

national interest.

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GEORGE BUSH

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Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters on a Possible Railroad Strike

June 23, 1992

The President. Well, let me just say I've had a first-class briefing from Secretary Card, doing a first-rate job over there at Transportation. I'm very much concerned. Let us hope that some last-minute breakthrough will avert a strike. But my message today, after listening to the Secretary and understanding how bad it would be for the people of this country, is that should a strike occur, Congress ought to do in this instance what they've done twice before, two preceding events like this, and that is to move promptly to protect the American people and to end the strike through legislation. I feel very strongly about it, and I think in this instance, should a strike occur, Congress has an obligation to move fast to protect the American people, whether it's a lockout or a strike.

Q. How would they—

The President. Legislation like happened the last two times.

Q. Mr. President, would you do anything before the possibility of a strike? Is there some kind of intervention or emergency declaration or anything?

The President. No. Andy can answer that.

Secretary Card. The President has exercised that responsibility when he created the Presidential Emergency Board. So—

The President. And you see, it's reported back. It's made sound recommendations, and the Secretary has been working diligently to try to get various parties to come along. But the unilateral action by the President does not apply. The only thing that could stop the strike, if one occurs, is to have legislation.

Q. What is the economic impact? Why

is the economic impact so dire that Congress should move immediately?

The President. Well, first place, there's an enormous inconvenience to the American worker on the commuter side. And then as it begins to take a hold on moving freight and moving product, agricultural product for example, to market, it's terrible. So public good is not served by a prolonged strike. So it ought to end the day it begins.

Q. Mr. President, do you anticipate any downside in terms of political consequences for your reelection campaign with the rail strike?

The President. I have no idea of that. This is not a political matter. This is a matter of the national good and what's best for the American people. And what's best for the American people is to avoid a strike. But if a strike takes place, or a lockout, it could be ended and ended right away.

Q. Do you plan to call congressional leaders today, sir, to express your feelings?

The President. Well, they know our views; we've expressed it. But we were just talking about that. I might well do that. But if that would help, I'll do it.

Q. Have you been talking—

Q. If the legislation goes through, could it be passed?

The President. It could be done in a day. I mean yes, it's happened before. The last two times, I believe it was just one day.

Secretary Card. Seventeen hours.

The President. Yes, 17 hours, Andy is reminding me, was the last one.

Q. Have you been consulting with the automakers or the shippers or people that

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have urged you to take this action?

The President. The Secretary's talked to everybody, yes.

Q. Have you urged them not to do a lock-out if there's a partial strike?

The President. Well, I'd leave the technical questions to the Secretary. He's tried to avoid shutdowns in every way, and he's gone the extra mile. A lot of people have been cooperative, he tells me. So it's not a one-sided picture here. But the bottom line is, the public are not served by a strike that lasts for any time at all. And so the Congress should do now, if that's the case and there is a strike tomorrow, it ought to do what it's done to incidents before this: move. The last one took 17 hours to legislate it, to solve it. It can be done that quick or quicker.

Q. Is there any reason—

The President. This is a challenge to the Congress to do what's best for the American people, should it get to that.

Q. Would a rail strike hurt the economic recovery, sir? Could it throw it back?

The President. Yes it could. It could adversely affect the workers in this country, and it could adversely affect a lot of things, depending, obviously, how long it goes on.

Q. Is there any reason for optimism in collective bargaining—will resolve this thing at this point?

Secretary Card. They're still at the table, which is a good sign; so the dialog is continuing.

The President. You've got several different entities, is a part of the problem here. Some seem to think that it can be avoided, and others think not.

Q. But it sounds like, from making the statement to us, that you feel pretty pessimistic.

The President. I feel I cannot tell the American people that I think it will be resolved through negotiation as it should be. So I just think it's important to get in focus the fact that if there is a strike, it ought to be quickly solved by legislation.

Q. Anything from Capitol Hill whether they would go along with that, sir?

The President. Different reaction from different Members of Congress, I'm told.

Thank you very much for your interest.

Note: The President spoke at 11:54 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House, following a meeting with Secretary of Transportation Andrew H. Card, Jr.

Remarks at the Presentation Ceremony for the National Medal of Science and the National Medal of Technology

June 23, 1992

Thank you, and welcome to the Rose Garden. Well, thank you very much. And what a beautiful day here in the Rose Garden. May I salute Dr. Bromley; Dr. Bernthal, the Deputy Director of the National Science Foundation; and of course, over my right shoulder here, Secretary Barbara Franklin, Secretary of Commerce; also Congressman Vander Jagt, who's so interested in all of this; and so many special guests here today, and then three generations of American scientists.

As I look out at the group here of the men and women that we honor, you may remember what Albert Einstein said to his fellow scientists: "Concern for man himself and his fate must always form the chief in-

terest of all technical endeavors in order that the creations of our mind should be a blessing and not a curse to mankind." Today we honor men and women whose life's work answers Einstein's challenge. They bless mankind not only with the brilliance of their minds but with the integrity of their hearts.

I am very proud to present the National Medals of Science and Technology to our 16 recipients, to these men and women of persistent and, at times, clairvoyant determination. They've explained the frontiers of science on canvasses as infinitesimal as a single human cell and as infinite as space itself.