the veto, trying to override it, and by the way, we came within 80 votes of telling the President, we came within 80 votes of beating him.

But while I was standing on the floor of the House trying to override the veto, I had in my hands some very interesting statistics provided by the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO. And I thought it was very interesting, to say the very least, that this administration found no justification for a housing bill at this time.

Because here are the statistics that I was reviewing and told my colleagues. Today, 90% of the construction boilermakers of this country are out of work. 90%. Not 6%, not 5%. 90% of the boilermakers are out of work. 70% of the carpenters in Portland are out of work. 61% of the bricklayers of this state, in the Portland area, according to the national statistics are out of work. And all of them out of hope. 44% of the plumbers. 50% of the painters. And this administration says that there is no justification for a piece of anti-recession legislation that was going to put these people back to work?

What's going on here? Who are these people? What's wrong with the President? Where has he been? Did someone fail to awaken him?

God forbid, the President was wrong. He vetoed what may very well be the last best hope of Oregon reviving and coming through this recession. They won. It's important for this convention to know that they knew exactly what they were doing. And if you don't believe me, let me show you a quote from a very interesting gentleman, he is the finance chairman of the national Republican party. And I happen to be reading you a quote, that this gentleman, Mr. Richard DeVos, stated on June 4th of this year. It sort of explains why this administration finds no justification to sign the bill that would mean jobs for 400,000 Americans.

Here is the quote. Listen to the words. "This recession has been a beneficial thing, and has been a cleansing thing for this society." Quote. Unquote. Now perhaps the Chairman of the national Republican party thinks that. A cleansing thing! Can you believe it? It's one thing for them to think it, but they had to come out and say it!

And who's clock do you thing they're going to clean my friends? It's yours. And your brothers and sisters all over this land. Working people. Working people, ordinary people, people who only want a chance to make it for themselves. People who's sweat of their own labor has built this country in the first place. That's who's clock they intend to clean. Who are these people. I mean who are these people? Who think somehow that this is some reflection of the traditional sense of America's fair play? Who are these people running America today?

Well you don't have to look very hard to find out. A few statistics tells the whole story. Let me go over just a few of those statistics because I think we all pretty much know it, but we can never be reminded often enough. The statistics I want to go over with you are the income figures of this cabinet in this Administration. This is the richest cabinet in the history of this Republic. Listen to the outside earnings of the chief \_\_\_\_\_, the high priests of this administration. Secretary Malcolm Baldrige, felt that his government salary wasn't enough for 1982 so he got outside earnings of \$2 million dollars, last year. Treasury Secretary Donald Regan, former chairman of Merrill-Lynch. He's bullish on Reagonomics.

You want to know why? Let me tell you what he earned in 1981. \$750,000 -- outside earnings, over and above what the taxpayers paid him to represent them as the Treasury Secretary of the United States. Caspar Weinberger, remember him? The great deed-maker who wants to sell arms to every third-rate dictator on the face of the globe. Coincidence that Caspar worked for a defense contractor before he became Defense Secretary. Caspar Weinberger last year earned \$670,000 in outside earnings. Secretary Donovan. You're great friend, right? Secretary Donovan's going to make it through this recession my friends because he earned \_\_\_\_\_ \$241,000 in 1981. Frankly I can't leave out one of the really fine, lovable people in this Administration, and that's the CIA Director William Casey. He sees a Russian behind every bush.

He thinks people who just honestly care about managing their natural resources are sinister forces. The CIA Director has a little hedge against this recession. In 1981, over his government salary he earned \$442,000.

That's the list. It goes on. But those are some of the high priests. Those are some of the real leaders. And that's the Administration. That's the team that's telling every American today as the recession's bleeding them of almost all hope of providing an education for their kids, of providing a house and homeownership for their family, and they're being led, this administration, these people are saying to the average person -- Be a little bit more patient. Hang on just a little longer. Suffer just a little more. Be just a little bit more patriotic and everything's going to be just fine.

It's going to be fine. It's going to be fine for Cap Weinberger. He's going to make it. I think that \$670,000 in outside earnings, that little nest egg, is going to get Caspar Weinberger through all of this. He's going to make it. And all those other people too.

But what about the mill worker in Tillamook County? Who is running out of unemployment benefits. Is he going to make it? What about the bricklayer in Portland who is beginning to lose hope because there are no jobs available? Is that person going to make it? What about all of the working people who simply want to work, the 11% unemployed in Oregon. Are they going to make it? That's the issue. That's the issue.

I don't think the people of Oregon can afford to be patient. They don't have any clout that the rich club that we know runs the capital of the United States commands. And that's what we have got to resolve in this convention. As we do in every convention right through the heart of this country. That we are going to elect a state congressional delegation that will operate as a restraint on these men when they try to put through their reckless policy that is throwing people out of work in order to make it possible to finance a tax cut for the wealthy corporations in this land. We've got to do that.

We've got to elect a state delegation with every vote -- not just three votes out of four -- but every vote, all five votes in the House of Representatives. We'll stand up for the people of Oregon and tell the President his policies are wrong. Mr. President we don't buy into that. We don't buy into that. We're going to vote for our people -- not the White House.

My friends, we dare not fail to elect such a delegation in Oregon this year. We dare not fail. The stakes we're fighting for in budgets and taxes alone are far too great for any of us to sit on our laurels. To remember the political victories of times past. To remember the heyday and then forget the real work we've got to do this year in electing that kind of a delegation.

The stakes are too high. These are table stakes. Look at the damage already done. Ten million Americans out of work and virtually out of hope. Families and communities being destroyed. Child abuse - up. Wife beating - up. Violence - up. Hopes down. Jobs - down. Progress - down. We dare not fail. We must face the challenge. We must face the task.

And given the damage that's already been done, it hasn't taken very long, 18 months or so, given the damage that's already been done to ordinary people and to this country, I think it's worthwhile to pause just for a second at this great convention and reflect on just how it was that this package of budget cuts and tax cuts were sold to America in the first place. Do you remember the promises we heard from the White House, and from their ranches in L.A., from the floor of the House of Representatives, including Denny Smith, from the state of Oregon.

These budget cuts that took \$36 billion dollars out of people programs and left tobacco subsidies untouched funded the beginning of history's largest arms race, and passed out the most reckless tax cut for the largest corporations ever conceived in this country.

This package was to unleash the most immediate, unprecedented, boom of economic activity this country had ever seen. And my friends it was only that promise, that pretention, as skeptical and as doubtful as all these things to this member of Congress seemed to be, it was only that promise of general prosperity, it was only that promise that kept this program from being from the outset a raw shift of resources from the folks at the bottom of society to the folks at the top.

And where are we today given that basis, that sales job that we were given in this country? Has the boom happened? Is this prosperity? I read in the newspaper the other day that 500 oil\_\_\_ who are out of work stood in line for hours for 30 minimum wage jobs in a restaurant in downtown Salem. Is that the prosperity we were promised after we had this shift of resources, of taxes for the rich and budget cuts for the middle-class and poor. That's not prosperity -- you and I both know it. Now we hear a lot about this economic package. And we're going to hear a lot more about it. And we hear a lot about deficits.

Well, I'm here to tell you that I came down to this convention to tell you we need to attack not one, but two deficits, perpetrated by this administration. The first deficit is the obvious one -- the treasury deficit -- \$182 billion dollars in red caused by a runaway military spending program and a tax cut that almost gave away the store to corporate America. \$182 billion dollars, causing interest rates to go up and throwing Americans out of work. And we can pound on that throughout this convention and we should. But my friends I came down to attack the second deficit in this economic package and I'm talking about the moral deficit in Reaganomics. The moral deficit.

Because without the possibility that it will hope to benefit everyone, rich people alike, the entire moral basis of Reaganomics totally collapses and the people of this country know it and they're going to say it on November of 1982.

And we're all going to help them right?

We've got a job to do. I remember standing before you last year, talking about the incredible challenge, the crossroads that this country is at. This is a generational political fight -- to determine who's going to run America.

When the history of your life and mine, someone is going to take a count as to who stood up and fought to turn this direction around and who sat on their ass. We've got a job to do. Labor has always risen to every one of these challenges throughout the history of this country and it's going to rise to this challenge again today. We've got a job to do. A big job to do.

And I know, my friends, I know that it's difficult. I know it's difficult for you, for labor, for the people within your movement that you represent because you're hurting. You're full of hurtin', and it's easy to get depressed.

And you get so depressed when you're setting down here and your own labor movement has financial problems and you're having to debate tax proposals that no one wants in order to stay alive in your movement. And you listen to Wall Street and you hear a string of defeat coming out the tickertape of the news organizations and it's easy to be depressed. It's easy to throw in the towel and to say it's just not going to make a difference what I do.

Let me tell you something. That's what they're counting on. That's what they're banking on. They expect that to happen. They want labor to sit on its hands. They want to break labor as a political force, they want to break the progressive movement in this country. They want to polarize us so much that we will have an economic agenda of this kind that we've been inflicted with for the last eighteen months, to live under for the next several decades.

That's what we've got to stop. So it's now or never. This is the year to do it. If the 1982 elections do not send the kind of message we want to send to the White House and to the country. The kind of message that says Reaganomics is not safe politics and that anyone buying on is buying on to his own political death warrant. If we don't send that kind of a message, that will be what the history of our lives will be when it's written.

And I'm not going to sit back and let that happen. And if I know the men and women of this organization, I don't think you're cut out of that kind of cloth either. I think you're fighters and I think you're going to fight back. And I think we're going to win!

We will prevail. A Democratic President once said, and I want to say this because we're going to take some defeats between now and then. You're going to hear more bad news out of Washington. You're going to take some more defeats. But a Democratic President once said, and I think it serves us today very well. He said, "I would rather lose on a side that morally will final prevail than ever win on a side that morally is doomed to fail."

And so we are going to prevail. You can feel it if you travel with Jim Weaver in the fourth district or with Les AuCoin in the first district or with Ruth McFarland in the fifth district or with LarryAnn Willis in the second district or with Ron Wyden in the third. You can feel it.

It's there. There's a rumbling in the grassroots in which the people of all political parties that are sensible are saying we're not going to take it anymore. We're going to turn it around. We're not going to have this as our epitaph when our lives are written. We're going to turn it around. We're going to prevail, and when we do, when we do we're going to get this country back in the business of building jobs -- not bombs. Of funding people, not tobacco.

And we're going to get this country in the business of freezing deployment, the manufacturing, and the development of nuclear weapons, rather than freezing our senior citizens. We're going to win. No question.