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REMARKS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD AT THE FIFTH ANNUAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS AND THE CONSULTING ENGINEERS COUNCIL OF THE U.S., 8:50 A.M., MONDAY, MARCH 13, 1972, AT THE ~~STATLER~~ STATLER HILTON HOTEL.

M Office Copy

If my friend Hale Boggs looks gloomy this morning, it's probably because unemployment dropped 0.2 of a point in February to the lowest point ~~in~~ in 16 months. What's good news for the rest of us is bad news in Hale's book.

I might follow up that comment by saying I expect unemployment to drop to 5 per cent or less by the end of 1972, and I believe we will see a 9 per cent rise in Gross National Product this year--6 per cent of that as real growth and the other 3 per cent in inflation.

The economy will be an issue in the 1972 campaign, of course, and I am not afraid of the judgment of the American people on that score.

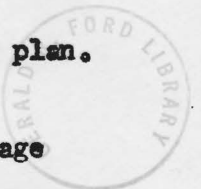
Strikes
Speaking of issues, Democrats in the House recently made clear that crippling strikes in transportation will be one of the major issues of the fall campaign.

As you may~~know~~ know, a House Commerce Committee subcommittee recently killed for this year legislation to prevent crippling strikes in transportation. The subcommittee vote was 6 to 5, with all of the Democratic members of the subcommittee but~~one~~ one voting to kill the legislation.

In my view, that vote ~~was~~ did great injury to the Nation, and Republicans ~~xx~~ will be constantly reminding the voters of that fact this fall.

The vote on the crippling strikes prevention legislation points up the fact that all of the major Administration measures~~xx~~ the Democrats refuse to enact will become prominent issues in the 1972 campaign. The Democrats will, of course, move and approve a number of the President's proposals.

Significantly, the Senate on March 2 approved an omnibus housing bill which includes a form of the President's urban community special revenue sharing plan. The bill consolidates the Nation's housing, home subsidy and water and sewage



programs into one huge fund. The vote on the ~~bill~~ bill was almost unanimous--80 to 1.

~~Now let me state to you that~~

The Senate went off somewhat on a tangent, giving Washington more control over how the money is spent than the President has proposed. I predict that the House will approve ~~an important~~ urban community development special revenue sharing plan which is much closer to the President's desires.

As you know, under special revenue sharing for community development we lump together into one block grant the present separate grants for urban renewal, neighbor-
hood development, water and sewer assistance, neighborhood facilities, open space,
public works, land acquisition and others.

Indications are that the block grants for all of these programs will be between \$2 and \$3 billion a year, to take effect beginning ~~in~~ July 1, 1973. This will allow for the necessary transition period.

This change in direction is a most healthy development in Federal, state and local relations. As Federal urban development programs have grown, local counterpart bureaucracies have popped up, many of them operating outside the control of elected local officials. This is a fragmentation of local effort. It has made it difficult for ~~the~~ local governments to focus in proper priority sequence on the ~~most~~ problems needing the most time and money. At the same time, local efforts have become entangled in the delays and distortions that result from submitting applications for Federal aid.

Under special revenue sharing, cities will have a relatively free hand in ~~the~~ deciding how to use Federal community development funds. Local officials will decide how much to spend and on what. The bureaucrats' hold on City Hall will be broken. I see Community Development special ~~revenue~~ revenue sharing as a precise and direct solution for the problems now plaguing our system of urban aid.

You have heard much in the past about general revenue sharing--alloting ~~out~~ our states and cities a definite percentage slice of Federal income tax revenue on a largely no-strings-attached basis. Chances now are good that we will be making ~~for~~ \$5 billion or more a year available on ~~this~~ this basis to free local programs from the red tape which now obstructs them. Prospects for passage of general revenue sharing are quite bright now that House Ways and Means Chairman Wilbur Mills has introduced a ~~bill~~ general revenue sharing bill which goes about ~~fixes~~ 80 per cent of the way with the President.

I believe there is also a good chance we will get some kind of health care legislation this year. The President recently made a fresh pitch for this legislation. Ways and Means will be taking up the health care bills in executive session after disposing of general revenue sharing. If we do not get sound health care legislation this year, this ~~will~~ will be an issue in the fall campaign.

We can also expect this year some kind of welfare reform legislation, a sizable increase in Social Security benefits, consumer protection on warranties, the creation of a consumer advocacy agency, increased aid for colleges and universities, and a multi-billion-dollar program aimed at fighting water ~~pollution~~ pollution.

Pension reform is a strong candidate for legislative honors this year but it is questionable whether there will be sufficient time to get a bill through both houses.

As for an increase in the minimum wage, Mr. Boggs is in a better position than I am to predict the future of that legislation because it is a senior member of his party who is ~~now~~ keeping the House Education and Labor Committee's minimum wage bill bottled up.

To sum up, then, this promises to be a fairly productive session of Congress.

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