

REMARKS BY
CLAYTON YEUTTER, SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
CONSTANCE NEWMAN, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL
MANAGEMENT
FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE:
WORK FORCE DIVERSITY AND DELIVERY OF PROGRAMS
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Body

SEC. YEUTTER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you all for coming. This is a tremendous turnout for the event today. It's a delight to have you all here and to participate in a program that is very meaningful. I'll have a few more remarks later, but we'd like to start off the program today with a lady who exemplifies all the good things about workforce diversity in this country, building a -- changing federal system that would be reflective of that objective, and that's Connie Newman, who is sitting there just to my right, and I'll have her come up here in just a minute.

As most of you know, Connie is, I suppose, about the nearest thing that we have to a Civil Service legend in this town. She started out -- and I haven't asked her how many years ago, Connie, I guess I won't do that -- Connie started out as a GS-3 clerk-typist in the Department of the Interior, and through the years she's come up through the ranks, as far up as you can go, and then moved from the career Service on into the non-career political appointee ranks.

Through her career Connie has now, I'm told, spanned twelve federal agencies, and she's had four presidential appointments, three of whom -- three of which, rather -- required confirmation by the US Senate. That's a pretty impressive career by anybody's standards, I must say. The most recent appointment is the one for the position which she now occupies, and that's as director of the Office of Personnel Management which, as all of you know, is the top job in personnel management in the government of the United States. She moved into that position in June 1989 [and] has been there since.

So if there's anybody who has the experience and the background and the commitment to this objective, and therefore the justification to talk about it, it's Connie Newman. So let's welcome her warmly.

Connie?

MS. NEWMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

One of the great liabilities of history is that all too often, too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change. We know that every society has its protectors of the status quo and its fraternities of the indifferent, who are notorious for sleeping through revolutions. But today our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change.

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We know that the large house in which we live demands that we transform this worldwide neighborhood into a worldwide brotherhood. And finally, together we must learn to live as brothers or together we will be forced to perish as fools.

I wish those were my words. They aren't. Those were the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I'm here today to honor the fact that the Department of Agriculture has remained awake through this great period of social change because of the leadership of Secretary Yeutter, Assistant Secretary Adis Vila and others involved in the development of the framework for change.

I'm here today out of respect for the fact that the Department of Agriculture is facing the challenge of change with regard to workforce diversity and the delivery of programs. You have done what is required of people who make a difference. First of all, you sought to understand the problem and hence the need for change. You have developed strategies to bring about change. On May 24th, 1990, Secretary Yeutter announced the department's meaningful and comprehensive plan for change and I am aware that since that time you have taken steps to implement your plan. You are more than remaining awake through this great period of social change, you are vigilant, you are adjusting to new ideas, and you are facing the challenge of change.

What you are accomplishing here at the Department of Agriculture is what America is all about. You are respecting and building on the heritage of America. For decades, people have come to our shores seeking the rich rewards this nation offers, the right to participate in governing our country, the freedom to speak, to worship, to develop one's self as a productive part of our society and to enjoy the nation's abundant natural resources. Yes, people have come from all over the world to these shores seeking its rich rewards, but they -- along with the Native Americans -- have made this nation great.

We became a strong nation through diversity. Let me repeat; we became a strong nation through diversity. Our diversity has allowed us to accomplish so many things and will continue to do so in the future, that is, if we respond correctly now. We must strengthen our efforts to make diversity work for the nation in every aspect of our being. But today I would like to concentrate on the necessity for a diverse federal workforce.

The workforce is changing whether we want it to change or not. It's changing rapidly. We will be older, there will be more women, there will be many more immigrants and more minorities, and the 24th (sic) Century will usher in new opportunities for all Americans. Our population, hence our workforce, will be more diverse than ever before in the history of this nation.

The Hudson Institute published two studies -- you know of them -- "Workforce 2000," "Civil Service 2000" -- that gave us an idea of what was in store for us between now and the year 2000. These are things over which we have no control. Two-thirds of the new entrants in the workforce will be women. Twenty-nine percent of the new entrants in the workforce will be minorities. More and more disabled Americans, who deserve to be a part of the mainstream, will be a part of the mainstream. And more immigrants will be coming into the workforce than ever, since World War I.

So we have no control over the change in the workforce, and what we also must recognize at the same time that we have a change in who is coming into the workforce, the nature of the work is changing. Jobs will become much more sophisticated, more high tech, more information oriented, requiring a much higher level of education. There will be almost no jobs -- no meaningful jobs -- for people who do not have an education beyond high school, and there will be few jobs for people who have not gone to school beyond high school. As we move toward the 21st Century, the real challenge before the nation will be finding people for our jobs, not finding jobs for our people.

So the future presents a real need for all Americans in the work force, no matter what race, sex, age, disability. But the future presents employers with an opportunity as well, an opportunity to bring more diverse groups into the work force into the mainstream of America. The future gives employers the opportunity to return to what made us great: Diversity.

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So you may ask, is the only reason for a diverse work force the fact that those who are going to be available are diverse? I would say to you, no, that's not the only reason, but it's a darned good reason. But I have an additional argument for diversity in the work force that I would like to share with you, and it goes like this:

We have very many problems in this nation, the resolution of which will require new skills, new sensitivities, new understanding, and new ideas. In my view, only a diverse, sensitive and competent workforce can solve the serious drug problems of this nation. Yes, we've begun the fight, but there's so much more to accomplish.

Only a diverse, sensitive and competent work force can fully address the problems of inner city crime; the escalating rates of teenage pregnancy and homelessness. Only a diverse, sensitive and competent work force can provide the necessary, creative ideas to ensure that the American farmer is preserved, and only diversity will address the serious problems of the migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

The arguments for diversity, then, are as follows: One, it is diversity that made this country strong and to continue to be strong, we must be diverse.

The second, "Just the facts, Ma'am." You youngsters and there are lot of you here, don't remember "Dragnet" -- (laughter) -- but you don't have understand and remember "Dragnet." The facts are -- the facts are that the population and the work force will become more and more diverse as the time goes on. And anyone, any employer who has a job to fill is going to have to fill it from the people who are there. And the people who are there are going to be more women, more immigrants, more disabled, more minorities. That's the facts, ma'am.

The third reason: Many of the problems of the nation require solutions from all Americans. Hence, the necessity for partnerships in problem-solving. Now, we can get pretty smug in the federal government. Our record is pretty good. We've traditionally had more diversity in our work force. We've been able to turn our nose up at the private sector because we've had more women, more minorities, more veterans. We've had that, that's true. But those of us who are honest also know that we have a long way to go. The good news? Minority recruitment, for example, the most recent statistics tell us that minorities comprise 27 percent of the federal civilian work force and the general work force is only 22 percent. Minority women represent 14 percent, where in the general work force, it's ten percent.

But the problem with that is, the numbers don't tell the whole story. I mean, it's good to have the numbers. But if we're honest, we look at the distribution of women and minorities and the disabled all up and down the line, and I will tell you we can be proud, but we can also -- must be embarrassed. Senior executive service: Only 11 percent are women. Only 8 percent are minorities. And I'm not going to break it out between minority groups because it's very embarrassing.

And so people say to me, "Don't worry about it. Women, minorities, and the disabled -- they're in the pipeline. So we've turned this thing around, and if you can just be patient, it will change." Well, the truth of the matter is, if you look at the pipeline, I don't know when they expect it to turn around because if you look at grades 13 through 15, only 17 percent are women; only 12 percent minorities.

So, yes, we can be proud. But we should be embarrassed. Hispanic men and women have lower representation in the federal civilian work force than in the general work force. Hispanic men, in particular, remain underrepresented at all grade levels in all occupational groupings. That's the bad news.

The good news is that change comes about with a change in

the environment from the top. We have to recognize that this president has sent a signal through his words and deeds that he is very serious about this country depending upon all of its resources to be great. He signed Executive Order 12677, which asks federal agencies to form partnerships with historically black colleges and universities. That's one example of his commitment. He's recently signed a new executive order on educational excellence for Hispanic Americans, another example.

But the real example and what really makes a difference is his own actions. This president has had the opportunity to appoint large numbers of people to political positions, and he has the best record of any president in appointing

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women and minorities and the disabled to political positions. So far, 20 percent of the President's appointments to top positions are women -- remember, compare that with the 10 percent. Eleven percent are minorities.

But he went beyond that and said to each and every person, every opportunity he had, that "I am not only appointing you to these positions, but I expect you to use your power to bring about a greater diversity throughout this government." And it is his expectation that his appointees will bring about the diversity that he expects.

Now, let's talk about the Department of Agriculture. That's what you're interested in. In one year, change has taken place. You really are to be commended because in just that short period of time, there have been meaningful increases in the numbers of Native Americans, Asian, Black and Hispanic-Americans and women working for this department. Now, I know we can debate, are there enough all up and down the line, but the very fact that the record is turning around is something you should be very proud of. You are to be commended for the Hispanic employment programs, the symposium at Southwestern College, for the summer intern program, these designed to ensure that a greater diversity is brought about in this department.

But you know what you've done and you know what you have not done. Secretary Yeutter, if anyone says that the Department of Agriculture failed to remain awake through this period, tell them they don't know where of they speak, or have them call me, I'll testify on your behalf.

Thank you. (Applause.)

SEC. YEUTTER: Thanks, Connie. That was very, very gracious. We have a lot of people standing here, so we want to keep this program relatively short today. I'd like to just make a few comments embellishing on that, but I'll do them very quickly so that you can move around and get back to doing other things. But, it's a delight for me to participate in this program, too, and it's particularly good that it is occurring today because, as some of you know, we had the national prayer breakfast at the Washington Hilton this morning. That's an inspiring experience in itself, and it relates in a very direct way to what we are talking about here today.

For example, Connie mentioned the dimension of this program which involves hiring people who are disabled or handicapped. And as you were speaking of that, Connie, I thought about one of my favorite workout partners at the USDA Fitness Center who happens to be sitting in the front row here today and who is hearing impaired, but that doesn't keep her from keeping her body in good shape and in fact much better shape than mine. And she will be interested to know, as will others in the audience today who are hearing impaired, that one of the presentations this morning at the national prayer breakfast was by another gentleman who is hearing impaired but who has risen to be president of Gallaudet College, if that's the way it's pronounced, and that certainly was inspiring. And as to the visually impaired, I am continually awed by how well folks with visual impairments do in this world and how productive they are. I'm not sure I could handle that kind of impairment personally, but some folks have no choice, but they do it and do it well. And it just seems to me that whatever any of us can do to hire handicapped or disabled no matter who they may be we perform a service not only to them but to ourselves because the inspiration that comes from people who are handicapped or in any way impaired is just an enormous thing.

But diversity is a fact of life. And I'd like to follow up on Connie's comments about diversity generally for just a minute, too, and put it also in the context of the prayer breakfast this morning. I travel about as much as anybody in the world, I guess, except maybe Secretary of State Baker, and as a consequence, I've been exposed to a lot of cultures and a lot of very diverse peoples all over the world and including throughout the United States. And I find that to be a meaningful learning experience always. I have not made a single trip to any country and any people without having learned something from that diverse geographical area or the diverse culture, whatever it may be. And sometimes we visit countries that pride themselves on homogeneity of their populations and their cultures. Some of them see that as a strength. I see that as a weakness. And Connie was making the point that that's what made America great, and I agree with that. I think it's the heterogeneity and the diversification of our culture and our people that makes us strong because we get the hybrid vigor, if you will, of that kind of cross-fertilization that is probably not equaled in any other country in the world, and we ought to pride ourselves on that.

But we need to take advantage of that and consider it a strength and then develop that strength in our hiring practices here at USDA. And though Connie was being very kind today and complimentary about what we've done

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in the last year, and we can take pride in all that, we still have a way to go. This is no time to rest on our laurels and say we've done our share. In the interest of the Department of Agriculture we ought to do more. And as you know, my tenure here will draw to a close in about three weeks, and I certainly hope that all of you and Congressman Madigan, who will succeed me, will move forward in a very aggressive way with this effort.

But to illustrate the **diversity** that exists around the world, going back to the prayer breakfast, I sat this morning at the prayer breakfast with two gentlemen at my table who happen to be from outside the United States. One of them was Vice President Garcia of Peru. And it was fun to sit there and visit with him about a lot of things. The other one -- and this really reflects **diversity** of culture -- was a gentleman whose card I have here now whose name is Guillermo Yoshikawa Torres (ph), who is a Japanese-Peruvian. And we have Japanese-Americans but there are also Japanese-Peruvians. And it was interesting to meet a gentleman with the name of Guillermo Yoshikawa Torres (ph), but a very fine gentleman indeed from Arequipa, Peru. And they -- both of them were enjoying the prayer breakfast facilities this morning.

Well, all of you know what workforce **diversity** is all about, so you don't need a further sermon from me about that. What we need, of course, is commitment from all of us and commitment on an individual basis as well as an institutional basis, and I hope we shall have that.

I wanted to indicate to you that as part of our honor awards program here at USDA I've now approved having an annual award in the workforce **diversity** area. We're going to honor each year now one agency and one individual within the Department who contributes most to achieving the goals of developing workforce **diversity** here in the Department of Agriculture.

And then finally, just to finish off my part of the program before I turn it back over to Adis Vila, I want to show you a publication. But before we do that and use it for some photo ops I want to thank Adis in particular, and the folks here at the department who have been **working** with her in this area. I doubt that there's anybody in the entire government who's **worked** any harder over the last year on **work force diversity** than Adis Vila. It has been a labor of love and commitment on her part, and the progress that we've made here in the department is due primarily to her efforts and those here in the department who have been supporting her in that endeavor.

Now, for the photo op opportunity, we put out a little publication on this subject now that -- and those will be passed out to you in the audience in a minute, so you'll be able to take one along with you and read it. It has some excellent photos in there, most of them of me, I think. (Laughter.) I'm going to keep lots of copies of this, Adis, for my memoirs. But it's entitled "Building on the Framework for Change: Workforce **Diversity** and Delivery of Programs in the US Department of Agriculture." Really a skillfully done publication which illustrates what this effort is all about, and we hope you take it, read it, enjoy it, and then implement the program in a vigorous way as you have an opportunity.

And thanks to all of you. For some of you whom I may not see before my departure at the end of the month, thanks so much for all your support and your commitment to the department during my tenure here. I'm going to miss you all a great deal. Thank you. (Applause.)

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