The original documents are located in Box 21, “1/8/76 - Taping: Symposium on the American Presidency, 200 Years Later, University of California” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice
The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

TAPING:

SYMPOSIUM ON THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY --

200 YEARS LATER, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

JANUARY 8, 1976
GOOD EVENING.

I AM HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO GREET YOU, THOUGH I AM

NOT ABLE TO JOIN YOU, IN THIS SYMPOSIUM ON "THE AMERICAN

PRESIDENCY -- TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER."
SPEAKING STRICTLY, THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY IS
OF COURSE, NOT YET 200 YEARS OLD. IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1789,
AFTER YEARS OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE LACK OF A STRONG
EXECUTIVE, THAT THE CONSTITUTION REMEDIED THAT DEFECT AND
GEORGE WASHINGTON WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT.
DESIRE FOR A STRONGER EXECUTIVE FOUND EXPRESSION

IN THE PROVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION.

MUCH OF THE REST

OF THE CONSTITUTION EXPRESSES AN EQUIVALLY STRONG DESIRE TO

PREVENT ABUSE OF THE EXECUTIVE POWER.

IN MORE WAYS THAN

ONE, THE PRESIDENCY HAS A CENTRAL PLACE IN THE CONSTITUTION.
THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT WASHINGTON INHERITED IN 1789 HAS BEEN DESCRIBED THIS WAY: A FOREIGN OFFICE, WITH JOHN JAY AND A COUPLE OF CLERKS TO HANDLE CORRESPONDENCE WITH OUR TWO AMBASSADORS; A TREASURY BOARD, WITH AN EMPTY TREASURY; AND A SECRETARY OF WAR -- HE WAS CALLED THE SECRETARY AT WAR -- WITH AN AUTHORIZED ARMY OF 840 MEN. INITIALLY, THIS WAS THE GOVERNMENT FOR 4 MILLION PEOPLE AND A TERRITORY GREATER THAN ALL BUT ONE EUROPEAN NATION.
CONSIDER HOW THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR POPULATION,
OUR TERRITORY, OUR COMMERCE, AND OUR GOVERNMENT HAVE GROWN.

AND CONSIDER ALSO, DESPITE THAT GROWTH, THAT THE ORIGINAL
CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS SETTING FORTH THE POWERS OF THE
PRESIDENT HAVE REMAINED UNAMENDED [BY LEGISLATION] TO THIS DAY.
BUT THOUGH UNAMENDED, THE POWERS OF THE PRESIDENCY,
LIKE THE POWERS OF THE CONGRESS AND JUDICIARY, HAVE BEEN
GREATLY ALTERED. OUR ABILITY TO ADAPT VENERABLE AND STABLE
INSTITUTIONS TO NOVEL AND CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES HAS BEEN
CONSTANTLY TESTED — AND WE HAVE MET THAT TEST VERY WELL

indeed, in my opinion.
WE HAD A FOUNDING 200 YEARS AGO, AND WE HAVE BEEN
REFOUNDING STEADILY EVER SINCE.

ALTHOUGH OUR INSTITUTIONS ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING,
I HOPE THAT WE WILL NEVER CHANGE OUR NATIONAL PURPOSE:
TO BUILD A STRONGER AND BETTER NATION OF SELF-GOVERNING PEOPLE
WHO RESPECT AND PROTECT THE EQUAL RIGHTS OF EVERY PERSON TO
LIBERTY AND JUSTICE. WE ARE NOT YET THERE; BUT THAT
REMAINS OUR GOAL.
BY ASKING WHAT HAS CHANGED, AND WHAT FURTHER CHANGES MIGHT ENABLE THE PRESIDENT TO SERVE ALL THE PEOPLE AND OUR NATIONAL PURPOSE MORE EFFECTIVELY, YOU FITTINGLY OBSERVE THE BEGINNING OF THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR.

FOR THAT, THANK YOU ALL.

END OF TEXT