

The original documents are located in Box D18, folder “Republican Women's Federation Dinner (telephone text), September 21, 1965” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Telephone text

Republican Women's Federation

dinner Sept. 21 (Tuesday)

By telephone
from home
9-21-65
@ 9:00 p.m.

Please accept my apologies for not attending your dinner this evening.

The press of legislative business in the House this week --and particularly today--- is the reason I am unable to be with you in Lansing.

Congress is on the ^{home-stretch} ~~home-stretch~~ for this session. However, it is difficult to predict the date of adjournment.

With a 2 to 1 majority in the House and Senate, President Johnson has said he intends to keep Congress in session late this autumn. Actually, it would be best for the American people if Congress had adjourned before the President was able to push through so much quantitative ---but not qualitative---legislation.

The way the President controls the Democrat-powered Congress, I understand he writes his diary six weeks in advance.

* * *

Before discussing U.S. foreign policy with you for a few minutes, you might like to know about a cartoon published a few days ago in the Washington Star.

It portrayed a large elephant sitting in a chair with crocodile tears flowing. I was shown with my hands on hips looking down at the elephant and saying: "quit blubbering and try acting like a Democrat."



I don't know where the cartoonist got the idea I am in favor of Republicans acting like Democrats, but he was right in quoting ~~me~~ ^{me} as telling many in our party to quit blubbering, to stop bemoaning our fate. Instead of wringing our hands, let's set to work building a record as a ~~united~~ unified party.

Let's forget 1964. Let's not make the same mistakes. Let's profit from our defeat. Let's ~~become~~ once again ONE Republican Party.

I have complete confidence in you and your ability to help solidify a massive Republican team effort.

And, now let us consider the Viet Nam war and U.S. foreign policy.

It should be remembered that the ~~involvement~~ involvement of the United States in Viet Nam after World War II began with a Democrat in the White House.

It began with a decision of the Truman Administration to provide economic and military aid.

In 1954 a fragile peace was achieved by the Geneva agreements.

During the Eisenhower Administration a near ~~miracle~~ ^{miracle} occurred ~~thanks~~ ^{thanks} to intelligent, statesman-like actions by the United States.

The Democratic Administration taking office in 1961 faced acute difficulties in the neighboring nation of Laos. While there were sporadic guerilla attacks in Viet Nam, Communist forces had launched a full-scale offensive in Laos threatening the government.



After months of fighting, high-level diplomatic foot-shuffling and a lot of double-talk from the State Department, a declaration of neutrality in Laos was signed. It is a wordless document. Laos today is ripe for picking by the Communists whenever they chose.

The resoluteness of the United States was tested in Laos. It was *found to be* ~~found~~ weak.

The Administration said it would not permit aggression against Laos to succeed..... it did *g* permit aggression.

The Administration said it would refuse to negotiate until a cease-fire was in effect...it did negotiate.

The weakness of a Democrat Administration in dealing with the problem of Communist aggression against Laos is strongly reflected in the Viet Nam situation today.

As the military efforts of the United States in Viet Nam have broadened, the pronouncements of President Johnson defining the objective of our Nation have been progressively ~~watered down~~ watered down.

The past July 28, the President seemed to disregard the independence of South Viet Nam as an objective.

Declaring that the purposes of the 1954 Geneva agreements are still our own, he asserted that the people of South Viet Nam shall have the right to shape their own destiny in free elections--in the south or throughout



all Viet Nam under international supervision. ~~.....~~

This statement raises the disquieting possibility of accepting now in Viet Nam the type of election which the United States rejected a decade ago....an election which would be stacked and subverted ⁱⁿ advance.

The President now tells the Nation...."this is really war."

To what degree miscalculation on the part of the enemy has brought about this state of affairs, no one can be sure.

Miscalculation was the natural result of the withdrawal of American backing for the Diem government. For the U.S. had pledged its support of Diem all the way... a phrase used by Lyndon Johnson in 1961.

Miscalculation was encouraged by President ~~Johnson~~ Johnson's 1964 campaign oratory. Making his opponent to appear reckless and trigger happy, the President in several public statements set limits to America's role in Viet Nam military conflict....yet these were exceeded after the election.

Miscalculation is encouraged---and the American people are confused---when the Administration glosses over a messy ~~sit~~ situation with optimistic pronouncements and predictions.



Recall Secretary Rusk reporting in his words "steady improvement"

of the situation when he visited Viet Nam in the spring of last year.

Now once again, the public is told by the White House there is reason for cautious optimism.

Neither the Congress nor the public is being accurately and fully informed about the Nation's involvement in Viet Nam.

This summer the President said that the stationing of 125,000 American troops in Viet Nam did not imply any change in our policy.

The fact is---there has been a radical change in policy.

Instead of providing advice, equipment and dollars as did the Eisenhower Administration...or participating in air warfare as during the Kennedy Administration---the United States today is engaged in large-scale combat.

I was one of several Republicans questioning commitment of large numbers of American ground troops before making fuller use of air and sea power...and we ~~questioned~~ ^{with} asked ~~if~~ we didn't get more help from friendly nations directly threatened by Communists.

These questions have not been answered by the White House.



The objective of the Nation's policy in South Viet Nam must be the establishment of conditions under which the people of that country can live in peace and freedom. This means a government of their own choosing. This means an end to aggression---from within and from without.

We should always be ready to negotiate.

Negotiation ^{to} and the fighting and assuring the freedom and independence of South Viet Nam would be welcome.

However, the United States cannot acquiesce in a settlement which would end the fighting but sacrifice the freedom and independence of South Viet Nam. Such a settlement would be only a prelude to a larger war in other parts of Asia---in places like Thailand, Malaysia, or the Philippines.

It would be disastrous to end the war in South Viet Nam with a ~~settlement~~ ^{settlement} which like the Geneva agreement of 1962 relating to Laos, installed a ~~communist~~ ^{coalition} government with Communist participation in the nation which has suffered aggression.

It would be a grave mistake to accept a settlement which would be policed by an international commission with veto power in the hands of a Communist member.



There are in the Democratic Party some who would abandon the free people of South Viet Nam. The President must not yield to them.

In doing our best to see to it that the President does not yield to such critics, Republicans are carrying on in the finest tradition of bi-partisanship in foreign policy.

Bipartisanship does not mean that the opposition party may not offer proposals to the Administration; not that the opposition may not criticize Administration actions.

Guided by the single standard of the security and well-being of the Nation, Republicans will continue to offer suggestions and to criticize.

Criticism, when well-founded, helps the Nation to steer a surer and steadier course and to attain its objectives without unnecessary loss or delay.

Thank you for listening.

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