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UNTIL 7:04 p.m. CDT (8:04 pm EDT)

OCTOBER 15, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary  
(Kansas City, Missouri)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF AN ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE FUTURE FARMERS OF  
AMERICA

One week ago, I asked the Congress and the American people to help me revitalize the economy, slow inflation and save energy. I proposed specific and urgent actions.

The American people, I can report tonight, have responded magnificently. A great citizens' mobilization has begun. It is already evident here in this eager, up-beat convention of the Future Farmers of America.

I have received Inflation Fighter enlistments from Americans of every conceivable occupation, economic circumstance and political persuasion. Support has been freely offered by organizations and groups representing all ages, races, religions and reaching into every corner of our land.

America is arousing itself as it always has in time of great challenge to prove that we are people who can do anything we want to do when we really want to do it. We are going to WIN.

Some have said that, instead of asking Congress and the Nation to bite the bullet, I offered only a marshmallow. Well, I had already asked the Congress to postpone for three months a 5.5% pay raise for Federal Government employees which would have saved 700 million taxpayer dollars. Congress wouldn't even chew that "marshmallow." They haven't yet shown much appetite for the other "marshmallows" in my latest message. But if they don't like my menu, I may be back with some tough turkey. Do I dare mention turkey here in Kansas City, the bastion of prime beef?

I sense that the American people are hungry for some tougher stuff to chew on tonight. I don't know of any better place to look the future of America in the face than right here. I don't see anyone in this auditorium wearing a button that says "LOSE."

When your State FFA Presidents came to Washington last July, during a time of tension in our national affairs, I pointed out to them that people around the world have faith in America. I asked Future Farmers to have confidence in themselves, in our system of Government, and in our free competitive economy.

I appreciated your response. It is well expressed in the FFA's creed.

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I believe, with you, "in the future of farming, with a faith born not of words but deeds . . . in the promise of better days through better ways, even as the better things we now enjoy have come to us from the struggles of former years."

Number One of the major points in my address to the Congress last week was food. In a war against inflation, farmers are frontline soldiers. To halt higher food prices, we must produce more food. I called upon every farmer to grow to full capacity. I promised every farmer the fuel and fertilizer he needs to do the job, plus a fair return for his crop.

Tonight, I have the answer of the Future Farmers of America. And I thank you on behalf of America. I knew we could count on you.

It is not only the young people in this auditorium who must lend their hands and their hearts to the task. I need help from young Americans everywhere. The creative energy and enthusiasm of youth is our sure guarantee of winning.

And youth has the most to gain.

Restoring stability and strength to our economy doesn't call for sacrifices so much as for contributions to one's own future well-being.

Last Saturday, 22 members of the Citizens' Action Committee to Fight Inflation met with me at the White House. It was a beautiful Fall afternoon. I am sure we would all rather have been outdoors enjoying it. I am grateful to the members of the committee who have already given so much of their time and themselves and will be called upon for even more in the months ahead.

Let me stress this point: This is a volunteer working committee, a completely non-partisan group dealing with a non-partisan problem. It will seek to mobilize America against inflation and for energy conservation. I told the Committee that, if there was a scintilla of partisanship or if the group seemed to be merely a front for the White House, its efforts would be doomed to failure.

Columnist Sylvia Porter, who has agreed to serve as national chairperson of this committee, responded that if I tried to manipulate the committee or seek to influence its actions, she and the other members would not participate.

We understand each other.

I am greatly impressed with the membership of this committee, and the cross-section of America which it represents.

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For instance, included are representatives of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, United States Jaycees, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, Advertising Council, General Federation of Women's Clubs, Consumer Federation of America, National Governors Conference, American National Red Cross, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Association of Broadcasters, Boy Scouts of America, National Urban League, National Center for Voluntary Action, Audubon Society, AFL-CIO, American Newspaper Publishers Association, Magazine Publishers Association, and the American Association of Retired Persons.

In addition to Chairperson Porter, the committee elected four co-chairmen at its meeting last Saturday and I want to congratulate them at this time. They are: Carol T. Foreman, executive director of the Consumer Federation of America; William J. Meyer, president of a small business company in Lansdale, Pennsylvania; Leo Perlis, director of Community Service of the AFL-CIO, and Frank Stanton, president of the American National Red Cross.

As the committee moves further into its work, more members will be added. But for now, let me state how pleased I am with the way this group has taken charge.

One of its first actions last Saturday was to initiate ten recommendations to start us all off as inflation fighters and energy savers. A Task Force headed by Ralph Nader, one of the Committee's members, came up with suggestions which coincide to a large extent with the views emanating from the Conference on Inflation last month which the Future Farmers of America and many other groups attended. Indeed, letters to me from thousands of Americans sound similar themes.

I had touched upon some of the proposals in my message to Congress a week ago -- grow more, waste less; drive less, heat less. But the committee added some good specifics.

I promised to pass the Committee's 10 recommendations along to you tonight. I will add some of the comments I have received in the mail from thousands of individuals who responded enthusiastically to my request at the summit Conference on Inflation.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION NO. 1: Bring budgeting back in style. Balance your family budget and expect your government officials to do the same.

The second part of the committee's first recommendation seems to stray a little into the forbidden area of political action. But I have already asked Congress to work with me on this as far as the Federal budget is concerned. As to your family budget, I know how hard it is to balance. But many of your letters prove it can still be done.

Mr. and Mrs. Roland Spaek live in Holland, Michigan. He is a locomotive engineer working on a freight run between Grand Rapids and Chicago. Mr. and Mrs. Spaek describe in a letter to me how they are cutting their household budget. They urge that "our Federal budget should be pared to the bone."

Robert Stewart writes from Waverly, Tennessee, that he has a heart condition and draws a pension of only \$251.28 a month. This allows him only two meals a day. "But thank God we aren't on welfare," says Mr. Stewart. He asks me to "cut government spending, except for national defense."

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION NO. 2 was stated to me this way by Chairperson Porter: Learn How to Use credit wisely. Postpone unnecessary borrowing -- wait for interest rates to come down -- as they will -- and pay down as much as you can, pay off as quickly as you can. The cheapest way to buy anything, of course, is to pay cash; but credit wisely used is essential to our way of living. Take time to learn more about it.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION NO. 3 is to save as much as you can -- and watch your money grow. Mrs. Frank Tennant writes from Climax, Michigan, that her husband works hard and she helps to stretch the paycheck through systematic savings. Mr. Tennant is a self-taught machinist and a veteran who lost his leg in Korea. But it is his ability rather than his disability that comes through in his wife's letter. The Tennants report that they do not use credit cards. They put something in their credit union each week and buy a Government bond every month.

James Kincaid of Belleville, Illinois, suggests a new type of Government anti-inflation bond, purchased through payroll deduction, in which the interest rate is more competitive.

I have asked the Treasury Department to look into the possibility of issuing a new series of WIN Bonds and report to me on the feasibility of Mr. Kincaid's idea, which was supported by many other letter-writers. Meanwhile, if you can save more, the hard-pressed homebuilding mortgage market needs your dollars. For those who can't save much or anything now, here' a simple formula: Every time the cost-of-living index drops one percent, put one percent of your spendable income into savings.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION NO. 4: Conserve Energy. Save on fuel and take the pressure off scarce supplies. The Committee advocates observance of the 55-mile speed limit, use of public transit and carpools, and more walking.

Enforcement of the 55-mile per hour speed limit is largely a State and local police responsibility, with voluntary cooperation an essential ingredient. Here we can save both gasoline and lives. Yesterday I wired Governor's and local officials urging them to follow this committee recommendation. At the same time, I directed strict enforcement of the 55-mile per hour limit, except in emergencies, on all Federal property and by drivers of all Federal government cars, including my own. And I say this with some trepidation. I will ask for voluntary compliance by the four younger Fords.

From Hillsboro, Oregon, the Stevens family writes that they are fixing up their bikes to do errands. They are also using fewer electrical appliances, turning the thermostat down and the lights off.

Bob Cantrell, a 14-year-old in Pasadena, California, gave up his stereo to save energy. Bob made some excellent suggestions. He urges the initiation of high school courses that teach students how to conserve energy. He adds: "if a kid nags his parents to conserve energy long enough, it will help." I might add: Believe me, it will.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION NO. 5 is directed at business and labor. It calls on them not to raise prices or wages more than costs or services absolutely require.

Admittedly, this very complex subject cannot be handled on a nationwide basis. I believe that local citizens' action committees, including labor and management representatives, should be set up in every community to interpret this recommendation, set realistic goals for themselves, and report by Thanksgiving--six weeks away-- which plants, stores or other enterprises are doing the best job of holding the line on costs and prices.

I will then award a WIN flag to the most outstanding to fly as public recognition of their contribution to the fight on inflation. Similar recognition will be given outstanding energy savers, both individuals and groups. Saving energy is, of course, a major way to cut costs. The national committee will help local groups to organize.

Committee Recommendation No. 6: To help offset pay increases, insist on productivity improvements where you work, from the boss on down the line. In short, work better, waste less of both time and materials.

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Monson write from San Antonio to urge support of "companies showing a higher degree of concern for energy solutions and unemployment problems."

And Mrs. Hannah Folsom of Ojai, California, offers an additional suggestion. She urges that steps be taken to cut down the proportion of administrative personnel to productive workers.

I will apply your good idea to the Federal bureaucracy, Mrs. Folsom.

Committee Recommendation No. 7: Proposes we make economizing fashionable. Shop wisely, look for bargains. Go for the lower cost item and brag about the fact you are a bargain hunter.

The committee certainly is not suggesting Americans should buy less. It is suggesting we should all buy smarter, urging that we eliminate from our shopping lists--and lists are helpful--items of no real value and which may even harm us.

Kathy Daly, a student at Sacred Heart High School in Weymouth, Massachusetts, has one formula for shopping wisely and saving energy. Kathy suggests buying warmer clothing this winter. G. M. Knapp, of Tuscon, Arizona, puts it this way: "Only you can stop inflation. Buy only if you need it."

Committee Recommendation No 8: Asks Americans to work with others to eliminate outmoded regulations that keep costs of goods and services high, and to enforce regulations that advance efficiency, health, and safety.

W. A. Taylor, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, points out that because of Interstate Commerce Commission regulations, many trucks return empty. I have asked Congress to undertake a joint review of restrictive and outdated rules by the Federal government and its independent regulatory agencies. Yesterday, I called upon State Governors and local officials to do the same.

Committee Recommendation No. 9 is: Do it yourself. Plant WIN gardens for yourself or within your community. Pool other do-it-yourself skills.

Sylvia Porter tells me that \$10 worth of seeds on a 25 by 30 foot plot will grow \$290 worth vegetables. She says community gardens can grow even in the inner cities. Many letters to the White House also propose WIN gardens.

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Rick Jacobsen in the fifth grade at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, writes the White House that "we planted our own garden so we could save on vegetables." In the Southern areas of the country, there's still plenty of time to plant WIN gardens. The rest of us can plan them for next Spring.

Committee Recommendation No. 10: Asks Americans to assist in recycling programs and the re-use of scrap materials.

Margaret and William Dalton of High Falls, New York, write me on recycled paper that one ton of recycled fibres saves seventeen live trees and a ton of waste.

Talbert and Elaine Stein of Detroit asks for more recycling centers at local sites "so you don't have to travel so far to deposit a few cans or bottles."

Mr. Laird H. Barber of Morris, Minnesota, wants to know if a national program can be organized to collect cans, glass, and newspapers. A national program might be cumbersome, but the Citizens Committee wants them for every community.

These are typical of the thousands and thousands of creative suggestions from Americans in all fifty states.

I would like to add two points of my own to the committee's ten and round it out to a daily dozen recommendations for all Americans.

Committee Recommendation No. 11: Waste less in every way. Unfortunately, Americans have an international reputation as the world's worst wasters. We waste food, gasoline, paper, electricity, natural resources--in fact, we waste almost everything. We litter our streets and countryside with waste. One friend told me we could probably whip inflation with the contents of our trash cans. In your own home, take just an hour to make a waste inventory. In the letters I have received are thousands of good suggestions. For instance, take all you want, but eat all you take. The first words I can remember were: Clean up your plate! When you aren't using them, turn off the lights, turn off the television, turn off the radio, turn off the heater. Use less hot water. Insulate attics and windows. Shut doors. Keep rooms at 68 degrees in the wintertime when you're awake and at lower temperatures when you sleep. Reducing waste can save money and energy at the same time; it is a double duty for Inflation Fighters.

My 12th and Final Point is an Important One: Guard your health. One of the worst wastes we have in America is days lost through sickness. Statistically, we are one of the healthiest of all nations, and your governments and the medical profession are constantly trying to improve public health and disease prevention. But we can do better. This will materially strengthen our attack on inflation--by increasing individual productivity, by reducing demand for health care and thus checking its soaring cost, by helping balance the family budget in this essential but unpredictable cost item.

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The American Red Cross and other agencies are ready to offer you home, health and safety instructions. Study and practice them. Adequate rest and recreation are essential elements of good health and efficient performance. Vacation trips or social visits need not be completely cut out. But we can all plan better for our fun and simplify our style of entertaining. For example, I like to swim and play golf. But when I can, I play close to home. Each American knows best how to keep mentally and physically fit. Let's all do it.

The Committee is already busy drafting goals and strategies to implement and measure achievements periodically to combat inflation, reduce waste, and thereby advance the standard of living for all Americans. This voluntary program will enlist the measurable efforts of industry, government, workers and consumers in two major stages.

In the next six weeks, state and local committees will be organized to enlist the adherence of all parties to specific goals requiring the serious commitment of the affected and contributing groups in this national effort.

After Thanksgiving Day, measurement of progress and recognition of outstanding accomplishments will be pursued at local, state and national levels. The success of cooperative voluntary action will depend on a mutuality of effort, a sense of fairness and widespread support of goals. The benefits of such action will lead to greater civic efforts by millions of Americans and a focused awareness of what directions public policy should take toward economic justice for all.

I have requested the Governor of each state and the governing authorities of the territories and the District of Columbia to form WIN committees on the State and local levels. A chain reaction has started.

Our Government will not dictate this drive but will use existing mechanisms to measure the cumulative effect. For instance, I have asked the Federal Energy Administration to continue to provide up-to-date monthly reports on gasoline consumption.

Earlier, I asked every American driver to cut his car mileage by five percent. That would save one-fourth of our 1975 goal for petroleum savings. Tonight, I ask those who can to make it ten percent -- and I am ordering an even larger reduction for all Federal vehicles.

A national reporting system will be instituted before this year ends to assure a new year of less inflation and greater self-confidence for all Americans. We will know how we're doing.

Each day, I hear of new and exciting efforts by individuals and volunteer groups. This is the real WIN spirit of America.

I am greatly encouraged. We are on our way!

With your help, each new day will bring more good news than bad news for our economy.

There will be some setbacks. We will not be out of the economic trenches by Christmas. But I remind you of one fact:

Every battle in history has been won by the side that held on just five minutes longer.

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Our enemy in this battle has been called inflation. But perhaps Pogo was wiser when he said: I have met the enemy and he is us.

If we, the people, can overcome ourselves as we have other enemies, we will surely overcome our economic difficulties and come out a happier and better people.

Let me close by reading you an energy-saving suggestion by an 8 year old girl in Bristol, Virginia. Her name is Luette Drumbeller:

"Turn off lights when not needed, and if you are scared when you go to bed without the light on, tell your mother or father and they will do something about it."

Luette, we are not going to be scared of the dark -- any of us. Because we are all in this together -- mothers and fathers, grandparents, great-grandparents, sisters and brothers -- until together we turn back on the lights of a brighter tomorrow.

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