

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 11, 1975

Office of the Vice President
(Houston, Texas)

REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
HOUSTON BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL
MEN'S CLUB DINNER
HOUSTON, TEXAS

(AT 9:40 P.M. CST)

Reverend Clergy, to you, Mr. Fonteno, for those generous words, I want to thank you. To you, Mr. Jones, for your invitation to be present in this wonderful gathering, I want to express my gratitude and delight at the opportunity. To Mr. Robinson, for that paper cutter, I am taking that back with me. It looks like a dual-purpose weapon to me.

(Laughter.)

That is a rough town in Washington.

(Laughter.)

To Judge Jon Lindsay, his kind words, to Quentin Mease, and I would like to say to you, Mr. Jones, I listened with tremendous interest to the five basic objectives of the club which you read.

To me, those personify good citizenship in the greatest free society in the world. The very values and the very basic concepts which have made this country what it is and have given us the opportunities which we enjoy. I am delighted to join with the group of men and women who are dedicated to those objectives because they are the fundamental objectives.

They are the ones that express all of the spiritual and emotional and intellectual values which we cherish in this country and which are so meaningful in this country. I congratulate you, sir, and to the whole organization for having adopted them.

I would like to say also to Mr. Bass, the Voice of Heaven, who sang that wonderful piece, and to Mrs. Thomas who played that wonderful piece, that they dedicated, when you walk through a storm, hold your head up high and don't be afraid of the dark. I have got to tell you that is a little bit reminiscent of those hearings you were talking about.

(Laughter.)

I have got to say to you that the real opposition, the strongest opposition I had was from a fellow Republican Senator. The strongest support I had was from the 100 black businessmen of New York and Washington. I would like to say that the summation in the House of Representatives, after I had gotten through the Senate and then came to the House was made in one of the most brilliant addresses that has ever been made to support my approval by the Congress of the United States which was by Shirley Chisholm, a former Assemblywoman from New York.

MORE

(Applause.)

She is a dear friend of mine, a Democrat, but one of the most brilliant, eloquent people. So, I am deeply grateful for this opportunity of service to the country through the President.

But while you were very generous about the responsibilities of the Vice President, let's be totally candid in this distinguished gathering. I looked this up for President Eisenhower when he was trying to figure out something for Dick Nixon to do, while he was Vice President.

(Laughter.)

I was Chairman of his Committee on Government Organization. We studied for three months and came back with a recommendation to him that the only Constitutional function of the Vice President was that of presiding over the Senate, which, of course, is a great honor and a very great distinction.

I have to say, parenthetically, that you can't speak without unanimous consent with the body. I had that opportunity twice. If I take advantage of this wonderful gathering here this evening, you will understand. For a Governor to listen to a lot of people talk and not be able to say anything, it is a little difficult.

But we told the President, frankly, that there was no responsibility you could give the Vice President, because if he did, he would be creating an alternate political center in the government, which could ultimately cause proliferation.

Therefore, we recommended that he just leave things as they were. I just came to Washington to accept this great honor with a total awareness of the fact that I would have the distinction of presiding over the Senate.

My mother's father had been there as a leader in the Senate for 17 years. So, it meant a great deal to me, emotionally, and personally. I didn't expect to do anything else except to be a staff assistant to the President of the United States, which I have tried to be a good staff assistant and do as he asks me and be helpful to the country, the United States through him.

(Applause.)

I would like to congratulate Dr. Coleman and Mr. Hardy for the distinguished awards which they received. I am delighted to be here with them on this occasion and to have the opportunity of giving an award myself to Horace.

I would like to say that as I look out on this audience, that you men and women represent collectively, and individually the creative genius of America, the managerial skills, the ability to apply research and technology to meet America's needs, the vision and courage to take risks to invest capital that has built the great strength of America.

And this has all been within the greatest and most productive system that mankind has ever invented, private enterprise. This is what you represent here this evening.

MORE

This is what has built America and what thrills me about this evening. You have been very generous in speaking about the family and it is true.

My family has been identified because of a deep belief, going back five generations, that freedom of opportunity in this country could only be achieved through good education and good health, on a basis of equality.

If you don't have those two, no matter what else you have got, you haven't got much in the way of equal opportunities. But with those two, then it is up to the individual.

(Applause.)

After grandfather set up the Rockefeller Foundation before the turn of the century, he spent some \$50 million through the General Education bill, which was one of a group trying to revise primary and secondary education itself, for blacks because of his deep concern.

There isn't a black university or, I have got to say, a woman's college in this country that doesn't have a building that he gave. This was more than 50 years ago. He was a little ahead of his time. But that is what we believe in, opportunity for all.

(Applause.)

As a family, my father, my brothers and I, our sons, of course, Laura Spelman -- Spelman College was named after my grandmother, Laura Spelman Rockefeller.

There are still members of the family on the Board of that college. This is the fifth generation that members of the family are on that Board.

I am here with very special feelings and great feelings of pride in our country and in your achievements in our country. Our country is reaching a point of sophistication and awareness of human values and an understanding of those values, which with your dedication and hard work these things will be accomplished. Because these things don't just come.

Let's not forget, I am not forgetting and there is no reason why you should, that my grandfather grew up on a farm in upstate New York, a poor boy who left school, a dropout at the age of 16. His family had nothing and his father was a patent medicine salesman. I am not advocating that. I am just telling you the truth.

(Laughter.)

The medical business is better today than it was then, particularly if you want to sell these things. I understand what it means in the family to try and seek to achieve and to produce, to serve people through hard work. That is what has built America. It didn't just happen in 200 years.

People came here seeking opportunity, seeking freedom from all over the world. That is what the Statue of Liberty symbolizes in the bay of New York harbor. Her arms are open.

We welcome some of that greater opportunity more than others. Some have had greater handicaps than others. Those have to be recognized. But basically when we get right down to it, those who really care, those who really want to do, are going to do it through hard work.

I have got to say there are a lot of people in this room that, including myself, don't have to work if we don't want to. But when one really finds out the joy that comes from work, the satisfaction that comes from achievement, from doing for others, from creating things for others, that is what draws people on, into the world.

That is what built this country. That is what is going to keep on building this country. I have got to say I think we are at the turning point right now. We have become more interdependent in the world than we ever dreamed would happen. We are more interdependent between state and local government, and Federal Government between government and private.

None of us in our lives can make decisions without being affected by others and other organizations in other parts of the world. We had this brought home in the most dramatic way two years ago, when as a result of the conflict in the Middle East, and the fact the United States, despite all of the great natural wealth of Texas, found that it became a net importing country, as far as energy was concerned.

Those producing countries that were selling to us in the OPEC nations and particularly those in the Arab nations were related to this conflict in the Middle East. Then they found that they not only could raise the price 500 percent, but then cut off the supply to the United States.

For the first time we began to realize that we, at that point, were no longer self-sufficient. That raises new questions. Out of that, that 500 percent is now 700 percent increased inflation, then recession and then unemployment.

At the same time, coincidental with this, the population is growing throughout the world. Food production is not keeping up with population growth. Then there was the great Soviet Union crop failure. Then to move in and buy a million dollar's worth of grain, overnight grain prices double, food prices skyrocket. We have a combination of an increase in oil prices and an increase in food prices.

That is what brought this inflation and recession and unemployment. We can sit around and wring our hands or we can go to work. The tradition has been that there isn't any problem that America can't solve, if it puts its mind to it. But you have got to get facts first.

All of you businessmen here, professional people, with a diagnosis of the patient or an analysis of the market, you don't start out by saying, "My mind is already made up, don't confuse me with the facts." You do get the facts first. You analyze the patient's problem or analyze the trend in the market.

You make sure you know all the facts and make surveys and so forth. Then, slowly, you come to a conclusion. Too many people today have got ideological positions in their minds. They don't want to hear the facts. They just want to

get the answers that they already have come to the conclusion about without thinking, or maybe by some preconceived ideas.

Therefore, I say, what we as a nation have got to do is analyze the situation we find ourselves in, that God has been good to this country, first in terms of the human resources which we have, unbelievable, creative imagination. The things I was speaking that you have and that you have demonstrated that caused your success.

We have the natural resources in the ground. We have the capability to become, again, self-sufficient in energy production. The days of cheap energy are gone.

You used to get gasoline cheaper than you would get bottled water for a great many years until the last few years. Now the costs are going to go up. But this nation has been able not only to produce with three to five percent of the people, all of the food we need in America, but because of the ingenuity of industry and the chemical research with the insecticides, fungicides and the fertilizers and the machinery and equipment, we have got the greatest agricultural system in the world, run by family farms.

When the needs grew, last year 60 million new acres were opened up in America. By whom, the government? No, by individual Americans, due to that drive, that ingenuity and that hard work. I say, here we are at this moment and we have the capacity to meet these problems to regain our confidence. But we have got to start with the economy.

The President, in his State of the Union Address, called for energy independence, not only because it is essential to our economy, but because it is essential to our national security. If the source of energy can be cut off, then the whole East Coast of the United States can go black because the lights will go out because 80 to 90 percent of all the energy comes from imported oil.

We don't have the reserve there. Again, I have to say this is a blessed State. I have to exclude you from some of these problems. You are sitting pretty. Forgive me for putting it that way.

(Applause.)

But the rest of the country has got problems. You have got gas, oil, agriculture. You have got everything. You have got wonderful people who are right here in this room. I am thrilled to be here.

But as a nation we have to face these problems. I was in Los Angeles on Monday and Tuesday. They have been objecting to offshore drilling. I was asked on the television show, "You came in here from Washington to listen to the people. You say Washington wants to be responsive to the people. The State of California, the County of Los Angeles and the township have all protested the issuing of drilling permits in the offshore."

I said, "That is right. But we have also got a member of the United States Government in Washington, who is not only responsible to California, but is also responsible to all the people in America."

We are now faced with a new problem. That is one state sitting on these resources can say, "We don't want our waves or our beaches in any way disturbed. We are going to sit on this. We have got enough for ourselves. But you all, just too bad."

We have to balance these things out. These are the interrelations, the interdependence of these problems. I think we have got to have the courage to face the facts and recognize that we can deal with these.

But you, as business and professional people here know that you are not going to be able to succeed and we are not going to be able to provide the jobs for America. Out of the jobs there are; there are 2,800,000 people with families who are suffering, who are unsure and there are a great many more who don't know.

The only way they can get the kind of jobs they want in industry is through expansion, and they can't expand because industry in this country and the way of life we have enjoyed in this country is built on energy. I agree with the President when he says our number one objective has got to be to get going in creating energy independence in the United States.

He suggested a \$100 billion Federal Energy Authority, with a capacity to take the risks and prime the pump to get this going in this country. People say, "Wait a minute. We don't want government interfering. We want free markets." The minute the President said we want independence, energy has been a free world market.

Now he has said we want independence in the United States. Therefore, the government has stepped in. They have cut across this opening of the worldwide free market. Many people say, "We still don't want the government coming in. That is allocation of capital. That is government getting into business."

I would like to give an illustration of earlier discussions we had. How do you think the railroads got started in this country? They got started because the people said, "We want a railroad." They gave the land, land owned by the government to the railroads. They gave enough to sell off pieces for towns and villages.

America grew up along with the railroads. How do you think we got this great automobile industry? That wasn't just by private enterprise alone. Who built the roads you drive on with your cars? That was the Federal and State government and local government.

How did we get the airplane industry? We have the greatest industry in the world. The research was all done by the military. They spent millions developing the kind of planes which after they had been developed for military purposes, they were then adapted, without expense for private enterprise.

How did we get the agricultural system I just talked about? Government credit, the most ingenious system that has even been developed. Government extension agents were taking research to government, making it available to farmers. What we have is cooperation between the democratic government

and the private enterprise system, working for the best interests of the American people. I think we have to do this now in energy and take the risk.

We have four times as much oil in shale in this country as in the known reserves of the Arab countries in the Middle East. It is locked up in shale. If you dig that shale out and cook it, you end up with what I call talcum powder and oil.

There is no water in Colorado. So, if you pile the talcum powder in the valley and the wind comes along, you will have talcum powder spread all over the West. The ecologists are not going to dig that.

The scientists have come along and said, drill down into the shale. Set off an explosion. Set it on fire. Then you get underground the very process you would get on the surface. Then you take the pipe -- the oil is gasified -- and you condense it on the surface.

It will cost \$200 million to build that commercialized plant. Private enterprise doesn't want to take the risks. If they give land for railroads, why shouldn't the government do this?

I think what we have to do is have the courage and boldness and the freedom to act to represent the best interests of our people all over the country.

(Applause.)

If we do it and we get that spirit back that we have had, I want to tell you, this country is just going to start humming again. There is going to be a demand for people because industry is going to be booming.

If we are going to spend as we are, the way things are going, if we don't move, \$30 billion importing oil, why not spend that \$30 billion in America and employ a million Americans working, producing oil in this country instead of buying it abroad?

(Applause.)

Out of that will come all kinds of other industry. Do you realize that the railroads in the East, the roadbeds have been let go because the railroads are in bad shape and they couldn't afford to fix it? This is Mr. Coleman who is the Secretary of Transportation. He said it will take \$11 billion to fix up those tracks.

As it is now, a coal car train can only move 10 miles an hour. If it goes any faster than that, it is dangerous and will derail. We have got unemployed. We have got the railroads who are needed by the coal burning plants in the East.

You can get people to haul the coal over the railroads, giving jobs to the people who mine the coal and jobs to the people who fix the railroads and jobs down the line, and out of that, new industries, the gasification of coal. It is just unlimited. This country has got so many opportunities that lie ahead.

Science is moving so fast. Technology is moving. The enthusiasm that is here in this room in what you have done, we have just scratched the surface, when you get down to raw materials.

I had a visit from a very distinguished friend of mine who is Prime Minister of Trinidad, Sir Eric Williams. He came in to see me. He is an old friend of mine.

(Applause.)

He is a wonderful man. He said, "You know, we are thinking of joining with our neighbors to produce bauxite." He said, "We have got cheap gas down there. Why export the bauxite to the United States? We can just make alumina and then aluminum in Trinidad."

I said, "That is a great idea and it is very exciting." I said, "But have you looked into the costs yet as to what it costs to make aluminum in the United States out of silica sands or out of certain types of clay?"

He said, "Never heard of it." I said, "Sir, before you spend the money in getting into this thing, you better check this out, because this is a kind of serious situation."

He said, "I am very grateful to you and I will find out." This is another area. We have got the capacity in terms of raw materials, of finding alternatives and substitutes which make new industries every time.

How did we get the synthetic rubber industry? It was because of World War II. During that time, natural rubber was cut off. Through the RFC there was set up the Rubber Reserve Corporation. They contacted about five companies who had different systems. Three or four of them worked.

After the war the government sold them. They got their investment back and we have a new industry. We are self-sufficient in rubber. This country has just scratched the surface on getting going. We just have got to have the faith.

I have got to tell you, it is very unfortunate, ladies and gentlemen, but at this moment in history we have got a division between the Presidency, which is Republican and the Congress, which is controlled by Democrats. And politics has a tendency to creep into these solutions. I guess it is human nature. I am guilty of it myself, sometimes.

This is a bad moment for politics. When we were discussing this in Dallas, your great Governor came in and spoke. He said, "You know, had we responded to Pearl Harbor as a nation, the way we have responded in the energy crisis, we all would be speaking Japanese in the United States right now."

He said that Senator Vandenberg got up on the floor of the Senate and said, "Let's let politics stop at the water's edge. Let's have a bipartisan foreign policy to end the war."

I think it is time we had a bipartisan policy on some of these basic issues that affect our well-being as citizens.

(Applause.)

This Joint Committee of the Senate and the House has been fooling around with this now for years, since the President recommended it. Now what have they come out with? They have come out with a bill that rolls back prices just at the moment when we are trying to encourage capital, to get into this area. They roll back prices until after elections. Then everybody gets reelected.

When we make a mistake we underestimate the public's intelligence.

(Applause.)

This man rolls back prices until after the election. Then they go back up. What American is going to be fooled by that? People are too smart. But that is the vote that is going to be sent down to the President very shortly.

This is not going to solve our problems. This bill retards the solution to this problem about four years. We can't afford it. What would happen if out of Lebanon, where the situation is very tough, let's say, the Syrians moved into Lebanon, and then the Arabs moved in and then the Egyptians get involved, then the Russians, then we would find ourselves sucked into this. Then they put another oil boycott on. Then we have had it this time.

Before we were a little bit dependent on oil. Now it is 40 percent. By 1980, it will be 50 percent. What I say is just let's look at the facts. What we want is jobs for people, opportunities for people, the demand for people. They are looking for them to bring them in because we need them. That is what creates equality of opportunity.

When there is a shortage of people, then everybody gets treated on the basis of their merits and their merits alone. That is the kind of society we want to see.

I believe in this country. I believe in you. I thank you for asking me to be with you.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

END

(AT 10:15 P.M. CST)