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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 5, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: MAX L. FRIEDERSDORF

SUBJECT: Tip O'Neill

Congressman Tom Railsback obtained an advance copy of a speech Majority Leader O'Neill will deliver this Saturday on the President's second anniversary in office, and asked that it be brought to the President's attention.

A copy is attached.

HOLD FOR RELEASE UNTIL 6:30 P.M. SATURDAY, AUGUST 7, 1976

Contact Burt Hoffman
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HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER THOMAS P. O'NEILL

CALLS FORD 'APOSTLE OF OPPOSITION'

ON ANNIVERSARY OF TAKING OFFICE

WASHINGTON -- Calling Gerald R. Ford an "apostle of opposition," House Majority Leader Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill Jr. said today that Ford has conducted "a presidency that opposes, a presidency that denies, a presidency that is built around the word 'no'."

In a statement issued in connection with the second anniversary of Ford's succession to the presidency on April 9, 1974, O'Neill described Ford as "a negative President" and listed a "litany" of policies and programs that Ford has opposed ranging from ending the war in Vietnam, to tax cuts, jobs and other assistance for the unemployed, to housing, health and aid for the old-aged, the handicapped and the migrant worker.

O'Neill said Ford preferred paying \$18 billion a year in unemployment compensation to spending money for productive jobs and credited Congressional Democrats with raising the economy from the depths of last year's recession over Ford's opposition.

He warned, however, that Ford's attempts to nullify policies designed to keep the economy moving threatened the nation with continued high unemployment and a renewed recession.

O'Neill said that while the accomplishments of Ford as President "are miniscule, his place in history is secure as Richard Nixon's hand-picked successor and the last Republican President."

The text of the O'Neill statement follows:

TEXT OF STATEMENT

Two years ago Gerald R. Ford was sworn in as President of the United States. On this second anniversary -- which also marks his final anniversary as President -- it is appropriate to assess the kind of Chief Executive he has been.

While he can be commended for his integrity -- a quality he shares with most Americans and virtually all but one of his predecessors -- there is little else praiseworthy to be said of his brief tenure.

He is a negative President and his is a negative presidency, one that is not significantly different in political philosophy from that of his predecessor.

-- more --

It is a presidency rooted in the traditions of William McKinley, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover and Richard Nixon.

It is a presidency that opposes, a presidency that denies, a presidency that is built around the word "no."

It is a presidency of veto, of impoundment and of rescission.

An evaluation of the two years of Mr. Ford's tenure shows just how all-encompassing his philosophy of negativism has been:

- He opposed ending the war in Southeast Asia.
- He opposed the tax cut that stemmed the recession.
- He opposed employment and assistance for near-record numbers of jobless Americans.
- He opposed the Freedom of Information Act.
- He opposed the food stamp program.
- He opposed health services and nurse training.
- He opposed the control of strip mining.
- He opposed cost of living increases for people receiving social security and other government distributed retirement benefits.
- He opposed limiting the rise in petroleum costs.
- He opposed housing legislation.
- He opposed adequate funding for a host of social and medical programs including Head Start, nutrition for the aging, rehabilitation of the handicapped, maternal and child health care, drug abuse, alcoholism, mental illness and cancer research.
- He opposed assistance to unemployed home owners to meet their mortgage payments.
- He opposed the expansion of the school lunch and child nutrition programs.
- He opposed adequate funding for educational programs.
- He opposed strengthening protections for migrant farm workers.
- He opposed programs for expanded community mental health centers, migrant worker health centers and family planning assistance.
- He opposed increasing services for the handicapped.
- He opposed expanded educational benefits and on-the-job training for veterans of the Korean and Vietnamese Wars.
- He opposed spending funds for sewage treatment plants that would have expanded job opportunities and eliminated the pollution of streams, rivers and harbors.

-- He opposed assistance to New York City.

-- He opposed rural electrification loans.

This litany of negativism -- by no means complete -- illustrates the degree to which this President has become an apostle of opposition and an advocate of obstruction.

Perhaps the clearest picture of these policies of negativism emerges from Mr. Ford's prescription for the economy.

When Mr. Ford took office, the unemployment rate was 5.5 percent and growing, a high figure for which the policies of his predecessor, not his own, were to blame. But Mr. Ford sought to continue those same policies and in May 1975 unemployment reached 8.9 percent. His economic prescription, proclaimed proudly by him last January, was aimed at bringing an unemployment rate of 7.7 percent this year, 6.9 percent next year and 6.4 percent in 1978.

But Congressional Democrats, despite his obstructive tactics, enacted legislation that already has lowered the jobless rate to 7.5 percent and will bring it to 6 percent -- or less -- by the end of next year, not two years from now.

Mr. Ford, as his policies so clearly state, preferred to have the Treasury pay \$20 billion for unemployment compensation last year and \$18 billion for compensation this year rather than spending a portion of that money for useful public works and public service jobs.

Instead of providing productive employment, he preferred a dole. Instead of salaries for the unemployed from which they can pay taxes, he preferred payments that come from tax money and increase the public debt and the deficit. In 1975 alone, about \$50 billion was lost in government tax revenues because of the atrociously high unemployment rate preferred by Mr. Ford.

If Congress followed the economic remedies proposed by Mr. Ford, the nation would find itself in another recession in 1978.

This President, who sounds as though his bedside reading is composed of the speeches and veto messages of Herbert Hoover, continues to predict the most dire consequences from Congressional policies that he opposed.

But what do we find when we compare his prescriptions with the remedies Congress has provided over his opposition?

The inflation rate in 1972, when his predecessor sought reelection, was 3 percent. It jumped to 9 percent in 1973 and reached 12 percent in 1974 at the very time the economy dropped deep in recession and appeared headed for depression.

Over the intense opposition of Mr. Ford, the Congressional programs adopted by the Democratic majority in 1975 have reduced the rate of inflation to about 5 percent, at the same time that unemployment has declined and economic expansion has resumed.

The Ford prediction of a shortage of capital never materialized, and the fiscal 1976 budget deficit was \$10.4 billion below what Mr. Ford and his economists said it would be.

President Ford continues to oppose an economic program that would restore the economy to full health; he continues to want to stem inflation by keeping unemployment high -- the same policies implemented so disastrously by Herbert Hoover some 45 years ago. In his refusal to learn the lessons of the past, Mr. Ford refuses to recognize that jobs are the key to a healthy economy. He refuses to recognize that recent deficits do not result from unnecessary spending; they are the direct result of high unemployment.

If unemployment were now 6 percent -- instead of 7.5 percent -- the deficit would drop to \$28 billion. At 5 percent unemployment, the deficit would fall to \$12 billion. If unemployment were 4 percent, there would be a surplus of \$4 billion.

The "do-nothing" Congress that Mr. Ford also labels as "reckless" and fiscally "irresponsible" reduced his own budget requests in 1975 by \$7 billion. It will reduce them again this year, but it also will provide -- as it did in 1975 -- for programs and policies that mean progress for all of us, compassion for the unfortunate among us and the expectation of a bright future for our children and our children's children.

The 94th Congress has preserved that future despite the negativism of Gerald Ford.

President Ford is remembered fondly by many in Congress, where he spent so many years opposing virtually every positive program put into effect by a Congress and a President working together. While we will personally miss him when he leaves office next year, the record of his two years shows the nation will be better served by his departure.

Although his accomplishments are miniscule, his place in history is secure as Richard Nixon's hand-picked successor and the last Republican President.

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