

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
UNTIL 9:31 P.M., EDT

OCTOBER 7, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary
(Burlington, Vermont)

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED AT A DINNER IN HONOR OF SENATOR GEORGE AIKEN
PATRICK GYMNASIUM, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
BURLINGTON, VERMONT

Before I begin, I want you to know that I'm not exactly a stranger to either the State of Vermont or to this UVM campus. I addressed a similar function almost nine years ago to the day, October 2, 1965. Now I know that you Vermonters have a reputation for being honest and direct -- but I never knew just how honest and direct until that visit.

Well, I gave my little talk and then I was taken to a reception in another part of the city. And at the reception a sweet little grandmother came up to me, put a gloved hand into mine, and said, "I heard you gave a speech here tonight." And trying to be a little modest, I said, "Oh -- it was nothing." And she said, "Yes, that's what I heard."

So with the thought of that sweet little lady still fresh in my mind, I want you to know that I am standing up here tonight with all the confidence and self-assurance of the man who sells life insurance to Evel Knievel.

But it is a real pleasure to be here in Vermont again -- the Ski Capital of the East. In fact, I learned to ski in New England and have very fond memories of this part of the country.

As you know, I have pledged an open and honest Administration -- and I have tried to apply this honesty to all aspects of my life. So I was in a little bit of trouble when Bob Stafford asked me if I was much of a skier. I said, "Well, let's just say I can ski for hours -- on end!"

Tonight, I feel particularly honored to be asked to join with all Vermonters in celebrating George Aiken Day. There is an old expression, "Let George do it" -- and for more than forty years the citizens of Vermont have let George do their bidding in the State House, the Governor's mansion and in the United States Senate.

In George Aiken, Vermonters have a public servant for all seasons. He has the enviable ability to cut through the chaff and get to the heart of the matter.

(MORE)

George Aiken is also noted for his independence of mind. Some have even criticized him for it. I praise him for it. He has given the Nation the benefit of his down to earth wisdom, his leadership and his guidance in many areas -- in education, electric power development, betterment of rural America, and foreign relations. These very different fields of endeavor only suggest the breadth and greatness of this man.

We are in his debt for his 34 years of Senatorial service to America and to Vermont. I think it is safe to say, and it ought to be said, that he is in no one's debt. I understand that in George's last campaign, he spent a grand total of \$17.04. Can you imagine spending only \$17.04 for a political campaign in this day and age? George Aiken is the only man I know who could go into a supermarket to buy five pounds of sugar with a dollar bill and come out with change!

I won't forget -- nor will you -- Lola Aiken's service to Vermont in her own right. A member of the Senator's staff from the very beginning, and then as his wife, Lola has also dedicated her life to the State of Vermont and the United States Senate and the Senator from Vermont.

I can tell you first hand, whatever Lola wants, Lola gets.

Both Lola and George have well earned their retirement. And both know they have my heartfelt gratitude and that of the Nation.

As it has since Ethan Allen, the Green Mountain State continues to produce outstanding leaders.

Senator Bob Stafford, whom I mentioned a moment ago, is one of the best. He is not merely an associate of mine in running the Federal Government, he is a personal friend of long-standing whose advice and counsel I value most highly. It is indeed a pleasure to share this platform with Bob and his charming wife, Helen.

Congressman Dick Mallery, now campaigning for the Senate seat George Aiken is leaving, is a credit to your State and to the Nation. Dick will be a valuable Senator -- a diligent, hard-working, thorough legislator. I urge you to send him back to Washington as a United States Senator.

Former State Attorney General Jim Jeffords who is running for Dick Mallery's Congressional seat, is the kind of person I can endorse most heartily. Jim has the extensive experience and qualifications to continue the fine tradition of representation set in Washington by my former colleagues in the House, Bob Stafford, Dick Mallery and the late Winston Prouty.

At this point, let me not overlook a great lady who is with us tonight -- Jeannette Prouty, widow of the late Senator.

I would also like to single out one of our head table guests. He has a very interesting name, politically speaking. He is a Kennedy I can endorse. Just as he has served as an outstanding State legislator and as Speaker of the House, "Peanut" Kennedy will make you a great Governor.

First-class leadership for the Nation and for Vermont is urgently required. And these men and women who are campaigning on the Republican ticket are clearly first-class people.

I would like to take a few minutes to talk with you about one of my chief concerns -- the preservation of the two-party system in this country.

(MORE)

In the wake of Watergate, the national polls indicate that the number of independent voters is growing. And the number of party voters -- both Republicans and Democrats -- is shrinking steadily.

I am concerned about this -- not for the sake of our party alone but for the country. For I am convinced that the future of America is directly tied to the politics of America. And the politics of America is bound to the two-party system.

You know, most of us tend to take our stability, opportunity and freedom for granted. But these things did not merely happen. Nor can they endure automatically. These treasured elements of American life are largely the result of the political continuity that followed the development of our two-party system. This approach to self-government offers a large, diverse people like ours choice without chaos.

And it has worked and worked exceedingly well. Although not envisioned by the Founding Fathers, the two-party system is the very foundation of our political balance.

This is not just a personal view of mine. It is a lesson being learned and relearned today in countries where a healthy two-party system has died out, or was never born.

For where the two-party system fails, one of the two extremes results -- neither of which is very desirable.

On the one hand, a mass of small, regional or class-oriented splinter groups emerges, none of which is capable of governing for long. Alternatively, after a period of chaos and uneasy coalitions, one emerges from the many--more ruthless and more unscrupulous--and the democratic process is crushed.

Whether it is a man on horseback, or a demagogue on a pedestal, the result is too often the same.

We need two strong parties -- free, vital and broad enough to take under their wings a wide spectrum of opinion -- to serve as the twin pillars of democracy. And this, above everything else, is the reason you and I and millions of others over the years have dedicated ourselves to the Republican Party.

President Eisenhower once outlined what our vision should be as members of one great political party, the Republican Party:

"We see our party not as an end in itself," Ike said, "but as a magnificent means -- a means through which countless thousands of devoted citizens can cooperate in the conquering of problems that beset free men everywhere."

At the moment, the biggest problem besetting free men everywhere is inflation. It has certainly been mine, ever since I began this job. I know it is affecting Vermonters as it is all Americans and people in other parts of the world.

As you know, tomorrow I will outline to the country and to the Congress a comprehensive plan to deal with inflation. What I will recommend will be a two-pronged undertaking. First, I will call for legislative action which is needed if government is to do its part in whipping inflation. And I might note that the success of this effort will depend on the help of tough-minded legislators like Bob Stafford, Dick Mallary and Jim Jeffords -- all of whom I need in Washington.

(MORE)

Further, I will set forth actions in which everyone can participate. If every citizen enlists in this effort, I am not only confident, I am certain that we will win this fight against America's Public Enemy No. 1.

In this battle, I am particularly mindful of those who are unemployed and of retired people living on already small, fixed incomes. The commitment I make to you tonight and will repeat to the American people tomorrow is to halt the rise in prices and the problems it forces onto each one of us.

With the help of great people like you all across America, we will be successful in this effort.

One further comment is in order before I conclude:

I want you to know that Senator Aiken and Stafford and Congressman Mallary have kept me well advised on Vermonters' views. In particular, they have told me, in no uncertain terms, of your views on an increase in Federal gasoline taxes.

Therefore, let me state tonight what I will say to the Congress tomorrow: I am not asking for any increase in the Federal gasoline tax.

I appreciate your invitation to be here this evening -- to join you in honoring one of your most distinguished sons, Senator George Aiken -- and to break bread with some of the finest people I have known.

Thank you.

#

#

#