

The original documents are located in Box D34, folder “Opening Statement for Debate, East Grand Rapids High School, East Grand Rapids, MI, November 1, 1972” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Suggested opening statement for debate Wednesday, November 1, 1972 at East
Grand Rapids High School.

Two years ago I appeared before you in this same forum and asked you to look at the issues with the eyes of common sense. Tonight I renew that plea in the light of 1972 and what has transpired in the last two years.

The Vietnam War is still an issue but it is fast becoming a non-issue. We have brought back more than a half million men from Vietnam and we have ended our ground combat role there. Now we are close to ending the Vietnam War by negotiation . . . ending it in an honorable way and in a way that will allow the South Vietnamese people to choose their own political future. The negotiated settlement which is in prospect for Vietnam will bring American prisoners of war back home and produce an accounting of our men missing in action.

In that connection, let me point out that my opponent in this election favors an immediate and complete U. S. withdrawal from Vietnam. She probably assumes that this would mean the return of American prisoners of war, as Sen. George McGovern also assumes. It turns out that McGovern misinformed the American people when he told them on October 10 that all French prisoners of war were returned within 90 days after the French pulled out of Indochina in 1954. It's just not true. The Library of Congress in Washington estimates that more than 20,000 French Union forces missing in Indochina are still unaccounted for today. And at the same time the French Embassy has advised the Library of Congress that at least 1,000 French POW's are still missing and unaccounted for from that war.

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This is in addition to the fact that an immediate and complete U. S. pullout from Vietnam -- a drop-it-all and get-out action -- would simply mean a surrender of South Vietnam to the Communists and would have a shockingly adverse impact on U. S. allies all over the world.

My opponent has indicated she shares George McGovern's views -- not only on Vietnam but on defense cuts. I assume, therefore, that she favors cutting our defense budget by \$32 billion. She would therefore embrace McGovern's formula for defense of this Nation: Don't wait to negotiate; slash the defense budget; strip away our strength; cut the Air Force by a third, the Navy by a quarter, our aircraft carriers from 16 to 6, our Marines by a third; and bring more than half of our forces in Europe home without even trying to negotiate a mutual force reduction by the Russians.

McGovern actually has said: "I am convinced that we will some day rue the phrase, 'negotiate from strength,' as one of the most damaging and dangerous cliches in the American vocabulary." McGovern must believe it is dangerous to negotiate from strength because his program would assure that we have no strength to negotiate from. Is this also the position of my opponent? I believe in peace through strength. Does my opponent stand with me or with George McGovern?

-- Incidentally, the \$32 billion defense cut would eliminate 1.8 million jobs.

My opponent contends that I am not sufficiently interested in cutting the defense budget where possible. It so happens I voted a few weeks ago to cut the fiscal 1973 defense budget by \$5.2 billion. But this didn't cut into the muscle of our defense. I would have fought that.

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What about the McGovern and McKee cut of \$32 billion in defense funds?

McGovern says this would be "cutting the fat and waste out of our military spending." And I assume Mrs. McKee agrees with him. What was Sen. Hubert Humphrey's response to that during the Democratic presidential primary? Said Hubert Humphrey: "I submit that the McGovern defense proposal cuts into the very muscle of our defense. It isn't just cutting into waste; it isn't just cutting into manpower. It's cutting into the very security of this country." On this issue, I agree with Hubert Humphrey.

McGovern also favors a general amnesty for draft dodgers. I favor handling this matter on a case-by-case basis and requiring every man who has shirked his military duty to do two years of service in a peacetime capacity. Does my opponent stand with me or with Sen. McGovern?

Let's turn now to domestic affairs. What has happened on the domestic scene?

The Nixon Administration inherited 6 per cent inflation. The Administration has cut inflation in half.

It's true that unemployment was at a rate of less than 4 per cent in 1968. But the unemployment rate was low because we had 540,000 men in Vietnam, 3.5 million men in the military overall, and a boom in our defense plants.

We have reduced our forces in Vietnam to 34,000, have cut the size of our armed forces overall to 2.3 million, and throttled back our defense plant spending . . . thus eliminating 1.3 million defense-related jobs.

Despite this movement toward a peacetime economy, employment is at an

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alltime high -- 82 million. We have generated 2.6 million jobs in just the last 12 months, the highest 12-month creation of jobs since 1955.

Unemployment is still too high but this is because of extraordinary increases in the labor force. And unemployment is edging down while the economy continues to exhibit solid, sound steady growth. Real growth this year will easily top the Administration's prediction of 6 per cent.

What about Sen. McGovern's promise that if elected he would immediately spend \$10 billion to create 2 million jobs? Anyone knows that the projects McGovern talks about would require many months of planning and would involve deficit spending. And these jobs would simply offset the loss of jobs through his defense cuts. By contrast, the Administration's new economic policy is expanding the economy and building permanent new jobs.

My opponent is fond of talking about national priorities, asserting that far too many dollars are going into national defense and too few into people programs. The facts are that in 1968 defense spending totalled 39 per cent of the budget -- that's while a Democrat, Lyndon Johnson, was President -- and in fiscal 1973 defense spending takes only 30 per cent of the budget. At the same time, outlays for human resources rose from 32 per cent of the budget in 1968 to 45 per cent in fiscal 1973. So a far larger chunk of the budget now is going into human resource programs than into defense. And this shift in priorities occurred under the present Administration.

My opponent talks about cost overruns, as though that's where all of the defense money is going. In the first place, it was the previous Administration

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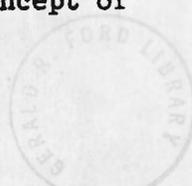


which negotiated the contracts which resulted in the cost overruns. Also, more than half of the Department of Defense budget -- fully 56 per cent -- now is people-related and not weapons-oriented. That compares with only 43 per cent of the budget for personnel in fiscal 1964. In that 9-year period, manpower costs have risen by \$20.8 billion, nearly double the 1964 level. Other costs have risen only 17 per cent.

Speaking of priorities, let me reiterate my resolve that the Highway Trust Fund be kept intact. We should keep the Highway Trust Fund 100 per cent for highways until we have eliminated every death trap like old US-131, here and throughout the country. Meantime, we can and should provide sufficient funds for our mass transit needs. In just the last 20 months, Grand Rapids has received \$400,000 in Federal aid for mass transit and on January 1 a program of transportation on demand is going to start in the Inner City. Meantime a study is being made of transportation needs of our elderly, and I am sure the resulting program will be funded. We can get rid of our highway death traps and bottlenecks and still meet our public transportation needs. In that connection, let me point out that mass transit is one of the purposes for which Federal revenue sharing allocations to local units of government can be used. And Grand Rapids will be receiving roughly \$2.7 million a year under revenue sharing.

Speaking of transportation, what about busing? And by that I mean forced busing to achieve racial balance. My opponent says forced busing is a non-issue, that the real question is one of complying with the 1964 Supreme Court ruling on integration. I am opposed to busing for whatever reason. I favor the concept of

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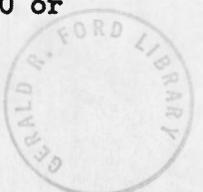


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What about welfare? George McGovern would greatly expand welfare rolls and the costs of welfare and double the average citizen's taxes to pay for it. I favor the Administration's workfare plan, designed to shift people from the welfare rolls onto payrolls. McGovern originally embraced the Welfare Rights Organization's proposal -- a guaranteed \$6,500 a year minimum income which he introduced in the National Welfare Rights Organization bill. He backed away from that just as he backed away from his \$1,000 for everybody scheme. Now he's for \$1,000 for everybody on welfare -- \$4,000 for a family of four. Is my opponent for that?

McGovern's for a lot of other things, too. In fact, taxes would have to be increased by 46 to 100 per cent for all families with incomes of \$12,000 or

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more to balance the McGovern budget. The McGovern program would have an especially severe tax impact on single individuals and small families.

But McGovern says he would just take it out of the hides of the rich.

That's a phony. McGovern wouldn't just wipe out the rich. He'd wipe out Middle America. Is my opponent for that?

McGovern keeps talking about tax reform. I'm for tax reform. Isn't everybody? The Democrats have been in control of the Congress for 36 of the last 40 years, and if we still need tax reform then the Democrats have fallen down on the job. We passed a Tax Reform Act in 1969. Within 90 days of his inauguration, the President submitted major and fundamental tax reforms to Congress. We are now beginning to see the effects of the 1969 Tax Reform Act. In the last 3½ years, individual income taxes have declined by \$22 billion. Citizens in the lowest economic brackets have received major relief. For example, a family of four with a \$5,000 annual income has received a tax cut of 66 per cent -- from \$290 paid in 1969 to only \$98 in 1972. Similarly, a family of four with a \$10,000-a-year income received a tax cut of 26 per cent -- from \$1,225 paid in 1969 to \$905 in 1972.

Excise taxes, which tend to hurt most those in the lower income brackets, have declined \$3.5 billion since 1969. This includes taxes on telephones and cars.

Corporate taxes have increased by nearly \$5 billion.

It is the individual citizen who has been relieved of some of the burden of his Federal taxes.

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Those who attack so-called tax loopholes must look at the effect some of their proposals would have on individuals and the community. What about the fact that the interest on municipal bonds is tax-free? If it were not, local units of government would have to pay higher interest charges on the money they borrow by selling such bonds, and the taxpayer would have to ante up to pay the difference. What about the deduction for charitable contributions? What would happen to many hospitals and community agencies if contributions to them were not tax-deductible?

Tax reform needs an honest and calm evaluation by Congress -- not the highly political election-year rhetoric we have been hearing.

Summing up, the key issues in any election campaign are peace and prosperity.

I submit that the best path to peace is the path being taken by the present Administration -- the path to an honorable peace in Vietnam, the path to a detente with the major Communist powers in the world. We already have the SALT agreement with Russia and the opening of communications with China as markers on this path to peace.

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Over the last four years of the Democratic Administration, the working man's real spendable earnings rose by \$1.19 per week -- from \$90.32 to \$91.51.

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