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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
GREGORY L. ROSE  
MEMBER, NATIONAL SOCIETY  
OF YMCA YOUTH GOVERNORS

THE CABINET ROOM

10:53 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Let me congratulate all of you Governors. I wish we could get the same applause from the duly elected Governors when they come down to the White House.

I don't mean to be critical of them because they have been very helpful in many ways, but I am very grateful for your very warm reception, and I wish to congratulate you on your election, your selection, and also the activities in which you are participating.

I think it is appropriate, also, to say that I believe the Reader's Digest does a fine job in making this program possible. Their support of it makes it feasible for all of you to come down and get firsthand some insight into the Government here, to get to know the people that are representing you in both the House and the Senate, and to talk firsthand with individuals in the Executive Branch of the Government.

The net result is in due time, and I hope soon, all of you can become an active participant in the Government in your respective areas, whether it is local, whether it is Statewide or whether it is on the Federal level.

Let me say parenthetically, I am confident with your educational background, the experiences that you have, and will have, and your interest that all of you will do an infinitely better job when you start running things than we have.

So, get prepared and be active because it is important for the country, as well as yourselves, that when the time comes you can do that job, which is so important.

Let me just make an observation or two because, as you have talked to many, you have maybe gotten one side of the coin and not entirely the other, and I am not going to speak in a partisan way.

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But, there is something that I think all of you ought to understand. You know, we have a Judicial Branch, an Executive Branch and a Legislative Branch, and they all perform a very important function.

Our forefathers so wisely decided they didn't want one person or one group in our society dominating all of the rest, and so they established this system of checks and balances -- the Executive being checked by the Judiciary, and by the Legislative, and vice versa.

This system has ended up giving us a tremendously effective Government protecting our individual rights, and also giving us the flexibility to meet our problems.

You may have read, and you may have heard, there is a confrontation between the Executive Branch on the one hand and the Legislative Branch on the other, probably best exemplified by the four vetoes that I have exercised where, on the reconsideration by the Congress, the House of Representatives has sustained in each case the four vetoes.

Some people are alleging that we have a stalemate, that we are not making headway. Let me convince you otherwise.

First, let me explain what the function is of a veto.

The Constitution says that a President can exercise a veto and that if it is to be overridden and the legislation is to become law, two-thirds of the House and the Senate must override.

Now, in the case of the four vetoes where the Congress has sustained by vetoes, we have not been deadlocked into no action.

The facts are that in two of the cases, the fact that I vetoed what I think is bad legislation and where there has been a sustaining of the veto, the Congress has come back after reconsideration and actually submitted -- or is in the process of submitting -- legislation that is good legislation, or infinitely better legislation than that which was vetoed.

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So the exercise of the veto has kept the country from having a bad law on the statute books because the Congress has then understood that they had to do a better job.

In the case of housing, I think we will have that result. We will get a good housing bill.

In the case of the appropriation bill where they increased my recommendation by \$3 billion, where they added to my proposal for a summer youth employment program, and where they added money over and above the public service program that I recommended, added \$3 billion with a whole raft of goodies that could not be justified economically, they have now done what? They have taken the summer youth program which I have recommended, they added a few minor items, but basically they appropriated the money that I proposed.

In the case of housing, it appears they are going to more or less go along with the recommendations that I made.

What I am saying is our forefathers gave to a President a tool to get the Congress to think, to reconsider and to come back with something that is more acceptable to the Executive Branch of the Government, a program that is a better program for the people as a whole, and that is what we really want.

We don't want legislation that is indefensible; we want legislation that financially and otherwise is in the best interest of all the people.

Now, there is another problem that you may have heard about; it is a little different. It is traditional that a President recommends legislation. This is the system, the way it works.

Usually it is recommended in what we call a State of the Union message, given when Congress reconvenes, but it can be done on other occasions -- like I am sending up today a proposal for what we call a Uranium Enrichment Program, which is of vital importance for us to build facilities to supply our nuclear power, and to supply to foreign customers the necessary ingredients.

But the point that I want to make here is in January I submitted a very comprehensive energy program that would, if enacted into law, get the American people to conserve energy which is necessary; and secondly, the program I have proposed would stimulate domestic sources of energy because the United States today is very vulnerable to the foreign oil producers.

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If we had an oil embargo today, we would be worse off in gasoline, in fuel oil, in all crude oil products, than we were in 1973.

How many of you can remember standing at the gas station? You could not get gas unless you waited a long time. How many of you can remember the other inconveniences that you had to go through because there was an oil embargo?

If we had an oil embargo today, we would be worse off because Congress has not enacted, as I recommended, or they have not enacted something that they have proposed.

So in this case there has to be some push on the Congress from me, from the American people, to get off dead center and enact an energy program. Otherwise, we will be more and more vulnerable to foreign sources, and we cannot afford that from the point of view of our country's national security, our country's economic prosperity; and therefore, as you go back home and have an opportunity to talk to others, please get your friends, as well as yourselves, to get Congress to move ahead in the field of energy, either on the program that I have recommended or some program that they will put together. We cannot condone a lack of action on the part of the Congress in the field of energy.

This is a little different problem from the veto problem that I discussed earlier, but it is all part of how our Government works. In each case, what is being done in the case of vetoes and better legislation, that is part of our Constitution. In the case of no action, that is the prerogative of the Congress.

I think it is wrong where they don't do anything, but at least that is their prerogative, and the way to get the Congress to move -- and I spent 25 years there so I know a little bit about how the Congress either works or does not work, and I know that if people back in their respective districts or respective States say, "Move," the Members of Congress will act, and act, I think, in most cases, responsibly.

Well, this is a great opportunity for me to talk to not only leaders in your own right, but prospective leaders in the future.

Good luck, and I am confident after most of us who are here now are out of the picture, we can look and say those young Governors that came down to Washington in this program are doing a better job than we did.

Good luck, and the very best to you.

Thank you.

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MR. ROSE: Mr. President, it is my privilege and honor, being Youth Governor from Michigan, to present you at this time a current certificate of your membership in the National Society of YMCA Youth Governors, of which we are all members, of which there are about 500 members, starting in 1962, throughout the United States.

As a small symbol of our appreciation, I would like to present you this book "Mankind and the Turning Point," which we would appreciate your reading. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Gregory, and thank all of you.

I never made it as a Governor (Laughter) so I am glad to be a part of the Society of Governors.

I thank you for thinking of me, and I will make an effort; I will do my best to try and read it.

Thank you, and good luck to you.

I congratulate the YMCA. I congratulate the Reader's Digest. And most importantly, I congratulate all of you.

The very best to you.

Thank you very, very much.

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(AT 11:06 A.M. EDT)