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introduction, particularly to this convention. One of those who is always in the front ranks for organized labor. By the way, and I don't think you need to read the whole text of those brochures on the table, but it does tell you something about who our Congressman's opponent is all about. Being a schoolteacher, I can't even pronounce the guy's name, and I am not even about to learn how to pronounce his name. The only name I need to pronounce in the First District is Congressman Les AuCoin. Congressman AuCoin.The delegates rose and applauded....

ADDRESS
OF THE
HONORABLE LES AUCOIN
CONGRESSMAN, FIRST DISTRICT

*Speech &
Statement file
1982
AFL-CIO Speech*

Thank you very much for the introduction. And I want to say first to all to the delegates to this great convention, how very pleased I am to be able to stand before you again, this convention of the greatest social movement in the history of this country; the movement of organized labor. I want to say too how pleased I am to be back among the people I count on as my friends.

This year more than ever before, more than at any time I can remember, there is a purpose for you and me to be here today. Now, I want to say it's not very complicated. It's not very complicated or very hard to understand. That purpose is that we intend to come out of this convention

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with a commitment to say something loud and clear at the ballot box come November of this year; and that is that we, the people, want to take the government of this country back in our hands again. (Applause) And, my friends, we're going to take it again. We're going to take it out -- (Applause) -- of the hands of the fat cats who have no conception about pain or misery or hopelessness or joblessness, and we're going to put it back in the hands of ordinary people, who built this country and only want a chance to go to work again. That's what we're going to do. (Applause) Back, if I might say so, into the hands of the tax paying 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. (Applause) I don't think any of us ought to make any mistake about it; that's exactly what this election year is all about.

This, my friends, is a fight, a fight over who is going to run America. Is it going to be rich men who have never stood in unemployment lines and have no understanding of what it means to be a construction boiler maker, the ranks of whom today are 90 per cent unemployed? Is this country going to be run by rich men and ultraconservatives who have no conception of what Reaganomics are doing to devastate the communities and families across this state and across this country?

Or instead, is this great country going to be run by you, and by your neighbors, and by workers everywhere, who understand only too well what those things mean because, this administration has been dishing it out to them on those terms for the last 18 months and we're not going to take it any longer? (Applause)

You know, I have no doubt whatsoever what the outcome of that fight between now and November is going to be. I know what the outcome of that fight is going to be, and I think you do too. The outcome is going to be that we're going to win. We're going to win! We're going to win because we're going to work like we've never worked before. You're darned right! it's 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 today by an administration headed by a President who vetoed last week the only piece of anti-recession legislation that has a chance of passing in this session of Congress, and that's the housing bill I authored 100 days ago, vetoed by a man who said -- and I just happen to have a copy of his veto message, (Laughter) just happened to bring it along with me today. (Applause) It says right here, according to our President, that this

housing bill that would have created 400,000 jobs for Americans, 5500 jobs for Oregonians, would have produced 3.2 billion board feet of lumber production. It says right here in this veto message, that the administration can't justify this piece of legislation, that it can't be justified. That it can't be justified. I think that's an incredible political fact. It certainly a very interesting way to look at the economics of this country today. Can't be justified? I just read, had it in my hands on the day I was going toe-to-toe against the President of the United States in debating the veto, in trying to override it -- and, by the way, we came within eight votes of telling the President his veto was all wet and we came within eight votes of beating him.

Well, when I was standing on the floor of the House, going toe-to-toe with him, trying to override that 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 were the statistics that I was reviewing and told my my colleagues: Today 90 per cent of the construction boilermakers of this country are out of work. 90 per cent. Not six per cent. Not five per cent, 90 per cent of the boilermakers are out of work. Seventy per cent of the

carpenters in Portland are out of work; 61 per cent of the brick layers of this state in the Portland area, according to the national statistics, are out of work, and almost out of hope. Forty-four per cent of the plumbers. Sixty per cent cent of the painters, and this administration says there is no justification for a piece of anti-recession legislation that is going to put these people back to work.

What's going on here? Who are these people? What's come over the President? Where has he been? Did someone fail to awaken him? (Applause) The sad truth is, the President was wide awake, and so were his ultra-conservative compatriots and allies on the floor of the House of Representatives when they thwarted what may very well may be the last best hope for Oregon surviving and coming through this recession. They were wide awake. 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 share with you a quote, from a very interesting gentleman. I've never met him. I really don't want to. He is the Finance Chairman of the National Republican Party, but I want to read to you a quote that this gentleman, Mr. Richard Defoss, stated on June 1st of this year about the state of the economy. It helps explain why the administration finds no justification to sign a bill that would mean jobs for 400,000 Americans. Here's the quote. Listen to the words.

"This recession has been a beneficial thing and

has been a cleansing thing to this society."

The Finance Chairman of the National Republican Party said that. A cleansing thing? Can you believe it? And it's one thing for them to think it but they've got the nerve to say it! (Laughter and applause) And whose clock do you think 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 themselves, people whose sweat of their own labor has built this country in the first place. That's whose clock they intend to clean.

Who are these people? I mean, who are these people, who think, somenow that that is some reflection of the traditional sense of American fair play. Who are these people running America today? Well, you don't have to look very hard to find out. A few statistics tell the whole story. Let me go over just a few of those statistics. 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 ever assembled in the history of this republic. Listen to the outside earnings of the key players, the high priests of this Administration:

Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige felt that his government salary wasn't enough in 1981 so he got an

outside earnings of \$2 million last year. Two million dollars!

Treasury Secretary Donald Regan, former Chairman of Merrill Lynch: He's bullish on Reaganomics. (Laughter) Bullish on Reaganomics. You want to know why? Look what he earned in 1981. Seven hundred and 15 thousand dollars outside earnings over and above what the tax payers paid him to represent them as Treasury Secretary of the United States.

Caspar Weinberger: Remember him? The Great Peacemaker, who wants to sell arms to every third-rate dictator on the face of the globe. A coincidence that he happened to work for a defense contractor before he became Defense Secretary. Caspa Weinberger, last year, earned \$670,000 in outside earnings.

Secretary Donovan, your great friend, right? Secretary Donovan is going to make it through this recession, my friends, because he earned over his government salary \$241,000 in 1981.

Finally I can't leave out one of the really fine, lovable people of this administration. That's the CIA director, William Casey. He sees a Russian behind every bush -- (Applause) -- but he thinks people who just honestly care about managing our natural resources are sinister forces. The CIA Director had 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 average Americans today, as the recession bleeds them of almost all hope of providing an education for their kids, of providing a house and home ownership for their families. As they're being bled, 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 is 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 the \$670,000 of outside earnings, that little nest egg, is going to get Caspar Weinberger through all of this. He is going to make it. And all these other ones will too. But what about the millworker in Tillamook County, who is running out of unemployment benefits. Is he going to make it? What about 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 the working people who simply want to work, the 11 per cent 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 the ability to command these incomes that the rich club, that we know as the Cabinet of United States, commands. And that's why we have got to resolve in this convention, as we do in every convention like this across 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 pursue their reckless policies, that are throwing people out of work in order to make it possible to finance a tax cut for the wealthiest corporations in this land. We've got to do that. (Applause) We've got to elect a state delegation in which every vote, not just three votes out of four, but every vote, all five votes in the House of Representatives, will stand up for the people of Oregon and say to this President when his policies are wrong, "Mr. President, we don't buy into that crap; we don't buy into that. We're going to vote for our people, not the White House." (Applause)

My friends, listen to me. We dare not fail to elect such a delegation in Oregon this year. We dare not fail. The stakes we are playing 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 to forget the real work that 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 beatings up; violence up; hope down; jobs down; profits down. We dare not fail. We must face this challenge. We must face this task that, given the damage that's already been done, 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 rhetoric back in 1981 from the White House and from the apologists and allies on the floor of the House of Representatives, including Denny Smith of State of Oregon? These budget cuts, that took \$36 million 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 cuts for the largest corporations ever conceived in this country. This package was promised because it was to unleash the most immediate, unprecedented boom of economic activity this country has ever seen. My friends, it was only that promise, that pretension, as skeptical and as doubtful as it always seemed to this member of Congress to be, it was only that promise of general prosperity that would lift the whole nation, rich and poor alike. It was only that promise that kept this program from

being, from the outset, a raw shirt 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? Did the boom happen? Is this prosperity? I read in the newspaper the other day that 500 Oregonians, 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 that we were promised after we had this shirt 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.

You know, we hear a lot when we look at this economic package. And we're going to hear a lot more about it. We hear a lot about deficits. Well, I want to tell you that I came down to this convention to attack, not one, but two deficits perpetrated by this administration. The first first deficit is the obvious one: the Treasury deficit, \$182 billion in red ink caused by a runaway military spending program and a tax cut that almost gave away the store to corporate America; \$182 billion, causing interest rates to go up, and throwing Americans out of work. That's the obvious deficit. 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 am talking about the moral deficit in Reaganomics, the moral deficit --

(Applause) -- because without the prosperity that was supposed to benefit everyone, rich and poor 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. (Applause) 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 this country is at. This is a generational political fight, this question of who is going to run America. When the history of your life and mine is written, someone's going to take account as to who stood up and fought to turn this direction around and who sat on their hands.

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 it's difficult. I know it's difficult for you, for labor and for the people within your movement that you represent, because you're hurting. And your folks are hurting and it's easy to get depressed. And you get so depressed when you're sitting 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 as a movement, and you listen to Washington and you hear a string

of defeats coming off the ticker tape, out 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 any 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 of this country. They want to demoralize it so much that we have an economic agenda of this kind, that we've been inflicted with for the last 18 months, to live under for the next several decades. That's what we've got to stop.

So if ever, if ever we felt depressed and rose to the occasion and fought that depression and fought back, 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 who buys 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 am not one who's willing 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! (Applause). We will prevail.

A Democratic president once said, 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 finally prevail than ever win on a side that morally is doomed to fail." That's what we've got to remember. (Applause)

And so we are going to prevail. You can feel it. If you travel with Jim Weaver in the 4th District or with Les Aucoin in the 1st District, or with Ruth McFarland in the 5th District, or with Larryann Willis in the 2nd District, or with Ron Wyden in the 3rd, you can feel it! (Applause) It's there. There is a rumbling of grass roots in which the people of both political parties that are sensible are saying that we are not going to take it any longer. 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, funding people not tobacco. (Applause) And we're going to get this country in the business of freezing the deployment, the manufacturing, and the development of nuclear weapons rather than freezing

our senior citizens. That's our task. We're going to win! God bless you. (Applause)

PRESIDENT FLETCHER: While we are waiting for Senator Ruth McFarland, I'll announce the Escort Committee for the Majority Leader of the Oregon House, Grattan Kerans. That Escort Committee is Carl Below, Oregon State Fire Fighters; Ed Clay of UFCW 1092; Tom Ordonez, of CWA 9207; and Leon Lacefield, of Steelworkers 8141.

I think it would be appropriate at this time to remember that this labor movement that we have today -- let's be in order, folks. I just want to recognize from the floor one of those people who has made the Oregon AFL-CIO what I believe is a great organization. There is still many people here who know him. I know I learned a great deal from him, because when I become involved in the sixties, he was the Education Director. He is today Education Director Emeritus of the Oregon AFL-CIO, and with his good wife, Tommy Scanlon and Juanita, will you please stand in the back. (Applause)

The reason that I am so cautious about expressing any particular support for any political candidates is because I was directed by my Executive Board Sunday not to be quite so partisan before the organization makes its endorsement. So I will be restrained by that advice, even though I know what I think we're going to do in some races.

Our next candidate, as I said, State Senator Ruth