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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
UNITED REPUBLICAN FUND DINNER

THE CONRAD HILTON

9:25 P.M. CDT

Thank you very much, Dan.

Let me add to the commercial with a very short sentence. I am familiar with the United Fund. I approve of it. I congratulate it, and I endorse it. And I know the results. Keep it up. It is great.

Let me change the format or the style just a minute, if I might, of this wonderful evening. One of the wonderful things about traveling around is the opportunity to see some old friends. And there is one in the audience tonight.

Forty years ago, when the United Fund was started, I was an ambitious athlete over at the University of Michigan. And in those days we played, as we do now, Northwestern. The Wolverines and the Wildcats have a great tradition.

Well, back in 1934, Michigan and Northwestern had one of those traditional struggles. I was a center and there was a very outstanding guard playing for Northwestern by the name of Rip Whalen. He gave me a hard time, but he was very kind. And as a result of his kindness, I was able to go with Dick Handley and the Shrine's team to play on New Year's Day at the annual Shrine's East-West game in San Francisco.

Rip Whalen is here. He is a great guard. I know he has to be a good Republican. Rip, will you stand up?

Chuck Percy, Bill Scott, Les Arends, my former colleagues in the House, your two former Governors -- Ogilvie and Stratton -- and your outstanding candidate for the United States Senate, George Burditt, Harry Page, and all the rest of the candidates for re-election or candidates against inflation:

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(OVER)

It is a great privilege and a very high honor to be here at this 40th anniversary of the United Republican Fund of Illinois.

And, Dan, I thank you and Bill Croft for the super participation that you give to what I think is a most worthwhile organization.

It is also wonderful to be in Chicago, the home of the Bears—and I understand my old friend, George Halas, is out here -- the home of the Bulls, and the kangaroo. (Laughter)

You know, that is what I like about Chicago. You could always count on exciting things happening in the Windy City.

Dan Terra tells me the way that kangaroo has been dodging tacklers lately, there is a big controversy in the City of Chicago over what to do with him when they do catch him. The Chicago police want to put him in the zoo; the Chicago Bears want to put him in the backfield; (laughter) and, of course, the Democrats in Chicago want to register him -- at least once. (Laughter)

I was talking to my old friend, George "Papa Bear" Halas before the dinner, and I was telling him how, since I became President, I am usually introduced as Dan did, in a very stately and dignified manner.

This particular occasion that I will mention -- the format was a little different. I was introduced by a former teammate of mine at the University of Michigan -- and I will never forget that introduction. He said -- and I quote: "Ladies and gentlemen: It might interest you to know that I played football with Jerry Ford for two years, and it made a lasting impression on me. I was a quarterback, Jerry Ford was the center. And you might say it gave me a completely different view of the President."

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Chicago is getting to be quite a habit with me, as well as my bride, Betty, and both of us love the place. I was here in June for a Congressional booster's fund-raiser and again at a small dinner for the State Senate incumbents and their candidates and Betty was here in September for a luncheon honoring Republican women candidates.

I might say, incidentally, Betty, who is a native of Chicago, sends her love, she is doing excellently and she hopes to be back here again in Chicago real soon to see her old friends.

I happen to think as a Michigander it is true what they say about the big, dynamic City of Chicago. It looks tough on the outside, but at heart, as all of you know, it is a real softy, a warm and very friendly place, and I thank you for your warm and enthusiastic welcome here tonight.

That is why I am glad to be back, and that is why I am so proud -- and I say this with conviction and enthusiasm -- of the outstanding, the fine slate of candidates of the Republican Party which you are fielding here for this great election on November 5.

Chicago is one of the biggest, the best, one of the outstanding communities in our whole United States. It deserves the best, and your blue ribbon slate, in my judgment, is an outstanding group that every one of you should support from top to bottom.

I sat and listened to the people that proceeded me. George Burditt, Harry Page, Chuck Percy, Bill Croft, Dan Terra -- every one of them super guys dedicated to the same basic principles that each and every one of us espouses; principles that are sound, constructive, good for America, and I hope and trust that George and Harry and the rest, including Pete Bensinger, are elected on November 5.

I have known Chuck Percy a long, long time. As a matter of fact, back in 1949 wasn't it, Chuck he and I, along with eight others, were selected by the Jaycees as one of the ten outstanding young men in America. That was my first exposure to Chuck, and I was impressed then.

I know of his quality and his calibre now. Chuck, you need to go with you the kind of a Senator that George Burditt can give me in the United States Senate.

I have listened to a lot of five-minute speeches, and those of us who served in the House of Representatives know that we have a five-minute limitation, but George Burditt gave one of the finest, I think, soundest speeches on the fundamental issue that faces us in this country that I have ever heard, and I congratulate you, George.

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Needless to say, I thank Dan and Bill Croft. They work in the trenches every day and get little or no recognition, and a word from me, I hope, will be some benefit to the hours and hours of sacrifice that you have made. We are all very, very grateful.

Since this campaign began and since I became President roughly two and a half months ago, I traveled a good bit in America, according to my staff about 128,000 miles and I am going to travel some more primarily because I happen to believe that a President of the United States, if he has conviction and dedication, if he believes in the principles and the policies, ought to get out and try to sell them.

He should not sit in the Oval Office barricaded from the reaction of people, citizens, Republicans, Democrats or Independents. A President of the United States who has some belief and real down-to-earth feeling about what ought to be done for America ought to come out and say something, speak up for what he believes and in reciprocity listen to the people of this great country.

So, I traveled, and I am going to travel. I think people are concerned about the quality of our Government. People are worried about where we are heading as a Nation and what is being done about the problems that we face, both home and abroad. And people are fed up about corruption in Government, whether it is graft at the local level or abuse of power at the top.

I think it is up to those of us in political life to give the kind of leadership, the kind of example that Americans can honestly and truly believe in, and that is what the Illinois GOP has done here in Cook County, as well as throughout the State.

Now, I know there are some political prophets throughout the United States, a good many of them in Washington, who think the game is up, that we ought to quit, that people are going to stampede blindly into the Democratic column for no good, good reason, but just for some inward reaction that they have.

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When the chips are down, I don't think that is going to happen, and that is why I am here tonight. I have been in political life in the Congress and in the Office of the Vice President, and now as President, for almost 26 years. I have seen a lot of elections. I have heard a lot of wise predictions. They were almost always wrong.

Frankly, it is about the only thing that you could count on -- that they could be inaccurate -- because no one really knows what the individual voter is going to do in the sanctity of that voting booth. They will tell you one thing when they are being polled. But they might very well do something different as they sit and contemplate in that voting booth.

The only rule of thumb I know -- and it is one that has never failed me -- was taught to me by one of my very dearest friends. He was a great Congressman, a super Senator, and probably the greatest orator of this era. And because of a warm and personal relationship that I had with him, I will never forget him.

His wife, Louella Dirksen, is here. He came from Illinois. His name was Ev. We used to have what we called "The Ev and Jerry Show" when we were in the minority and the opposition held the White House.

I very vividly recall one afternoon when Ev and I were talking, just chatting before one of these press conferences -- television programs -- in Ev's office. Ev was a giant among giants. I have always wished that I had some of the qualities and capabilities that Ev had.

But anyhow, at that time the war in Vietnam was going full blast, inflation was then a problem, the Democrats had swamped us in 1964, and a lot of people were saying that the Republican party was finished.

Well, frankly, I was feeling a little blue, let down, and quite frankly, very discouraged. And I told Ev of my reaction. Ev, in his inimitable way, paused for a moment, looked at me and said, "Jerry, don't let it get you down. You just keep in there doing your best for the people and the people will do their best for you."

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I think that was the best advice I ever got in a political sense. Ev was right then as he was right for many, many years.

Well, in my lifetime in the political arena, that advice worked for me in Congress and I think it will work for me in the White House. But to do my best for the people and for America, I am going to need the help, the assistance, the support of good people, men and women, in the Congress of the United States -- men and women who will forthrightly fight excessive Government spending and will make an honest and conscientious effort to do something in the battle against inflation which I think is Public Enemy Number One. And all the polls that are taken indicate that that is the feeling of the American people.

What we need, what we must have if we are to see America through this very difficult economic period is not a veto-proof Congress but, in my judgment, an inflation-proof Congress. And that is the issue on November 5.

All of you are a very sophisticated group. You have learned that in life problems that plague you at home or the office or elsewhere--the really big problems that you have--just don't spring up overnight, and they don't get solved overnight, either. And, of course, inflation is precisely that kind of a problem.

It has been building up over a long period of years like a disease in our economy. Curing it, unfortunately, will take a little time, but it can be done with the right kind of a program, patience, work, dedication.

Let's take a minute to analyze why it happened, how it happened. There is no single answer, I concede, but there is an answer that ought to be reflected here. One big reason is excessive Federal spending over a long, long period of time.

This excessive spending that has gone on and on seems to go hand in glove with the problems of an increase in the cost of living. Each unbalanced budget, each wasteful spending bill rammed through the Congress, has added to your cost of living and Federal inflation.

It is legitimate to ask -- and I concede this -- who is to blame? I recognize there are many villains but the biggest burden of guilt lies specifically on the shoulders of the big spenders in the Congress of the United States.

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The fact of life is that one political party has run the Congress--as Les Arends knows, and others here in this head table complex likewise know. One political party has run the Congress, opened up the Nation's purse strings -- your tax dollars -- for 38 out of the last 42 years and, incidentally, unfortunately, for the last 20 years consecutively.

So I think it is pretty simple that if excessive Federal spending is the principal villain, those in control of the Congress have to bear the responsibility. That party is the Democratic party, and we cannot, as I look at it anyhow, allow it to drive the budget deeper and deeper into the red, and the rate of inflation higher and higher in the blue sky.

That is why each of you is more important than ever this year when so much, such a crucial part of our society actually hangs in the balance. Your enthusiasm tonight is tremendous, your support I am deeply grateful for, your volunteer work which I have heard about is unbelievable, your vote November 5 --these are the keys that we can use in whipping inflation and preserving a two-party system in the United States.

Here in Illinois you are lucky. George Burditt referred to it and very eloquently. You have 12 great Republican Members of the House of Representatives running for re-election -- Bob Michel, Ed Derwinski, John Anderson, Paul Findley, Bob McClory, John Erlenborn, Tom Railsback, Phil Crane, George O'Brien, Ed Madigan, Bob Hanrahan, Sam Young. I can tell you from personal experience, and I have seen a lot of Members of the House come and go -- sort of like Greyhound buses -- but the truth is that your delegation -- and I have mentioned them -- is outstanding. You should be proud of them and you should support them wholeheartedly. They will do a first class job on your behalf.

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Each of these individuals, great and good friends of mine--and believe me they basically were invaluable when I was minority leader in the House--are hard-hitting inflation fighters, and I am sure that the candidates you fielded to challenge the incumbent Democrats deserve your full support.

I could say easily, because I feel it, that I want them there for good and sufficient reasons, that for example I can depend on them, but that is really only one of the keys in the formula. You need them, Illinois needs them and the country needs them.

So, I urge you from the bottom of my heart that you maximize your effort, make that last minute contribution, that last minute effort to make sure that they come back to serve you and to serve our country. But you just don't fight inflation in Washington. The battlefield, as I see it, is the whole country, every State, every county, every city.

So, I hope that you will equally support your Republican candidates for the State legislature. They can give you responsible, economical actions down in your State capital, and a State capital today -- under our system of trying to transfer power from Washington to your capital and ours in Michigan -- is an important citadel of strength, good judgment.

The Republican Party has a major purpose. It has had from Lincoln's day to the present: to be just; to be fair, to be responsible, to stand up for what is right for America and to give America the kind of Government that is good for us individually, for our people collectively, for the world at large.

If I might just say that some of the big spenders who have ideas about programs for one individual or one segment of our society, their motives may be good, but the money they spend and the direction they take their Government in my judgment is bad. And, as I used to sit in the House with Les, and John Anderson, Bob Michel and the rest, I often used to think as these programs sort of flowed out of one committee after another, didn't those proponents ever understand that a Government big enough to give you everything you want is a Government big enough to take from you everything you have.

As I have looked through the pages of history, trying to analyze what one political party or another has done for our people and to see if we were wrong and the opposition was right, it is my thoughtful, honest judgment that the Republican Party historically has stood the test.

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It ended in our recent memory, the longest and the bloodiest war in America's history. It has begun the long, hard process of returning the power from Washington back to our local and State units of Government -- Government back to the people from those that wanted to control everything in the Nation's Capital, returning authority and discretion to locally elected officials who are under your more careful scrutiny.

The Republican Party, as I have seen it, has made an honest, determined effort to give you a program that will fight inflation, conserve our energy and keep our economy strong.

Now, I was criticized for submitting a 31-point program to the Congress a couple of weeks ago. Some of my Democratic critics called it a marshmallow approach. Well, then I had the opportunity just the other night to listen to one of the leading spokesmen for the Democrats coming up with their program.

Well, if mine was a marshmallow, theirs was a lemon. (Laughter)

Let me conclude with this: We can make headway both at home and abroad. We have got a good program. We just need a few more troops. We can't afford to lose some of the outstanding people that have been with us -- some much longer than others, some newcomers. They are all good, but we have got some great problems here at home, and we have got some serious ones abroad.

I can recall vividly coming to the Congress on January 3, 1949. At that time, we had just ended World War II and our country was embarked on a great bipartisan effort to have a foreign policy in America that would keep the peace won so wonderfully in Europe and the Pacific.

There was a Democratic President by the name of Harry Truman who worked very successfully with a Republican congress, the 80th Congress, and this bipartisan effort was successful in laying the foundation for peace, a foundation that developed the North Atlantic Treaty.

It laid the foundation for strength in doing what was right from a humanitarian point of view in Latin America or in Africa or Southeast Asia. It was a bipartisanship that was predicated on politics stopping at the water's edge, and as we look back over the last 25 or 30 years that kind of approach has been highly successful in meeting the challenge of those who have a different political philosophy or a governmental point of view.

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We have some terribly serious problems facing us, yes, at home, but equally abroad. The Middle East still is a tinderbox. Unfortunately, two good allies -- Greece and Turkey -- are at sword's points over Cyprus. We have problems in the Pacific. We are trying to build a new relationship with the People's Republic of China, which needs a very, very careful maneuvering to be sure that it is right and strong and sound.

We are trying to broaden a detente with Moscow. What we need today is a strong continuation of that bipartisanship that was so successful in the post-World War II era. If that bipartisanship is ruptured, if that bipartisanship is torn asunder, our problems worldwide can be complicated.

Let me say so that it is not construed to be partisan, in recent weeks I, as a Republican President, had the full support of the Democratic leadership in the House and Senate, but their troops were all over the lot, and the net result is we may have some difficulties.

So, as I conclude, let me just add this final comment: You elect the right kind of a Congress, and we will solve our problems at home and will meet those challenges abroad for the benefit of all of us -- Democrats, Republicans and Independents.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 10:00 P.M. CDT)