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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
66TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT  
OF COLORED PEOPLE

THE SHERATON PARK HOTEL

10:20 A.M. EDT

Roy Wilkins, Margaret Wilson, Clarence Mitchell, Secretary Coleman, Reverend Hope, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I wish to thank Roy Wilkins, my very good friend, for inviting me to speak to this very unique organization and to share this platform with so many distinguished guests.

Roy said on Sunday on TV that you could expect from me today "a lot of rhetoric, but no specifics." Well, he is wrong about the rhetoric, but he is right about the specifics.

I have come here not to offer a checklist of specific programs and promises for blacks. I come as President of all the people, to talk with you about common problems and common sense approaches, about what we can achieve together for America.

The NAACP has a very proud record that spans 65 years with markers of achievement in racial equality unmatched by any other organization. Your coalition of Americans has never been content to stop with one success. You move from one goal of racial progress to the next.

As a result, great strides have been made in achieving the goals laid down by the NAACP in 1910: Equal rights, particularly voting rights, equal opportunities for justice, for education for employment.

By making our system work through legislation and court decision, the NAACP has helped America keep its promises to all its citizens.

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Today, laws insure the rights of all Americans. The 1910 commitment of your organization has become the American commitment in 1975 -- to continue black progress throughout America.

Today, blacks are better educated, better housed and employed in better jobs. Blacks are making important contributions at all levels of the Federal Government, civilian and military.

The end of racial discrimination by law has paved the way to the beginning of full participation. I commend the NAACP for its new emphasis on the economic progress and problems of blacks.

The progress you have made has been threatened by a troubled economy. The economic recession we have been going through has unquestionably hit hardest at blacks and other minorities. The result: 12 percent of black adults are jobless compared with 7.5 percent of whites who are unemployed. 40 percent of black teenagers are jobless compared with 20 percent of white youngsters.

An unpleasant reality is that recession hits and hurts first those who can least afford economic setbacks, and recession and inflation together deal a doubly cruel blow.

If recession hits hardest at low income workers who are most likely to be laid off, inflation severely saps their buying power and creates special hardships.

The Congressional Black Caucus calls this economic situation -- and I quote -- "our common dilemma." It goes on to state in its legislative agenda -- and again I quote -- "It is not rich against poor, black against white. Instead, there is mutual recognition that any of us may be the next victim of unemployment and that all of us will most certainly be the next victims of inflation."

In short, inflation is no less a human problem than recession. The cold statistics of the 12 percent rise in the cost of living last year translates into a cut of this amount in the paycheck of every working American. For persons receiving unemployment compensation, welfare or social security checks, it translates into the difference between sustenance and subsistence.

But what you, your great organization, have contributed to America is invaluable. You have helped turn this Nation around on the issue of racial equality. You have helped to create a climate in which progress can be made.

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Now, together we must create the other conditions to turn the legal right to equality into the reality of equality, a stable, growing economy that allows all of our people to realize their full potential.

An unstable economy is the enemy of equal opportunity. While important advances can be made during economic good times, they can be quickly and cruelly erased during hard times. Quality of opportunity can be sustained only in the context of economic stability.

In the past 15 years, huge Federal deficits have financed unprecedented domestic spending. Too many of those expenditures produced short-term benefits for some Americans, but with the long-term hidden costs for all Americans.

Too many of those whom the programs sought to help -- the poor, the elderly and the disadvantaged -- are now bearing the inflationary burden of the Federal Government spending spree.

America is an economic family. We must live by the rules that any family must follow. We cannot spend more than we earn by endless borrowing. We must end our propensity for short-term solutions at the expense of long-range setbacks.

There are solid signs that the recession is coming to an end. For example, consumer confidence is up, boosting retail sales in May by 2.2 percent over April. The number of Americans at work rose by 553,000 between March and May. Personal income rose in May by \$9.3 billion, the biggest jump in eight months.

Interest rates are down, both prime and others. Housing is showing signs of recovery with a 34 percent increase in building permits between March and May. Housing starts were up 14.2 percent in May over April, and the inflation rate is down from an average annual rate of more than 12 percent last year to less than 6 percent today. That is tantamount to 6 percent more purchasing power.

Obviously, some indicators will continue to be depressed for a few months because they record only what is past. But I am confident that the economic decline is over. We must make certain, however, that our recovery is based on sound economic policy or we stand in dire danger of setting off another massive rise in inflation, and even deeper recession and greater unemployment and hardship in the future. We don't want that.

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A policy of fiscal restraint does not mean that this Nation will turn its back on major problems of employment, housing, transportation, health care and education. In fact, my budget for the fiscal year of 1976, which starts today -- it increases the total of these human resources programs by more than \$17 billion over fiscal year 1975.

The critical area of jobs required action to meet immediate need without upending long-term progress. Temporary aid measures I proposed have sought to keep this very, very important balance.

For example, this summer, some 840,000 young Americans will be working because of Congressional action, on my request, for \$473 million for summer youth employment and recreation programs.

Last Friday, I signed into law legislation which I requested to extend for one year the public service jobs program and to provide \$1.6 billion to continue 310,000 jobs.

Yesterday, I signed legislation to extend the unemployment insurance program, to provide up to 65 weeks of compensation to persons without jobs.

These are temporary measures to cushion the blow. They do not answer the need for permanent jobs. These jobs must come from full production in the private sector.

One initiative in this area is the promotion of assistance for minority business. Representatives of the NAACP have been very helpful in developing plans to coordinate Government programs in this area, and I compliment you for it.

In fiscal year 1975, that ended at midnight last night, minority enterprise programs of the Small Business Administration alone created or saved 63,000 jobs. 25 percent of all SBA loans and 16 percent of the total dollars went to minority business.

To make certain that job opportunities in the Federal Government are open to all Americans, each department and each agency will vigorously enforce the equal opportunity employment laws. To make sure, to make certain job opportunities are open in the private sector, I have emphasized to Lowell Perry, the New Chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, this Administration's commitment to the elimination of all vestiges of job discrimination because of race, religion or sex.

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The EEOC budget in fiscal year 1976 is over \$60 million, or \$6.5 million up from 1975. Federal civil rights enforcement outlays for fiscal year 1976 are \$395 million, \$34 million more than in the previous year. But equal opportunity for equal employment and civil rights enforcement are most meaningful when the economy is strong, when the economy is vibrant and full recovery will be possible only if we act together responsibly.

I will continue to work with the Congress to balance fiscal responsibility against measured economic stimulation. This Administration and the Congress cannot achieve sensible, long-term approach to the national economy without your help, the help of all Americans.

Your leadership, your influence are needed, working to implement a sound fiscal economy. We must work together to insure the financial soundness of our Nation, that makes equality, that makes freedom possible for all Americans.

America is stronger because of the vitality of your organization, and I say that with emphasis. America is more creative because of your imagination. America is closer to achieving its Constitutional promise of the blessings of liberty for all its citizens because of your dedication and your spirit.

The entire Nation is at last waking up to the contribution and potential of black people and along with Roy Wilkins, I believe that if America's blacks are permitted to do for themselves according to their own likes, they will do like nobody ever dreamed.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 10:33 A.M. EDT)