

Remarks by Secretary of Commerce Donald L. Evans

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Thank you, Jim, for that kind introduction. I want to congratulate Steve McDaniel on his successful tenure as your chairman and extend best wishes to you, Senator Dunlap, as you take the helm. ALEC has been and will continue to be in good hands.

A little over seventeen years ago, there was another fellow who stood at a lectern preparing to address a crowd. His audience was just a little bigger -- by about 19,000. He was speaking to the 1984 Democratic National Convention. In San Francisco.

But this fellow -- Mario Cuomo -- proceeded to warn America with a tale of two cities. America was not the "Shining City On A Hill" hailed by Ronald Reagan, he said. It was a country where rich preyed upon poor and a few threatened many.

As Mr. Cuomo saw it, Ronald Reagan's America was a country club, littered on all sides by slums and ghettos that piled higher every day. Only a forceful federal government could save America.

Since September 11th, I've been reminded of that speech. It's almost two decades later, and we are again facing fundamental, big questions.

How do we repair our economy? What is best for the peace of our nation? What is our responsibility to the world?

We have the choice, now, not of two cities, but of two Americas.

One is confident and strong, filled not with "what ifs" but with "why nots." It is an America that stands undaunted in the face of tragedy.

It is an America that understands the venomous cursing of a few is not a warning that she has gone too far, but a call that she has not yet gone far enough.

It is an America that embraces others and seeks to gather them in -- into her schools, her churches, her communities.

But there is another America.

It is broken and cowed. Its people have seen an ugly side of the world, and have decided they want nothing more to do with it.

Its institutions, both private and public, no longer attract the world's brightest and best.

It is a country which, starved of the innovation and ambition of others, slowly digests itself, withering and receding into ignorant isolation.

These are the two Americas we now face.

Of course there is only one choice; we know that. The real question is how do we get there?

Our freemarket is the best economic system in the world, but even it has cycles. Our challenge is to ensure these are shorter rather than longer, shallower rather than deeper.

That doesn't mean it can't get tough. I've seen the ups and downs first-hand.

Like the president, I moved to Midland, Texas, in the mid-1970s. To us, the oil fields of West Texas were like nowhere else in the world. The possibilities were endless.

We worked hard and were rewarded. I became president of Tom Brown, Inc., at 33 years old. By 1979, we had 1800 employees, a market value of \$2 billion, and investment bankers parading to our door.

But then the boom gave way to bust. Our net worth dropped to \$25 million and we were forced to lay off all but 50 employees.

Ultimately, we recovered. When I left the company last December, our market value had climbed to \$1.5 billion.

Some of you might call that a success story. Others might define success in different ways. It might mean writing the Great American novel, or growing that perfect ear of corn. And for all, I hope, it means caring for your family, your community, your state . your country.

We can't promise success in America, we only offer the opportunity to get it. Our job, as public servants, is to create the environment in which individuals are limited only by their capacity to dream and their will to pursue.

In the wake of September 11th, many are looking to Washington to stimulate the economy. I am glad they are seeing a Commander-in-Chief willing to reach across party lines. I'm glad they're seeing a war-time President working with Zell Miller, Ben Nelson and John Breaux to build a better day for America.

There is a right and wrong way to craft economic policy. The right way isn't a zero-sum game. The right way says, "Nobody wins, unless we all win."

In the end, Washington can facilitate growth, but it can't create it. It can foster a friendly environment for investments, but it can't compel businesses to make them. It can encourage entrepreneurs to be innovative and creative, but it can't do it for them.

That doesn't mean we leave anybody out. The President has a plan to help workers laid off in the wake of September 11th. It calls for an extension of unemployment benefits, improved access to job training and more dollars to cover health care costs.

But these are only a means to a larger end. Americans want more than unemployment checks. They want paychecks. And opening up new markets is central to that pursuit.

There is still growth here in America. But there is even greater growth abroad. You all know this. ALEC has been a tireless ally in the fight to expand our trade ties around the globe.

Trade Promotion Authority, or TPA, that will give the President greater flexibility to negotiate trade agreements, passed the House by a single vote.

When a vote is that close, it means that every last effort counted and every effort on its behalf was pivotal.

That's why ALEC's role in the House TPA victory was so important to the President, to our country's economy and to American workers.

The U.S. is the world's largest importer and exporter, bar none, and every head of state needs to know that when they negotiate with America, they are getting a straight deal.

There are 133 trade agreements in the world today. The United States belongs to only three.

Trade agreements will continue to be forged - with or without us. It is our responsibility to get off the sidelines and to lead the world in trade.

And make no mistake about it: Granting this president the sole authority to negotiate trade deals is imperative to shaping America's future.

There's no doubt that trade is good for Americans. Just look at the economics of it, alone. Exports account for 11 percent of our Gross Domestic Product, and trade supports 12 million American jobs.

Nor is trade a zero-sum game. What's good for America is good for the world. Alan Greenspan has said so unequivocally.

Economists know that the interests of workers everywhere lie not with those who tear down trade talks, but with those who tear down trade barriers.

America stands to gain a great deal by extending wealth across the globe. But just as surely, there is a cost if she does not.

Of the 6 billion people on this planet, nearly half subsist on less than \$2 per day. Poverty drives people to do desperate things. Poverty creates envy, and from envy, hatred. It allows them to be manipulated by those with wicked intentions. We have seen this all too clearly over the last three months.

But when the last rifle cracks and peace falls on the mountains and sands of distant places, our efforts will not be done. It is not enough that we defeat our enemies; we must vanquish the despair that sows their tyranny.

Trade creates not only wealth, it creates stability.

Trade compels bad governments to change. It forces them to bring transparency and clarity to their economic decision-making, and combats the corruption that impedes progress, entrenches self-servers, and perpetuates poverty.

Trade is inherently democratic. Economic freedom brings about political freedoms. New enterprises and capital formations lead to the creation of a merchant class. And middle classes demand greater political participation. That has been the pattern not only in the developed West, but also throughout Asia and the Americas in recent years.

These are trends Americans have a responsibility to foster. Not only to ensure our own safety and security, but to allow others to participate in the American dream -- whether they live in Guatemala or Indonesia or Russia.

In mid-October, I had the opportunity to meet with young businessmen in Moscow. Two of them had been part of a San Francisco entrepreneur program, had returned to Russia, and are now doing quite well.

And I will never forget what they told me. As we sat around a table in the capital city of what was once the Soviet Union, they said: "Mr. Secretary, you might say we are living the American dream."

It was a small moment with big meaning. These young men had lived through the dying days of the Soviet Union. They knew the government couldn't provide everything. They knew that the responsibility for caring for our families, our communities and our world is an individual responsibility.

And I am confident the free-market will reward them as they do their part to build another Shining City, a sister to our own.

The lessons here are clear. Government can't create a Shining City. The Shining City is built by man, for mankind.

It isn't self-perpetuating or self-sustaining. It either expands to encompass more who contribute and share in its prosperity, or it starves.

My friend, Fred Corley, an orthopedic surgeon from Texas, put it well recently. "America is good because of its bounty, its location and climate," he said, "but mostly because of the spectrum of its people. Their energy, enthusiasm, work ethic and brilliance are a sum of their numerous homelands, cultures, religions and beliefs."

America has always been a reflection of the world. It's time to make the world a reflection of America.

We all hold the hope for peace and prosperity, but the world has moved beyond the days when a nation could simply live in peace. We must be a planet that lives in peace.

The great service you can do is to help your constituents add their brick to the foundation of prosperity. And reassure them that, as we learn more and more about distant places, it doesn't mean their world is getting larger and less certain, but that it's getting smaller and more certain.

My friend, Fred Corley, understands that. You and I understand it, too. It is our challenge - our responsibility - to make sure the American people understand it.

Thank you. And God bless you, and God bless America.