



Department of Justice

TRANSCRIPT OF

THE INSTALLATION OF

THE HONORABLE EDWIN MEESE III

AS THE SEVENTY-FIFTH

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

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THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 1985

THE GREAT HALL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

10TH AND PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

MR. JENSEN: Ladies and gentlemen, friends of Ed and Ursula Meese, it is a matter of great honor and privilege that I welcome you here today on this occasion where Edwin Meese III will take the oath of office as the 75th Attorney General of the United States.

I am going to ask you now please to rise for the presentation of the Colors and the National Anthem.

(Presentation of Colors and singing of the Star Spangled Banner.)

MR. JENSEN: I would like to thank the Army Band and the Joint Color Guard for their presence and participation here in this ceremony today. And I would like to now introduce Chaplain James Ford of the House of Representatives for the invocation.

CHAPLAIN FORD: Let us pray.

Oh God, we ask Your blessing on us and upon all that we do. We acknowledge Your many gifts to us, the gifts of family and friends and colleagues, the gift of faith which allows us to receive Your bountiful blessings, the gift of hope which allows us

to strive for a better world, the gift of love which binds us all together.

We pray Oh, God, that Your Spirit will inspire us to serve all the people of Your creation, of every station and position, that You will give us the strength to use our talents and abilities in ways that serve the common good and glorify Your name.

We pray Your special blessing on him whom we honor this day and upon all who work in this place, that justice will flow down as waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

In Your name we pray, amen.

MR. JENSEN: Would you please be seated. And now it is again a matter of great personal privilege that I introduce to you a man who for the past four years has served this nation with extraordinary distinction as the 74th Attorney General of the United States, William French Smith.

(Applause)

ATTORNEY GENERAL SMITH: Thank you very much. I am certainly pleased to be here today back in the Great Hall, and particularly pleased to be here on this occasion.

The Department of Justice, as so many here know, is truly a remarkable institution. I think that perhaps the thing that impressed me most when I first arrived here was the unanimity with which all of those that I talked to about it who had been here in the past or who were here at that time, the degree to which they had respect for this institution. I can't remember anyone who had been here who did not have strong feelings about the great value of having served the United States in this particular Department.

I know among others included in that category was the Chief Justice, who served as head of the Civil Division for some three years. He has said to me on more than one occasion that it was the most fascinating time that he had spent. I have not had the courage to ask him whether or not that excluded his current position or not. Perhaps one day he will tell us.

The Department is also unique and different and remarkable in another sense. One of the first discussions I had when I arrived was with one of my predecessors, Attorney General Rogers, who after our discussing what went on here, said that life at the

Department of Justice is best described as one damn thing after another.

Another predecessor, Herb Brownell, said that whenever he was asked what his long-term plans for the Department were replied by saying to get through the day.

And, Ed, I can tell you, both of those descriptions are very apt. Actually it's one of those situations too where you can make a very important decision with national consequences, and twenty minutes later you can't remember what it was.

As someone once said, I know you're going to have the feeling probably many times of the member of the Olympic javelin team that elected to receive.

The Department is unique in another respect, and that is that the Attorney General, as distinct from any other agency of government that I know of, actually wears four hats. He is the principal legal advisor to the President and other agencies of government. He is administrator, manager of sixty thousand employees and thirty-one boards, operating divisions, bureaus, and so on. He is the chief law enforcement officer of the land. And he is a

cabinet member charged with implementing administration policy.

Those four hats have rather sometimes strenuous tensions that exist between them. And one of the great challenges of being Attorney General, as you will find, Ed, is how you handle those tensions. At some times they seemed to be irreconcilable. But somehow they always seem to work out.

In any case, I have known you, Ed, for many, many years. And I have valued our friendship, and our friendship with Ursula as well, perhaps even more important. That has been a very fine relationship as far as I'm concerned, and my wife Jean as well.

I've always admired Ed's abilities and his fortitude, his determination. With those qualities and with his background in law enforcement, his tenure here, in my opinion, is bound to be a highly successful one. And I certainly wish him well in every respect.

Now, it's my great pleasure to present to you the Chief Justice. But I'd like to take advantage of this opportunity to say what a pleasant

relationship I had with the Chief while I was here. He really has done more in connection with the administration of the Court and the system of justice and in dealing with the Department of Justice, a very close relationship, obviously.

And I don't think that I've ever had the occasion publicly to express my appreciation for that very fine relationship, so I do now. And it is with great pleasure that I present him to you.

(Applause)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Mr. Meese, are you prepared to take the oath of office?

MR. MEESE: I am, Mr. Chief Justice.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: If you will place your left hand on the Bible and raise your right hand, and repeat after me, Mr. Meese.

I, Edwin Meese, do solemnly swear.

MR. MEESE: I, Edwin Meese, do solemnly swear.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: That I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

MR. MEESE: That I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Against all enemies foreign and domestic.

MR. MEESE: Against all enemies foreign and domestic.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same.

MR. MEESE: That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: That I take this obligation freely.

MR. MEESE: That I take this obligation freely.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion.

MR. MEESE: Without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: And that I will well and faithfully discharge.

MR. MEESE: And that I will well and faithfully discharge.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: The duties of the office on which I am about to enter.

MR. MEESE: The duties of the office on

which I am about to enter.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: So help me God.

MR. MEESE: So help me God.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: My congratulations, sir.

(Applause)

ATTORNEY GENERAL MEESE: Thank you very much. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. And thank you, Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. Attorney General Bill Smith, distinguished guests, and fellow employees of the Department of Justice, and all you friends, thank you all for honoring me by your attendance today, and particularly by that very warm welcome that you just accorded me.

I guess I can't resist saying that a funny thing happened to me on the way to this forum. As we all know, it has taken some time to get here, and it's taken some time for Bill Smith to get back to California. But I am happy to be here, and I look forward to the challenge of leading this great Department.

I also want to recognize the tremendous help, support, and encouragement that I've received from so many of the people that are seated here. I am

deeply grateful to all of you. The number is too great to individually mention you. But to each of you, I extend my heartfelt thanks and the knowledge that Ursula and I will always be grateful to you.

I appreciate very much the Chief Justice being here to do me the honor of administering the oath today. I'm grateful to Chaplain Ford for giving us the invocation, and to Bill Smith for being here and returning in effect to welcome me to the Department today, as well as the very gracious words that you gave to us. And I appreciate Lowell Jensen presiding over these ceremonies.

I do want to take just a moment, if I may, to introduce my family that is with me today. I have with me my son and daughter-in-law Mike and Ramona, and my daughter, Dana. Would you stand please.

(Applause)

ATTORNEY GENERAL MEESE: I'd like to introduce my brother Myron and my nephew Tim.

(Applause)

ATTORNEY GENERAL MEESE: I am particularly pleased that the two people to whom I owe what I have learned about service and loyalty and dedication are

able to be here with us today, my father and mother, Edwin and Leona Meese.

(Applause)

ATTORNEY GENERAL MEESE: And although you've met her before, and she's participating in the ceremony, the person without whom I would not be able to go forward in the things that I'm doing and with whom I have had a most delightful life, my wife Ursula.

(Applause)

ATTORNEY GENERAL MEESE: When I appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee in January of this year, I stated that my priorities for the Department of Justice would be these: first, the protection of the law abiding from the lawless with due and careful deference to the Constitutional rights of all citizens; secondly, the safeguarding of individual privacy from improper governmental intrusion; third, the vigilant and energetic defense of the civil rights of all Americans; and fourth, the promotion of legal and regulatory structures designed to conserve and expand economic freedom.

These four objectives to me are the

foundation of a sound system of justice. They are the President's priorities, and they certainly are mine.

In addressing these priorities, I feel fortunate to be a part of an outstanding Department with a history and the traditions of excellence, integrity, and dedicated service. I want you to know that it will be my purpose to preserve and continue the tremendous initiatives of the past four years which were pioneered by my predecessor and good friend Bill Smith.

I am well aware, the people of this Department are well aware, and the people of our country are well aware of the great debt we all owe Attorney General Bill Smith for the remarkable advances of the immediate past. We have seen decisive improvements in the war on organized crime and bold new efforts against drug trafficking.

Where four years ago there was little in the way of a coordinated international response to the global criminal syndicates, today we have in place a functioning and extremely important network of cooperative arrangements to follow and to find these boundary jumping felons.

There is a new federal criminal law and a new federal bankruptcy law. Not all the provisions have been worked out yet, but there is a law in place. There is a new approach to antitrust enforcement and a recommitment to the first principles of civil rights.

All of these initiatives and many others were begun and implemented by Bill Smith and the fine men and women of this Department. One of my goals will be to keep these programs and this progress healthy and strong.

I think it's important that as a department we continue the long tradition of professionalism that pervades this great building and the people who work here. This is more than the finest law firm in the world, more than the finest law enforcement agency, more than the finest department in the government. It is also a collection of dedicated professionals who aspire on an individual basis to excellence in the performance of their duties.

I will commit a great deal of my energy not only to achieving the Department's goals, but to strengthening their individual efforts and seeing that every employee in this Department has the opportunity

and the encouragement to grow and to develop their individual various talents. To the extent that every one of us has the chance to improve individually, the Department's performance likewise will be enhanced.

I am determined to keep the doors of this Department open to new ideas, new approaches, and new solutions. We live in an era of continuing, indeed exponential change. We must never allow satisfaction with the tremendous achievements of the past to slow or to halt the drive to innovate.

The balance of this century and the decades of the next century will witness new demands on the Justice Department. If we are to successfully position ourselves to confront new dilemmas, we must begin today to encourage a wide open and ready exchange of views on the law's response to problems, some of which we can only see in dim outline at the present.

I welcome and will certainly encourage intellectual ferment, and I will certainly foster creative thinking. In the next four years we will welcome all shades of sincere opinion, all manner of

spokesman, and all kinds of constructive criticism. We will seek the best professional judgment of the members of this Department and we will promote a spirit of cooperative management and team effort that will produce the best results for the people of our nation.

Looking at the work of the Justice Department and of our justice system, we will address the problems of crime and will work closely with state and local law enforcement agencies in preventing and controlling criminal activity. Particularly we will work to protect our children in school, on playgrounds, on the streets, and in their homes. We will be attentive to protect the rights of victims of crime, and we will provide increased assistance to them.

We will work to prevent and to control and combat terrorism which threatens our citizens at home and abroad. And we will use our ingenuity and our creativity to control white collar crime as new technologies provide new opportunities for criminals, just as they provide new ways to improve the way of life for the rest of our citizens.

And particularly we will continue to work for a systems of corrections in our country that provides adequate capacity and humane prison institutions.

Turning to the other branches of our government, the Department will seek from the courts a common understanding on the crucial role of the judiciary. And from Congress we will seek a renewed appreciation of the importance and the vitality of the Constitution is guarantee of three separate but equal branches of government.

I must point out also that the states were not named in the Tenth Amendment as an afterthought. Federalism is not a quaint cannard of the 18th century, but a living and dynamic system of governance. We will protect that original design, we will dust off the Federalist Papers, and we will project a spirit of creative federalism.

Most importantly, we will protect the rights of all Americans. The poor especially must not find that the laws work only for those with deep pockets.

Many of us who are members of a profession

must commit the resources that we have and we control to protect the rights of those who are on the margins of society. We must take the lead in inspiring the professional bar to fulfill its obligation to those who are least well off among us. We are lucky in that we are not alone in attempting these tasks.

Cooperation with every agency in the federal system and with every level of government is not a luxury for us, but is a necessity if we are to be effective. And our ultimate success depends upon the people of the nation working with us, understanding our objectives, and supporting our aims as we address their concerns.

There is a national consensus, I believe, on issues such as crime. And I believe that we must utilize that consensus to continue to win the support of the people and therefore prosper in their work.

Finally, we must and we will serve the President of the United States. And we will work to carry out his policies and programs. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the honor that he has done by nominating me to this post or the tremendous and continuous support that he has given me over the past

year.

This Department will be fiercely independent in accurately interpreting and vigorously upholding the law. But this is not inconsistent with conscientiously and vigorously implementing the President's philosophy, which is the mainstream of today's American political thinking.

Let me close by saying that I expect an exciting and productive four years ahead. And if I had any doubt, Bill Smith has mentioned that in his remarks today. We have many tasks, but we have only one mission. That mission is referred to in the Preamble to the Constitution where the founders announce their intention to both establish justice and to ensure the domestic tranquility.

The Constitution itself went a long ways toward establishing a just system of government. But, the domestic tranquility depends, to a large extent, on the daily operations of that government. It is our mission to secure and defend the tranquility which allows for the full and free exercise of the rights of all Americans.

When George Washington wrote to Edmund

Randolph and asked him to be the first Attorney General of the United States, he said, in 1789, that the due administration of justice is the firmest pillar of good government. That remains the case nearly two centuries later.

Together, I commit myself, and I look forward to the commitment of this Department, to faithfully promote the administration of justice and thereby to protect and to serve the people of our country.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. JENSEN: On behalf of Attorney General and Mrs. Meese, I want to thank you for your participation here and your presence here today in this warm and memorable occasion. The program is concluded. Thank you.

(Whereupon, at 4:35 p.m., the ceremony was concluded.)