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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT A
GOP FUND-RAISING DINNER
THE CONRAD HILTON HOTEL

8:20 P.M. CDT

My former colleagues in the Congress, Chuck Percy, John Michel, John Anderson, Robert McClory, George O'Brien; Bill Scott, your fine State official; Don Adams, Jerry Millbank, from the National Finance Committee; Harold Smith, my good friends, Les Arendæ and Marguerite Church and, of course, my good friend and great helpmate, Dick Ogilvy, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

This has turned out to be a rather unusual evening for me tonight. One of your newspapers suggested very strongly that I not come to Chicago, and Mayor Daley suggested very strongly that I do come to Chicago. (Laughter)

I hope you good Republicans don't mind if on this occasion I come down on the side of Mayor Daley. (Laughter)

In the short time that I have been here this evening, I can assure you from the very bottom of my heart that I am especially pleased to be in Illinois when the outlook for the Republican Party in Illinois is so very bright.

I have had the opportunity of meeting and talking with many, many of those who are becoming or hope to become a part of your State ticket, and obviously it is going to be a very strong State ticket in 1976.

You have excellent candidates for local and State offices, and I certainly get the impression that we will have some good, strong, new candidates for the Congress.

But, what pleases me the most is the fact that I find a tremendous enthusiasm among your State leaders, and so I come to this great State with a new sense that in the heartland of the Middle West -- literally the heartland of our country -- in Illinois we have good reason to be enthusiastic, and I urge you to multiply your efforts between now and November 2, 1976.

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Let us remember just this: As Republicans we have one powerful resource which our Democratic friends lack. The majority of Americans -- Republicans, Independents and discerning Democrats -- believe in the same basic principles that we do and, therefore, I think we can go on a tremendous sales campaign between now and 13 months from now.

And the net result will be success for these kinds of principles. These individuals who cut across the political spectrum want fiscal sanity restored to our national Government. They want the free enterprise system freed from the shackles of over-regulation -- we all know it is over-regulated.

This tremendous part of the political spectrum want a strong national defense which they know is the best assurance of peace in the months and years ahead.

And then they want local people to handle local problems because those people know the solutions as well as the problems the best.

But almost more important than anything, strong national defense, the free enterprise system, local control, literally millions and millions of Americans want to preserve and want to expand the dignity and the freedom of the individual that is basic to the progress and the liberty that we so cherish in America.

You know the French have been saying -- or they have a saying that the more things change the more they are the same. The platform adopted by the Republican National Convention in 1960, held right here in Chicago, attacked in these words, and I quote, "The reckless extravagance which pervades every department of the Federal Government."

It commended at this great convention the private enterprise system, advocated local control over local affairs and stressed individual freedom as basic to the preservation of our Republican institutions.

And I stand here tonight proud to advocate these principles on which Abraham Lincoln campaigned in 1860. And I invite everybody in 1975 and 1976 who believes in them to join us in the Republican Party and to fight for them in the months ahead.

This is one of the most important off-year political areas in the history of the Republican Party. This is the year we must organize to elect Republicans at every level -- Federal, State and local -- next year. And I, having gone through 13 political campaigns in my State, know that party organizations will play a very vital role in Illinois, in Michigan and 48 other States.

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Through such projects as Task Force 1975-1976, which was headed by Bill Duvall, inspired by Chuck Percy, you are laying the foundation for the victories of 1976, victories which will mean so much to so many after that historic election. Successful registration drives this fall in every section of this State and across the country are absolutely essential.

I know it is hard work. I know it is drudgery. I know it seems not very exciting. But we must find party workers from new elements in our society. We must identify our strengths, our weaknesses and be frank where we must improve. We must fine tune our party's organizations for the campaign ahead. We must demonstrate that our party is determined to select and elect the best possible candidates at the local, the State, and the national level.

And we must be cognizant that no candidate who can be a part of the implementation of the philosophy in which we believe can be successful over the years and even in this next election, if we don't have a responsible effective party organization.

Not many people realize that in 1976 we are going to be operating under a new Federal campaign law which just by the language and its interpretation we will require a stronger working relationship between party organization and candidates. The ability of Republicans to win elections at every level will depend on the success of our registration drive and our determination to literally go from door to door asking people who may not have voted before, who may have voted differently, who may be disgruntled, who may be unhappy, to join us in what I honestly think could be a great crusade for the next 13 months.

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We have to find a party organization -- and you obviously have it in Illinois -- and we must depend upon good financing, and this dinner tonight is the best example of that kind of participation.

Whether it is in the organization or in the funding, our results will depend upon what you can do and have done and will do.

Since taking office as President some 13 months ago, I have gone to 38 States to let people know what this Administration is trying to do in Washington; more importantly, to learn what our fellow Americans want us to do.

This includes the broadest possible spectrum. Before the end of the year, I hope and expect to visit the remainder of our States.

Now, obviously I can't discuss in the time allotted all of the issues and all of the problems that I hear from people as I travel. I can't try to analyze and give you what we think are the right answers to the problems, both at home and abroad.

So, if I might, let me concentrate on several that are very pertinent, are very important to us right now. It has some significance here in the great State of Illinois.

I speak at this point concerning agriculture, farm prices. We recognize that agriculture is a great industry. It participates very significantly in making our economy strong or weak. Of course, we feel a great debt of gratitude in this country to the 6 percent of our people who produce so much food and so much fiber for all of us and literally millions around the world.

Last year, just about this time, the American farmers responded to my call for full production, literally from one fence to another, and every plot of ground that they could find -- full production.

This year, they have harvested a record wheat crop, and they expect a record corn crop by the end of the harvest year.

Obviously, American farmers want -- and they have every good reason to expect -- to sell all they produce, either at home or abroad, and I intend to see to it that they do in a free market and at fair prices.

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Profitable and steady grain trading relations have been built with buyers in Europe, Japan and elsewhere, and we can count in advance on regular and significant purchases by those foreign customers.

There is a new element. With the Soviet Union a relatively new customer, we do not yet -- and I underline yet -- have that assurance. Soviet grain purchases have fluctuated greatly in the last five years, and let me illustrate the peaks and valleys that we have had in this relationship.

In 1971-1972, the Russians bought 182 million bushels of grain from the United States. In 1972 and 1973, the figure soared to 524 million bushels. In 1973-1974 it dropped to 252 million bushels and then fell sharply, precipitously to 74 million bushels in 1974 and 1975.

During this crop year, the Russians have already bought 399 million bushels and are anxious to buy much more.

Now, these wide fluctuations disrupt our markets and make it much more difficult for our farmers to plan properly. Furthermore, these peaks and valleys, these wide fluctuations, have an undesirable impact on our overall economy.

To achieve a better result for the farmer, the consumer, yes, our economy as a whole, I am giving, personally, priority attention to an agreement with the Soviet Union that will put agriculture trade on a far more certain and a far more predictable basis, and agreements along the lines of the one which we are now concluding with Poland to assure grain sales over the next five years at levels considerably higher than in the past and with far less deviations and fluctuations.

I am confident that in a relatively short period of time we will reach an agreement with the Soviet Union to facilitate the sale of this year's bumper crop with firm assurances of similar sales of considerable magnitude in future years.

This, in my judgment, will meet all of our needs at home and keep food prices at a fair and reasonable level, but more importantly, it will give to us as a Nation the opportunity to use our great resource -- agriculture -- for humanitarian purposes, for other national interests.

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It is something that can be used effectively and beneficially for all of us, and for that we should thank every farmer who has produced and produced and produced.

Let me speak for a moment, if I might, about the status of our economy. Tonight, I can tell you this with firm conviction, without any hesitancy or reservation -- the recession that we have gone through -- and it has been tough -- unemployment much too high, inflation much too great.-- this trend that started in the late fall of 1974 and was accentuated by serious problems in the early spring of 1975, this trend has been reversed.

Virtually every indicator that is valid and reliable, significant, gives us the encouraging news.

We are getting some good news also from the supermarkets and even our retail stores throughout the country.

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Let me take you back, if I might, just a moment, to a year ago, September, 1974. The cost of living at that time was rising at an annual rate -- almost unbelievable -- of 15 percent. For all of last year, 1974, the rate rose by more than 12 percent, yet the figures just in for August, just a week or so ago, show the cost of living just two-tenths of one percent by any standard and, particularly compared to 1974, that is encouraging news.

But let me assure you this bit of information doesn't mean that the battle against inflation has been won; far, far from it. We must continue to apply restraint, particularly on inflationary spending by the Democratic controlled Congress. With the Republicans outnumbered in the Congress better than two to one, my Presidential veto is often the only weapon available to defend fiscal responsibility against the assaults of the big spenders. And if I might interject a personal note of appreciation, I had the privilege of serving in the Congress with the Members of the House and Senate who are here. It was a great experience. I loved every minute of it, primarily because I enjoyed the association with the people who are here representing you from Illinois.

You in this great State have one of the most outstanding delegations of any State in the Union. They were strong in their support for me when I was privileged to be the Minority Leader and, believe me, they have been staunch and steadfast and discerning and articulate since I have been President.

And I can't thank them enough on your behalf, on behalf of our fellow Americans. But I want to express to them my deep gratitude for their great cooperation and the wonderful job they are doing. I thank you all very, very much.

I would be remiss if I didn't express the same feelings, even though they are not there, for Marguerite Church and Les Arends. I indicated just a moment ago that these were the kinds of people who were the bulwark against the inflationary policies of big spending in the House as well as in the Senate, controlled, as I indicated, by better than two to one by the opposition. Under these circumstances, the veto must be used, will be used and ought to be used to maintain America's Federal fiscal integrity.

Let me emphasize this, if I might. The exercise of a Presidential veto is a positive action, as the framers of our Constitution intended it to be. For one thing, the legislation I vetoed so far will save the taxpayers between now and the end of calendar 1976 more than \$6 billion. I happen to think that is a fairly positive result.

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Furthermore, when these vetoes were sustained -- and most of them were -- the Democratic majority was forced to come back with reasonable legislation which Republicans in good conscience could support in the House as well as in the Senate.

And that is positive action, because you start with a bill that calls for too much spending and it is vetoed and the veto is sustained, and then, after the Congress has had a little time to reconsider, it decides that a more reasonable figures makes far more sense.

Or whether it is in some other legislative area, our forefathers, when they drafted the Constitution, decided that a President ought to have the power under the Constitution to make the Congress take a little more time to think. And the net result this year has been constructive and positive.

Now, let me say this: The utilization of the veto is not a long-term answer. The long-term answer is for Republicans in Illinois and in every State to elect more Republicans to the House as well as to the Senate. I would rather be in the position of advocating affirmative legislation to help us deregulate business and individuals, to get the Federal Government off your back, and the only way you are going to get that is a Republican Congress.

I don't have to repeat the admonition and the urging that I gave you earlier, that we need more locally elected, sound, responsible Republican officials, or statewide or Federally. You can do it by hard work, by organization, by concentrating our resources in defeating those Democrats whose philosophical views are totally contrary.

I think we should emphasize our differences with the opposition rather than discrediting other Republicans. Let's start winning elections rather than winning arguments.

You know I have read a lot of columns and articles lately about the future of the Republican Party, and many of them, you might say, gleefully pessimistic. They cite the dwindling percentages of voters registered by both major parties and the increasing number of Americans who prefer to call themselves independents. They conclude that the two-party system is just about dead. And I don't believe that. I think it has worked so well in America. We darn well better preserve it for the good of the country.

For my part, I believe our Republican Party will bounce back dramatically in 1976 as we did in 1966. And some of the Members here, or former Members, know how tough it was in January of 1965, how, by hard work, organization, good financing, we came back and made tremendous gains in the House as well as the Senate two years later. I say this not because we possess any monopoly of political wisdom and virtue, but because we are moving to meet the deeply held desires of the American people.

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For fiscal responsibility in Government, for firm but restrained leadership in foreign policy, for domestic tranquility at home, for freedom in personal decision-making, for practical common sense solutions to long-range problems facing us across the spectrum, the American people are not only good people, the American people are very smart people.

Neither the Republican Party nor any other party can repeatedly sell them a bad bill of goods. They won't buy it. They may be fooled once, but they will learn. If they get the simple truth and the plain facts, they will make the right decisions.

I think we can say that regardless of where we go in the City of Chicago, or in the suburbs, or in down-state Illinois, or in my State of Michigan, and Detroit or the Upper Peninsula or elsewhere, the American people won't buy political double-talk forever.

Now, I have been traveling around this great country trying to talk straight to the American people. I have also done a great deal of listening. If I were an orator, perhaps I could say more eloquently what I foresee for America. If I were a poet, perhaps I could sum up more movingly what I hear.

Being what I am, I can only say that two-way communication with my friends and fellow Americans is, for me, an essential part of doing my job properly.

I intend to keep my communications open, not in any foolhardy spirit, but by every prudent and practical means. I have complete faith in the good will and good sense of America and in the ability of our competitive political system to produce responsive and responsible leadership for our country's future.

That future will be far brighter than our past if we all pitch in and if we all work at it. I know that Illinois, with your leadership, will set the pace.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 8:52 P.M. CDT)