

The original documents are located in Box 30, “4/28/76 - Remarks at Open Forum, Wagstaff Gymnasium, Tyler Junior College, Tyler, Texas” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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for other speeches.*

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.....

REMARKS AT OPEN FORUM AT TYLER JUNIOR COLLEGE

TYLER, TEXAS, APRIL 28, 1976

I'M GLAD TO BE HERE TODAY AT TYLER

FOR SEVERAL REASONS: *It's the Rock Capital of the World.*
And, if you invite me, Betty + I would like to be here for
the Rock
FIRST, IT WAS JUST GREAT TO SEE YOUR FAMOUS *Foster*

APACHE BELLES AND MARCHING BAND IN ACTION.

Ketone Rangerettes

~~SECOND~~, IT'S AN HONOR TO BE A GUEST AT THIS

OUTSTANDING JUNIOR COLLEGE, ONE OF THE BIGGEST AND BEST

IN THE COUNTRY.

(END ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS WITH:)

AND LET ME ADD A SPECIAL HELLO TO YOUR VERY

POPULAR STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT -- JO NELL HENSLEE.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT TO JIMMY CARTER, SHE IS MY KIND

OF PEANUT !

FINALLY, ONE OF THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES
OF THIS INSTITUTION OF LEARNING AND ALL OTHERS IS TO PROVIDE
ITS STUDENTS WITH FACTS. FACTS AND EXPERTISE THAT WILL
PREPARE YOU FOR THE DECISION-MAKING THAT EVERY JOB,
CAREER OR PROFESSION CALLS FOR.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MUST ALSO

DEAL IN FACTS -- AND TODAY, I WANT TO SHARE SOME OF

THOSE FACTS WITH YOU, SO THAT YOU CAN INTELLIGENTLY

REACH YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS ON A MATTER OF SUPREME

IMPORTANCE TO OUR UNITED STATES.

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE SNOWS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

AND THE SUNNY CLIMES DOWN IN FLORIDA, THE FOCUS OF THIS

YEAR'S REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN FOR THE PRESIDENCY BEGAN TO

SHIFT AWAY FROM THE GROWING STRENGTH AND PROSPERITY OF

THE AMERICAN ECONOMY TO A NEW AND MORE COMPLEX ISSUE:

THE STRENGTH OF AMERICA'S MILITARY FORCES.

NOW, I'VE BEEN DOWN THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL BEFORE

AND I KNOW THERE'S A REASON WHY A CHALLENGER WILL TRY

TO SHIFT HIS ATTACK. IT'S CALLED SECOND PLACE.

IT MAKES YOU TRY HARDER /-- AND SWING WILDER, TOO.

HAVING FAILED ON THE ECONOMIC ISSUE,

THE CENTRAL THRUST OF MY OPPONENT'S NEW STRATEGY IS TO

CLAIM THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS BECOME INFERIOR TO THE

SOVIET UNION, EXPECIALLY IN MILITARY STRENGTH. HE

GLIBLY QUOTES STATISTICS WITHOUT ANY IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING

OF THEM.

HIS ANSWER TO THIS ALLEGED INFERIORITY,
APPARENTLY, IS TO CHANGE OUR FORCE STRUCTURE SO THAT
IT MATCHES THE SOVIETS -- SHIP FOR SHIP, WEAPON FOR
WEAPON, MAN FOR MAN, -- RATHER THAN LOOKING AT
OVERALL CAPABILITIES.

FIRST LET ME SAY THAT THE ISSUE IS NOT OUR
MILITARY CAPABILITIES TODAY - THEY ARE ADEQUATE TO ANY
CHALLENGE -- LET THERE BE NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. BY THE
TESTIMONY OF ALL WHO KNOW, AND I'VE SPENT MUCH OF MY
LIFE DEALING WITH DEFENSE MATTERS, BY THE TESTIMONY OF
SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE PAST AND PRESENT, DEPUTY SECRETARY
BILL CLEMENTS, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF,

OUR MILITARY FORCES ARE CAPABLE OF FULFILLING THEIR
ASSIGNED MISSIONS.

THE IMPORTANT ISSUE IS NOT TODAY, BUT
TOMORROW. THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH THE
CONGRESS AND THE COUNTRY TO ADOPT A DEFENSE BUDGET FOR
THE UNITED STATES WHICH WILL PROVIDE FOR OUR NATIONAL
SECURITY IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

BUT LET US LOOK A MOMENT AT THIS QUESTION OF
WHETHER, AS MY OPPONENT IMPLIES, WE SHOULD TRY TO
RESHAPE OUR ARMED FORCES SO THAT THEY MIRROR THOSE OF
THE SOVIET UNION. WHAT STEPS WOULD WE HAVE TO TAKE
IN ORDER TO BE EXACTLY LIKE THEM?

THE ANSWERS, I ~~THINK~~, SHOW A GREAT DEAL
ABOUT HOW SUPERFICIAL HIS CHARGES ARE.

IN ORDER TO PARALLEL SOVIET FORCES, WE WOULD
HAVE TO BEGIN BY MOTHBALLING THE 13 AIRCRAFT CARRIERS THAT
NOW SAIL THE SEAS FLYING THE AMERICAN FLAG.

OUR HUGE NUCLEAR AIRCRAFT CARRIERS LIKE THE

ENTERPRISE, THE NIMITZ AND THE FORRESTAL, HAVE NO SOVIET

COUNTERPARTS. OVER ONE-HALF THE RUSSIAN NAVY CONSISTS

OF SMALL PATROL CRAFT, MINESWEEPERS AND OTHER SMALL

VESSELS. SO TO MATCH THE SOVIET UNION AS MY OPPONENT

SEEMS TO SUGGEST, WE WOULD HAVE TO RETIRE OUR OWN

LARGER, MORE SOPHISTICATED SHIPS WITH THEIR AWESOME

FIREPOWER, AND REPLACE THEM WITH MANY, MANY MORE

PATROL CRAFT, MINESWEEPERS AND THE LIKE.

NO ONE WOULD TRULY BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD

BE A SANE DEFENSE POLICY TO PROTECT AMERICA AND DEFEND

OUR FREEDOMS IN THE WORLD.

LOOK AT OUR AIR FORCE AND ASK WHAT IT

WOULD BE LIKE TO MAKE IT EXACTLY LIKE THE SOVIET AIR FORCE.

WE WOULD HAVE TO BEGIN BY GROUNDING MOST OF OUR B-52

BOMBERS AND CALLING OFF THE PROGRESS WE ARE MAKING IN

DEVELOPING A NEW, MORE CAPABLE B-1 BOMBER.

OR THINK OF OUR MARINES, THOSE VALIANT MEN

WHO HAVE WON SO MANY FAMOUS BATTLES FOR US IN THE PAST.

TO PARALLEL THE SOVIETS WE WOULD HAVE TO JETTISON THE

MARINE CORPS BECAUSE THE RUSSIANS HAVE NOTHING COMPARABLE

IN EITHER QUALITY OR DEDICATION.

NOW, OBVIOUSLY MY OPPONENT ISN'T FOOLISH
ENOUGH TO SERIOUSLY SUGGEST THAT WE SHOULD DO AWAY WITH
OUR CARRIERS, OUR B-52'S OR OUR MARINE CORPS. THE
SIGNIFICANT POINT TO BE MADE, HOWEVER, IS THAT
SIMPLISTIC AND SUPERFICIAL CHARGES BASED ON LIMITED
INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE, COULD LEAD TO IRRESPONSIBLE
AND FUNDAMENTALLY HARMFUL POLICY DECISIONS.

LET'S TAKE ONE OF HIS FAVORITE CHARGES --

THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE TWICE AS MANY MEN IN UNIFORM AS
WE DO.

PRESUMABLY THAT MEANS HE WANTS TO DOUBLE THE

NUMBER OF MEN AND WOMEN WE HAVE IN UNIFORM FROM 2.1

MILLION TO MORE THAN 4 MILLION.

OBVIOUSLY THAT WOULD REQUIRE US TO REIMPOSE

THE DRAFT TO OBTAIN SUFFICIENT MANPOWER.

IN TURN, MORE THAN 2 MILLION OF OUR YOUNG

PEOPLE NOW IN SCHOOL OR WORKING WOULD HAVE TO GO INTO THE

ARMED FORCES, PROBABLY MOST OF THEM UNDER SELECTIVE

SERVICE.

WE WOULD HAVE TO DIVERT BILLIONS OF DOLLARS

NOW BEING SPENT FOR SOPHISTICATED NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS

FOR THE ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE AND MARINES TO PAY THE

ADDED MANPOWER COSTS.

MONEY THAT SHOULD BE SPENT ON THE NEW B-1
BOMBER, OR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW BALLISTIC MISSILE,
OR EXPANDING OUR FLEET WOULD BE WASTED ON MAINTAINING
PERSONNEL LEVELS THAT WOULD ADD LITTLE TO OUR OVERALL
MILITARY CAPABILITIES.

NO REPUTABLE MILITARY EXPERT I KNOW HAS

SUGGESTED SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION. SUCH A POLICY,

IF YOU CAN CALL IT THAT, WOULD UNDERMINE RATHER THAN

STRENGTHEN OUR DEFENSES.

LET'S LOOK AT THE MANPOWER QUESTION ANOTHER

WAY. THE UNITED STATES TODAY HAS SOME 3 MILLION

FARM WORKERS. THE SOVIET UNION HAS 39 MILLION FARM

WORKERS. DOES THAT MEAN THAT WE HAVE TO INCREASE THE

NUMBER OF OUR FARMERS BY 36 MILLION IN ORDER TO BE EQUAL

TO THE SOVIET UNION? OF COURSE NOT.

OUR AMERICAN FARMERS -- EQUIPPED WITH THE

BEST TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORLD, RELYING UPON THE FREE MARKET

AND THEIR OWN INGENUITY -- FEED 7 TIMES MORE PEOPLE THAN

THEIR SOVIET COUNTERPARTS YEAR-IN, YEAR-OUT.

INDEED, AMERICAN FARMERS EVEN HELP TO FEED THE SOVIET PEOPLE.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS: IT ISN'T ALWAYS THE NUMBER OF MEN

THAT COUNT, BUT THE QUALITY - AND AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED,

THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE U.S. ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE

AND MARINES ARE THE BEST IN THE WORLD, BAR NONE.

OBVIOUSLY WE SHOULD EXERCISE GREAT CAUTION

BEFORE HEEDING THE WORDS OF A MAN WHO OBVIOUSLY HAS NO

EXPERIENCE AND LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMPLEXITY OF

NATIONAL DEFENSE MATTERS. SUPERFICIAL ARGUMENTS BASED

ON INCOMPLETE KNOWLEDGE ARE FUNDAMENTALLY HARMFUL RATHER

THAN HELPFUL.

I BELIEVE THAT A MAN WHO IS CAMPAIGNING FOR

THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN THE LAND MUST BE WILLING TO TALK

SERIOUSLY ABOUT HIS POLICIES AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS

POLICIES.

WHEN IT COMES TO THE LIFE AND DEATH DECISIONS OF OUR

NATIONAL SECURITY, THE DECISIONS MADE MUST BE THE RIGHT ONES.

THERE ARE NO RETAKES IN THE OVVAL OFFICE. GLIBNESS IS NOT

GOOD ENOUGH: SUPERFICIALITY IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

EVERY SERIOUS CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY MUST BE EQUAL

TO THE BURDENS AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESIDENCY.

SAM RAYBURN SERVED 50 YEARS IN WASHINGTON WITH

OVER 3,000 CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS AND 8 DIFFERENT PRESIDENTS.

AT THE END OF A LONG DAY, AFTER HE HAD WORKED HARD TO MAKE

A BETTER LIFE FOR AMERICA, WHEN HE HEARD FROM THE CHRONIC

COMPLAINERS, HE LOVED TO RECALL WHAT HIS FATHER ONCE TOLD

HIM:

"ANY DONKEY CAN KICK A BARN DOWN, BUT IT

TAKES AN AWFUL GOOD CARPENTER TO BUILD ONE UP."

IT IS IRRESPONSIBLE AND A DISSERVICE TO THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE TO LEAD THEM TO BELIEVE THAT WE ARE
INFERIOR WHEN WE ARE NOT, \ THAT OUR MILITARY STRENGTH IS
INSUFFICIENT WHEN IT IS NOT, \ OR THAT THERE ARE PAT ANSWERS
AND SIMPLE SOLUTIONS TO THE COMPLEX ISSUES OF NATIONAL
SECURITY, \ WHEN THERE ARE NONE.

THIS COUNTRY MUST HAVE A PRESIDENT WHO CAN

DO MORE THAN SCRATCH THE SURFACE OF COMPLICATED PROBLEMS.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO ASK QUESTIONS.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO OFFER CRITICISM.

IT IS THE OBLIGATION OF EVERY CANDIDATE FOR THE
PRESIDENCY OF THE UNITED STATES TO OFFER ALTERNATIVES,
TO DEAL IN SPECIFICS, TO PROVIDE SOME ANSWERS TO THE
QUESTIONS HE RAISES.

IF A CANDIDATE FAILS IN THAT RESPONSIBILITY,

HE HAS FAILED TO SATISFY A MOST FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENT

OF A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN AND OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN

THIS COUNTRY: HE HAS FAILED TO LEVEL WITH THE AMERICAN

PEOPLE.

YOU MUST DEMAND MORE THAN THAT OF PRESIDENTIAL

CANDIDATES. THE ELECTIONS OF 1976 ARE MUCH TOO IMPORTANT

FOR YOU TO MAKE YOUR DECISIONS ON THE BASIS OF LESS-THAN-

COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE.

MY RECORD IS CLEAR. I HAVE SERVED AS YOUR

PRESIDENT FOR MORE THAN 21 MONTHS, AND DURING THAT PERIOD

I HAVE RECOMMENDED THE TWO LARGEST MILITARY BUDGETS IN

OUR NATIONS'S HISTORY. THEY WERE NEEDED TO SEE THAT

OUR MILITARY CAPABILITIES CONTINUE TO BE STRONG IN THE

YEARS AHEAD AS THEY MUST BE IF WE ARE TO FIND THE PEACE AND

SECURITY WE ALL SEEK.

A BUDGET MUST ALSO BE BASED ON FACTS AND

HARD REALITIES. ONE FACT IS THAT IN RECENT YEARS,

THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEEN SPENDING MORE AND MORE FOR

ARMAMENTS -- WHILE SUCCESSIVE AMERICAN MILITARY BUDGETS

HAVE BEEN CUT BACK BY THE CONGRESS.

TODAY AMERICA IS A NATION AT PEACE,

A NATION WITH NEW CONFIDENCE IN ITSELF AND ITS FUTURE,

A NATION THAT STANDS TALL AND PROUD AND FREE AS IT ENTERS

ITS THIRD CENTURY.

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IF THIS IS YOUR IDEA OF WHAT AMERICA SHOULD BE,

I ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT THIS SATURDAY, NEXT NOVEMBER,

AND IN THE CHALLENGING YEARS AHEAD.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

NOW LET'S GET TO THE QUESTIONS.