

CHAPTER 2

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER ADDRESS: THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE POST 9/11 WORLD

I. INTRODUCTION

RICHARD MITTENTHAL*

Welcome to the Academy's distinguished guest speaker luncheon. I told our guest speaker that the Academy would issue a reprimand for his late arrival. He told me that if we did that, he would file a grievance. And we left it at that. I am somewhat disadvantaged in this introduction, for our guest is truly a modest man. I telephoned his office six times in the past eight weeks to secure personal accounts of his life and career but was unable to get any such information. My son, a computer whiz, came to my rescue. He went on the Internet, made a search, and sent me some 50 pages of material about Richard Trumka, along with a cautionary note that computer buffs can appreciate: "This guy has more than 1,000 hits." That's more hits than Beethoven but fewer than Ty Cobb, but those hits suggest how active, how well-traveled, how outspoken he has been these many years. His story began in Nemaquin, Pennsylvania, in 1949. Like other members of his family, he entered the coal mines at an early age. He soon became an activist in the Miners for Democracy reform movement. He left the mines at some point, secured an undergraduate degree from Penn State, a law degree from Villanova University, and then worked as a union lawyer. His wish, however, was to represent miners. Because he had not been in the mines long enough to qualify for elective office in the United Mine Workers, he returned to the mines. And after he had qualified, he ran for president of the union, was elected, and held that office for 13 years. He led major strikes against the Pittston

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Coal Company and the Bituminous Coal Operators Association. Those strikes resulted in significant benefit improvements for miners and large advances in employer-union cooperation. By all accounts, he served the UMW with distinction. Then, in 1995, he was called on to serve a much larger labor constituency as Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO—a somewhat different role but still as a spokesman for working men and women. Once again he has served the labor movement with distinction. As arbitrators, the conversations we have with labor and management are largely limited to the issues raised at our hearings. We seldom have the opportunity outside of the hearing room to speak of matters of common concern. It is my pleasure therefore to introduce a dedicated trade unionist who has spent the better part of his life fighting for the interests of working men and women. I give you Richard Trumka.

II. ADDRESS

RICHARD L. TRUMKA*

Today marks the formal end of the deconstruction and cleanup effort at Ground Zero—the site of the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001. You should know that we handled the project 100 percent union, and because thousands of union crafts workers have been working 12-hour shifts, seven days a week for the past eight months, the job has been completed without a life-threatening injury to any worker.

And, equally important, those workers have brought in the job six months ahead of schedule and \$2 billion under budget. They deserve our respect and recognition, and I ask you to join me in a round of applause for the union movement in New York.

I might add that, although 17 unions have been involved—including the building trades, the firefighters, and the police—along with four union prime contractors, the City of New York, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the American Red Cross, Burger

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