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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.

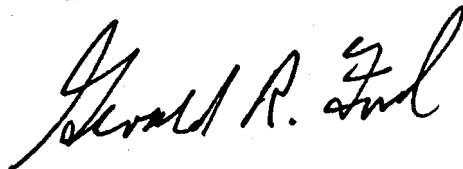
You should be proud that in your state of New Hampshire, a meeting which started off in a tense and contentious mood ended up as a genuine constructive dialogue on such important issues as health care, gun control, drugs, energy, foreign policy, military policy, jobs, the environment, welfare, amnesty,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

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Gerald R. Ford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "G" and "F".

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



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

CONCORD 03301

February 9, 1976

ELDRIM 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.

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MT:cjc

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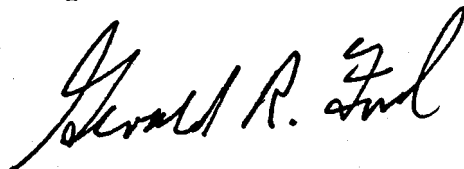
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Sincerely,


Meldrim Thomson, Jr.

MT:cjc

THE WHITE HOUSE

ACTION MEMORANDUM

WASHINGTON

LOG NO.:

Date: February 17, 1976

Time: 8:40 am

FOR ACTION:

cc (for information):

✓ JACK MARSH
ROGERS C. B. MORTON
HOWARD CALLAWAY (VIA MORTON)

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date: February 17, 1976

Time: ASAP

SUBJECT:

Gov. Thompson, New Hampshire letter to President
and President's proposed reply

ACTION REQUESTED:

☐ For Necessary Action☒ For Your Recommendations☐ Prepare Agenda and Brief☐ Draft Reply☒ For Your Comments☐ Draft Remarks

REMARKS:

Immediate response requested. The incoming letter was received from the Governor on Friday. The attached reply has been proposed and, if approved, will also be released to the New Hampshire newspapers this weekend.

Marsh - see comments
Callaway - OK
Morton - excellent

PLEASE ATTACH THIS COPY TO MATERIAL SUBMITTED.

If you have any questions or if you anticipate a delay in submitting the required material, please telephone the Staff Secretary immediately.

James E. Connor

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 17, 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, but in my judgment no apology on their behalf was called for. The extraordinary demonstration of good citizenship of more than 3,000 persons in the audience at the University of New Hampshire massively outweighed the bad manners and disruptive behavior of perhaps 100 or so persons.

In a free society there will always be some who try to abuse the rights of others. But they cannot succeed so long as the great majority are strong in their determination to defend their rights. A successful defense of the right to speak and to hear others speak is the real story of what happened that Sunday night in Lundholm Gymnasium.

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*Not sent —
Jim Connor said
to destroy* *UB 7*

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

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

2/17/76

Dr. Goldwin:

Trudy from Jim Connor's office called to say that Messrs. Morton and Callaway agree with your letter but that Mr. Marsh has the following comments and Jim Connor asked that you comment:

2nd sentence , 1st paragraph to read as follows:

OK,
as shown
The extraordinary demonstration of good citizenship of more than 3000 persons in the audience at the University of New Hampshire massively outweighed the bad manners and disruptive behavior of ~~a tiny handful of~~ perhaps 100 or so persons.

3rd paragraph, 1st sentence:

i.e. my answers--with good humor, but very firmly -- is this referring to persons responses or to the observation of a member of the audience quoted later in the paragraph?

*refers to audience as a whole.
They cheered Pres. and loved efforts to disrupt the meeting.*

P.S. They would like to hear from you as soon as possible as they would like the letter to go today.

WB

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 17, 1976

Dear Governor Thomson:

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~Changes given
to Goldwin's
secretary~~

~~To Correspondence
for n-do~~

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Jim -

Morton & Callaway approve the letter
as is.

Jack Marsh - recommends some
changes.

Trudy

THE WHITE HOUSE

ACTION MEMORANDUM

WASHINGTON

LOG NO.:

Date: February 17, 1976

Time: 8:40 am

FOR ACTION:

cc (for information):

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ROGERS C. B. MORTON

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REMARKS:

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Mr. Marsh's Comments: Suggest rewording the second sentence of the first paragraph to read as follows: "The extraordinary demonstration of good citizenship of more than 3,000 persons in the audience at the University of New Hampshire massively outweighed the bad manners and disruptive behavior of a tiny handful of perhaps 100 or so persons."

The last phrase, first sentence, third paragraph is not clear, i.e.: "My answers -- with good humor, but very firmly." Is this referring to the President's responses or to the observations of a member of the audience quoted later in the paragraph?

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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
CONCORD 03301

February 9, 1976

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The White House
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MT:cjc

Draft reply to Gov. In. Thomson

2/14/76

Dear Gov T:

To Jim Connor for the President 2/16/76

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