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REMARKS BY GOVERNOR JAMES B. EDWARDS
SOLOMON BLATT APPRECIATION DAY
APRIL 7, 1976 at 3:00 P.M.

To stand here today and pay tribute to Sol Blatt is both a privilege and a challenge. It is a challenge because so much has been said and written about this man. So many tributes have been offered to his life and his accomplishments. I find it difficult to add to all of this.

More than ten years ago, John Cauthen wrote a biography of Speaker Blatt. When you read that book, you realize that Sol Blatt had made more contributions/in his early years alone/ than most men make in a lifetime. Yet, he continues working for the people of this state...for a total of 43 years of dedicated service.

I envy those who have had the benefit of his wisdom for so many years. Personally, I have had the opportunity to work with Sol Blatt for a relatively short time. Even so, I am a richer person for this brief experience. As Governor, I can see the benefits South Carolina has gained from this man's leadership. We can all see the progress in education, /the financial integrity/ and the wise management of our resources that this man has helped to bring about.

Sol Blatt has a vision of what South Carolina can become...it is that vision that has led him through the trials and tribulations of the years. He has the foresight to recognize the needs of the future...and the wisdom to deal fairly on the problems of the day.

He has been willing to work, struggle, fight and compromise for the good of the people of the state. But there was one thing he would never compromise...the best interest of ^{SC}~~the state~~ and its people.

All important men have been accused of seeking power...If Sol Blatt ever sought power, it was not for personal gain...but for the people of this state. I am told he would fight you tooth and nail on an issue...but he'd give you equal time to defend yourself. His interests lay with the interests of the people...not the interests of the politicians. What fights he won./he won for the people./not for political or personal gain.

f It is said that a great man is one who affects the mind of his generation. If this is true, then Sol Blatt is far more than a great man. He has affected the minds of his generation and many more to come.

His record of service offers us an outstanding example of courage, honesty, and fairness. His life is almost a classical success story...but fortunately for us his life has meant even more. As a young man, he was a product of the American dream of opportunity. Through the years, he lifted himself up by his bootstraps...but at the same time...he lifted his fellow South Carolinians.

Sol Blatt has never been a quitter. Despite three rejections, he finally got into the United States Army and served in World War I. He was undeterred in his effort to serve his country then... just as he is today.

He didn't quit after his first political venture failed, Again his desire to serve overcame all obstacles.

He began his service to this state at the worst of times...right in the middle of the Great Depression. He had his work cut out for him...and he stuck with it.

Over the years that followed, he worked to put this state on a sound financial footing and keep it there. He saw Governors and legislators come and go...but all the while he worked toward his two main goals...good government and a good state.

In 1963, the Columbia Record carried an editorial tribute to the Speaker that described his dedication: "No man in public life has dedicated himself in a most difficult position, to his county and state with greater fairness. No man has striven more mightily for those things in which he believed." This remains a fitting tribute to the man we honor today.

Yet, Speaker Blatt avoids the spotlight...He's never tried to take credit for his accomplishments. He has been often quoted as saying "I'm just one of 169 other legislators."

But the fact remains that his kind of leadership helped South Carolina become one of the most progressive and growing states in the nation. It is a result of his leadership that this state today does not suffer the fiscal problems that we see in so many other places.

Speaker Blatt may not want so much praise heaped on him...but the progress of South Carolina is a direct reflection of his contributions to her people.

James F. Byrnes once said of him, "In a legislative body things do not just happen. Somebody must make them happen. Speaker Blatt makes things happen. He has always been interested in accomplishments and not in headlines."

By making things happen Sol Blatt has given us a better state...without him we would have been a far poorer state.

We are in his debt for what he has made happen.
Praise is all we can offer...even though it is
by far insufficient repayment.

Mr. Speaker you can be justly proud of the
state you have served...you can be proud of your
role in shaping its future.

Let me offer another tribute to you. In a
day when there are far too many "sunshine patriots
and summer soldiers," your commitment to this
nation and this state stands as a shining example
for all of us. Never once have you forgotten the
value of being an American. You have never
hesitated to express your appreciation for the
opportunities of this land.

You have reminded those who would criticize
our nation that without our form of government,
they would not even have the right to criticize...
much less all the other freedoms they enjoy.

Some years ago, you said that you wished to be "emphatically recorded as one of those who does not believe that this nation is headed for self-destruction." You said, "the opposite is true. We will advance and strengthen the free world. Our vast productivity must be wisely and fairly administered."

Mr. Speaker...it is such faith in this nation that has made it great and will continue to do so. And I have no fear of America's future if its resources are administered with the kind of wisdom you have shown us in your 43 years of service.

It is said that "gratitude is the hardest of all emotions to express. There is no word capable of conveying all that one feels. Until we reach a world where thoughts can be adequately expressed in words...thank you will have to do."

Mr. Speaker...with that limitation...let me simply say...Thank you.