

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEBRUARY 23, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

---

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
ROBERT D. RAY  
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF IOWA

THE STATE FLOOR

10:11 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Governors, and your delightful wives, and guests:

It is a very great pleasure for Betty and myself to have all of you here on the second annual dinner where we have honored all of you who have come to the National Governors' Conference.

As I was sitting here talking to Reubin and Jim and Bill and Cal, I thought to myself how many times I have been in three States -- of course, coming from Michigan, I have been there a couple of times--but I thought to myself how many times I have, over a period of some 25 years or more, visited every one of the 50 States, and I have cherished in many, many ways the warm welcome that I have gotten from Chief Executives of every State, whether they were Democratic or Republican.

As I met all of you in the receiving line tonight, every one of you, whenever I have come to your State, have been most generous and very kind. For that, I thank you, and Betty joins me in that expression of appreciation.

But as I had the opportunity this morning to speak to all of you, I thought of the high degree of unanimity that we appear to have, those of us who are in the Executive Branch of the Government, whether we are at the Federal or at the State level, and I thought of my conflicts with my old friends in the Congress, who are still my friends, but with whom I disagree quite violently on some occasions, not all.

I think it is a totally different experience to be in the Executive Branch than it is in the Legislative Branch, and you get a different perspective, and all of you have shared that with each other and I have had the privilege of sharing it with you.

MORE

Somebody has to be in charge, at least as far as the day-to-day operations are concerned. We respect, we seek to work with, the Legislative Branch and it is vitally important in our system that we do. It is better if we can, but until you have had the experience of being in the Executive Branch of the Government, you really don't understand the day-to-day trials and tribulations.

So, I congratulate all of you who have done your job of responsibility in the Executive Branch in your respective States. Let me say I appreciate it far better today than I did for 25 years when I was on the other side of the fence.

But, let me say very deeply and very sincerely that I am immensely appreciative of the cooperation that I have found in your organization and with each of you individually. I don't mean to be so pollyannaish that we agree on every issue.

We have had some pretty stormy meetings in the Cabinet Room where there were some rather strident differences expressed between some of you and myself, or you and some of my associates. But, at least there was an understanding that we had a job to do at the Federal, State and local levels.

The net result in most instances, whether we agreed or disagreed, there was an understanding that I think has pushed us as a country further forward to have a better relationship between the Federal Executive and the State Executive, and I thank you for all of you going more than half way, and I can assure you we will seek to go half way or better as well.

The net result is, I think, your States and our country are both better off.

So, as we deal with the day-to-day problems of general revenue sharing, or block grants, or welfare, or food stamps, whatever the issues might be, I am grateful for your input and your cooperation.

I am especially appreciative of the warmth of your welcome when either Betty or myself have come to your States. We have enjoyed your hospitality, and we are most grateful for your understanding and cooperation.

With that, I think it is quite appropriate that I offer a toast to all of you and to our joint constituents, and to a better America.

MORE

GOVERNOR RAY: Mr. President, and my charming dinner companion, Mrs. Ford, colleagues, and wives and guests:

This morning the President spoke to us, and you might recall how he addressed us. He first said, "Governors and candidates" (Laughter) and I can't help but think of a little cartoon I saw. Perhaps you saw it, also.

Two little kids were standing on the corner, and one said to the other, "You know, when I grow up I am not going to run for President like everyone else wants to." (Laughter)

Mr. President, we know tomorrow is an important day, and we want to sincerely thank you for your generosity in hosting us here tonight. We also want to thank you for making an appearance at our opening meeting this morning. It was something that hasn't always happened in the past, to have a President come to our winter meeting of the National Governors' Conference.

You not only came to that meeting, but you gave us a message, you talked to us off the shoulder about something that is very important to us as Governors and to the people we represent in our respective States. You also came with an interest in the National Governors' Conference and what we are doing.

This is the kind of interest that we have seen grow, not only on your part but on the part of the Administration and the staff members in the White House. For this, we are deeply thankful and very appreciative.

When you took office, you said you were a Ford and not a Lincoln. Yet, I can't help but think that many things that Abraham Lincoln said are things that could be attributed to you.

For instance, one time he said that we should always remember that as American citizens we are brothers in a common country and that we should dwell in the bonds of fraternity feeling.

You know, I couldn't help but think about that today and this evening as I realized that you are establishing the bonds of a fraternity feeling between the Federal Administration and the States.

MORE

I think it goes even a step farther, and perhaps that is the reason you are meeting with some success in your endeavors to establish a relationship with us, and that is because you personally have expressed that kind of relationship with us as Governors.

I suppose you might say we are just plain human beings because we are kind of flattered by the attention that you pay us.

We have found that you are sincere. We have found that you believe in integrity and you have brought that to the White House. It makes us feel kind of good to think that here in the White House there is a common virtue that we call decency.

You and Mrs. Ford have brought that to the White House, and it makes us very proud because, after all, you represent all of us, regardless of our party, regardless of our States, regardless of our problems and regardless of the wealth in those respective States.

So, Mr. President, it is my pleasure to represent this group of people as the Chairman of the National Governors' Conference, and I would like to propose two toasts.

First, if you would stand and take your glasses, I would like to propose a toast to the very lovely and charming First Lady, Betty Ford.

Now, to the well being of this country of ours, a toast to the President of the United States.

END (AT 10:23 P.M. EST)