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UNTIL 5:16 PM, EST

OCTOBER 29, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS  
TO BE DELIVERED AT  
CALDER PLAZA  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

It's just a wonderful afternoon with all the bands, the parades, and seeing so many of my good life-long friends again. But I don't mind telling you -- those two big balloons sent up in my honor have me a little worried. I understand they're filled with hot air. I just hope you're not trying to tell me something.

Thank you, Mayor Parks, for that very kind introduction -- and thank you, Althea Bennett, for these cookies for Betty. Since you know what a steady customer I was of your cooking at Petersen's Drug Store, I have to warn you: It's a long flight back to Washington. Betty just may not get all of them.

Some people, I know, have criticized me for not staying in Washington this fall. They ask: "What is he doing in Grand Rapids?" Well, this is the first time in 28 years I haven't been out campaigning for myself. So, I'm out campaigning for others -- and I enjoy it. The truth is, I missed the Red Flannel Day parade in Great Bend this year for the first time; I missed the Sparta Rodeo for the first time; and when you invited me to this homecoming -- I just had to come home.

As I return to the familiar sights of Grand Rapids, I'm struck by one thing: Grand Rapids is a pretty good cross-section of these United States of America.

We have some wonderful farms and farm families around here. But you know and I know that Grand Rapids is basically industry. It is a good working man's town.

Grand Rapids is big enough to have all the problems of a big city. But it is still small enough so that we all know each other. So when I am in the White House dealing with the problems of this Nation, I try to relate them to people I have known all my life. In the case of inflation, for example, I am concerned about how it affects people I know in this audience here today.

Since I became President, there has been a lot of comment about Grand Rapids, some of it a bit amusing. A lot of commentators and writers describe Grand Rapids as conservative. What do they mean? Do they mean that people here have a healthy skepticism of quick and easy solutions? If so, Grand Rapids is conservative. Do they mean that people here are afraid of new ideas? If so, Grand Rapids is in no way conservative.

(MORE)

Look at our Calder sculpture here -- and tell me that people in Grand Rapids are afraid of new ideas. I see where Chicago unveiled a new Calder yesterday -- but Grand Rapids was way ahead of Chicago in recognizing this artist's great talents. In fact, I used to say I didn't understand abstraction, but that was before I became a Calder convert.

I know at first it was the subject of some controversy but the Calder Stabile is now as much a part of Grand Rapids life as driving out to see the rich reds and yellows of the autumn trees -- or sinking your teeth into one of those good, juicy, freshly picked apples from Kent and Ionia counties. Like those tangy Jonathans and Winesaps, Calder's work has added a rich new flavor to our life here.

For many years, my office was in the Federal Office Building over there. My office window looked out on the living center of the Grand Rapids community. Calder Plaza in the Vandenberg Center seems to be where Grand Rapids people go -- to hold a meeting, to hold a demonstration, or just to hold hands on a summer night. And I don't ever want to shut my eyes to the view from Grand Rapids -- to the hopes, the thoughts, and the feelings of my fellow Michiganders.

Look at the record of the late Senator Arthur Vandenberg -- and tell me that people in Grand Rapids are afraid of new ideas. It was Senator Vandenberg who turned from isolationism to the concept of mutual security agreements, almost thirty years ago. It was Senator Vandenberg who fought for the European Recovery program -- the so-called Marshall Plan -- and drafted the legislation which put it into effect. It was Senator Vandenberg who helped President Truman lay the foundations of post-World War II bipartisan foreign policy which has endured for the past quarter century.

On the other hand, Grand Rapids' residents do have a healthy skepticism of quick and easy solutions. That is why I am so pleased to see so many WIN buttons and signs in this audience here today. The WIN program represents a serious and solid approach to solving this Nation's most pressing problem -- inflation -- and I am delighted to see your enthusiastic support of it. Thank you.

As your Congressman, I tried to listen to your views. As your President, I intend to keep on listening -- and have sought differing viewpoints in advance of making decisions. Later this evening, for instance, I plan to confer with a number of Union Members from this area -- to get their views first-hand on the problems we are trying to whip.

If I had my way--and Presidents seldom do, I find -- I would return to Grand Rapids more often. I like to listen to your views and learn about your problems. Since I am unable to do this, I constantly look for other ways to stay in touch. For instance, I have invited the 30/30 Club, our 1930 football team from South High, down to the White House for our annual Thanksgiving reunion.

(MCRE)

Even though we don't play football anymore, a lot of this Club's members are still calling signals--in their communities, in their business life, in the places they work. And as a good center, I want to hear these signals--and signals from others across the Nation--and to act on them.

Because the great problems of this nation are the problems of individuals and of families, it is individuals and families who are keys to solving our number one problem--inflation.

But just as individual action is no substitute for Government action, so Government action is no substitute for individual action. It takes both to whip inflation. I have asked Congress and all of you as individuals to join me in what I believe will be the most concerted attack ever made in this country on a problem that affects all of us.

My friends, you know that Grand Rapids has a very special place in my heart. And as a good cross-section of this Nation, I am certain the spirit expressed here today represents so much of what is taking place across America. With that old spirit intact, with a new spirit in Congress, we can defeat our number one enemy--inflation--and go on to celebrate our 200th birthday in 1976 both prosperous and at peace.

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