

The original documents are located in Box D32, folder “Republican Dinner, Montgomery, AL, February 21, 1972” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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AN ADDRESS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH.
REPUBLICAN LEADER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BEFORE A REPUBLICAN DINNER

AT MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1972

FOR RELEASE AT 6:30 P.M. MONDAY

The Republican Party can achieve great success in the 1972 election if only we can get the truth across to the American people. We must dispel the myths that the opposition is peddling about Republicans.

The Bible tells us: "Great is truth, and mighty above all things."

To make the truth known--this is what we must do to win the hearts and minds of the American people in this most important election year.

I do not issue this challenge to you solely for partisan reasons. I do so because I sincerely believe that the cause of peace at home and abroad will be best served by a Republican victory in 1972.

The truth sometimes touches us in flashes. We speak of "moments of truth." Such a moment occurred the night of January 25, 1972, when President Nixon went on nationwide radio and television to reveal the vigorous private negotiations he had been pursuing to end the war in Vietnam.

Certain truths then became immediately evident to all reasonable persons:

It is not the United States which is continuing the Vietnam War but the North Vietnamese.

We offered as long ago as last May 31 to withdraw all U.S. troops from Vietnam within six months in exchange for an Indochina cease-fire and release of American prisoners of war.

We are not committed to the support of any particular government in Saigon--only to the objective that the people of South Vietnam determine their future.

We have done everything possible to negotiate an end to the Vietnam War short of cooperating with the North Vietnamese to topple the Saigon Government.

The North Vietnamese have been insisting that we collaborate on turning South Vietnam over to them.

Another truth also became clear. Some candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination are not only willing but are urging that we make peace on the enemy's terms. They are, I believe, unwittingly prolonging the war.

(more)

I say they are prolonging the war because I believe the North Vietnamese would accept President Nixon's basic peace plan if they were not encouraged to believe they will do better by holding out. They might very well buy the idea of an election in South Vietnam if some Democratic leaders did not lead them to believe we eventually will simply turn South Vietnam over to them.

Consider what some of the Democratic presidential candidates are saying, in effect. They are saying to the American people and to the world: "The Democratic Party made a mistake in leading the United States into the Vietnam War nine years ago. We have spent over \$100 billion in that war and lost more than 50,000 lives. Let's wipe the slate clean by making peace on the enemy's terms."

The Vietnam War ultimately is going to end through negotiations. The greater the number of Americans who talk of ending the war through surrender, the farther off the day of settlement will be.

It is ironic that some leading Democrats today point to their party as the party of peace. Democratic Administrations initiated the U.S. combat role in Vietnam and escalated our commitment there to 543,000 men. It is easy to have peace if you are willing to take the enemy's terms.

It was a great Roman, Cicero, who said: "What then should be the objective of those who are at the helm of government, which they should never lose sight of, toward which they ought to set their course? It is peace with dignity."

It is interesting to note that leaders of the country's largest POW-family group have praised President Nixon for his latest peace initiative and are demanding that his critics go on record with their own plans for freeing American prisoners of war.

I join the POW families in that demand. I would like to ask the Democratic presidential candidates where the morality and justice would be in eliminating all U.S. aid to Saigon while the North Vietnamese continue to receive up to \$1 billion a year in aid from their allies. In that connection, we have offered to limit our aid to Saigon if the North Vietnamese would agree to a similar limitation on the aid they get.

We could negotiate an end to the war--if the Democrats would unite behind the President.

As for Republicans, we can be proud of our record on Vietnam. We have reason to be proud because we are getting out of Vietnam with honor.

(more)

In fact, the entire Republican record during the three years that Richard Nixon has filled the Presidency is a basis for pride. This, too, is a truth we are going to have to carry to the American people this election year.

We can be proud because we are successfully fighting an inflation that roared ahead almost unchecked under the Democrats between 1965 and 1969. The cost of living rose 4.3 per cent in 1971. That is a marked improvement over the 5.5 per cent increase in 1970 and the 6.1 per cent rise in 1969. Through the President's bold program of price and wage controls--a program that is working--we stand a good chance to hold the rise in 1972 to 3 per cent.

We can be proud of the President's New Economic Policy, which will push unemployment down toward the 5 per cent mark by the end of 1972. We are moving from a wartime to a peacetime economy, and the dislocations are severe. Meantime, employment has topped 80 million, an all-time high. With employment steadily growing unemployment will drop. Sound growth in the economy will soak up the increased number of job-seekers. The economic indicators are pointing upward.

We have to work to make truths like this known because the Democrats are playing a game they are very good at. It's called "viewing with alarm"--seeing the worst of things and blaming the Republicans for it.

There's really only one way to beat the Democrats at their game. That is to recite the real-life accomplishments of our Republican Administration.

We have reason to be proud of the Nixon Administration, and we should let the American people know the truth about it.

The truth is it was the Nixon Administration that reversed the course of the Vietnam War and is ending U.S. involvement in that war in an honorable way.

It is the Nixon Administration that brought about a cease-fire in the Middle East and has helped prevent an outbreak of fresh fighting there.

It is the Nixon Administration that is engaged in strategic arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union--talks that carry the promise of a near-future agreement.

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It is President Nixon who transformed the world scene from one of confrontation between the major powers to one of negotiation--who is even now in China on a mission for peace.

It is President Nixon who has developed a new strategy for peace in the world centered around the doctrine of helping those nations willing to help themselves.

These, of course, are all actions aimed at promoting peace abroad. What about progress at home?

It was the Nixon Administration that reordered our national priorities by devoting a greater part of the Federal Budget to human needs than to defense.

It was the Nixon Administration that achieved the most significant improvements in unemployment insurance in our entire history.

It was the Nixon Administration that brought about a massive increase in our manpower programs to provide work experience and training for young people of all races.

It was the Nixon Administration that quadrupled minority hiring for government jobs in higher grades and expanded aid to minority enterprises by more than half--and has since proposed an even greater expansion of such aid.

It was the Nixon Administration that tripled food assistance programs for the needy from \$1.1 million to \$3.5 million a year.

It was the Nixon Administration which proposed \$1.5 billion in funding for school districts with a high concentration of low income families and the doubling of aid to black colleges.

It was the Nixon Administration which reformed our draft laws to make them more equitable and began moving toward an all-volunteer Army.

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It is the Nixon Administration that has launched the most progressive and most comprehensive Federal attack on drug abuse ever undertaken in the United States.

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Now we look to the future. We look for more progress--progress toward peace at home and abroad, and progress toward prosperity in peacetime.

There is much more that Richard Nixon is determined to accomplish.

By a stroke of fate, he has been afforded an opportunity to change the direction in which the Supreme Court was travelling during years when more attention was paid to the rights of criminal defendants than the rights of society.

Richard Nixon is keeping all of his promises to the American people. He wants to do much more than he has already achieved. What he needs to write his whole program into law is a Republican Congress.

There is a whole host of Nixon Administration reforms awaiting congressional action: A workfare program in place of the welfare scandal; Federal revenue sharing, giving the States and cities a percentage slice of Federal tax receipts so they can zero in on their own problems free from Federal red tape; reorganization of cabinet departments so government will be more responsive to the people; a consolidation of manpower training programs, to be turned over to the states and local communities as they become equipped to handle them; a re-examination of Federal aid to schools to achieve quality education; and a revamping of our labor laws to improve handling of national emergency labor disputes in transportation.

Every one of these reforms will be an issue in the 1972 campaign unless the Democrats in Congress join Dick Nixon in his crusade to improve the quality of life in America.

The best way to help Dick Nixon is to elect Republicans to Congress next November 7 so he will have the team he needs to turn America in the right direction.

The hour of truth is upon us, and the time is now. Truth is our greatest weapon in the 1972 campaign. Our success at the polls will be measured by our success in impressing the truth upon the American people.

So tell the Republican story. Tell the Richard Nixon story. Let the American people know what Dick Nixon has done to bring them peace abroad and progress at home.

That is the truth you must make clear. So let us do the job. Together we can. We are on the march--we and Dick Nixon. Let us prove that our party is a winning one. Let us move forward together.

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