The original documents are located in Box D18, folder “The Executives' Club of Chicago, September 10, 1965” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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House Minority Leader Speaks to Capacity Crowd at Club’s 55th Year Opener.

Rep. Ford (R-Mich.) declared that in “ramming through” the bill to knock out right-to-work laws, the White House virtually ordered second-class citizenship for millions of workers.

Minority Leader Ford was raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and graduated with high honors from the University of Michigan in 1935. He was a member of the undefeated National Championship Football Teams of 1932 and 1933; named Michigan’s most valuable player in 1934 and placed against the Chicago Bears in the All-Star Game of 1935. And my question to him was, “What was the score?” He promised to answer that in his remarks. (Laughter)

Our guest has received many awards acknowledging his leadership abilities. He was voted one of America’s ten outstanding young men by the United States Chamber of Commerce in 1949; placed high in a Newsweek poll to determine the ablest member of Congress; received the Distinguished Congressional Service Award from the American Political Science Association, and in 1959 was selected by Sports Illustrated to receive its Silver Anniversary All-American Award as one of twenty-five players of 25 years past who had contributed to their fellow citizens.

Minority Leader Ford was raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and graduated with high honors from the University of Michigan in 1935.

He received his law degree from Yale in 1941 and was admitted to the Michigan State Bar that year. After nearly four years of naval service, he was discharged in 1946 with the rank of lieutenant commander.

Returning to the practice of law, our speaker became active with the Young Republicans in a campaign to clean up corruption in local Government. His political work led, in the summer of 1948, to the Republican nomination for Congress; and in November to his election by a substantial margin.

Our Next Program

MICHAEL G. O’NEIL
President, The General Tire & Rubber Co.

September 24, 1965
Grand Ballroom, Sherman House
A few weeks before his victory, he mar­ried Elizabeth Bloomer of Grand Rapids, who has become something of a minority leader herself, of three sons and one daugh­ter.

It is my great honor and pleasure to present the distinguished Member of Con­gress, Representative Gerald R. Ford. (Applause.)

This sound comment has affected my views politically and on many legislative matters. For example, I have always re­garded it as a fundamental of the Executive branch of the Government that they need to meet the challenge of the multitude of people who work for the Executive branch, in effect, give no superiority to any one of the three branches of the Federal Government.

The Executive branch of the Government has under its control and jurisdiction, the Internal Revenue Service. As the tax collector for the Federal Government, the IRS is one of the most visible and powerful agencies. They are constitutionally ordained. The first, the mental operations. They also provided that we should have a strong judicial system to interpret the Constitution. The second is the inter­pretation of the Executive branch and their annual payroll is over 14 billion dollars. In contrast, I think you will find that the legislative branch is the only one person every four years—puts his record on the line. This vast group of em­ployees who work for our Federal Govern­ment in effect are never challenged by the voters of this country. And I think there is a growing apprehension in the minds of many people about this octopus.

With that I will end my remarks before the toastmaster's overly generous toast. I will now invite you to raise your glasses to toast the toastmaster. (Applause.)

Designated Balance in Government

For my substantive remarks today I would like to talk about "The Role of Government." I think that the history of the United States will clearly indicate that whenever we have had a strong economy whenever we have had the scales tipped far too much, there has been a loss of liberty and a failure of progress. On the other hand, in such cases, the scales are balanced evenly, we have maintained our free-enter and have made progress in America.

I happen to subscribe to the views of the late Justice Felix Frankfurter who, as the lawyers here well know, espoused the philos­ophy of judicial restraint. It seems to me that this was sound judgment and that his philosophy should be followed today in the legislative branch of the Government.

On the other hand, the Executive branch of Government is increasing its power and strength. I often wonder whether or not our citizen as a whole really understands the size of the Federal Government. Today the Government has 2,350,000 civilian employees whose annual payroll is over 14 billion dollars. And when the President makes a recom­mendation for a 4% increase in the pay­ment for civilian employees of the Federal Government, it is not small, it is a con­sequence amount.

Another cornerstone of our political so­ciety was the establishment of the Federal, State and Local government relationships. When I became a member of the House of Representatives, I said that I shall be sovereign and that the Federal Gov­ernment and States have a Government of limited power. The United States Government; that the Congress would play a vital role in the workings of our govern­mental operations. They also provided that we should have a strong judicial system to interpret the Constitution. The second is the inter­pretation of the Executive branch and their annual payroll is over 14 billion dollars. In contrast, I think you will find that the legislative branch is the only one person every four years—puts his record on the line. This vast group of em­ployees who work for our Federal Govern­ment in effect are never challenged by the voters of this country. And I think there is a growing apprehension in the minds of many people about this octopus.

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in Washington and chatted for a few minutes. He is a very small and honest guy. He said, "Gerry, look, you might be interested. Have you ever noticed that on one of the income tax forms, up in the upper right-hand corner—" maybe Don has—"it says, 'Please do not write here!'"  

And this from the Internal Revenue Service said, "You would be surprised at the number of people who put on their Internal Revenue Tax Form, 'I'll write any damn place I feel.' (Laughters and applause)

State and Local Government Bypassed

I also feel that the traditional relationship between the Federal, State and Local Governments is being eroded, even though this has been a bulwark of strength over the years. The states, in effect, are no longer self-contained units of government, and church.

There is another cornerstone I would like to talk about in our American political system and here I refer to what is called the "two-party system." Our two-party system is not constitutionally ordained American, but early in America's history our forefathers decided that a two-party system was for the best interest of all our people. As a result, we have avoided the loss of freedom that exists in one-party governments throughout the world. We have also avoided the chaos and confusion that results from multi-party governments throughout the world. Yes, I think a strong two-party system is an equally important cornerstone in the American political system.

Today, I am sorry to say for more reasons than one, we don't have a strong two-party system in America, and particularly we don't have a strong two-party system in the Congress of the United States. The net result is that many of the safeguards which have been traditional, for the benefit of all segments of our society, are gone. I must say as I sit on our side of the aisle in the House of Representatives with the small band of 141 members, and look at that mass of humanity across the aisle, that I am a little jealous and at times have been discouraged. Particularly am I discouraged when I see these messages come down from the White House and I see many, many, too many of my Democratic friends, not knowing whether to clap their hands or click their heels. (Laughter and applause)

When you have this awesome power that I have described in an Executive branch of the Government, and when you have the complete imbalance that exists in the House and the Senate today, I think that some of the things we believe to be important are in jeopardy. A question to be answered under the current circumstances is: does the Congress operate merely as a limp arm of Government, bending like a wet noodle under the current circumstances is: does the Congress operate merely as a limp arm of Government, bending like a wet noodle, when I see these messages come down from the White House and I see many, many, too many of my Democratic friends, not knowing whether to clap their hands or click their heels. (Laughter and applause)

First, the problem of Federal Aid to Education was passed from the White House to the Congress that this measure should not be changed significantly in committee. 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In my judgment these were issues that should have been given serious and exhaustive debate. The mute opening of debate on vital and controversial issues falls far short of serving the genuine interests of the American people. (Applause)

Exemplars of Gag Rule
One of the most brazen examples of gag rule was the restriction clamped on the debate in the House of Representatives on Section 14-B of the Taft-Hartley Act. In this case, as I voiced against it then, as you well know, Section 14-B is just one section of the Taft-Hartley Act. The bill came from the Committee on Education and Labor, a very simple one-page proposal to repeal Section 14-B. Under the parliamentary procedure which was used, no amendment could be offered. The net effect was that the issue was submitted to the floor for an offer an amendment was ruled out of order.

For example, some of us felt that if Section 14-B was to be repealed, at least certain constitutional rights of the individual should not be wiped out. For example, was the right of the individual to write a letter to his Congressman. I am an optimist for another reason. "Why do we have a joint House-Senate Committee working right now on proposals that will make us a better legislative body. We believe in our Constitution. Those wise men who put it together almost 200 years ago made an historic document. But, let me say, it is politics and politicians that have put the breath of life and the blood in the veins of the still bones of a constitutional system. And so I conclude with these observations: Each of you in your place can be a politician or in politics. For yourself, for your humanity, for your state, for your party, for your country, for what you want, and what you can do. It is up to you. Thank you very much." (Applause)

PRESIDENT ERICKSON: Let me say, Mr. Congressman, that up to this time, the Executives' Club has had outstanding programs. (Applause)

We have had quite a few questions answered by the remarks of our speaker, but there are some I think he might like to touch upon if it's of any other reason than for emphasis.

First of all: Why are so many Republicans giving the Administration the "pock-marked" to pass through all of these welfare bills? (Applause)

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the Republicans who were giving the strongest support to a firmness against Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, I pointed out that four or five Democratic Senators were those giving the President the most trouble.

This got into four or five newspapers throughout the country. The President saw it and gave certain misinformation as to what transpired at the luncheon Mel Laird of Wisconsin and I had. Without checking the facts, the President made these accusations.

Fortunately, one of the newspapermen or one of the men who writes for one of our national magazines was up for vacation in New Hampshire. He read these stories and completely on his own, unsolicited by me, wrote me a one-page letter saying, "The President is wrong. I was there. I asked the question which prompted the derisive from the White House, and if you want to, you can send this to the White House and make it public."

At the news conference with Senator Dirksen later that day, I released the letter and sent it to the President, asking him for an opportunity to straighten out the record. I must say, thus far I have had no response from the White House. (Laughter)

**QUESTION:** "How do you feel about 'splinter groups' in the Party? Do they serve a purpose?"

**REPRESENTATIVE FORD:** Naturally, splinter groups do create some problems. I happen to believe that a strong Party organization is the best way to use your manpower, your money and your ideas. But, it must be conceded that following the election of 1964, the Republican National Committee and many of our state organizations rather fell apart. The net result was that various splinter groups were organized to fill this void.

I think the National Committee is getting re-organized and you can't eliminate those splinter groups that have been organized, but you can try to bring them within the Party organization. I think as the Party organization gets stronger, these various organizations will become a part of the organization headed by Ray Bliss. You certainly can't help the cause any by condemning splinter groups. I think you have to persuade them that they can serve the cause better by being a part of the organization and this is what we are trying to do today. (Applause)

**NEW MEMBERS**

Lee R. Farmer, Executive Vice President National-Ben Franklin Insurance Co. 300 W. Jackson Blvd. 341-2846
Sponsor: Ralph O. Butz

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Theodore E. Hanson, Partner Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. 111 W. Monroe St. Sponsor: Bruce Hoover

**QUESTION:** "A recent Forbes Magazine editorial entitled, 'Congress Go Home,' urged the House and Senate to take a month off in August, or two if possible, to rest and recharge the members. Do you agree?"

**REPRESENTATIVE FORD:** Of course my appraisal of this Congress is that it is long on quantity and very short on quality. The sooner we adjourn, the better it will be for the United States. (Applause)

I do think it would be wholesome and helpful for the members of the House and the Senate, both Democrats and Republicans, to get back and get reacquainted with their constituents. You get a distorted view of the United States and the views of 195 million people by spending too much time on the banks of the Potomac. The quicker we get out, the less bad legislation will pass, the more opportunity the citizens of America will have to communicate with their Congressman and Senator. When they do, if my appraisal of the situation is correct, you will find a different atmosphere in the Congress during the next session. (Applause)

**PRESIDENT ERIKSON:** Thank you, Congressman Ford, for a very enlightening and interesting discussion. The meeting is adjourned.
Without over-indulgence in political partisanship, I am sure we can agree that a strong two-party system and a meaningful balance in government are best for the national interest.

When the balance of power is critically and steeply tilted by an overwhelming majority in either political party, we have collective conformity in government.

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His praise is understandable. This Congress has given him almost everything he wants.

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At this point in history, the President commands a branch of government that employs more than 2½-million civilians and controls the destiny of 2 million 600-thousand military personnel. These two groups have a payroll cost totalling $28 billion. Together they will spend more than 127-billion tax dollars in fiscal 1966.

For the sake of comparison in establishing the slanted balance of power in government, it can be pointed out that the number of employees in the Congressional legislative branch total little more than 9,000 persons.
The question to be answered is whether the Congress operates merely as a limp arm of government, bending like a wet noodle to the will of a President armed with a 2 to 1 majority in the House and Senate or whether it is to be a strong, coordinate branch of government exercising fair but independent judgment.

Within the intent of the Constitution has the present Congress been effective? Has there been independent judgment? Has there been enough questioning and investigation of proposed legislation?

The documented record provides the answers.

The federal school aid bill, which will cost $1.3 billion in the first year of operation, is a good example of the silence imposed on the elected representatives on Capitol Hill by the existence of political power and the brutal use of such power.

House Republicans prepared 29 amendments each aimed at making the proposed legislation more sensible, more meaningful and more within the guidelines of the Constitution.

Of these, four were debated only five minutes and 14 were allowed no debate. Authors of the latter amendments were given no opportunity to explain them to their colleagues.

The silent treatment was given to several amendments that would have concentrated $200 million in Federal funds on the education needs of economically-deprived children.

The silent treatment was ordered for another amendment requiring state approval of supplementary educational centers to assure coordination of Federal activities with state plans and policies.

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These were the issues which should have been given complete, exhaustive debate in public discussion. The muting of open debate on vital and controversial issues falls short of serving the American people.

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By the use of raw power—284 on one side of the House aisle versus 141 on the other—debate was severely limited. At the same time and by the identical method any opportunity to offer meaningful amendments was blocked.

Action by the Administration-controlled House ignored public opinion. All the national polls, plus the results of numerous questionnaires sent out by Congressmen, consistently indicated most Americans favor the right of each state to outlaw compulsory unionism and are against repealing 14-B.

The House, in voting to repeal Section 14-B, failed to consider proposals based on effective safeguards aimed at protecting the basic rights of workers.

A proposal that came from the minority side of the House provided it would be unlawful for a union entering into an agreement requiring membership as a condition of employment,

1. To discriminate on account of race, color, or creed;
2. To use dues or assessments for political purposes or for any other purpose not related to the union's statutory function as collective bargaining agent; and
3. To fine or penalize a member for exercising any legal or civil right guaranteed by the Constitution or laws of the United States.

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It is amazing that the same government which will excuse a conscientious religious objector from military service to his country will force him to join a labor union in order to earn a living.

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However, a bi-partisan approach does not rule out responsible dialogue and debate. Neither should it silence those who raise questions and make suggestions.

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Based on fact, example and Congressional performance, the imbalance in government becomes obvious.
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I urge that all Americans be more aware of what is at stake on a day-to-day basis in Washington. This demands careful, constant analysis.

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More Americans should become active in a political party after carefully studying the philosophies of each.

For the preservation of our political and economic systems, each person must exercise the right to vote—not just every four years, but in each election.

In asking for a reawakening of the American electorate, we can look into history. Almost from the start our Nation chose to have our government operated through two great political parties. By this wise decision we avoided the chaos of multi-party government and the loss of freedom under a single party system.

Among the great challenges of our time is the strengthening of the two-party system to re-establish balance in government.

I am confident this challenge will be met by citizens with patience, imagination, courage and willingness to sacrifice to make the future better than the past with government more representative of all the people than at present.

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Excerpts from an address
The Executives' Club of Chicago
September 10, 1965

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