

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
HAROLD WILSON  
PRIME MINISTER OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THE STATE FLOOR

9:53 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Prime Minister and Mrs. Wilson, our distinguished guests:

We are very deeply honored and we are greatly pleased to have both of you and your party with us this evening. You have been guests in this house before, and I hope you have enjoyed it tonight, as well as you have enjoyed your previous occasions.

My wife and I consider ourselves very fortunate to have this opportunity to extend our hospitality to both of you, both officially as well as personally. The great heritage that we have, that we share, draws our two countries together.

George Bernard Shaw once remarked that we are two nations separated by the same language. Nevertheless, I believe you will agree that what unites us is vastly more significant than our differences.

As you put it so well on a previous visit, Mr. Prime Minister, Britons and Americans communicate effectively because we share a common background of understanding, and each of us is aware that behind these few words lie volumes of thought and experience which do not need to be articulated, and, of course, this is a priceless asset to both our nations and our enduring friendship.

Mr. Prime Minister, another aspect of our common heritage is our devotion to democracy, our faith in the wisdom of people, and you and I have spent most of our adult life in government in one capacity or another.

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This year marks the 30th anniversary of your election as a member of the Parliament where you have built an extraordinary record of achievement, leadership and service to your country.

My own election to the House of Representatives was in 1948, when one of our guests, Hubert Humphrey, and I were both elected, he to a more prestigious office in the minds of some Members of the Congress, but none of us in those days could have foreseen what would happen in the 1970s.

Today, the task is not to rebuild and to reorder a world torn by war, but to face the challenges of peace and to face the problems of recession, inflation, balance of payments deficit, the shortages of energy and fuel, as well as food and the safeguarding of our security while trying to reduce the international tensions that are difficult as we try to strengthen our international relationships.

The problems underlying our interdependence of nations and the need for communication are vastly important, and our two nations, I think, can set an example for the problems that we face in this regard.

Recently, the world honored the 100th anniversary of Sir Winston Churchill's birthday, and it is almost unbelievable that today marks the tenth anniversary of Sir Winston Churchill's death. So, we think of him and of our difficulties and challenges; we are reminded of his courage and optimism in the face of great peril.

He told the world in December of 1941--and I think this is appropriate to mention now--"We have not journeyed all this way across the centuries, across the oceans, across the mountains, across the prairies because we are made of sugar candy."

Mr. Prime Minister, the challenges we face are serious, they are different, and in many ways much more complex than those confronted in the Second World War, yet I am confident by working together the free and democratic nations can again triumph. We are still made not of sugar candy.

I look forward, Mr. Prime Minister, to continuing our constructive discussions tomorrow that we initiated today. It was most enjoyable to have an opportunity to be in the company of our British friends.

Mr. Prime Minister, you and I talked before dinner of a sport that apparently we both enjoy, but we don't do too competently. It is a sport better known among the Scottish, but loved by Americans as well as the British.

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You know, I especially like to play golf with our Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, who is with us tonight. Henry is undoubtedly one of the greatest diplomats this world has ever known. Let me tell you why I can make that categorical statement.

The last time we played, I found myself in a sandtrap. There was a water hazard beyond that and then 95 feet before we found the first hole. Henry conceded the putt. (Laughter)

Mr. Prime Minister, with profound appreciation for your presence with us today and tonight, I offer a toast to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and to you and Mrs. Wilson.

PRIME MINISTER WILSON: Mr. President, Mrs. Ford, Mr. Vice President, Mrs. Rockefeller, your excellencies, distinguished parliamentarians of both Houses of Congress, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf, Mr. President, of all those who have traveled with me for this meeting, this week, I should like to express our sincere thanks for your warm hospitality and for your kindness in inviting tonight so great and distinguished a company of your fellow countrymen, many of them old friends of mine, very many of whom to my personal knowledge have contributed to the full in maintaining and strengthening our trans-Atlantic friendship.

The tradition of meetings between the governments of our two countries is rooted deep in our history. The very informality and friendship of these meetings, as we found again today, so far from being a bar to the deep and wide-ranging probing of world problems, these things are themselves a guarantee that these problems fearlessly faced will be resolutely handled.

In my experience, the value of these Anglo-American intergovernmental and equally, may I say, interparliamentary associations that strengthen our relationship, the value of them rests in the fact that when we meet, there is so much that just does not need to be said between us.

It is all taken for granted, whether it be the assertion of the principles which we jointly hold, or whether it be the obligations upon us to work together towards the solution of our own problems and those of the world, and it saves a great deal of time because we don't even have to go back to first base and repeat these things one to another.

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From my experience of intergovernmental meetings in this city and in London, now going back more than a quarter of a century, I repeat tonight what I said to my hosts on Capitol Hill this afternoon. I repeat that I cannot recall a time when our relationship was so close, our understanding so deep as it is at this time as we meet, Mr. President, this week.

In past years and for more than a generation -- many would say for many generations -- our peoples have worked together and indeed fought together to secure and strengthen the peace of the world and the role that democracy can play and must play within that work.

Last year 15 North American and European nations celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Atlantic Alliance. As a surviving member of the Attlee Cabinet in Britain, which jointly with President Truman's administration played so large a part in creating that alliance, I asked last year at the celebrations how many of us in 1949 could have foreseen the enduring strength of the alliance, still less foresee the contribution it would make and is making for peace and for the defense of democracy in some of these dangerous years which have laid between.

But whenever peace was in danger, whenever democracy was threatened, there were always leaders in our two countries ready to work together in joint action and in a wider setting to meet whatever challenge faced us, nor at any time did those leaders lack the unstinted support of their peoples.

Always we set before us the objective, not just of building strength for its own sake or even building strength just for our own defense; always we have looked on strength as a means to peace and to reconciliation and to detente.

It is these aims that we are together again this week pursuing with world leaders. It is these aims that Her Majesty's government will continue to assert when the Foreign Secretary and I visit Moscow in two weeks' time.

Mr. President, in a wider sense, our talks this week are being directed to still greater, still wider, still newer problems which have arisen to threaten the economic life of our own nations and of so many other nations of the world, rich and poor. It is out of the very nature of the challenges we have faced together, challenges which now are to the economic advance, challenges to the well being for all the peoples of the world.

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It is out of the nature of the very challenge, it is also out of the understandings developed between us in the past that we must now in this new situation forge still newer instruments for meeting the economic problems, the gravity of which -- and they are grave -- serve only to strengthen the joint resolution which we shall put forward together.

In this spirit, Mr. President, thanking you again for your wonderful hospitality today and this evening, it is in this spirit that we undertake together the discussions of this week and it is in this spirit, too, that we shall go forward together.

In that spirit, Mr. President, may I now have the honor, on behalf of your visitors here this week, and of this great company, of proposing the health and prosperity of the President of the United States and of Mrs. Ford.

END (AT 10:10 P.M. EST)