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Friday, May 9, 1952

DEDICATION OF A. W. MELLON MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN

May 9, 1952

REMARKS BY J. F. DRAKE, PRESIDING OFFICER

Mr. Vice-President, Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. Secretary and friends:

Admirers of Andrew William Mellon have united to raise the fund which has made possible this beautiful memorial fountain, which we dedicate today. They felt it to be most fitting that a memorial of this nature should be erected as a lasting recognition of the great public service rendered by this modest man.

Through a joint resolution passed by the 80th Congress, the A. W. Mellon Memorial Committee was authorized to erect the fountain upon this site located, appropriately, close by the National Gallery of Art. I am sure that there will be universal approval of this memorial. In dedicating it we honor a great American. We honor him today not as a great financier and builder of an industrial empire, but rather as a public servant and national benefactor.

It was a deep sense of public duty that induced Mr. Mellon, in March 1921, to accept the office of Secretary of the Treasury. It was my good fortune to come to

Washington with him at that time and to play a very modest part in assisting in the selection of key personnel of the treasury department. His passion for efficiency in public service is well illustrated by a statement which he made to me the first day of his administration. He said that his sole purpose was to develop the best possible organization and stated that, in order to accomplish this, he felt that he should retain in the service those in key positions who had shown outstanding efficiency, regardless of the party to which they belonged. That patriotic principle of seeking efficiency above all things guided him throughout his administration and was a most important factor in the success attained. To adhere to that principle required both courage and determination for his persistence caused a great deal of criticism from those who felt that the selection of personnel should be dictated by other considerations. So strong was this criticism that a vigorous protest was sent to the President demanding that Mr. Mellon change his policy. Happily, this protest was of no avail and Mr. Mellon continued to operate with a single purpose in mind; viz., to give the people of the United States the best possible administration of the Treasury.

During his years of public service, Mr. Mellon

laboring early and late, spared himself not at all in connection with the discharge of the duties of his office. However, in spite of the strain that was constantly upon him, he maintained a poise and serenity which were a wonderful example to all his associates. Those who were privileged to have daily contact with him had for him not only a high regard and respect but a real affection--born of the human kindness and sympathy which was so characteristic of this great man.

It was quite in keeping with his character that Mr. Mellon, having completed his public service as Secretary of the Treasury and Ambassador to Great Britain, should, in the remaining years of his life, devote himself to the creation and development of a plan to provide the nation with a National Gallery of Art which would be everlasting in its benefit to mankind. Were he with us today to see the happy fruition of his thoughts and effort, he would well say that he "builded better than he knew." As we look at the building across the avenue (gesture), which we know as the National Gallery of Art, we are impressed not only by the beauty of the structure but by the thought that within are priceless treasures of art which, with those yet to be added, will be a source of enjoyment and education and inspiration to generations yet unborn.