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I S S U E S . A N D A N S W E R S

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GUEST: HON. WILLARD WIRTZ, Secretary of Labor

INTERVIEWED BY:

EDWARD P. MORGAN, ABC Commentator  
and  
BOB CLARK, ABC Correspondent

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THE ANNOUNCER: From Washington, the American Broadcasting Company brings you ISSUES AND ANSWERS.

Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, here are the issues:

Does the compulsory arbitration of the railroad dispute mean the death of collective bargaining?

Will the big Civil Rights March open up more jobs for Negroes?

Why hasn't the Kennedy Administration done more about unemployment?

Now for the answers to the issues on this Labor Day week-end, from the Honorable Willard Wirtz, Secretary of Labor. Here to interview Secretary Wirtz are, ABC Commentator Edward P. Morgan and with the first question, ABC correspondent Bob Clark.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Secretary, the action by Congress and the President sending the railroad labor dispute to binding arbitration

has headed off a nationwide railroad strike but it has also brought bitter protests from the Union.

How do you justify compulsory arbitration in this case?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: It is too broad a phrase. What the Congress did was to provide for arbitration of two of the issues in the railroad case. Those were issues on which both parties had agreed that arbitration was the right answer. Unfortunately that agreement had not been completed but it should be very clear that this is no broad, compulsory arbitration precedent and it is limited to those two issues with respect to which there had been voluntary agreement that arbitration was the right answer.

MR. CLARK: The head of the Brotherhood of Engineers, Mr. Luna, had this answer after the bill was passed this week by Congress: "It is the lowest blow Labor has taken in many a year. It is the beginning of the end of Collective Bargaining for all."

I would take it you don't agree with Mr. Luna?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: I don't agree. If it was a low blow at Labor it was a blow which Mr. Luna struck at himself but it has none of the breadth of effect which is suggested by that statement. There had, as I suggested earlier, been acceptance by Mr. Luna and by the other Brotherhoods, of arbitration in this situation. There was no justification for its having to go to Congress and if it went to Congress it was because of the position which some

of the Brotherhoods took.

MR. MORGAN: This is a point which I think needs developing further, Mr. Secretary. The implication of what you just said is that some of the railway labor leaders did not live up to their full responsibility to their unions and to the public. Can you develop that further?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Yes. In specific terms the situation was this: About two weeks ago on August 16 I think the Brotherhoods all addressed a letter to me subscribing to the proposal that there be arbitration of the two principal issues in this case. Now it was the Firemen's issue which had the most at stake in this situation.

MR. MORGAN: More jobs?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: More jobs, and the Engineers' union which is also directly affected lived up completely to the commitment which they made. There was no renigging as far as the others were concerned but the train crews did attach conditions to the arbitration which made it impossible to reach agreement on it.

There was a difference in the positions of the unions. I should like to make it clear that although in my judgment it came too late the position of the firemen's union was one of acceptance of the principle of arbitration in this particular situation.

MR. MORGAN: Well now you indicated earlier in your answer

to Mr. Clark that this was not a precedent in terms of putting compulsory arbitration into all labor disputes.

(a) do you think it should be and (b) is there a signal, here, from the Congress that if it isn't to be that it involves more responsibility on Labor and Management in general?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: I don't mean to minimize the considerations which are involved, here. I have a little of this feeling: It is as though Collective Bargaining had had perhaps, let's say a slight heart attack which it had better take as a warning as far as the future is concerned because this does indicate the difficulties which arise when agreement cannot be reached. I think it is a good thing, perhaps, that there be this warning, that there is this danger and that there has got to be the exercise of private responsibility or the only alternative is the exercise of public responsibility.

I would hope that all of American Labor and American Management see this as a warning of what can happen if they default in their responsibilities. I should like to insist, though, that this precedent as far as the Congress and the President are concerned is of a very limited nature and in my judgment does not infect the whole institution of collective bargaining.

I suppose it is going to be impossible to separate in the public's mind the concept of complete compulsory arbitration from what was done in this particular case but I'd like to make it just as clear as I could, as I can, that this was a very limited

action, limited to the area in which there had been private agreement and as far as I am concerned it does not establish compulsory arbitration as a precedent for the future.

MR. MORGAN: Well Mr. Secretary, does this mean that this is a very short-term thing in every respect and that at the end of this particular road that you are going to get right back into a deadlock in railroads?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: No, I don't think it will. There are a number of issues in this case. These two which now go to arbitration are the principal issues. There have been strong representations from both sides that if these two can be worked out, as they will be now, with definitive answers, by arbitration, the other issues can be settled through collective bargaining. I believe that to be the fact.

MR. CLARK: You don't share the concern in Congress that arbitration will only postpone a strike for six months or so?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: I do not. I am sure there is a very real awareness on both sides as far as this case is concerned, that there must be a settlement by collective bargaining of the other issues and I think there will be.

MR. CLARK: You have become one of our ranking experts on featherbedding during your own long and intense efforts to settle this dispute. Do you share the view held in some quarters that featherbedding is strangling the nation's railroads?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Oh, we deal in these absolutes. I dislike

featherbedding as intensely as anybody in this country. I see, though, featherbedding as part of a much broader problem to which we have got to direct our full attention. There is no justification for a man's hanging on to a job which is no longer necessary. There is no justification in this society and in this economy today for a situation in which if he loses this job it is going to be hard for him to find another job. I find the basic fact behind the railroad case and behind most of the others we have faced to be the fact that there are over 4 million unemployed people in this country and I find the basic answer to be not just in the elimination of featherbedding but in the supplying of jobs for all of the people, the men and the women in this country who want to perform them.

MR. CLARK: Perhaps we are a little rough on the railroads when we talk about featherbedding -- rough on the railroad Brotherhoods. Do you think there is widespread featherbedding in other industries?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: I don't know the extent of it. I only say to whatever extent there is anybody today doing a job which isn't necessary and being paid for it, it is wrong. There is more of it in some industries than in others. There has been more of it in transportation and in some of the other areas than there have been in still different industries. I don't know how broadspread it is but as far as I am concerned, it is all wrong.

MR. MORGAN: I wonder if you would agree -- in a sense you

have answered the question by your last phrase but I wonder if you would agree that, rather than a Union or a Management peculiarity that it is a human peculiarity in this country -- I am thinking of the report for the Securities and Exchange Commission which pointed the finger of featherbedding on various brokers in Wall Street.

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Oh, we are all party to it in one form or another but I think it sort of confuses the issue to suggest that because it may exist in some other places it ought to be condoned any place. I think the cleanest cut view of the whole situation is that there should be no performance -- there should be no hanging on to a job in any industry or in any kind of occupation where there isn't work to be done. I only press the other side of it that part of the reason that there is that, is that the economy is not working today on a basis which supplies alternative job opportunities for these people.

Let's reduce unemployment down below the three million or the two million mark and then lets stamp out featherbedding completely.

MR. MORGAN: Mr. Secretary, I don't want to scramble the continuity of our dialogue here but I want to go back to an area that Clark raised, the Congress' approach to legislation in Labor-Management disputes. We got the impression that they were pretty touchy about it and didn't like to handle it too much and I wanted to ask you this: Do you think that

touchiness was due to the fact that they were very sensitive of labor constituents who might react against them in elections or do you think it was more a philosophic approach to the dangers to collective bargaining?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: I expect it is a combination of both answers. Let me answer more broadly. I think perhaps one of the values of this last experience is that everybody has discovered that whether for one reason or the other there is a strong allergy in Congress for any kind of legislation in this particular area, I think it is going to be right clear, clearer than it was before, to both American Management and American Labor, that they've got to settle their own problems, that there is no easy refuge in the Congress for those who can't settle their own problems. I don't know exactly what the motives are. There is a real feeling that collective bargaining ought to be protected and, sure, there are also the political pressures which are brought to bear on this situation. I add it up to the important fact that it is clear today that Congress does not want to pass compulsory arbitration legislation unless it is absolutely forced to.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Secretary, we saw this week in Washington a remarkably peaceful demonstration by 200,000 Americans who want voting rights and housing and school integration but probably most of all they want jobs. Do you think the Civil Rights March was a success and that it will help these people

get what they want?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: I think the Civil Rights March was a success in the sense that it impresses on the whole country the depth of feeling -- not just of the Negroes -- the march earlier this week was of Negroes and of whites. I think the dignity of it, the reflection not only in the speeches which were made but in the attitudes of all those who participated made clear to the whole country that what is involved here is the deepest feeling that can possibly lie in human hearts -- not just in minds but in hearts -- that there is to be complete equality of opportunity for education, for jobs. I think that the whole movement, of which the march was perhaps just a symbol, will have a very real effect as an expression of what is now a national concensus. The conscience of the country is in agreement. Yes, I think it will have a very real effect.

MR. MORGAN: Secretary Wirtz, you were at the White House last Wednesday afternoon when the March leaders came to take their case to the President. What did they talk about most, what was the thing that seemed to be most urgently on their minds?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Equality of opportunity in general but the necessity particularly of equality of opportunity for work. The desirability in their judgment of a Fair Employment Practices Act. The desirability, the necessity of making this economy work, so that we can get full employment and so that fair employment will come as part of that development.

MR. CLARK: There had been a lot of talk about how much influence

the Civil Rights March will have on Congress. Do you think 10  
it will influence the Administration to accelerate its own  
Civil Rights program?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Well, everything that can be done is  
being done so far as I know, so far as the Administration  
is concerned. I believe that very deeply. I think there will  
be an influence on Congress, not from the march, not in the  
sense of threat -- in the sense as I suggested before, that  
there is a new realization of the intensity, the depth, the  
breadth of this feeling. Yes, I think the -- everything that  
has happened this year, of which the march is a symbol, will  
make it clearer to everybody in government, in the Executive  
in the Congress and in the country as a whole that there is  
a problem here which we must meet.

MR. MORGAN. Do you suppose, Mr. Secretary, that we as  
Americans as a whole are too easily beguiled by phrases?  
Somebody invents a perfectly legitimate phrase, "job retrain-  
ing" and Congress passes a law limited for job retraining;  
ergo, all things are right in this area.

I suspect that this is an over-simplification. Could  
you tell us what some of the difficulties are, to you as Secre-  
tary of Labor -- here we are on the eve of Labor Day -- in  
implementing something of this kind?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Yes, there are two. First -- or  
three, perhaps. First, the economy has got to move on to a  
basis where there are more jobs. Now, the training and the  
retraining program can't do that. As far as the point of this  
week's march and our general emphasis is concerned, the

second element must be the elimination of any discrimination, but the third element and the one you touch on particularly is that there has also got to be a retraining program on the broadest possible scale.

We have under the Manpower Development and Training Act worked out programs for the retraining of some 50,000 people. We know we are not meeting the hardest problems. Because the hardest problems are presented by those who don't have the educational qualifications even to take our training programs. The worst, most alarming figure, I know is that there are in the American work force today, 3 million people with less than a fifth grade education.

MR. MORGAN: Does this mean they can't read and write?

SECRETARY WRITZ: That means that they can't read and write and it also means that there won't be jobs in the economy of the future for them because the machines are taking over the jobs which untrained, uneducated people used to do. The other thing is this: There will be five and a half million boys and girls, young people, entering the work force in the next 30 months. Two million of them will come in without a high school diploma and most of those 2 million are simply not going to find jobs in the work force because, again, the machines are taking over the untrained jobs, or the unskilled jobs which untrained people used to do. We've simply got, if we mean what we say about full employment, about eliminating unemployment, we simply have got to attack it basically

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in terms of attacking on ignorance.

MR. MORGAN: What do you do?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Oh, you revise the whole educational system in this country so we stop thinking in terms of training people just to go to college. We recognize -- we have to recognize that there are a lot of people who are not going on to college. I don't think we ought to let them out of school until they've got some basic elemental skills which can be used in this new automated technological work market. We have to do that. We've got to expand the manpower development and training program so it covers not just 50,000 but so that it covers a good many more than that and so that it lets us give the basic education to some of these people who need it. We hate it when we have to turn away from a training program somebody who can't take it because he doesn't know how to read or write. We've got to change the program to meet that problem. We've got to go to the hard core of it.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Secretary, this Administration has been in office now for two and a half years and I think you would agree has made only a slight dent in the whole unemployment problem. Don't you think it is time for crash programs of some sort, for a totally new approach, or certainly an expanded approach over what the Administration has proposed?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Yes. If you will broaden it out so that it is not just the Administration but the country. There is

every element of leadership as far as the Administration is concerned, to meet this problem. There has been a tremendous increase in the number of jobs in this country in the last -- what is it now -- two and a half years. There is an influx into the work force of what used to be the post-war baby crop. We know that there is a great deal more to be done. It is not going to be done by any magic wands as far as the Administration is concerned. The administration is sponsoring a tax program which is absolutely essential to the stimulation of the economy. The Administration is mounting a manpower development and training program which is training these people. The Administration is supporting the Youth Employment Act. It is supporting a Vocational Education Program. It is supporting an Area Redevelopment Program and a great many other things which contribute to the meeting of this problem. But let's face up to the fact that the problems of this country are going to be met when the 94 percent of the people who are today employed realize the problem which is presented by the five percent to six percent of the people in this country who are unemployed and when we decide as a nation -- not as an Administration, but as a nation -- to start doing the things which we want so much to do and which if we do them, will give us the full employment which we also want as an element in our program.

MR. CLARK: Of course Negro unemployment is double that

of whites. It runs I believe 11 percent nationally and as high as 17 percent in Chicago and some other cities.

Do you think a special employment program is needed for Negroes?

SECRETARY WRITZ: I would like to attack the problem in terms of its whole, so that we eliminate all of unemployment, just as far as it can be. I would like to attack it in terms of a recognition of the fact that the Negro unemployment is double, as you say it is. So has the denial of educational opportunity been doubled. That is why the unemployment rate for Negroes is doubled today. Yes, I am in favor of directing our attention particularly at the hard core unemployment problem which centers on the Negro population in a good many areas in this country. I am in favor of a retraining program which recognizes the disadvantage of a century, now, as far as the Negroes are concerned. I am in favor of a program, both educational and in terms of employment which is directed at the whole unemployment problem and recognizes it includes a particularly Negro unemployment program.

MR. MORGAN. Mr. Secretary, what you seem to be saying here is a rather revolutionary thing that would cause a lot of people to gasp and react. Namely, the dismantling of at least our whole approach, if not our whole establishment of education. And get a new, more realistic approach, if I follow you.

How are you going to do that?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Oh, I would hope that Labor Day 1963 could stand for facing up squarely to the facts of the problem as they are presented in this country, today. Facing up to the fact that Negro unemployment is double what it is as far as the white population is concerned. Facing up to the fact that unemployment is today a matter of untraining, of unskilled, of lack of educational opportunity, and of taking out on this problem in terms, yes, of making the economy work, because there is no shorter answer than that, but facing up to it, too, in terms of seeing to it that every man, woman and child in this country is qualified, is trained, is educated, because if he isn't from here on out he is going to be useless to himself and he is going to be useless to the country. Yes, if it is a matter of gasping about the realization of the facts, we'd better gasp right now and start recognizing the fact that automation is the salvation of the future as far as the work force is concerned, but the machines are taking over the unskilled jobs and we have simply got to train people in this country for the jobs that are available.

MR. MORGAN: Are you committing the Kennedy Administration to this issue in 1964?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: President Kennedy has stood for every forward movement as far as the invigoration of the economy is concerned, as far as improving the educational program

in this country is concerned, as far as developing a training program is concerned. I am simply speaking his very deep commitment to all of the purposes that I have here been talking about.

MR. CLARK: How do you feel about employment quotas, the assignment of fixed percentages of jobs?

SECRETARY WRITZ: I am against them 100 percent.

MR. CLARK: Why?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Because I don't think that is the right answer to the problem. It separates it out. If we would more and more recognize that the problem is not just a racial problem, that it is an unemployment problem and that we've got to meet it in terms of everybody who is unemployed, we would get there so much faster, and I see no reason for expressing the problem in terms of quotas which are allocated on a racial basis. I am simply not going to compromise with the proposition that there is only one answer to this, and that is to eliminate all unemployment, it is to eliminate all ignorance and I recognize the fact that that problem has hit the Negro community -- those problems have hit the Negro community harder, but they've got to be met in terms of meeting the whole problem not just part of it, and I just don't like the idea of quotas.

MR. MORGAN: But that being said about quotas, Mr. Secretary, would you quarrel with the argument of the Negro leaders

that some special consideration must be given the Negro in order to let him have equal opportunity for jobs and to carry himself along in the full exploitation of his talents?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: I wouldn't quarrel a bit. We've got a century to make up for. There is more training need as far as the Negro community is concerned. There is the essentiality of eliminating all of the bars. No, I don't quarrel with -- in fact I affirm -- as Vice Chairman, for example, of the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, which is directed toward the elimination of discrimination in the federal government and on federal contractors -- I affirm the necessity of facing up squarely to the racial aspects of this problem. I simply say that the answer lies in meeting that part of the problem, but also in meeting the rest of it, too.

MR. CLARK: Are you saying that an employer who is considering two job applicants equally qualified, one white and one Negro, should give preferential treatment to the Negro?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: No, I am not. I am saying that if we will establish the proposition that he pay no attention to anything except the qualifications of the person before him, then we will achieve our purpose.

MR. CLARK: Well, if he pays no attention to anything but the qualifications this isn't preferential treatment, which I thought you were endorsing in principal.

SECRETARY WIRTZ: No, if I did, I think I ought to clarify

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it. It is a question of making up for a century of failure of training and a failure of education, by seeing to it that that part of the problem is neutralized, but when it comes to actual hiring, I don't believe that there is any justification for making a distinction which I think will only get us in trouble, in reverse, as it has in the other way in the past. But to be specific about it, if there is an apprenticeship list for a particular craft which has been drawn up, a waiting list of those coming into their apprenticeship, and that has been drawn up on a basis of discrimination, then I think that list should be re-opened so that there will be equal opportunity for those of all races on it. Now, if that means preferential treatment -- I am in favor of the preferential treatment which is involved in neutralizing and in equating opportunities, but I think we take a wrong start if we start talking now in terms of preference, for one group or the other. What we need is equality of opportunity.

MR. MORGAN: Will you look ahead for us a little bit in terms of the economy as a whole, Mr. Secretary? Is it hardening in terms of quality, is it becoming more soft?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Oh, I don't know enough of the economics of it. I know only the basic facts and that is that there are still all of these unsatisfied consumer demands, all of these needs we need for elevating the standard of living of 30,000,000 people in this country. All the needs for schools,

for highways, for hospitals, for programs of one kind or another, and I know that if we will decide that we are going to do those things that then we will meet this employment problem that we have, or this unemployment problem. As to whether it is getting worse or getting better, I believe in the future. I believe as clearly as we are sitting here that we are going to beat the unemployment problem. I think if there is this consciousness of which we spoke earlier, if the American people realize our potential, and that in living up to our potential we meet our problems, I believe that the future is a bright one. My answer to your question comes as much from my heart as from my head, but I know that America is not going to put up with unemployment. I know that it is going to do the things it wants to do and that therefore my answer to you would be, I look to the future with great anticipation and hope.

MR. CLARK: The government's latest unemployment figures show I believe \$4.3 million for July.

SECRETARY WIRTZ: That is about right.

MR. CLARK: As you are looking ahead, do you see these figures going down for August and September?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Oh, they may vary from month to month. I see them going down over a longer range. They've got to go down steadily or regularly. Yes, I think they will go down. I think the passage of the tax bill will help a

very great deal in this connection. There is other action which must be taken, particularly by the private community. I see them going down. I wish they were going down faster.

MR. MORGAN: Mr. Secretary, you and the President and others have suggested that there is a peculiar problem involved here in terms of the six percent or less unemployed, and that is that it is kind of invisible; with the 94 percent of the work force employed, a good deal of prosperity, we ignore these fringes which are there. How do you solve this? How do you penetrate this invisibility?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: By making clear to the country in some way or another that our whole economic welfare, the growth of the whole economy is dependent on meeting the problem which unfortunately, as you say, is concentrated in a few geographical areas among youngsters, among minority groups.

I don't know how we get through to the American people on that, but we've simply got to, and we've got to make it clear that it is a national problem. I think there is a growing awareness of it. Well, it is by discussing it, in circumstances such as these, that we can hope to get through the common factor in this problem.

MR. MORGAN: We have less than a minute left, but let me ask you this: You have indicated a certain urgency to this. Do you think that Congress catches your contagion of urgency?

SECRETARY WIRTZ: Not enough, because the country hasn't

the contagiousness of urgency enough. It's got to start with peoples' realization of the problems in their own communities and in the country as a whole. I think the people of this country get the representation and the leadership which reflects their own feeling of urgency pretty largely. And so my answer to your question would be not enough is there a realization of this in Congress, perhaps in the government as a whole, and it is up to the people of this country to remedy that defect.

MR. MORGAN: Secretary Wirtz, on the eve of this Labor Day, we thank you particularly for being with us on ISSUES AND ANSWERS.

THE ANNOUNCER: Our guest was the Secretary of Labor, the Honorable Willard Wirtz.

Next week at this same time, ISSUES AND ANSWERS will bring you an interview with the Secretary of State, the Honorable Dean Rusk. We hope you will be with us.

ISSUES AND ANSWERS is produced by Peggy Whedon. Directed by Richard Armstrong. Associate Director, W. P. Fowler. Technical Director, Steve Gabosy.

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