

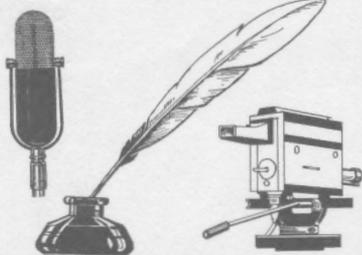
The original documents are located in Box D23, folder “Mock Political Convention, University of Missouri, February 23, 1968” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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RELEASE**

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Mr. Chairman, Fellow Republicans and Fellow Americans: As we meet here tonight in convention, America and, indeed, the world resound with alarms.

We are met at a time of grave crisis--a crisis not only for the American people but for the entire Free World. While our Free World partners see some of the pieces of this crisis only as in a glass, darkly, we here in America are confronted with the full stark tragedy of it.

This will not be a traditional political convention keynote speech. I have no intention of promising the American people that the Republican Party if returned to the White House will solve every problem overnight, increase every benefit, expand all existing federal programs and start a whole flock of new ones...in short, give everybody everything he wants, with the devil taking the National Debt. Let's leave that onus of fiscal irresponsibility to the other major political party--they deserve it.

Of course, they have been pursuing that course for the last seven years and they haven't accomplished much except to run up prices, run up interest rates, run up the National Debt and the interest on it to staggering proportions, nearly run us out of gold and run the dollar into the ground. Small wonder we recently witnessed a run on U.S. gold stocks by foreign creditors. No stardust in their eyes. They haven't swallowed the Administration's Big Lie--the fiction about 84 months of uninterrupted prosperity. And they are fearfully aware of how the United States is being bled of its men and its treasure in that bottomless pit known as Vietnam under the Administration's misguided and misdirected policies.

Tonight I want to talk with you about the health and welfare of our Nation. Not in the limited sense of school lunches or prenatal care for indigent mothers. But the health and welfare of all the American people--of every one of us who as individuals make up the great living community which is the United States of America.

Where are we tending, and what do we want?

We face many problems--problems that threaten to tear us apart as a people, problems that demean us in the eyes of the world, problems that threaten us with collapse as a Nation.

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I believe what Americans want to know as we meet here tonight is this: Which party is best equipped to restore this country to blessed peace and which party can best promote genuine prosperity, a soundly growing economy with relative price stability.

Which party best understands the forces at work in America and the world today--those forces which promise a brighter tomorrow and those other forces which threaten our very existence?

Which party best recognizes the uses of power and how best to employ it in the interests of world peace?

Which party does a better job of preserving the value of the dollar so that a man need not lead a precarious credit-card existence during his working years and throw himself on the mercy of the government in his old age?

Which party does a better job of watching over tax dollars and seeing to it that Americans get a fair return for what they "invest" in their government?

Which party offers the American people the kind of moral leadership so necessary to teach respect for law and order and to preserve this republic as a government ordained of laws and not merely of men?

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The other party would have Americans believe that the Republican Party is the enemy of the people. That is so ridiculous as to be laughable. It would be laughable if the opposition did not repeatedly peddle it as the seeming truth. The truth is we oppose the other party's means to an end when we know those means to be unsound.

The Democratic Party now stands before the people to be judged. The Democratic Party has had seven years in which to demonstrate the wisdom of its policies, the beneficent fruits of legislation which has been pushed through one Democratic Congress after another. The people will decide whether to leave the Nation in the Democratic Party's hands.

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A Republican might say...the dollar that was worth a dollar when President Eisenhower left the White House now is worth about 87½ cents.

Both would be right, and that reading of the incontrovertible record is devastating. It means that the Johnson Administration with its policy of planned deficits has been robbing all of us of purchasing power and, indeed, has been pauperizing our senior citizens. The Johnson Administration is primarily responsible for the inflation which has hit us all and has struck most cruelly at the aged who are living on limited incomes.

The Johnson Administration's own Labor Department reports that inflation has wiped out the wage gains the country's production workers thought they had made during the last two years.

The Johnson Administration has so wasted our substance and so heavily borrowed against the future that we find ourselves plagued with cost inflation, price inflation, massive federal deficits, some of the highest interest rates in a century, and repeated attacks on the dollar. There has been a virtual explosion of federal spending on too many unjustified and wasteful programs and projects.

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With all this massive spending, the Johnson Administration has failed to solve the major problems of America...wage-robbing inflation, the cost-price squeeze on the farmer, the cancers of hard-core unemployment and a swiftly rising crime rate, the widening gulf between the races, the threat of a new kind of civil war, the disaffection of former allies, nation-building in Southeast Asia where the balance of power is steadily shifting against us.

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Picking Attorney General Ramsey Clark as coordinator of all federal crime-fighting agencies is like naming Dr. Spock head of the Defense Department. Yet Lyndon Johnson would like the American people to believe he understands the need for firmness in law enforcement.

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The people have every reason to mistrust the Johnson Administration, for they have been misled almost every step of the way into the sinkhole of war that is Vietnam.

When the Eisenhower Administration left office, South Vietnam had a relatively stable and apparently established government. The late President John F. Kennedy, writing in 1960 as a senator, said in his book "Strategy of Peace" that U.S. aid to South Vietnam under Eisenhower had proved "effective." He called the results "a near miracle."

In 1960 there were fewer than 700 U.S. military personnel stationed in South Vietnam, sent there to train South Vietnamese forces in the use of American weapons and equipment. Today more than 525,000 U.S. military personnel have been committed by Lyndon Johnson to a seemingly interminable land war in Vietnam--and he hints he will be sending many thousands more. Where will it all end?

Vietnam has become the third largest war in our history. More than 20,500 American have lost their lives in this bitter conflict.

Yet Lyndon Johnson ran for the presidency as a peace candidate in 1964. No less than five times during that campaign he indicated he would never send large ground forces to Vietnam.

On August 29, 1964, Lyndon Johnson told the nation: "Some others are eager to enlarge the conflict. They call upon us to supply American boys to do the job that Asian boys should do. They ask us to take reckless action which might risk the lives of millions. We don't want our American boys to do the fighting for Asian boys. We don't want to get involved in a nation with 700 million people and get tied down in a land war in Asia."

Lyndon Johnson spoke those words a little more than three years ago. Today we are tied down in a land war in Asia. The end is nowhere in sight.

It was a Republican Administration--the Eisenhower Administration--which brought an end to the Korean War which the Truman Administration would not win and could not stop. We said in 1952 that we could get and maintain peace with honor, and we did. A Republican Administration will do likewise in 1969.

The Korean War was the first war we ever fought on the enemy's terms. The Vietnam War is the second. To have continued the Korean War would have been madness. To conduct the Vietnam War Lyndon Johnson style has been utterly tragic.

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We all recognize we must negotiate an end to the Vietnam War. President Eisenhower brought the Korean War to an end without compromising our own interests or those of our allies. A new Republican administration will bring the Vietnam War to an honorable conclusion. The Johnson Administration is . . . incapable of accomplishing this result, although I would dearly like to see it happen right tomorrow.

A measure of success in Vietnam is demanded by our own national interests. But President Johnson has fought the right war in the wrong way. He has over-committed the American people in Vietnam as well as at home. He has mismanaged the war, and he has mismanaged the domestic economy.

He has taken this Nation down a destructive and failure-filled path that has brought us stalemate in Vietnam, humiliation at the hands of North Korea, the distrust of both the Israelis and the Arabs, a sundering of the once-strong ties that bound NATO together, danger that the Soviet Union will surpass us in nuclear capability, and a shocking loss of credibility among the nations of the world...both Communist and free.

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Americans have no desire to heat up the cold war. Republicans are anxious to live at peace with the Communists. But we will never settle for a fool's paradise where detente is nothing but wishful thinking, a word that dangerous dreams are built on. More than ever before, the times demand realism and the American people demand the truth. The Johnson Administration is failing them on both counts.

We are in a time of testing. Indeed, in the words of a great Republican

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President, it is a testing whether Government of the people, by the people and for the people can endure.

The Nation must have new leadership--great new leadership that will restore this country to fiscal sanity, destroy the ghettos and rebuild our cities, bring us to honorable peace and make us proud of America again.

This is a moment of great decision, a point of critical choosing as we ponder our Nation's destiny.

Lincoln and the Republican Party led this country through the cataclysmic crisis that was the war between the states. I believe the American people will turn again...now, in this hour of gravest danger...to the Republican Party.

The cup that is borne in the hands of that challenge is bitter. But we shall not shrink from it. We shall dedicate ourselves to renewing America's soul. We shall be worthy of the people's trust.

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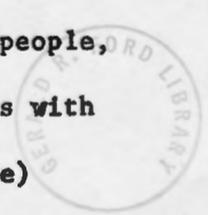
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MISSOURI

FEB. 23, 1968

Gerald R. Ford
M.C.

FRIDAY

8:00 P.M.

MOCK POLITICAL CONVENTION

UNIV. OF MISSOURI

NOTE: See reading copy for
Bloomsburg, Pa.
March 16, 1968

