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MEETING WITH PFC VOLUNTEERS  
CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
FEBRUARY 8, 1976

On behalf of Betty and Susan, as well as myself, let me thank each of you for your very warm welcome on a very cold New Hampshire day.

From the time we first got off the plane in Manchester yesterday, we have been impressed with the friendliness of your people and the beauty of your State.

Susan was at the North Conway ski competition yesterday, and she came back and told me that the skiing conditions, as well as the skiers, were excellent. I said, "Don't tell me -- tell Ron Nessen."

The competitive spirit which Susan saw so well displayed yesterday, and which all of us are seeing at the Olympics in Innsbruck, is an important part of the American spirit.

Competition in our free enterprise system has been the stimulus for the greatest economic progress and the greatest accumulation of economic wealth the world has ever known.

Competition in sports has been the passport to fame and fortune and a better life for countless Americans, and a source of great pleasure and pride for millions more.

Competition in politics has kept the American system of government still vital, still changing, still improving after 200 years.

This last form of competition is the one that most concerns us right now. The competition of ideas and of political organizations is an exciting thing to behold and to participate in.

I appreciate the role that each of you is playing in this New Hampshire campaign. No campaign can be successful without good, enthusiastic, talented volunteers -- and lots of them.

As I look about this room, and after meeting many of you personally, I'm confident that our campaign in New Hampshire will be very, very successful.

You are the people I'm counting on most. As President, there just isn't the time to come up here every few days to campaign --

much as I'd like to. The burden of that activity will fall heavily on you.

Knocking on doors, talking to people, distributing literature and campaign material -- these are the nuts-and-bolts of politics. They hold everything else together.

It's hard work. I know it because I've done it. That's why I have a special kind of appreciation and affection for you. There's no promise of money or patronage or even recognition in this work. It's just a series of unselfish, untiring acts by some of the finest people I've ever met.

Fortune has smiled on me in a very special way. I came to this office facing a number of very serious and urgent challenges. The credibility of political leadership in America was at its lowest ebb in our history. Our national economy was headed in two very dangerous directions, with prices going up and everything else slowing down.

There was great danger to peace in many areas of the world.

These were challenges as urgent, as complex, as difficult as any President has faced upon taking office.

But with the understanding of the American people, with their prayers and their support and their help, I set about to do what I could to meet those challenges, to put America at peace with itself and with all the world.

The past 18 months have seen many of those efforts succeed. I believe my policy of using common sense and a realistic approach to America's problems has helped restore confidence in government.

The economic policies we adopted and steadfastly pursued have pointed the national economy in the right direction -- in the direction of progress and prosperity and stability.

That battle is far from over but we are on the attack now, instead of on the defensive. We will stay on the attack, and we will win this very important victory over inflation and unemployment and every other economic enemy of the people.

Fortunately, the sound of real battle is something Americans hear only faintly now. This Nation is at peace with all the world and we intend to keep it that way.

All of our problems have not been solved, and all of our challenges have not been met. As Lincoln said, the question is not "Can any of us imagine better?" but "can we all do better?"

I think we can, and that is why I'm running for President.

I am running, not merely to seek a stamp of approval for past policies, but to seek a mandate for the future.

For 200 years, America has always looked toward the future. Our own future is as promising and as challenging as that which stretched before our ancestors in earlier days.

We can fill our future with hope and achievement. It is a future that will summon the best in all of us. It is a future that will see America rise to heights even we cannot imagine, or fall back into the complacency and frail comfort that have engulfed great

civilizations of the past -- civilizations that are great no longer.

I choose to go forward. I choose to place my trust in the American people, in their industry, in their ambition, their genius, and their competitive spirit.

I am running for President, not to keep the people under Government's control, but to free them to do the great things I know they can do.

I am not renouncing the important role which government plays in our society. I am working to improve that role, while others may seek only to enlarge it or reduce it, with no thought of the consequences.

The people will choose the best course. If we can get our message through to them, I believe they will choose our course as the best course.

It is a fundamental choice. It is one we will have to live with, for good or ill, for the next four years and perhaps beyond.

The people of New Hampshire traditionally have the honor and responsibility of choosing first. Let's all do our best to convince them that ours is the best course -- the right course for America -- and let's celebrate a great victory together on February 24.

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