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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME CONVOCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
ATHLETIC AND CONVOCATION CENTER

11:15 A.M. EST

Father Hesburgh, Governor Bowen, my former good friends and colleagues in the Congress, Senator, Birch Bayh, and Senator Hartke, Congressman John Brademas, distinguished public officials, honored faculty, members of the student body and distinguished guests -- and I add our new Attorney General:

It is really a great privilege and a very high honor for me to have the opportunity of being in South Bend on the University of Notre Dame campus, but I am especially grateful for the honor that has been accorded me this morning. I really cannot express adequately my gratitude being made a member of the Notre Dame family. I thank you very much.

I would be most remiss if I did not also express as strongly and as sincerely as I can the gratitude that all of us have in the government for the contributions that have been made, not only in the program described by Father Hesburgh, but by his many other contributions. I say to you, Father Hesburgh, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

This has been a most exciting morning. As we were getting off the plane at the county airport, a rather amazing thing happened. Somebody asked me, "How do you get to the campus of the University of Notre Dame?" What made it so amazing -- it was Father Hesburgh.
(Laughter)

I especially want to thank Father Hesburgh for all he has done to make me and my party most welcome here today, and particularly for granting amnesty to the classes this morning.

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It is also a rare opportunity for me to be at Notre Dame, the home of the Fighting Irish, on, of all days, St. Patrick's Day. I tried to dress appropriately and honestly, I have a green tie on. Let's face it, this is one day we can all be part of the greening of America.

As your next door neighbor from Michigan, I have always been impressed by the outstanding record of the students of the University of Notre Dame. You have always been leaders in academic achievement, in social concerns, in sports prowess, and now, once again, you are blazing new paths in the developments of new concepts in mass transportation.

Some communities have the mono-rail, some have the subway, Notre Dame has the quickie. (Laughter)

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The Fighting Irish of Notre Dame have become a symbol of tenacity and determination of the American people.

But Notre Dame believes not only in might on the football field or on the basketball court, but in a spiritual response to humanity's struggles for a decent life.

I have been told many of you chose to go without a normal meal, eating only a bowl of rice to save money to help feed the world's hungry. It is heartwarming to know that students are concerned about others abroad at a time when many here at home are finding it difficult to afford an education or to get a job.

Although life is hard for many Americans, I am proud that we continue to share it with others. And that, in my opinion, is the measure of genuine compassion, and I congratulate you.

I am especially proud to be on a campus that looks up to God and out to humanity at a time when some are tempted to turn inward, and turn away from the problems of the world. Notre Dame's great spokesman, Father Hesburgh, is known in Washington as a non-conformist. I must admit that I do not share all of the Father's views, but he is following one non-conformist viewpoint to which I fully subscribe, and I quote, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

To conform to apathy and pessimism is to drop out and to cop out. In that sense, I fully reject conformity. In that sense, I am a non-conformist who continues to be proud of America's partnership with other nations and who makes no apology for the United States of America.

America's goodness and America's greatness speak for themselves. I believe in this Nation and in our capacity to resolve our difficulties at home without turning our back on the rest of the world.

Let me share a personal experience. I was elected to the Congress in the aftermath of World War II. A non-partisan foreign policy was emerging at that time. America realized that politics must stop at the water's edge. Our fate was linked to the well-being of other free nations. We became the first Nation to provide others with economic assistance as a national policy. Foreign aid was an American invention or an American project of which we can be justifiably proud.

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Today, as I look back, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in our government during the third quarter of the 20th century. The past 25 years, while not perfect, were incomparably better for humanity than either of the two previous quarters of this century. There was no world war nor global depression. Major nations achieved detente. Many new nations obtained independence. There has been an explosion of hope, freedom and human progress at home as well as abroad.

America's role, considered in fair context, was a catalyst for change, for growth, and for betterment.

The Marshall Plan, unprecedented in world history, restored a war-ravaged Europe. Even earlier, United States relief and rehabilitation activities during World War II and assistance to Greece and to Turkey after the war had provided precedents and experience in America's overseas assistance.

In the same year that I came to Congress, 1949, President Truman advanced Point IV, an innovative and remarkable concept providing technical assistance to developing nations. It brought new American ideas and technology to people hitherto unable to benefit from advances in health, agriculture and education.

The Food for Peace Act, designed to use America's agricultural abundance to assist others, was a product of the Eisenhower Administration. In the late 1950s, we created the development loan program to help others help themselves. In 1961, the Congress established the Agency for International Development to consolidate and to administer the various activities and agencies. They were carrying out the will of the Congress and the President at that time.

Programs to help people in the developing countries are an expression of America's great compassion and we should be proud of them. But such aid is also part of the continuing effort to achieve an enduring structure of world peace. It is no longer a question of just the Third World. I am deeply concerned about the problems of the fourth world, the very poorest world where from 400 million to 800 million people suffer from malnutrition; where average per capita income is under \$275 per year; where life expectancy is 20 years less than in the developing countries; where more than 40 percent of the children will never reach the age of five; where more than half of the population has never been to school.

Despite these problems, the economies of the developing countries have grown at an encouraging rate in the past ten years, thanks in part, I think substantial part, to American assistance. Manufacturing output increased 100 percent. Food production rose by over one-third. Enrollment in elementary schools doubled. Enrollment in secondary schools and colleges quadrupled.

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But population growth and increased demand collided with inflation and energy shortages. Gains in many, many instances have been wiped out. At the very time when our policy seeks to build peace with nations of different philosophies, there remains too much violence and too much threat to peace.

The Congress defined the role of foreign aid this way, and I quote from the legislation itself: "The freedom, security and prosperity of the United States are best sustained in a community of free, secure and prospering nations. Ignorance, want and despair, breed the extremism and violence which lead to aggression and subversion."

Those words, written by the Congress, I think are so accurate. If nations are to develop within this definition, they must be able to defend themselves. They must have assurances that America can be counted on to provide the means of security, their own security, as well as the means of sustenance.

People with affirmative vision of the future will not resort to violence. While we pursue a peaceful world in which there is unity and diversity, we must continue to support security against aggression and subversion. To do otherwise, in my judgment, would invite greater violence.

The United States, in this day and age, cannot avoid partnership with nations trying to improve the kind of world the children of today will face tomorrow. Recent events have demonstrated the total interdependence of all people who live on this planet.

The 1973 war in the Middle East showed that war confined to a limited region nevertheless has an economic impact, not only in South Bend, but in every corner of the world.

Developing and developed countries are all part of a single interdependent economic system. This audience, I am told -- and this student body includes many students from over 60 foreign countries, and I congratulate you, Father Hesburgh -- let this demonstrate to all Americans that other people place a high valuation on what America has to offer. Let it demonstrate that the University of Notre Dame rejects what some call the new isolationism.

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Let me share with you a specific problem that Father Hesburgh mentioned in his introduction. When the World Food Conference met in Rome in the fall of 1974, I -- as the newly chosen President -- was faced with a very perplexing problem.

Food prices in America were over one-fifth higher than in the previous year. Food reserves, as reported by the Department of Agriculture, were dwindling. The corn crop and other commodities were disappointing in 1974. There were concerns about higher among our own people.

Against this background, I was presented with several alternative estimates on how much we should spend for food for peace for those in other lands.

At the Rome conference, American spokesmen pledged that we would try our utmost to increase our food contribution, despite our own crop problems. As crop reports improved, I designated -- as was mentioned by Father Hesburgh -- a sum even higher than the highest option recommended to me at the time of the conference.

A factor in my own decision was your fine President, Father Hesburgh, and you should be thankful that you have a person who has such broad interests as he, as the President of your university.

A factor also in my judgment was that the program provided, and, properly so, a reminder of America's moral commitment. Food for peace was increased from about \$980 million to \$1.6 billion. This will provide about 5.5 million tons of commodities, up from 3.3 million tons last year.

Most of the commodities will be wheat and rice, but also desperately required and also increased are blended foods used in nutritional programs for mothers and for infants.

The United States, fortunately, is no longer the only country aiding others, but we continue to lead -- and we will -- in providing food assistance. In 20 years of food for peace, we shipped over 245 million tons of wheat, rice and other grains, valued at roughly \$23 billion.

Every American should be proud of that record. It is an illustration of the humane feeling and the generosity of the American people.

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While food helps, only by technical assistance can emerging nations meet their needs. It has been often said, but I think it is appropriate at this time, that if a hungry man is given a fish, he can eat for one day, but if he is taught to fish, he can eat every day.

The greatest opportunity lies in expanding production in areas where production will be consumed. The world is farming only about one-half of the potential crop lands, yet there are insufficient farmer incentives in many countries, shortages of fertilizer, high fuel costs and inadequate storage and distribution systems.

The answers to the world food problem are to be found in interdependence. We can and will help other nations, but simplistic paternalism may do more harm than good. Our help must take the form of helping every nation to help itself, and we will.

I am particularly concerned about the problem of fair distribution. America believes in equality of opportunity. This Nation provides a showcase of change in providing better nutrition, education, health, to more and more people, including those who can least afford it.

Some nations have made excellent use of our assistance to develop their own capacities. Other governments are still struggling with the issue of equality of opportunity and fair distribution of life necessities.

Good world citizenship requires more than moralizing about the role others should take. It requires each nation to put its own house in order. Good American citizenship requires more than moralizations about what is wrong with the United States.

It requires personal involvement and action to bring about change. It requires voting and organizing and challenging and changing with the flexible and dynamic American political process.

Our system, by any standard, works, and will work better, and you can be a part of it.

The developing nations of the world are increasingly successful in bringing prosperity to larger numbers of their own people. In fact, the assistance we have provided these nations is not just a one-way street.

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Thirty percent of U.S. exports are purchased by these developing nations, thereby obviously contributing to a better life for their people and jobs for ours. In cases where countries have the means, let them join in sharing with us, as they should.

Some have helped; others have not. We lead the way, and we will not shirk from future burdens, but all nations must cooperate in developing the world's resources.

We extend the hand of partnership and friendship to make a better world.

Another challenge facing the developing nations, as well as other nations, is to realize the need for peaceful accommodation with neighbors. An interdependent world cannot solve disputes by threat or by force.

People now and in the future depend on each other more than they sometimes realize. For example, we in America import between 50 and 100 percent of such essential minerals as cobalt, bauxite, nickel, manganese and others.

The challenge, as I see it, is for America and all other nations to take responsibility for themselves while building cooperation with each other.

The challenge is also the preservation of the freedom and dignity of the human individual throughout the world. Just as the world's nations can no longer go it alone, neither can the American people.

Woodrow Wilson said that "What we should seek to import in our colleges is not so much learning itself as the spirit of learning.

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Great universities that pursue truth face the challenge that confronts the entire American people. It is whether we will learn nothing from the past and return to the introversion of the 1930s to the dangerous notion that our fate is unrelated to the fate of others.

I am convinced that Americans, however tempted to resign from the world, know deep in their heart that it cannot be done. The spirit of learning is too deeply ingrained. We know that wherever the bell tolls for freedom, it tolls for us.

The American people have responded by supplying help to needy nations. Programs, both government and the volunteer agencies, could not have been, and cannot be, reenacted without popular support. CARE and Catholic Relief Services, pioneers in Food for Peace programs, are feeding over 28 million people around the world right today. Protestant, Jewish and other groups are similarly involved at universities throughout the Nation.

Researchers seek answers to world problems. Right here in Indiana, Purdue University, scientists have made discoveries in high protein aspects of sorghum, a basic food of more than 300 million people in Asia and in Africa.

Not only the scientists at Purdue, but people throughout America, realize that no structure of world peace can endure unless the poverty question is answered. There is no safety for any nation in a hungry, ill-educated and desperate world.

In a time of recession, inflation, and unemployment at home, it is argued that we can no longer afford foreign assistance. In my judgment, there are two basic arguments to the contrary.

First, foreign aid is a part of the price we must pay to achieve the kind of a world in which we want to live. Let's be frank about it. Foreign aid bolsters our diplomatic efforts for peace and for security. But secondly, and perhaps just as importantly, even with a recession, we remain the world's most affluent country and the sharing of our resources today is the right, the humane and the decent thing to do. And we will.

But just as we seek to build bridges to other nations, we must unite at home. This Administration wants better communication with the academic world and I express again my appreciation for the warmth of this reception.

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But this communication must not just be a search for new technology, but for the human and spiritual qualities that enrich American life. In the future, fewer people must produce more. We must, therefore, unleash intellectual capacities to anticipate and solve our problems.

The academic world must join in the revival of fundamental American values. Let us build a new sense of pride in being an American.

Yes, you can make America what you want it to be. Think about that for just a moment, if you would. Is it really true? Yes, in my judgment, it is.

But there is a catch to it. You will never see it come true. Perhaps your children or your grandchildren will. What you can do is move America slowly, but surely, along the right direction.

Admittedly, today's America is far from perfect, but it is much closer to the America that my class of 1935 wanted than it was when I left the University of Michigan.

Today's America is a far better place than it was 40 years ago when the lingering shadows of worldwide depression were being blotted out by the darker clouds of worldwide war. My generation did not wholly save the world, of course. But we did, to a degree, help to move it along in the right direction.

We learned along the way that we are part of one world. The author of that phrase was a Hoosier, the first political candidate about whom I got personally involved enough to volunteer as a campaign worker. His name was Wendell Wilkie.

Wendell Wilkie, of Indiana, was never President, but he was right. He fought for what he believed in against almost impossible odds. In the last Presidential campaign before Pearl Harbor, he believed most deeply -- too far ahead of his time, perhaps -- that America must be part of one world. He lost the 1940 election but he helped unite America in support of the truth, which has been our non-partisan national policy since the Second World War, and I say with emphasis, there has been no third world war.

On the contrary, the prospects for long-range peace have slowly, but surely, improved.

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Despite setbacks and current international problems, the standards of human life have been lifted almost everywhere. Yet, today, we hear another theme, that the tide of history is running against us, that America's example of American leadership is neither needed nor heeded at the present time; that we should take care of ourselves and let the rest of mankind do likewise; that our domestic difficulties dictate a splendid selfishness that runs counter to all of our religious roots, as well as to all recent experience.

We are counseled to withdraw from one world and go it alone. I have heard that song before. I am here to say I am not going to dance to it. Nor do I believe this generation of young Americans will desert their ideals for a better nation and a better world.

You can and you will help to move America along in the right direction. Hopefully, you can do a better job than the Class of 1935, but while the Classes of 1975 and 1935 are still around, we have much to learn from each other.

We can renew the old American compact of respect for the conviction of others, in faith in the decency of others. We can work to banish war and want wherever they exist. We can exalt the spirit of service and love that St. Patrick exemplified in his day.

I am not alarmed when I hear warnings that the tide of history is running against us. I do not believe it for a minute because I know where the tide of history really is -- on this campus, and thousands and thousands of others in this great country, and wherever young men and women are preparing themselves to serve God and their countries and to build a better world.

You are a part of the tide of this history, and you will make it run strong and true. Of that, I am sure.

Thank you, and the top of the morning to you.

END (AT 11:55 A.M. EST)