

Campaign speech, Scranton, Pennsylvania, October 23, 1948.
President's Secretary's Files, Truman Papers.

Original



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Oct. 23, 1948*

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SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA



*Tell about former visit to Scranton
How weather man spoiled trip to
Chicago. How he changed plans here.*
Starbuck I am happy to be here today in Scranton, Frank Walker

the heart of the anthracite coal industry.

*Man proposes, Almighty God disposes,
Just the other day, two weeks ago*
I am very sorry I had to postpone my visit to Scranton

two weeks ago, but it was necessary for me to meet

with the Secretary of State in Washington.

I had asked General Marshall to fly home from Paris

*Of course I was sorry
but the world's welfare
comes first. Please!*

between sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

and that Saturday - October ninth - was our only chance

to talk together about our plans for peace.



I understand that this great center of industry
and mining has Democratic city and county administrations.

That's the way it ought to be. And I hope,
after November, that you will have a Democratic Congressman,
too, - Harry O,Neill. Harry O,Neill has a
wonderful record in the state legislature - a record
of working for the welfare of the people of Pennsylvania.

When you look at the record of the last two years,
I'm sure you know that ^{by} electing a Republican from this District
in Nineteen forty-six ^{you made a grave} ~~was a~~ mistake - one of those
Nineteen forty-six mistakes - when too many people
stayed at home and didn't vote.

But it was a mistake which has cost every one of you
a very great deal. *in fact more than you can
possibly realize. But it has taught
me a real lesson.*

You can't afford to make that mistake again.

This year, Lackawanna County ought to be firmly
in the Democratic column from top to bottom.



I have just had the privilege of paying honor
to the memory of John Mitchell. I wish I could be with you
to help celebrate John Mitchell Day next Friday.

John Mitchell was a great leader.

He laid the foundations of the United Mine Workers,
which has grown from his day to ours until it now embraces
most of the miners in the United States.

John Mitchell was not only a great labor organizer,
he was a great labor statesman.



He pioneered in the development of effective collective bargaining, and he paved the way for good relations between mine operators and mine workers.

We all know the kind of opposition John Mitchell was up against, in his day, in fighting for the rights of labor and for the principle of collective bargaining.

In the early days of this century, big business was trying to destroy the labor union movement.

Those were the days of the Coal and Iron Police.

Right after the first World War, the employers of this country, aided and encouraged by a Republican administration, launched their open-shop drive to wipe out American labor unions.



The Republicans in power first tried
to strip the working man of the protection of his labor unions,
and then they led him into the worst depression in history.

In Nineteen Thirty-two, when twelve million Americans
were out of jobs and hundreds of thousands of miners
were on relief, the American people elected
Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In Nineteen Thirty-two, miners who were lucky enough
to have a job were being paid about One Dollar and Seventy cents
a day - and working only one or two days a week.

Now, miners are getting Fourteen Dollars a day -
or more - and working a full week.

That increase is a direct result of the
great advances of the New Deal.



President Roosevelt believed that the rights
of the working man were more important than the profits
of corporations.

He saw to it that the power of the
Federal Government was used, not to destroy unions,
but to protect them against unfair and evil practices
of employers.

The New Deal established the right of labor
to organize and bargain collectively as the keystone
of our industrial system.

Great Charter
The Wagner Act was the Magna Carta of labor.

And that great Act stood ~~firm~~ and unchallenged -
~~solid as a rock~~ - until the Republican 80th Congress
got to Washington two years ago.



The Republican 80th Congress began all over again
the old attack on the basic rights of the working men
and women of this country.

The 80th Congress passed the shameful Taft-Hartley law.

That law is only the beginning -
it is only the first step in the long-range strategy of the
Republican Party to crush organized labor to the ground.

The Taft-Hartley law is like a termite,
undermining and eating away your legal protection
to organize and bargain collectively.



I vetoed the Taft-Hartley law,
not only because it was bad in itself, but because
it was only a first step in the drive to wipe out labor's rights.

Let me give you a specific example of how
the Taft-Hartley Law directly affects your rights.

The United Mine Workers and the mine owners
have recently set up a welfare fund in the anthracite industry -
the Anthracite Health and Welfare Fund.

*The contract for that welfare fund
was signed in the office of the President of the
United States in May 1946. That welfare fund*

*This welfare fund is the result of collective bargaining.
was obtained with the help of the President.
Not only did you President fight for a welfare
fund he forced a union safety clause into*

that contract.
It is a fine thing for the miners.



It is conducting a program of research
and treatment to find a cure for the disease of silicosis,
the scourge of hard-coal miners.

This disease causes nearly twenty-five percent
of the so-called "natural" deaths of hard-coal ^{and hard rock} miners.

I am sure I do not have to tell you about the terrible effects
of silicosis, or the suffering it causes.

At last, we can hope for a cure,
for over half a million dollars is being devoted to this project.
Think what a relief this will be to miners, not only here,
but throughout the country and the world.

Now, I can't understand, and I'm sure you can't either,
why anyone would oppose a Health and Welfare Fund
which is doing such magnificent work.



But there are some people - even now -
who say that it is an outrage to ask employers to contribute
to an employee welfare fund.

These selfish, backward-looking men slipped
a provision into the Taft-Hartley law about welfare funds.
They thought they fixed it so that an employer could refuse
to bargain with a union about setting up a welfare fund.

But they were wrong - A Federal court only
last month held they were wrong:

The court said that employers do have to bargain
about welfare funds.



So now these same people are planning
to amend the law,

They want to make it illegal for a union
to ask for a welfare fund,

Congressman Hartley, of the Taft-Hartley team,
who has decided that he can't get re-elected this time,
says that he leaves that job to his successors.

Do not be fooled - they will *outlaw your welfare fund*
~~do it~~ if they can.

If another Republican Congress is elected in November,
the Republican leaders will do all they can to destroy the
growth of union welfare funds.



They will try to close the doors to progress
that are being opened by American ^{labor} unions - progress
such as finding cures for occupational diseases and
giving relief and comfort to working men in their old age.

They will do it all under the hypocritical cloak
of "correcting abuses" in our labor laws.

They will do it behind the mask of "national unity."

And, before we know it, they will have us all
unified into a depression, the way the Republicans did in
Nineteen Twenty-nine.



This attack on welfare funds may seem
to be a small thing, but it means the difference
between sickness and health - the difference, indeed,
between life and death to thousands of Americans.

And it is a straw which shows the way the wind is blowing.

If, however, ^{all of} you ~~all~~ go to the polls

and vote in your own interests - in the interests of yourselves
and your families - you can defeat this Republican strategy.

You can elect a Democratic administration,
pledged to the protection of labor's rights,
the expansion of social security,
the improvement of education and health,
the building of adequate housing, and
the control of the cost of living.



If you do that, we shall not falter in
our onward march toward a better and happier Nation.
