

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION
WESTERN HILLS MOTEL
SHAWNEE MISSION, KANSAS
APRIL 6, 1974

IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE THIS EVENING WITH KANSAS MEMBERS OF THE
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION.

THIS IS A SPECIAL OCCASION FOR ME, BECAUSE YOU ARE THE FIRST POSTAL
GROUP I HAVE ADDRESSED SINCE BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE SENATE POST OFFICE AND
CIVIL SERVICE COMMITTEE.

I WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF SERVING ON THIS
COMMITTEE. ITS CONCERN WITH POSTAL MATTERS IS ONE OF THE MOST BASIC AND
IMPORTANT JURISDICTIONS IN THE CONGRESS INsofar AS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE

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CONCERNED. THE POST OFFICE HAS MORE DIRECT, PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE AVERAGE CITIZEN THAN ANY OTHER ASPECT OF FEDERAL, STATE OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT. AND AS A CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, IT TAKES ON A UNIQUE IMPORTANCE IN THE CONGRESS.

ALTHOUGH THE RULES HAVE BEEN CHANGED SOMEWHAT IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, I BELIEVE THE COMMITTEE CONTINUES TO SERVE A MOST VALUABLE FUNCTION AS A CONTACT POINT FOR THE 220 MILLION AMERICANS WHO RELY ON THE MAIL AND FOR THE 600,000 MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE THE POSTAL SERVICE IN EVERY COMMUNITY IN THE NATION.

THEREFORE, I LOOK FORWARD TO INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMITTEE'S WORK AS WE MOVE AHEAD ON THE LONG AND SOMETIMES ROCKY ROAD TO A MODERN, UP-TO-DATE POSTAL SYSTEM.

INCREASED AWARENESS

PERHAPS THE MOST USEFUL UPSHOT OF THE TRIBULATIONS FACED IN RECENT YEARS BY THE U.S. POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT AND ITS SUCCESSOR, THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE,

MAY PROVE TO BE THE HEIGHTENED PUBLIC AWARENESS OF JUST HOW IMPORTANT THE SERVICE IS TO THE NATION.

FOR FAR TOO LONG -- 181 YEARS IN FACT -- THE POST OFFICE WAS TAKEN FOR GRANTED. MOST PEOPLE SIMPLY COUNTED ON THE MAIL GETTING THROUGH. A SUCCESSION OF ADMINISTRATIONS FAILED TO MEET THE NEEDS, FINANCIAL AND OTHERWISE, OF THIS TRULY GIANT INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISE. AND CONGRESS REFLECTED THE SAME VIEW THAT HELD SWAY IN THE COUNTRY.

A GREAT DEAL OF NEGLECT, FALSE ECONOMY, AND APATHY, WENT UNDER THE BRIDGE BEFORE THE INFAMOUS PRE-CHRISTMAS COLLAPSE OF CHICAGO'S MAIL-HANDLING SYSTEM IN 1966. THAT EVENT, HOWEVER, GAVE REAL MEANING TO THE 1967 WARNING BY THEN POSTMASTER GENERAL LARRY O'BRIEN THAT THE U.S. POST OFFICE WAS IN A CONSTANT, CLOSE RACE WITH CATASTROPHE. IT MADE BELIEVERS OF MOST AMERICANS. AND

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LARRY O'BRIEN'S SUCCESSORS, BOTH DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS, RECOMMENDED THE SAME APPROACH TO SOLVING THE PROBLEM -- SWEEPING REORGANIZATION.

PROBLEMS WITH REORGANIZATION

SO IN AUGUST, 1970, POSTAL REORGANIZATION FINALLY BECAME A REALITY WITH THE SIGNING INTO LAW OF THE POSTAL REORGANIZATION ACT. THE INDEPENDENT U.S. POSTAL SERVICE CAME INTO FULL BEING AS AN ENTITY OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ON JULY 1, 1971, SLIGHTLY LESS THAN THREE YEARS AGO.

I SUPPOSE IF WE HAVE LEARNED ANYTHING IN THIS PERIOD, IT IS THAT JUST PASSING A LAW PROVIDES NO INSTANT SOLUTIONS FOR SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

WITH A GREAT DEAL OF FANFARE AND GLOWING OPTIMISM, THE NEW POSTAL SERVICE LAUNCHED INTO THE ORIGINAL ROUND OF REORGANIZATION AND MODERNIZATION EFFORTS WHICH CULMINATED IN A BREAKDOWN IN SERVICE AROUND CHRISTMAS OF 1972. THE

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RESULTS OF NARROW MINDED CONCENTRATION ON COST FACTORS OVER SERVICE,
SCRAMBLED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES, INCOHERENT PERSONNEL POLICIES --
NOT TO MENTION THE WESTINGHOUSE STUDY AND FLIRTTATION WITH THE CORPS OF
ENGINEERS -- SET OFF A REAL EARTHQUAKE.

AND IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, FROM EVERY CORNER OF AMERICA CAME INCREASING
EVIDENCE THAT THE MAIL WAS NOT BEING TAKEN FOR GRANTED ANY MORE. IN FACT
OVER THIS PERIOD I RECEIVED MORE MAIL FROM THE PEOPLE OF KANSAS ON POSTAL PROBLEMS
THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE MATTER. I WOULD NOT WANT TO BELABOR THIS AUDIENCE WITH
ANY HORROR STORIES, BECAUSE I AM SURE YOU KNOW ENOUGH OF YOUR OWN. BUT AS ONE
INDICATION OF THE INTENSITY OF THE FEELINGS THAT WERE AROUSED, I WOULD REFER TO
THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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IN THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1973 NO FEWER THAN 17 SEPARATE BILLS WERE INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO REPEAL THE POSTAL REORGANIZATION ACT AND GO BACK TO A POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT. FORTY-SEVEN HOUSE BILLS AND A SENATE MEASURE WITH 11 SPONSORS SOUGHT TO REQUIRE ANNUAL POSTAL APPROPRIATIONS. AND 13 GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE REPORTS WERE ISSUED ON VARIOUS POSTAL OPERATIONS.

SENATE STUDY

IN ADDITION THE SENATE AUTHORIZED THE POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE COMMITTEE TO UNDERTAKE A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF POSTAL OPERATIONS IN ORDER TO DETERMINE IF THE SERVICE WAS REALLY COMPLYING WITH CONGRESS'S INTENT WHEN WE PASSED THE REORGANIZATION ACT.

I WAS NOT A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE DURING THIS INVESTIGATION, BUT I HAD BECOME A MEMBER WHEN THE REPORT WAS ISSUED LAST MONTH. IT IS A VERY

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INTERESTING AND CONSTRUCTIVE DOCUMENT, AND I BELIEVE IT SHEDS SOME IMPORTANT LIGHT ON WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AND WHERE WE MAY BE HEADED IN TERMS OF AMERICA'S POSTAL SYSTEM.

IN CAPSULE FORM THE REPORT'S FINDINGS COULD BE SUMMED UP THIS WAY: THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS OF IMPLEMENTING THE REORGANIZATION ACT WERE (1) INCREASED COSTS, (2) POORER SERVICE AND (3) WEAKENED SERVICE MORALE, BUT (4) THE WORST MAY NOW BE BEHIND US.

WHEN WE PASSED THE 1970 ACT, IT WAS DESIGNED TO PERMIT THE POSTAL SERVICE TO CONTROL ITS COSTS, RAISE ITS REVENUES, PROVIDE FOR GREATER STABILITY IN EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS, AND TO PLAN CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ON A LONG-TERM BASIS. THE LAW REMOVED THE POSTAL SERVICE FROM THE PURVIEW OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET AND FROM THE RESTRICTIONS OF A MULTITUDE OF OTHER LAWS REGARDING

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GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. OUR INTENTION WAS TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION WITH THE CAPABILITY TO CARRY OUT THE POLICY SET FORTH IN SECTION 101 OF THE NEW TITLE 39 OF THE U.S. CODE WHICH SAYS "THE POSTAL SERVICE SHALL HAVE AS ITS BASIC FUNCTION THE OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE POSTAL SERVICES TO BIND THE NATION TOGETHER THROUGH THE PERSONAL, EDUCATION, LITERARY, AND BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE OF THE PEOPLE."

EXPERIENCE AND THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS SUGGEST THAT THIS POLICY WAS NOT ALWAYS FOLLOWED.

ERRORS AND SETBACKS

*THE EXEMPTION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE FROM THE BUDGET AND ACCOUNTING ACT WAS CALLED INTO QUESTION IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF ITS OPERATION WHEN DISAGREEMENT WITH THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET AROSE OVER THE POSTAL SERVICE BUDGET.

*THE INVESTIGATION PROVED THERE WERE VALID COMPLAINTS THAT MAIL WAS DELAYED AS THE RESULT OF A POLICY EMPHASIZING COST REDUCTION ABOVE SERVICE, AND THE

POSTMASTER GENERAL HIMSELF SAID SO BEFORE THE COMMITTEE. REDUCED COLLECTION AND DELIVERY SERVICE AND CUTBACKS IN SATURDAY WINDOW SERVICES WERE AMONG THE MOST PROMINENT FEATURES OF THIS POLICY.

*EMPLOYMENT IN THE POSTAL SERVICE DROPPED BY SOME 40,000 PEOPLE IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS, BUT NOT BECAUSE THE WORKLOAD DISAPPEARED OR BECAUSE AUTOMATION INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY SO MUCH THAT THE MAIL COULD BE WORKED WITH FAR FEWER PEOPLE. TO THE CONTRARY, EARLY RETIREMENT COST THE SERVICE THOUSANDS OF EXTREMELY ABLE PEOPLE AT A CRUCIAL TIME, AND A HIRING FREEZE FURTHER DRAINED THE PERSONNEL RESERVOIR AND THE SERVICE'S CAPABILITIES. AND MORALE SUFFERED.

*DISMEMBERMENT OF THE BUREAU OF FACILITIES AND THE ILL-FATED TRANSFERRED OF ITS FUNCTIONS TO THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS WILL HAVE A DAMAGING IMPACT ON MODERNIZATION AND MECHANIZATION PROGRAMS FOR YEARS TO COME.

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*THE CONTINUITY OF MANAGEMENT INTENDED WHEN WE PASSED THE ACT IN 1970 HAS NOT BEEN ACHIEVED. THERE IS NO DEPUTY POSTMASTER GENERAL, AND THERE HAS NOT BEEN ONE FOR MOST OF THE TIME SINCE THE LAW WENT INTO EFFECT. THE TURNOVER IN UPPER AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT POSITIONS HAS BEEN ALMOST PHENOMENAL, WITH MANY POSITIONS HAVING BEEN FILLED BY THREE OR MORE PEOPLE.

*FINALLY, THE FREEDOM GIVEN THE POSTAL SERVICE WITH REGARD TO TRANSPORTATION HAS NOT BEEN EFFECTIVELY EXERCISED, AND THE COST FOR TRANSPORTATION HAS INCREASED BY ABOUT \$200 MILLION IN THE PAST TWO YEARS. THIS CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE AN EVEN GREATER PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE AS FUEL COSTS INCREASE. ON OUR STREETS AND HIGHWAYS ALONE 224,000 VEHICLES TRAVEL SOME 2.2 BILLION MILES A YEAR TO COLLECT, TRANSPORT AND DELIVER THE MAIL, AND FUEL-BASED REDUCTIONS IN AIRLINE SCHEDULES WILL HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT ON MAIL CAPACITY.

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WORST MAY BE PAST

SO, IN SHORT, WHILE WE REALIZE THERE ARE SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS, NOT ALL OF THE POSTAL SERVICE'S OWN MAKING, THE SITUATION SIMPLY IS NOT AS PROMISING TODAY AS WE HAD HOPED IT WOULD BE THREE YEARS AGO. BUT I BELIEVE THERE IS REASON TO HOPE THAT THE WORST IS BEHIND US, AND WE CAN LOOK FORWARD TO REALIZING SOME OF THE GOALS WE SET BACK IN 1970 FOR BETTER, MORE EFFICIENT MAIL SERVICE.

DEDICATED EMPLOYEES

LET ME SAY THAT IT IS MY EXPERIENCE, CONFIRMED BY OUR RECENT INVESTIGATIONS, THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS AT ALL LEVELS REMAIN DEDICATED TO MOVING THE MAIL. CERTAINLY, I INCLUDE THE EMPLOYEES OF LOCAL POST OFFICES -- PARTICULARLY HERE IN KANSAS -- IN THAT ASSESSMENT. I THINK THE SERVICE'S RECORD OF MOVING SOME 2.5 BILLION PIECES OF MAIL WITHOUT MAJOR DELAY OR

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DIFFICULTY DURING THE 1973 HOLIDAY SEASON PROVES THAT MANY IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE. AND IT ALSO SHOWS THAT THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO MAKE UP THE POSTAL SERVICE CAN AND WANT TO DO A GOOD JOB. AND THIS RECORD ESTABLISHES A FIRM BASIS FOR PRIDE IN THE ORGANIZATION, IN THE LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE IT RENDERS TO THE PUBLIC, AND IN EACH INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE'S OWN ROLE.

MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

IT APPEARS THAT MANAGEMENT HAS REDIRECTED ITS ATTENTION TOWARD EMPHASIZING THE "SERVICE" IN POSTAL SERVICE. THROUGHOUT 1973 THERE WAS A REDUCTION -- BUT NOT AN ELIMINATION -- OF THE LEVEL OF COMPLAINTS. AND THE RECORD OF PERFORMANCE OVER THE 1973 HOLIDAYS WAS CERTAINLY A PLUS.

IN ADDITION MANAGEMENT LIFTED THE HIRING FREEZE, MADE A GREATER EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH EMPLOYEE GROUPS, REFINED MANAGED MAIL PROCEDURES, ESTABLISHED A QUALITY CONTROL SYSTEM FOR MACHINE SORTING OF LETTERS, AND GRANTED MORE FLEXIBLE BUDGET AUTHORITY TO FIELD MANAGERS.

SOME MIGHT SAY THAT THESE WERE ONLY BASIC, COMMON SENSE APPROACHES THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED FROM THE START. BUT REGARDLESS OF TIMING, THEY HAVE BEEN INSTITUTED -- AND THEY ARE PAYING DIVIDENDS.

A TURNING POINT

PERHAPS -- AND HOPEFULLY -- WE WILL BE ABLE TO LOOK BACK ON 1973 AS THE TURNING POINT IN THE HISTORY OF THE POSTAL SERVICE. FOR I THINK THE SUCCESS ACHIEVED LAST YEAR IN IMPROVING SERVICE AND MEETING THE HOLIDAY MAIL CHALLENGE COULD PROVE TO BE AS IMPORTANT TO THE SERVICE, INTERNALLY, AS IT WAS TO THE PUBLIC AT LARGE.

THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM THERE NOW APPEARS TO BE A MORE POSITIVE "CAN DO" ATTITUDE. FROM HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON DOWN TO THE LOCAL POST OFFICE, I

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BELIEVE THERE IS A STRONGER, AND MORE OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK WITHIN OUR POSTAL SYSTEM ON ITS ABILITY TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS OF THE 1970 ACT.

AND AMONG THE SERVICE'S PATRONS, THE MILLIONS OF BUSINESSMEN, HOME AND APARTMENT DWELLERS, CHURCHES, SCHOOLS -- EVERYONE WITH AN ADDRESS OR POST OFFICE BOX -- THERE IS PERHAPS, AT LAST, A GLOW OF HOPE THAT THE MAIL IS FINALLY GOING TO GET STRAIGHTENED OUT.

I KNOW MY MAIL HAS REFLECTED THIS ATTITUDE. AND IN TRAVELING AROUND KANSAS, WHEN SOMEONE COMES UP TO ME WITH FIRE IN HIS EYES, IT IS MORE LIKELY TO BE A PROBLEM WITH FUEL, INFLATION OR BARBED WIRE THAT HE WANTS TO GET OFF HIS CHEST THAN A LETTER THAT TOOK FIVE DAYS TO TRAVEL ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

NO RETURN TO P.O. DEPARTMENT

AND BECAUSE OF THIS NEW ATTITUDE IN AND OUT OF THE POSTAL SERVICE, I THINK THERE IS MUCH LESS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT WE WILL SEE IT DONE AWAY WITH IN FAVOR OF A RETURN TO A POSTAL DEPARTMENT AGAIN. IN THE POST OFFICE COMMITTEE SUCH TALK SENDS COLD SHIVERS UP THE SPINES OF ANYONE WHO RECALLS THE "GOOD OLD DAYS." THERE IS CERTAINLY NO SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF SUCH A STEP, AND I THINK MANY IN CONGRESS ARE BEGINNING TO BREATHE EASIER AS OUR EFFORTS ON THE POSTAL REFORM ACT START TO BEAR FRUIT AT LAST.

PROBLEMS REMAIN

OF COURSE, MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE. I DO NOT THINK THINGS ARE AS BAD AS JACK ANDERSON WOULD WANT HIS READERS TO BELIEVE.

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BUT THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT MUCH MORE THAN A BEGINNING HAS BEEN MADE IN THE JOB OF SOLVING THE PROBLEMS THAT EXIST. THE QUALITY OF RURAL SERVICE IS A CONTINUING MATTER OF ATTENTION. AND COSTS REMAINS THE LARGEST SINGLE CONCERN FOR THE SERVICE AND FOR THE POSTAGE-PAYING PUBLIC. THE NEW TEN-CENT STAMP IS JUST ABOUT AS POPULAR AS FIFTY-CENT GASOLINE. BUT, CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT THE POSTAL SERVICE BUDGET CAN PROBABLY BE EXPECTED TO RISE BY NO LESS THAN 10 PERCENT A YEAR THE COST OF POSTAGE CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO SHRINK.

THIS POINTS TO SOME SORT OF HARD DECISIONS TO BE MADE IN THE SERVICE AND IN CONGRESS ON THE QUESTION OF PUBLIC SUBSIDIES. THIS WILL NOT BE AN EASY OR A CLEAR-CUT MATTER, SO I EXPECT THAT A GOOD DEAL OF CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN BEFORE ANY DECISIONS ARE MADE.

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SINCE MANPOWER COSTS ACCOUNT FOR ABOUT 85 PERCENT OF ALL POSTAL EXPENSES, THE PRODUCTIVITY OF EVERY EMPLOYEE IN THE SYSTEM IS GOING TO BE A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN THE FUTURE OF COSTS AND QUALITY IN MAIL SERVICE. AND THIS IS MORE THAN JUST A MATTER OF MECHANIZATION OR ORGANIZATION CHARTS. IT RESTS TO A CRITICAL EXTENT ON THE ATTITUDE AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT OF EVERYONE FROM THE LOCAL CLERKS, CARRIERS AND SUPERVISORS ALL THE WAY UP THROUGH THE DISTRICT AND REGIONAL OFFICES TO THE PMG IN WASHINGTON.

CONFIDENCE IN THE POSTAL SERVICE

I HAVE GREAT CONFIDENCE IN THE ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE POSTAL SERVICE. YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH SOME ROUGH TIMES OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. BUT YOU WEATHERED THE STORM AND YOU HAVE DEMONSTRATED A GREAT DEAL OF POISE UNDER VERY DIFFICULT CONDITIONS.

AS A NEW MEMBER OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE WHICH DEALS WITH POSTAL MATTERS, I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU AND THE ENTIRE SERVICE TOWARD THE GOAL OF "PROMPT, RELIABLE AND EFFICIENT" MAIL SERVICE FOR ALL AMERICANS.