

Harold Mills -
Constructi Assn -
Buffalo, NY

THERE ARE BOTH PERSONAL AND
PROFESSIONAL REASONS WHY BILL USERY DEEPLY
DEEPLY REGRETS HIS INABILITY TO BE WITH
YOU THIS EVENING.

LET ME BEGIN WITH THE PERSONAL
ONES.

AT THE HEAD OF THE LIST IS THE FACT
THAT HE PROMISED TO COME. HE DOESN'T LIKE
TO BREAK PROMISES UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.
HE KNOWS, AS YOU KNOW, THAT BREAKING
PROMISES IS VERY NEARLY A DISQUALIFYING
FAULT FOR A NEGOTIATOR--AND IT'S EVEN WORSE,
IF POSSIBLE , FOR A MEDIATOR.

IT'S TRUE, OF COURSE, THAT A PROMISE
TO MAKE A SPEECH ISN'T IN THE SAME CLASS AS
A FALSE PROMISE IN A BARGAINING SESSION.

SOMETIMES THE CALL OF HIGHER DUTY GETS IN THE WAY OF GREATER PLEASURE.

SINCE YOU ALL FOLLOW THE NEWS, YOU KNOW WHAT DUTIES ARE KEEPING HIM IN WASHINGTON TODAY.

HIS OTHER PERSONAL REASON IS BASED ON HIS CLOSE AND FRIENDLY DEALINGS WITH THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY OVER THE YEARS.

BOTH BILL AND I KNOW FROM FIRST-HAND OBSERVATION THAT NO INDUSTRY IN THE NATION HAS BEEN MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE NATIONAL INTEREST, WHEN CALLED UPON, THAN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, AND I MEAN BOTH MANAGEMENT AND LABOR.

THIS LEADS ME TO THE PROFESSIONAL SIDE OF BILL'S REGRETS. HE KNOWS THAT THIS IS SURELY ONE OF THE TIMES WHEN YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE BEARING THE BRUNT OF THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS.

THE RECESSION ATMOSPHERE IS QUICK TO TURN INTO ICE-COLD FACTS WHERE CONSTRUCTION IS CONCERNED.

EVERY DAY FOR WEEKS, STORIES IN THE WALL STREET JOURNAL AND ELSEWHERE HAVE REPORTED THE CANCELLATION OF NEW PROJECTS BY PUBLIC UTILITIES AND OTHER MAJOR INDUSTRIES.

OFTEN AS NOT THE ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE ACCOMPANIED BY A DISAPPROVING REFERENCE TO "CONSTRUCTION COSTS."

HARDLY ANYONE POINTS OUT THAT "CONSTRUCTION COSTS," IN THAT CONTEXT, INCLUDE THE COST OF MONEY...THE COST OF MATERIALS...THE COST OF LAND. YET THESE AND ALL THE OTHER UNFAVORABLE TRENDS IN TODAY'S ECONOMY HIT YOUR INDUSTRY FIRST AND HARDEST.

IN BUFFALO YOU ARE HURTING EVEN WORSE THAN ELSEWHERE. THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ARE CERTAINLY BEYOND YOUR CONTROL, THE FUTURE THAT LOOKED SO BRIGHT SUCH A SHORT TIME AGO HAS TURNED INTO A BLEAK PRESENT. THE NEW UNIVERSITY CAMPUS IS COMING ALONG SO SLOWLY IT HARDLY SEEMS TO BE MOVING AT ALL: THE RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM IS STILL ON THE DRAWING-BOARD.

THESE DISAPPOINTMENTS, COMBINED WITH THE GENERAL SLUMP IN BUILDING, GIVE THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN THE BUFFALO AREA AN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF SOME 30 PERCENT-- TWO AND A HALF TIMES THE NATIONAL AVERAGE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, AND FIVE TIMES THE GENERAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE.

I'M TOLD BY FRANK CERABONE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT THAT ABOUT 16 MILLION DOLLARS IN FEDERAL FUNDS ARE SCHEDULED TO BE SPENT IN BUFFALO NEXT YEAR. I SHARE YOUR HOPE THAT THE FIGURE WILL BE RAISED RATHER THAN LOWERED-- BUT AS WE ALL KNOW--THE GOVERNMENT BALL CAN TAKE FUNNY BOUNCES.

WE AT THE FEDERAL MEDIATION AND CONCILIATION SERVICE HAVE A PROFESSIONAL INTEREST IN ALL THIS BECAUSE MOST OF YOU WILL BE COMING OFF THREE-YEAR UNION CONTRACTS NEXT JUNE. I'M SURE YOU HAVE AN IDEA WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT, SINCE IT'S OBVIOUS THAT ANNUAL INCREASES OF 6 PERCENT HAVEN'T KEPT UP WITH INFLATION.

IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT CONSTRUCTION WAGES IN THE BUFFALO AREA STILL RUN ABOUT 10 PERCENT AHEAD OF THE NATIONAL AVERAGE--ABOUT THE SAME MARGIN THAT PREVAILED IN 1960. BUT THIS, AND ALL THE OTHER FACTORS, MAY LOOK VERY DIFFERENT NEXT JUNE.

MY GREAT HOPE IS THAT NO MATTER WHAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES MAY BE, THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND THE CONSTRUCTION UNIONS IN BUFFALO AND EVERYWHERE, WILL CONTINUE TO NEGOTIATE AGREEMENTS THAT ARE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE PARTIES, THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND THE NATION .

YOU SET AN EXAMPLE--TOO LITTLE APPRECIATED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC--THROUGH THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY BARGAINING COMMITTEE

AS A MEMBER OF THE CONSTRUCTION
INDUSTRY STABILIZATION COMMITTEE, I AM
FAMILIAR WITH THE STORY.

THE WORK OF THESE COOPERATIVE
ENDEAVORS WAS INVALUABLE TO THE COUNTRY;
FOR DESPITE ALL YOUR CHRONIC TROUBLES,
DESPITE ALL THE UNINFORMED CRITICISM YOU
GET, THE ECONOMIC HEALTH OF THE CONSTRUCTION
INDUSTRY IS THE KEYSTONE TO THE ECONOMIC
HEALTH OF AMERICA. AND YOUR INDUSTRY CANNOT
BE HEALTHY WITHOUT LABOR PEACE.

THEREFORE, IT IS MY PROFOUND HOPE--
AND THE HOPE OF BILL USERY--THAT EVEN
THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT STABILIZATION MACHINERY
HAS BEEN DISMANTLED, THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY
WILL MAINTAIN SOME FORM OF THE COOPERATIVE
APPROACH THAT WORKED SO WELL OVER THE LAST
FEW YEARS.

BOTH BILL AND I ARE PROUD OF
WHATEVER CONTRIBUTION THE FEDERAL MEDIATION
AND CONCILIATION SERVICE HAS BEEN ABLE TO
MAKE OVER THE YEARS TOWARD HELPING LABOR
AND MANAGEMENT IN THE BUILDING TRADES TO
REACH FAIR AND JUST SETTLEMENTS--AND IN YOUR
ACCEPTANCE OF OUR EFFORTS TO REACH THOSE
SETTLEMENTS PEACEFULLY.

AND BEFORE LEAVING, I WANT TO
PLEDGE TO YOU THE CONTINUED AVAILABILITY
OF THE ENTIRE FMCS STAFF IN YOUR EFFORTS
TO BUILD ON YOUR FOUNDATION OF COOPERATION,
AND TO REVITALIZE THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY,
BOTH HERE IN BUFFALO AND THROUGHOUT THE
NATION.