



The careers of 18 Labor Secretaries

*The role of a Secretary of Labor
and his or her place in history
is determined by a combination
of personal qualities—and circumstances
beyond the Secretary's control while in office*

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On March 4, 1913, Congress created "an executive department in the Government to be called the Department of Labor, with a Secretary of Labor, who shall be the head thereof, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate . . ." The purpose of the Department of Labor shall be "to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners of the United States . . ." ¹ In the 75 years since then, there have been 19 Secretaries from varied backgrounds and with different philosophies regarding the Department. The first three Secretaries were labor leaders. Six came from the ranks of the trade union movement. Others have been lawyers, professors, politicians, businessmen, and personnel directors.

Early secretaries

The first Secretary of Labor, William B. Wilson, would not recognize the Department over which he presided from 1913 to 1921. When he assumed office under President Woodrow Wilson, there were about 2,000 employees, of whom more than 90 percent worked

on the immigration and naturalization functions of the Department. Now there are about 18,000 employees. In 1913 (aside from immigration laws), the Department administered no statutes but today the Department is a regulatory agency.

Secretary Wilson emigrated from Scotland when he was 8 years old and soon worked 10 hours a day loading carts in a Pennsylvania coal mine. At age 14, he was secretary of a coal miners' local union. He later became secretary-treasurer of the national union. In 1906, Wilson ran for Congress and won a narrow victory. He represented the 15th Pennsylvania District for 6 years and was a leading advocate of a bill to create a Cabinet-rank Department of Labor.

As Secretary of Labor, Wilson explained that even though the purpose of the Department was to promote the welfare of American workers, "in the execution of that purpose the element of fairness to every interest is of equal importance . . . fairness between wage earner and wage earner, between wage earner and employer . . ." ² Despite this declaration of fairness, however, business generally mistrusted the Department. Secretary Wilson asserted that no other Department of the Federal Government had been organized under such

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Labor Secretaries and the Presidents they served

Secretary of Labor	Period of service	President
William B. Wilson	Mar. 4, 1913–Mar. 4, 1921	Woodrow Wilson
James J. Davis	Mar. 5, 1921–Nov. 30, 1930	Warren G. Harding Calvin Coolidge Herbert Hoover
William N. Doak	Dec. 9, 1930–Mar. 4, 1933	Herbert Hoover
Frances Perkins	Mar. 4, 1933–June 30, 1945	Franklin D. Roosevelt Harry S Truman
Lewis B. Schwellenbach	July 1, 1945–June 10, 1948 (died in office)	Harry S Truman
Maurice J. Tobin	Aug. 13, 1948–Jan. 20, 1953	Harry S Truman
Martin P. Durkin	Jan. 21, 1953–Sept. 10, 1953	Dwight D. Eisenhower
James P. Mitchell	Oct. 9, 1953–Jan. 20, 1961	Dwight D. Eisenhower
Arthur J. Goldberg	Jan. 21, 1961–Sept. 20, 1962	John F. Kennedy
W. Willard Wirtz	Sept. 25, 1962–Jan. 20, 1969	John F. Kennedy Lyndon B. Johnson
George P. Shultz	Jan. 22, 1969–July 1, 1970	Richard M. Nixon
James D. Hodgson	July 2, 1970–Feb. 1, 1973	Richard M. Nixon
Peter J. Brennan	Feb. 2, 1973–Mar. 15, 1975	Richard M. Nixon
John T. Dunlop	Mar. 18, 1975–Jan. 31, 1976	Gerald R. Ford
W. J. Usery, Jr.	Feb. 10, 1976–Jan. 20, 1977	Gerald R. Ford
Ray Marshall	Jan. 27, 1977–Jan. 20, 1981	Jimmy Carter
Raymond J. Donovan	Feb. 4, 1981–Mar. 15, 1985	Ronald Reagan
William E. Brock	Apr. 29, 1985–Oct. 31, 1987	Ronald Reagan
Ann McLaughlin	Dec. 17, 1987–	Ronald Reagan

trying circumstances. One example is the fact that although Congress had authorized the Department to conciliate labor disputes, it provided no funds for that activity. Wilson drew from the limited resources of other bureaus and created a Conciliation Division, yet neither striking workers nor employers utilized the service to any great extent.

World War I changed the situation. If a Department of Labor had not existed at the outbreak of the war, Secretary Wilson said, Congress would have had to create one. To mobilize labor, 15 departmental bureaus, services, and boards were created. The number of employees increased to more than 6,000. While it is difficult to describe the achievements of all the labor agencies participating in the war effort, a partial listing indicates their scope and significance: the U.S. Employment Service, the War Labor Policies Board, the Women in Industry Service, the Division of Negro Economics, the Farm Service Division, the Child Labor Division, the Working Conditions Service, and the U.S. Housing Corp.

In 1917, Secretary Wilson became chairman of the President's Mediation Commission, a body which mediated thousands of wartime labor disputes. The President also created the War Labor Administration to coordinate labor activities of the government. Secretary Wilson, as head of this body, advised the President to establish a National War Labor Board, the most important wartime labor agency. The cochairmen of the Board were former President William Howard Taft for employers, and famous liberal lawyer Frank P. Walsh for labor. The Board published a "Magna Carta" of labor, which included the right to organize and bargain collectively, the 8-hour workday with overtime provisions, and the right to a living wage. Labor, in return for recognition of these rights, gave up practices deemed harmful to productivity.

The Department also cooperated with the International Labor Organization (ILO). Secretary Wilson served as chairman of the first international conference of the ILO which was held in Washington in 1918.



James J. Davis

When the war ended, Congress cut back on "big" government. Wilson argued that although reductions were necessary, some of the labor-related agencies created during the war were also needed in peacetime. But Congress disagreed and the Department lost most of the functions it had gained.

In 1921, President Warren G. Harding appointed James J. Davis as his Secretary of Labor. Davis, born in Wales, emigrated to the United States as a young child and began work in a Pennsylvania steel mill at the age of 8. Although Davis later became a wealthy man, he carried a union card and liked to be called "Puddler Jim," a name taken from one of his mill jobs.

Davis's chief interest as Secretary was immigration. He supervised the registration of immigrants and called for restrictions in the number of aliens allowed into the country. As part of his effort to reduce the number of illegal aliens entering the country, he established a Border Patrol.

Although immigration dwarfed other Department of Labor activities, it was not its only function. Secretary Davis strengthened the role of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Without the Bureau, Davis said, labor policies of the Department would be adopted in darkness.³ Davis also encouraged labor-management cooperation and, along with Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, persuaded the U.S. Steel Corp. to abolish the 12-hour workday. In addition, when women won the right to vote, a Women's Bureau was created in the Department of Labor.

In 1930, Davis was elected to the U.S. Senate, and William N. Doak became the third Secretary of Labor. The first American-born Secretary, Doak worked as a railroad yardman and rose through the hierarchy of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. He was also managing editor of the union journal.

Doak was sensitive to unemployment matters and supported studies of public works programs and unemployment insurance as ways to offset the effects of the Great Depression. But economic conditions worsened during his relatively brief tenure, and he was overwhelmed by the worldwide economic disaster.

The New Deal and World War II

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Frances Perkins as Secretary of Labor. Perkins, the first woman Cabinet member and Labor Secretary with the longest tenure—1933-45—made the Department a seedbed of ideas for social reform.

Perkins wavered about accepting the position, but women's rights groups urged her to do

so. Mary Dewson, director of the Women's Democratic Committee, told Perkins that "generations might pass" before another woman would have such a chance. "You mustn't say no . . . Too much hangs on it."⁴

Most labor leaders opposed the appointment. She was the first Secretary who was not a union member. William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, said that unions "can never become reconciled to her selection." Perkins replied at a press conference that Green was a man of vision and integrity, and if labor leaders would not come to her, she would "hasten to see them."⁵

Perkins' first priority was to alleviate unemployment, and she participated in most national programs in the field, including the Federal Emergency Relief Administration which in the early days of the Depression spent millions of dollars on food, shelter, and other human needs. The Civil Works Administration created 4 million temporary jobs during the winter of 1933-34. The Works Progress Administration provided work for 8 million people. The Public Works Administration undertook large-scale construction such as schools, hospitals, and river-control projects. The Civilian Conservation Corps paid young men, between 18 and 25, \$30 a month plus board to plant trees and preserve natural resources.

The National Recovery Administration (NRA) had a significant influence on the Department of Labor. The NRA stimulated business by ignoring the antitrust laws and creating codes of "fair competition." Labor sections of NRA codes sought to abolish child labor, called for collective bargaining, and set maximum hours of work and minimum wages. Establishments supporting NRA principles displayed a blue eagle poster. However, in a case involving a Brooklyn, NY, poultry market, the U.S. Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional, finding that the Federal Government had exceeded its power to regulate interstate commerce. A "sick chicken" killed the "blue eagle," it was reported.

Frances Perkins searched for constitutional ways to continue some of the labor activities of the NRA. Some of her ideas on the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing were included in the National Labor Relations Act of 1935.

But continuing NRA's labor standards was difficult. Both employers and unions (fearing that minimums might become maximums) opposed minimum standards. But standards were important to Secretary Perkins. When she accepted the position of Secretary of Labor, she said that



William N. Doak

she wanted laws protecting children at work, a ceiling over hours of work, and a floor under wages. In 1937, Congress met in special session to consider a law drawn up in the Department of Labor to set labor standards. At first, Congress rejected the proposals. When Perkins watered down the bill, Congress adopted the diluted version as the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

The high point of Perkins' career came in June 1934, when she served as head of a committee that developed Social Security. She worked tirelessly on this project. Congress passed a Social Security law in 1935, which included old age insurance, unemployment insurance, and grants for relief to needy children.

Also significant during Perkins' tenure was the rejuvenation of the U.S. Employment Service. The Service germinated in 1907, when it dealt with immigrant labor. During World War I, it expanded into a large manpower agency, but contracted after the War to a minor agency. The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 gave it new strength as a Federal-State service which provided free job assistance. From 1933 through 1940, the new U.S. Employment Service screened and selected 26 million workers for relief projects.

Of the many laws which Frances Perkins helped create, only a few were administered by the Department of Labor. Perkins was eager to supervise Social Security, but Congress created an independent Social Security Board. Moreover, besides her failure to gain new functions, she lost some traditional activities of the Department. For example, the Immigration Service, which had been a bureau of the Department of Labor when it was created and was by far its largest unit, was transferred to the Department of Justice in 1940.

During World War II, the United States turned from programs to fight the Depression to programs to make the Nation an "Arsenal of Democracy." The tendency to place labor agencies outside the Department of Labor accelerated. At the end of the war, there were about 20 Federal labor agencies in which the Department of Labor had little influence. Between 1932 and 1945, when the number of Federal jobholders increased sixfold, the number of employees in the Labor Department dropped from 6,000 to a little more than 5,000.

From an historical perspective, Frances Perkins contributed to the advancement of the welfare of workers on a national rather than a departmental scale.

The postwar Secretaries

In 1945, Harry S Truman became President and asked Lewis B. Swollenbach, a former Sena-

tor and Federal judge, to be the fifth Secretary of Labor. Swollenbach had a troubled tenure. He took office during a great wave of strikes and was often bypassed by special labor advisers in the mediation of labor disputes. In 1946, Congress slashed the departmental budget from \$113 million to \$15 million. When Swollenbach died in office in June 1948, the number of Department employees had dropped to just above 3,000, the smallest number since 1917.

In August 1949, Maurice J. Tobin, former mayor of Boston and Governor of Massachusetts, became Secretary of Labor. Tobin fought the dispersing of departmental functions and saw the Bureau of Employment Security and some early apprenticeship monitoring functions placed under his stewardship. Tobin's goal was reinforced by recommendations of the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government, headed by former President Herbert Hoover.

Durkin and Mitchell

In January 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed Martin P. Durkin as Secretary of Labor. Durkin, president of the plumbers and pipefitters union, and the first officer of the American Federation of Labor to become Secretary of Labor, focused on changing the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.

The administration had said it was opposed to any law "licensing union busting." Durkin believed that the administration had agreed to revise sections of the labor law dealing with the closed shop and secondary boycotts. But the administration did not accept Durkin's proposals. Durkin felt betrayed and resigned from office after a tenure of less than 8 months.

James P. Mitchell, an industrial relations executive in private industry, replaced Durkin. Mitchell became Secretary of Labor at a difficult time. Some labor leaders called his appointment "incredible." Joseph Loftus, of *The New York Times*, observed that Mitchell "was like a man heading into an Arctic gale in a sunsuit." But Mitchell succeeded beyond expectations. He said, at the outset, that he was dedicated to fairness to all. Although the administration was viewed as promanagement, Mitchell carefully cultivated labor leaders and convinced them of his fairness.

Mitchell achieved a breakthrough when, for the first time in decades, the Secretary of Labor became the chief government spokesman for labor. Mitchell provided labor leaders with access to the President. There were no "backstairs to the White House" for either labor leaders or employers. Mitchell assumed leadership over Federal labor agencies outside the Department of Labor. He met with the heads of these agen-



Lewis B. Swollenbach

cies and he recommended Presidential appointments to the National Labor Relations Board and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Mitchell rebuilt the morale of the Department. During the Great Depression, able young people had flocked to the Federal Government as one of the few places where they could find jobs. Most of them started at low grades. This situation had created a pool of talented people eager to serve. Mitchell "discovered" and promoted capable employees, whose superior performance enhanced the reputation of the Department of Labor.

Mitchell initiated training programs which over time became one of the most important functions of the Department of Labor. He recognized the need to upgrade the skills of the work force. He observed that the United States was losing its advantage of producing goods more efficiently than any other nation in history. Mitchell appointed experts to plan for a manpower future with a larger and more skillful work force. Later administrations greatly expanded training programs. But the 7 years and 3 months that Mitchell served as Secretary of Labor showed more than average achievement by the Department.

Goldberg and Wirtz

In 1961, when President John F. Kennedy appointed Arthur J. Goldberg as Secretary of Labor, Goldberg already had a distinguished labor career. He had helped break the power of both racketeers and Communists in several large unions. He was one of the key figures in the merger of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which subsequently spoke for 15 million American workers. And shortly before becoming Secretary, Goldberg helped settle a major steel strike.

No other Secretary of Labor has had as much influence on national labor policy as Goldberg. Because of his powerful role and closeness to the President, he was eager to demonstrate that he was impartial. Although he remained friends with labor, he broke his previous associations with the labor movement, even forfeiting a pension he had earned from a union.

One of Goldberg's goals was to create a better climate between workers and their employers. A President's Advisory Committee on Labor-Management Policies, which he sponsored, furthered this goal. Goldberg advocated human relations committees in large corporations, committees which would bring both sides together before a crisis. He promoted profit sharing because it gave workers part of the "fruits" of their toil.

Goldberg was a successful mediator. He knew from experience that if there were predictable procedures of government intervention, both sides would try to use these procedures to their advantage. To prevent this tactic, Goldberg called for an array of weapons to convince bargainers that labor contracts should be in the public interest. When Goldberg was appointed to the Supreme Court after 20 months of service as Secretary of Labor, President Kennedy said that Goldberg had raised the Department of Labor to a "stature and significance which have never been surpassed."

Willard Wirtz, Goldberg's Under Secretary, succeeded him in 1962 and served 7 years. Wirtz, a former law professor, had served on several Federal labor boards during and after World War II.

Wirtz believed that the Secretary of Labor should rarely intervene in labor disputes. Wirtz noted that during his tenure, the Department scene shifted from "haggard men spending the night glaring at each other across the bargaining table," with reporters and television cameras keeping a "death watch," to one where the Department was no longer a news beat.

Wirtz was particularly interested in manpower programs. Secretary Mitchell planted the seed, Secretary Goldberg cultivated it and sponsored training as part of the Area Redevelopment Act of 1961, and Wirtz supported skill training to adapt to technological changes. He especially emphasized aid to the poor.

Quoting from the French writer Anatole France, Wirtz said "the state, with its majestic justice and equality, forbids the rich man as well as the poor man to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread." Wirtz believed that there had to be equality of opportunity, as well as equality under the law.

During Wirtz's tenure, the Department of Labor managed a variety of employment and training programs. Among these were the Neighborhood Youth Corps, New Careers, Work Incentive Programs, Job Opportunities in the Business Sector, and a program to curb job discrimination on Federal contracts. In his final report, Wirtz declared that the Department of Labor had worked toward the goal of ensuring "that every American has a full and equal opportunity to earn a decent living."

Five secretaries in eight years

There were five Secretaries of Labor between 1969 and 1977 compared with only four Secretaries during the first 32 years of the Department's history. George P. Shultz, who assumed the Secretaryship in January 1969, had been dean of the Graduate School of Business at the University of Chicago and had worked in Wash-



Maurice J. Tobin



Martin P. Durkin



James P. Mitchell

ington with various groups studying important economic problems, including construction jobs for blacks and reform of the welfare system.

Schultz led an effort to promote minority employment in the construction industry, supporting a plan to set goals on Federally funded construction projects. Under the plan, contractors had to take "affirmative action" in employing minority workers. Starting with the Philadelphia plan, targeting job increases for blacks from 4 to 26 percent of the work force over a 4-year period, the administration hoped to expand other city plans on this model.

The Philadelphia Plan pressured white-dominated unions to admit blacks. Shultz distinguished between "quotas" that he perceived wrong because of rigid parameters and goals perceived right because of inherent flexibility. The distinction has been challenged. But the Philadelphia Plan expressed Shultz's philosophy that job opportunities were better than welfare.

Along the same line of favoring jobs over welfare, Shultz promoted the Family Assistance Plan. He argued that some poor people would not accept low-paying jobs if they were better off on welfare. The plan would remove the penalty for working by making 13 million low-paid workers eligible for relief, with the hope that they would work themselves off welfare into better jobs. Schultz believed that the plan was a worthwhile gamble. After a long legislative battle, however, the Family Assistance Plan died in the Senate Finance Committee.

Shultz won friends even among those who opposed his programs. He was a good listener, and his courteous, low-key manner won respect. Although Shultz and George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, were on different sides on many issues, they worked well together. For example, when Meany opposed the Philadelphia Plan in a speech, he dropped his usually abrupt manner when asked about Shultz's views, and said mildly: "George is mistaken."

In mid-1970, when Shultz left the Department to head the newly created Office of Management and Budget, Under Secretary James D. Hodgson was appointed as the 12th Secretary of Labor. Hodgson had worked at Lockheed Aircraft Corp. for a quarter of a century and had become vice president for industrial relations. He had a lifelong interest in what he called "people business."

Hodgson was a champion of safety in the workplace. He was especially proud of his efforts in promoting passage of the Williams-Steiger Act of 1970, which created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The act set safety standards in 4 million workplaces.

During Hodgson's term, the government effort to control skyrocketing construction wages came to a head. In 1971, President Nixon suspended the Davis-Bacon "prevailing wage" for Federal construction. This was a hard blow to unions in the building trades, but Hodgson supported it as part of the administration's anti-inflation policy.

George Meany led the union battle against government efforts to hold down wages, and targeted his attack against the Secretary of Labor. He boycotted Hodgson, and went over his head to deal directly with the President. At a press conference, Meany talked about Hodgson, saying, "I don't pay too much attention to the Secretary . . . if you have a problem with the landlord, you don't discuss it with the janitor." Hodgson resigned in early 1973.

Peter J. Brennan, a construction trade union leader from New York, who led a "hardhat" demonstration supporting President Nixon's Vietnam policies in 1969, became the next Secretary of Labor. He believed that the top people of the administration were out of touch with the world of workers. President Nixon said that "Pete understands real people." When the Cabinet discussed accepting a 5-percent unemployment rate, Brennan pointedly depicted the human tragedy behind unemployment statistics. He supported long-term unemployment insurance for workers who had lost their jobs. Brennan also took pride in programs that gave job opportunities to women and minorities. In addition, he reactivated the Federal Committee on Apprenticeship, and appointed the first woman in 34 years to the body and the first black in history.

In 1975, John T. Dunlop, a distinguished scholar and experienced mediator, admired by both labor and management, became Secretary of Labor. Dunlop's position was enhanced because he also served as a member of the President's economic policy group.

Secretary Dunlop began his term with a thorough study of the programs of the Department of Labor. He was interested in promoting economic stability, worker safety, and pension plans. And he took a daring gamble in the legislative field to create a better labor-management climate.

The issue of situs picketing had been a thorn in the side of organized labor since 1951, when the Supreme Court declared that a strike against only one of several contractors on a job site was an illegal secondary boycott. Labor had fought the issue for nearly a quarter of a century. Dunlop performed a near miracle when he fashioned a bill approved by leaders of labor and management.

Congress passed the bill, lifting the Taft-Hartley Act's ban on construction site second-

ary picketing. The White House received 700,000 messages, most of them negative, in a campaign by the General Contractors of America for the bill's defeat. President Ford vetoed the bill, and Dunlop resigned.

In 1976, with 11 months remaining before a Presidential election, W. J. Usery, Jr. was appointed to this "hot spot" in the Cabinet. A former official of the Machinists Union, a former Assistant Secretary of Labor, and head of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, Usery had earned the reputation of being among the Nation's best labor mediators. Tireless, good-natured, and with a keen sense of timing, Usery, when necessary, could keep opposing sides at round-the-clock bargaining until they hammered out a settlement. As Secretary, Usery averted a national trucking strike and also helped end a major strike in the rubber industry.

An important achievement was Usery's use of his mediation skills and his friendship with George Meany to reestablish good relations between the administration and the American labor movement.

Ray Marshall, director of the Center for the Study of Human Resources at the University of Texas, was selected as Secretary of Labor in 1977, when Jimmy Carter became President. Marshall promoted a strong economic stimulus for the Nation's wage earners, with a primary emphasis on the problems of women and minorities. He practiced what he preached by appointing women and blacks to important positions in the Department. Public Service employment jumped from 310,000 in 1976 to a peak of 725,000 in 1978 and Marshall personally supported the Humphrey-Hawkins full employment bill of 1978.

During Marshall's tenure, the Department also devoted attention to occupational safety and health programs, publishing standards dealing with hazards caused by benzene, pesticides, cotton dust, and lead.

Mine safety and health also became a Labor Department function, when Congress transferred that function to Labor from the Bureau of Mines in the Department of the Interior, where it had been since 1910.

At this time, the pace of Departmental activities quickened in many fields. With rapidly growing programs, critics denounced what they viewed as wasteful practices and government interference. But Marshall and his supporters, especially trade unions and minorities, praised this activist role in promoting the welfare of American workers.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan appointed Raymond J. Donovan, a construction company executive, as Secretary of Labor. As 1 of 12 children in a working class family, Donovan

was sensitive to workers' needs. He had been active in charities and had spoken out strongly for social justice. He stressed economic growth as the best way to combat joblessness.

Secretary Donovan carried out the administration's policies of regulatory relief and reduced spending on social programs. He lessened the burden of regulation through policies aimed at conciliation and cooperation, with punishment reserved for serious offenders. This policy was particularly important in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the most active regulatory agency in the Department. In another area, the field of social programs, billions of dollars were cut from major employment and training projects, particularly public service jobs.

Because of the direction of the administration's economic and social policies, Secretary Donovan had difficulties. But the most serious problem he faced had nothing to do with the Department of Labor. He had to divert his time from Departmental programs to defend himself against charges of wrongdoing in private ventures. Rumors of unethical business actions involving Donovan had surfaced at the time of the Senate hearings on his nomination. Despite more than 4 years of accusations, Donovan insisted he was innocent, and refused to resign, until he was indicted in March 1985. After legal proceedings lasting 2 years, he was acquitted.

In 1985, William Brock became Secretary of Labor. Prior to his appointment as Labor Secretary, he held a Cabinet-level post as U.S. Trade Representative. He also had been a businessman, a four-term congressman, a U.S. Senator, and the chairman of the Republican National Committee. Under Brock, the Labor Department embarked on a program to view the rapidly changing work force, a reaction to the socio-technical advances and economic changes in the world, and the technical and educational skills that will predominate then.

On November 3, 1987, President Ronald Reagan nominated Ann McLaughlin as the 19th Secretary of Labor. She was sworn into office on December 17, 1987. McLaughlin is the second woman to serve as the Labor Secretary.

She brings to her Cabinet position wide experience as an executive, manager, and policymaker in public and private organizations. She has served as the Under Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior, and as Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, where she received the Department's highest honor, the Alexander Hamilton Award for distinguished leadership. McLaughlin also has headed her own consulting firm in Washington.



George P. Shultz

Differing roles

It is difficult to isolate specific accomplishments of individual Secretaries. Some landmark changes can be attributed to a particular administration. But most progress evolves over long periods of time in small increments. Dealing with unemployment, safety in the workplace, minimum wages, helping older workers, opening jobs to blacks and minorities, mitigating the conditions of farm labor, improving the quality and usefulness of labor statistics, promoting good labor-management relations—are evolutionary in nature. They are achievements of the Labor Department. Although the Secretary of Labor is often a key figure, attribution to any one Secretary is misleading.

Most important of the many-sided functions of the Secretary is the fact that he or she represents the President. It is true that some Secretaries have influenced and advised Presidents, but other Secretaries have merely carried out the administration's policies.

Also significant are the Secretary's relations with many parts of the Government. Secretaries deal with Congress and several were helped or hurt because Congress increased or cut appropriations of the Department or added or subtracted functions. The Secretary also works with fellow Cabinet members, other branches of the Federal Government, and States and localities.

Indeed, the Secretary's responsibilities extend beyond government to many segments of American society. The news media have a potent influence. The Secretary works with consumer and business interests. But the key constituency is the American worker. Although he or she promotes the interests of all American workers, the Secretary deals mostly with labor unions and their leaders by virtue of the fact that unions are organized and have representatives. The careers of some Secretaries have been enhanced by labor support, while the lives of other Secretaries have been made miserable because of poor communication with organized labor.

Personal ability is a factor. While some Secretaries have been more able than others, all of the Secretaries were above average ability. But there are so many outside factors that a Secre-

tary has sometimes performed well during one part of his or her tenure and poorly in another. This was true of two of the Secretaries. William Wilson was successful until the administration tried to hold down prices and wages to curb inflation during World War I. Frances Perkins was effective during the New Deal and ineffective during World War II.

Two Secretaries, Arthur Goldberg and George Shultz, took office under activist Presidents with whom they had extraordinarily good relations. They were successful both in their administration of Department of Labor programs and in helping shape national policy. Other Secretaries were victims of events. Doak faced the Great Depression. Post-World War II strikes and an anti-labor Congress thwarted Schwellenbach. Durkin, Dunlop, and Hodgson were trapped in the crossfire of a battle between the labor movement and the administration over national labor policy. Brennan had the Vietnam conflict and Watergate. Usery was a lame duck. Donovan was beset by events before he became Secretary. Under other circumstances, these Secretaries may or may not have had outstanding careers. The role of a Secretary of Labor and his or her place in history is determined by a combination of personal qualities and circumstances somewhat beyond his or her control during the term of office.

American life has changed greatly since the Department of Labor was established in 1913. Agriculture, once providing work for the largest number of workers, now employs less than 3 percent of the work force. There has been a major shift from heavy industry and mining to service and high technology occupations. There are now more women, more minorities, and older employees in the work force. Although the level of worker education is much higher in the Nation than in 1913, requirements will be greater in the year 2000.

In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson approved the seal of the new Department of Labor, which features a blacksmith's anvil and a plow. Today, more Americans are familiar with computers than anvils. The Department of Labor strives to meet the challenge of change. □



Raymond J. Donovan

—FOOTNOTES—

¹ Public Law 426, 62d Cong.

² *Annual Report, 1913*, quoted in O. L. Harvey, ed., *The Anvil and the Plow: U.S. Department of Labor, 1913-1963* (Washington, U.S. Government Printing office, 1963), pp. 11, 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴ George Martin, *Madame Secretary: Frances Perkins* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1976), p. 237.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.