

MARCH 5, 1976

**Pool Report of Ford at PFC Reception and Flight from
Springfield to Peoria**

The reception was held in the Lounge on Thirty--on the 30th floor of the Forum 30 Hotel. It is billed as "Springfield's newest and most sophisticated night club." About 150 campaign workers were packed wall-to-wall in the place.

Ford spoke for about five minutes. He said his victory in New Hampshire was "close but wholesome and inspirational." In Massachusetts, it was a "superb victory." In Florida, "I think we have gained significantly. It's a horse race, and I think with our momentum we are going to win." As for Illinois, he said: "I'm convinced we're going to win in Illinois, too."

Ford gave his standard comments about "selling points" that the campaign workers should use, and he emphasized his defense budget. This was the third time today that Ford gave the same spiel, and it was a kind of rebuttal of Reagan's attack yesterday. He used the familiar phrases about his proposed defense budget being the biggest in history and about how he would make sure that the U. S. remained "second to none in National security." He said his budget should be approved because it is "absolutely essential if we are to maintain the kind of military credibility to deter war and protect the national security." Ford said that "we are in a strong position and we are able to negotiate from strength." In addition, he said, "With your help, we can come back and continue the kind of strength at home and strength abroad that will make America prosperous here and respected abroad."

On the flight to Peoria, Butz came back to chat, or rather to deliver a campaign talk. "The farmers are basically for the President," he said. "You saw it manifested today" at the Farm Forum. "Rural people are basically conservative people." They respond "to this man." Butz said they like his candor, honesty, "his basic image of patriotism and his deep religious faith." Farmers like anyone else vote their pocketbooks, he said, and Ford's comments will appeal to them in this regard. "If you vote your pocketbook, as we all do, this is on the plus side."

"When it comes to a showdown, they're going to support the President," Butz said, "These people understand that detente means sales to the Russians. They know we've got to have unfettered access to the Russians. Butz added: "You're going to see a substantial movement of rural people behind the Ford candidacy." At one point, Butz commented on Ford's reorganization of food policymakers. He said "Part of the problem has been too many instant experts on agriculture on the White House staff and in other offices, especially State and Labor."

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Deignan/Mutual
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