

# News

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of Labor



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**SECRETARY ELIZABETH DOLE  
REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR HALL OF FAME CEREMONY  
SEPTEMBER 22, 1989  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Thank you, Bill, and good afternoon to all. It's a special pleasure to welcome the family members of our inductees. I hope to meet each of you after the ceremony.

From members of Congress to union presidents to civil rights leaders, we are very privileged to have so many distinguished guests with us this afternoon.

But the story of the Labor Department is the story of America's working men and women--so every person here is a distinguished guest in our book.

I am very proud to work in a building which houses the Labor Hall of Fame. This hall serves as a permanent reminder of the debt that America owes to our labor force.

My heartfelt thanks to Bill Usery for his service as Chairman of the Friends of the Department of Labor and to Monsignor George Higgins and his selection committee for their tremendous work in choosing our new inductees: **John L. Lewis, A. Philip Randolph, James Mitchell, George Meany.**

Four outstanding Americans who are inspirations to me because they each made a positive difference to our nation and our world. And as I studied the lives of our honorees, it was clear how strongly we continue to be influenced by their legacies. The contributions of these men were many, but each championed a different cause that remains on the top of the Department of Labor's agenda.

**John L. Lewis** began his working career as a coal miner, as his father and grandfather before him. The hours were long, the work hard, and the conditions dangerous.

These were conditions that Lewis would always remember during his 39 years as President of the United Mine Workers. A strong wit, a deep voice, and the most famous eyebrows in the country

combined to make Lewis a familiar figure to all Americans. But it was his devotion to improving the safety of mine workers that earned him a permanent place in our nation's conscience.

The history of coal mining in early and mid-20th century America was a grim history, indeed. Thousands of men died or were severely injured each year in mining accidents. The plight of these men and their families was the mission of John L. Lewis.

Steadily, unrelentingly, Lewis exhorted and demanded that mine owners and the government work to improve safety conditions. Soon, Lewis's cause was joined by the American public who were swayed by his eloquence and the rightness of his cause. The Federal Mine Safety Law passed in 1952 is a monument to Lewis's leadership.

Last week's tragedy in Kentucky reminds us that the work of John L. Lewis is not complete, and that it is our duty--our responsibility--to ensure that every American, whether in mines, offices, or factories, works in a safe and healthy environment.

This responsibility is on my mind each day, and worker safety is one of my top priorities.

While Lewis walked with Presidents, he never forgot his mission to improve the life of America's working men and women. This was a mission shared by our second honoree.

**A. Philip Randolph** was born in Florida 100 years ago, the son of a preacher who was as poor as his parishioners.

As a young boy, Randolph dreamed of following his father's footsteps. And while he never became a preacher, Randolph would eventually minister to millions of disadvantaged Americans.

As President of The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Randolph never ceased in his work to open unions and workplaces to black Americans, and to open the minds of all Americans. He organized the Negro-America Labor Council which advocated fair play to all labor, regardless of race or color. His work led President Franklin Roosevelt to establish the Fair Employment Practices Commission which barred employers in defense plants from discriminating against minorities.

Because of Randolph's efforts, the labor movement would emerge in the 1960's as one of the strongest supporters of civil rights legislation. In speaking to the AFL-CIO in 1963, Randolph said **"The labor movement...must move forward with a new evangelical spirit to reach down and lift up the poor workers, the disinherited, those in poverty in despair."**

A. Philip Randolph accomplished as much as one man could. But there is still much to be done to fulfill his dream.

While our unemployment rate remains at or near 5.2%--a 15 year low--minority youth unemployment is a staggering 37%.

We are blessed, however, with a real window of opportunity to reduce this number. Our workforce is growing at a rate of only 1% annually--that's slower than at any time in the last 40 years. As a consequence, workers are in great demand, and employers will no longer be able to afford discrimination.

Those who have been on the outside looking in--many women, members of minorities, the disadvantaged, the disabled truly have unprecedented opportunities for productive work.

I firmly believe that we will not totally eliminate discrimination from our society until we have stamped it out of our economy. And we will not stamp it out of our economy until every American--regardless of color--has the chance to gain the education, the skills, and the self-confidence necessary to compete and succeed.

And by providing those key elements, we can fulfill A. Philip Randolph's dream--that every man and woman who wants a job can have a job.

The fact that the Department of Labor has an active role to play in providing education and skills to our workforce is largely due to the accomplishments of our third honoree.

When **James Mitchell** became President Eisenhower's Secretary of Labor in 1953, he took office at a time of many disputes between labor and management. Indeed, the New York Times observed that the work ahead for Mitchell was akin to **"heading into an arctic gale in a swimsuit."**

Mitchell's abilities and fairness to all parties enabled him to succeed beyond anyone's expectations. Mitchell was the first Secretary who assumed leadership over federal labor agencies outside the Department of Labor. He began a policy of promoting outstanding and talented career employees, which have always been a major part of the Department of Labor's strength.

Perhaps most importantly, he initiated job training programs which are one of the foremost functions of today's Department of Labor. By recognizing the need to upgrade the skills of our workforce, James Mitchell laid the groundwork for the Job Corps, for the JTPA, and for the host of training and retraining programs that exist today.

One of the most critical challenges our nation faces today is the fact that the skills of our workforce have not kept pace with the changes in the workplace.

This challenge was addressed in the final report of the Secretary's Commission on Workforce Quality, presented to me on Labor Day.

This Commission was chaired by Dick Shubert, a former Deputy Secretary of Labor, former president of Bethlehem Steel and immediate past president of the American Red Cross. The blue-ribbon Commission included three major union leaders, and many other outstanding individuals. Their thorough and thought-provoking report will shape private and public policy for years to come.

Mitchell eloquently summarized his mission as Secretary of Labor when he said,

**"More than ever before in it's history, our nation needs men and women...motivated by desire to realize fully their talents and capabilities...Men and women who are willing to accept a challenge--who are willing to become engaged in the business of the community, the state, and the nation."**

The portrait of James Mitchell that hangs in my office serves as a constant reminder of those words and an inspiration to help complete his mission.

While James Mitchell advocated that working men and women become engaged in the business of their community, state, and nation, it was our fourth honoree, **George Meany**, who involved the labor force in the business of our world.

During his 24 years as President of the AFL-CIO, George Meany never tired of his mission; improving the lives of working men and women across the globe.

Meany believed that a nation was not free unless its trade unions were free. Under his leadership, the AFL-CIO became active in supporting European labor unions and in opposing Communist government-dominated organizations that denied basic human freedoms.

The spirit of George Meany can be seen in the unswerving support that Lane Kirkland and the AFL-CIO have provided Solidarity in Poland. This support began in the difficult days of the birth of Solidarity, and greatly contributed to the breathtaking changes in Poland today. The ramifications for democracy if this experiment succeeds--and it must--are limitless.

My husband and I recently travelled to Poland, where we arrived on the very day of Prime Minister Mazowiecki's election. We attended a Solidarity Caucus after that election. And in that room, you could almost feel the spirit of democracy come to life.

It was a feeling that I will always remember, and both Bob and I returned from our journey committed to doing more for Poland.

It was a commitment that was strengthened by the words of Lech Walesa, who told us that **"A great weight has been lifted from Poland, but we can not sustain it without help from America."**

George Meany's life was devoted to lifting weights off America's and the world's workers. We can honor him and secure the gratitude of history by working with our allies to ensure that Poland and her people, who've survived so many dark years of hardship and suffering, can finally live in the warm light of freedom.

The work of each of our other honorees--worker safety, opening our labor force to all Americans, providing the training necessary for a quality workforce--all was also the work of George Meany. He remains a constant reminder of the positive changes that unions continually bring to American life.

John L. Lewis, A. Philip Randolph, James Mitchell, George Meany--four men truly devoted to making a positive difference in the lives of America's working men and women, and four men with missions that are now ours to carry on.

Their lives, their accomplishments, their dreams have more than earned them a permanent place in the Labor Hall of Fame, and a permanent place in our hearts.

Thank you and God bless you all.