

June 29, 1971
2:50 pm – unknown

Conversation No. 63-5
Cassette No. 59
Cabinet Room

[The President met with a group of U.S. businessmen, labor leaders and economic policy advisors]

[. . .]

[Unidentified labor leader]: We had this National Association of Businessmen to find jobs in the ghettos – for the boys in the ghettos. And the first president of that organization closed a plant in Philadelphia where there were 2,000 jobs – the very type of jobs that could go to these ghetto boys and train them within a matter of a month or so, so they could perform. Where did they send them? They sent them to Taiwan. Then we've got this Mexican border thing. Mr. President, I spoke to you about this – where you've got this, this so called twin plant concept for the purpose of exporting American jobs, taking advantage of these low wages. Well, I'll tell you, these things may bring down wages in America. But you're never gonna build the type of society that led the world – you're never gonna build the type of economy that produced for the free world from 1940 to 1945 and saved the free world – you're never gonna produce that type of economy on the basis of seeing how far down you can go on the wage scale. To compete in the field of who can get the least wages. These are all things I think that are important and all part of this whole productivity picture. What do we want a higher productivity [...] for? We want higher productivity because our people should be able to live a little better. We don't want higher productivity so that the big corporations can go down south of the border, or go to Taiwan or go to South America or go to Hong Kong or some other place. These are all part of our problem and I think we're in big trouble.

[Conversation continues, unrelated]