

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 18, 1976

Dear Governor Thomson:

It was generous of you to send me a letter of apology on behalf of the overwhelming majority of New Hampshire citizens for the conduct of a few during my recent appearance at the University of New Hampshire. But in my judgment, no apology was called for. The extraordinary demonstration of good citizenship of more than 3,000 persons in the audience at the University massively outweighed the boisterous and disruptive behavior of a few people.

There was an attempt by those few to infringe on my right to speak and the right of the audience to listen. In our free society, the hecklers, of course, do have freedom of speech, but this freedom must not be abused to the point where others are denied their freedoms to speak and to hear others speak.

These sometimes conflicting rights and freedoms were resolved that Sunday at the Lundholm Gymnasium in a most democratic way in the best traditions of New Hampshire and of our Republic. The thousands in the audience insisted on their right to hear my answers -- with good humor, but very firmly. As one member of the audience put it, "I would like to remind some of the people here that while they assert their right of freedom of speech, I also have a right to listen on an intelligent basis without interruption."

At the same time, the tiny group of hecklers asserted its right to make its views known, even though they did so with crude language

and bad manners. I've always believed that free people can disagree without being disagreeable.

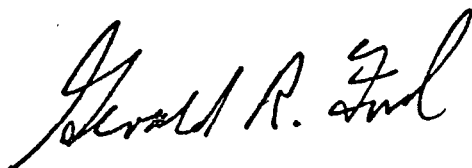
You should be proud that in your state of New Hampshire, a meeting which started off in a tense and contentious mood ended up as a genuine constructive dialogue on such important issues as health care, gun control, drugs, energy, foreign policy, military policy, jobs, the environment, welfare, amnesty, abortion, the political role of big business, veterans benefits, and much more.

I am enclosing a copy of the 23 page transcript of the meeting so that you can see how much was achieved and so that you will realize there is no cause for your disappointment or dismay.

We who were there did not witness "a stunning indictment of the time we live in," as you put it in your letter. Rather, we witnessed a triumphant testimonial to the desire of free men and women to assert their rights to listen to a President whose views were unpopular with a noisy minority of the audience. At the same time, the minority, which started out shouting obscenities and disrupting the meeting, was itself shouted down and forced to make its views heard in a more democratic and more orderly way.

In the end, the rights of everyone were served. I am proud of the citizens of New Hampshire, and you should be too. They had every right to be proud of themselves for what they accomplished in speech and in action that Sunday night on the campus of the University of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Meldrim Thomson, Jr.
Governor of New Hampshire
Concord, New Hampshire 03301



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
CONCORD 03301

February 9, 1976

MELDRIM THOMSON, JR.
GOVERNOR

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the overwhelming majority of New Hampshire citizens of all political persuasions, I apologize to you for the rude, uncouth and ill-mannered behavior of that small minority of malcontents who attempted to disrupt your campaign appearance at the University of New Hampshire on Sunday.

It is a stunning indictment of the time in which we live that such manifestations of gross ignorance and lack of basic manners be so blatantly demonstrated publicly by any citizen.

This group of agitators, many of whom profess membership in the People's Bicentennial Committee, have attempted for the past several weeks to use the same disruptive tactics at campaign appearances by other Presidential candidates.

Please know that New Hampshire voters will base their preference for President on the issues articulated by the candidates, and not by the howl of the mob outside the window.

Sincerely,


Meldrim Thomson, Jr.

MT:cjc