

The original documents are located in Box D28, folder “United Vets Council of Kent County, February 7, 1970” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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UNITED VETS COUNCIL OF KENT COUNTY (Sat., February 7, 1970).

Jerry: I suggest you talk about what a great contribution all of the veterans organizations make to American national life...how they have always worked for the good of the United States...how the men who were comrades in war have continued in peace the sense of service and dedication to America that led them to offer their lives for their country in the first instance.

1. VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS ARE, BASICALLY, GROUPS WHICH HAVE DEDICATED THEMSELVES TO SERVING THEIR COMMUNITY, THEIR STATE AND THE NATION.

2. THERE IS PERHAPS A GREATER NEED TODAY FOR SUCH ORGANIZATIONS . . . ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE IDEALS AND PATRIOTISM OF VETERANS GROUPS . . . THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME IN OUR HISTORY.

3. FOR THIS IS A TIME OF CRISIS PERHAPS MORE ACUTE THAN THE COUNTRY HAS KNOWN SINCE IT FIRST SURVIVED THE PANGS OF BIRTH AND THE DIVISIONS WHICH ACCOMPANIED ITS BIRTH AS A NATION.

4. AMERICA HAS KNOWN NO WAR AS HORRIBLE AS THE VIETNAM CONFLICT. WE SHOULD ALL MARVEL AT THE SACRIFICE WHICH IS BEING MADE BY THE YOUNG AMERICANS WHO ARE BRAVELY SERVING THEIR COUNTRY IN VIETNAM . . . THE SHEER GUTS OF THESE KIDS WHO ARE STICKING IT OUT IN VIETNAM DESPITE ALL THE EFFORTS OF THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE US JUST THROW IN THE TOWEL, CAPITULATE AND TURN SOUTH VIETNAM OVER TO THE COMMUNISTS.

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5. WE ALL HATE WAR, BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS WORSE THAN WAR. ONE OF THOSE THINGS IS TO THINK THAT NOTHING IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR . . . TO SLINK OFF AND LET OTHERS BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE BATTLE.

6. WE HAVE MEN IN VIETNAM TODAY WHO KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HONEST-TO-GOD AMERICANS, MEN OF WHOM WE CAN ALL BE PROUD . . . JUST AS THE FOLKS AT HOME WERE PROUD OF THE G.I.'s WHO FOUGHT IN KOREA, THE SAD SACKS OF WORLD WAR II, AND THE DOUGHBOYS OF WORLD WAR I.

7. WE HAVE MADE A GREAT CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD PEACE IN VIETNAM, AND NOW THE TIME HAS COME TO TURN THE WAR BACK TO THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE.

8. WE WOULD RATHER NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT, A JUST PEACE, BUT SINCE NORTH VIETNAM REFUSES TO NEGOTIATE IN GOOD FAITH THE ONLY ANSWER IS TO GIVE THE WAR BACK TO OUR ALLIES.

9. THIS IS WHAT WE CALL VIETNAMIZATION . . . AND I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT IT IS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. OUR TROOP WITHDRAWALS ARE AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. WE WILL HAVE WITHDRAWN 110,000 MEN FROM VIETNAM BY APRIL 15, AND I WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT WE WILL HAVE AN ADDITIONAL ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE PROGRESS OF VIETNAMIZATION AT THAT TIME.
10. WE HAVE MADE GREAT GAINS IN VIETNAM, AND I BELIEVE WE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL THERE IN OUR AIM TO THWART A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER BY FORCE.

11. DESPITE OUR SUCCESSES, THE NEED FOR ALL OF US TO GIVE STRONG SUPPORT TO OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF REMAINS VERY MUCH WITH US.

12. I KNOW I CAN COUNT ON EVERY MEMBER OF OUR VETERANS GROUPS, MEN WHO CHERISH AMERICAN IDEALS, VALUES, PATRIOTISM, FREEDOM AND PERSONAL LIBERTIES.

13. YOU WERE AMONG THE NEARLY 32 MILLION AMERICANS WHO HAVE FOUGHT FOR THIS COUNTRY OVER THE YEARS . . . HAVE FOUGHT IN NINE MAJOR CONFLICTS SINCE THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

14. I KNOW YOU WILL NEVER SURRENDER OUR SACRED
BIRTHRIGHT . . . THAT YOU WILL STAND SHOULDER TO
SHOULDER WITH OUR PRESIDENT . . . OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF . . .
TO KEEP THIS NATION STRONG AGAINST ALL ITS ENEMIES.

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