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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
FOLLOWING A MEETING WITH THE
DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS

THE CABINET ROOM

4:20 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: The Democratic leadership in the House and the Senate met with me and my advisers for the last hour and 15 or 20 minutes, and we have been discussing the proposal that has come from the majority party in the House, as well as in the Senate, on the necessary actions to take in our economic problems, as well as the energy difficulties.

In January, I submitted to the Congress my proposals, or the Administration's proposals, in energy and the economy. There are some differences as to details, but we all agree, both Democrats and Republicans, that we have to solve the economic problems of this country, and we have to solve the energy problems."

I have agreed to study the plan submitted by the Democratic leadership, and on Monday, if not before, I will indicate to the Speaker and to Senator Mansfield where I think we can find an area of agreement, of accommodation. The Republican leadership I will talk to later. I have an obligation to discuss the matter with them. I do not think there will be any disagreement as to the need for action and the need for accommodation and compromise.

There has been a suggestion made that I postpone the imposition of the \$1 import levy that is scheduled to go on on March 1st. This is a possible area of compromise. I can assure you, speaking for myself and, I am sure, for my associates, that we are willing to sit down and find an answer with the Democratic leaders of the House as well as the Senate, because the most important thing is what is good for the country, both on the economic front and the energy front as well.

Mr. Speaker, would you like to say anything?

MORE

(OVER)

MR. ALBERT: I simply want to say, I think you stated the general purpose and tenor of the meeting, Mr. President, and I thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Mansfield.

SENATOR MANSFIELD: Mr. President, I want to join with the Speaker in what he said to express my disappointment that your experts have not had a chance to really study our program, and I look forward to this being the first of a series of meetings at which we can sit down and discuss a common problem, a national problem. And I would hope that, eventually, we will reach the stage where the bipartisan leadership could be called in so that together we could work out a program which would be the most beneficial to the Nation.

As far as economics is concerned, I do not know too much about it, but I do know that we are in trouble. And I do know that we have to work together, and I do know that we have to do something.

THE PRESIDENT: I would like to emphasize -- and I think this is the unanimous view -- that the most important problem is for immediate action, the quickest possible action, to stimulate the economy and to get the country moving so we have jobs and we have a better economic environment, and we will work together to achieve that end and that objective.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you said you were thinking of postponing this thing; doesn't it start tomorrow? You would have to postpone it by some time tonight.

THE PRESIDENT: There is the right to amend that proclamation at any time.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you were quoted, this morning, as saying, "Where is the plan," in terms of not being enough. Now, do you feel that the Democrats do have what you could consider a comprehensive plan?

THE PRESIDENT: The Democrats have submitted a plan which is carefully thought out. It does not agree in some details with ours, but I think it is a plan. And it can possibly be meshed with ours, and we certainly will work to achieve some accommodation.

QUESTION: It is enough of a start to work now towards a compromise?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Thank you very much.

END

(AT 4:29 P.M. EDT)