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FEBRUARY 29, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Tampa, Florida)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
AUSTIN BUILDING COMPLEX

4:13 P.M. EST

Won't you all sit down and relax?

Well, thank you very much, Lou, Congressman Skip Bafalis, Jim Grey, Mrs. Chavez, all these distinguished guests and wonderful friends, ladies and gentlemen, and particularly these wonderful young people -- Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, Brownies -- we love them all.

Obviously it's a tremendous pleasure, a great experience for Betty and me to be in Florida again and to sort of wrap up a tremendous weekend with this just overwhelming, over-awing experience here in Tampa. It's a great city, wonderful people, and I guess I have a friend or two here.

And with all the friends we've got here and a good many elsewhere in Florida, we are going on from here. We intend to win the nomination in August in Kansas, and then we are going to win the election in November in all 50 States.

And we will win because we have the policies, the programs and, above all, the people on our side and all of you here reflect that kind of support and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

We will win because the American people, they know that it took action, not words, to put America back on the course. We have made real solid measurable progress in solving the problems that affect most, and you are going to see a lot more progress in the months ahead.

I promise you that, and I haven't fallen back on a promise in the 19 months that I have been in public office as President of all of you.

When I became President 19 months ago, America was faced with some very, very serious concerns, runaway inflation and recession, both of them threatened our economic strength and our stability. International tensions threatened the peace of the world in many places of the globe, a crisis of confidence in our own Government and in the basis institutions of our society threatened the promise of the 200-year old American experience.

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It was a bleak, depressing, even frightening picture. It was a time that called for strong, affirmative action. Nineteen months later the results are all there for Americans to take pride in and all of the world to note.

Our national economy is growing stronger and more prosperous every day. The business community is planning ahead with a new-found sense of certainty and security. And we individually are finding that economic indicators point to good news ahead almost every day of every month.

The Department of Commerce just announced two days ago that the index of leading economic indicators rose by 2.2 percent in January, and listen to this, the largest gain in six months. We should be darned proud of it.

That crucial, that critical index showed improvement in the length of the average work week, the job lay-off rate, wholesale prices, vendor performance, stock market prices, contracts and orders, net business formations, new orders and building permits. That's a sizable list of things on the up. This shows that in almost every segment of our economy there is a rebounding strong, dynamic, encouraging way.

We are on the road to a new prosperity in America, and we are not going to be sidetracked now. We are going to move ahead strongly, affirmatively and healthily.

Let me speak for just a minute about some things that concern all of us. Employment has gone up. In January alone, we gained 800,000 new jobs, the biggest monthly increase in nearly 16 years. And that is progress by any measurement.

In January alone, unemployment fell by five-tenths of one percent, the biggest monthly drop in more than 16 years. We are still not moving as fast as I would like it, particularly in Florida. But we are moving and moving in the right direction, and I am not going to let up until every American who wants a job will have a job. That's a promise to you.

During 1974 -- just let your memory go back a bit -- inflation was raging at an annual rate of more than 12 percent. The latest indicators show we have cut it almost in half. Again I am not satisfied, that is still too high. But by any standard, that is real progress. And the American people know it, and I think they kind of like it because we are going to do better and better as we move ahead.

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The latest index of consumer confidence -- and that is all of you, how you and your family and your neighbors look at the future -- it is double that of a year ago. The American people know that we have gone through a tough time, but they know we are on the way back up, and so consumer confidence is indicated in every place in almost every household.

Real earnings for the average American worker rose significantly in January, well above the rate of inflation. That means that your purchasing power is on the increase.

Now, when you get a bigger paycheck -- and I hope you get a lot of them -- it doesn't buy a smaller bag of groceries, and that is the real test for the housewife.

Nearly 2 million, 100 thousand jobs have been recovered since last March. That is 96 percent, almost 100 percent of all the jobs lost during that worst recession in more than 30 years. And we did it. This is the encouraging thing. We did it without strapping physical responsibilities, without massively tapping the Federal Treasury and without tapping the American taxpayer. Again that is the way to do it, and that is the way we have done it.

We didn't resort to expensive, temporary, quick-fix Government solutions. Through the common sense ideas that I initiated and promulgated, listen to them, these were the good policies, tax cuts for individuals, tax incentives for business expansion and job production, and extended income cushion for those Americans out of work. With all of these programs and with your help, and the fact that you didn't panic, we have weathered the worst of the storm. As a result of this Administration's actions, we have begun a vigorous economic recovery. But the price of America's economic recovery was not a new round of double-digit inflation, nor was it billions and billions of extra dollars from the Federal taxpayers.

I think all of you here know where I stand on the critical issue of unnecessary Federal spending. I vetoed and I underline "veto", 46 bills since becoming President and without endangering, or weakening, the economic recovery -- listen to this -- these vetos will save the American taxpayers \$13 billion. That's a lot of headway.

And let me assure you, let you in on a little secret, I will continue to veto those extravagant spending bills again and again and again until we restore some self-control in the United States Congress.

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We have to keep our financial house in order, and you have every right to expect a Federal Government, your Government will do the same thing. If we can hold the line on Federal spending, if we can keep the budget busters in Congress under some control, then another major tax cut will be entirely possible in the latter part of this year and another one in 1979, and we will balance the budget at the same time.

As I said, I think we have a strong economy, and I intend to make it even stronger. I want more jobs for Americans, and I want those jobs to provide Americans with a future to give you pride as well as a paycheck. I want to sustain our prosperity, not only as a goal, but as a fact in life in the United States of America.

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But, economic progress is not the only progress we have made. Today, America is at peace. Today, there are no Americans fighting anywhere in the world. I want to keep it that way. We will keep it that way, and that is good for America as the rest of the world.

I believe in peace and freedom through strength. We will stand tall and strong and keep our powder dry so the United States of America can negotiate from a position that commands respect and invites cooperation from those that want to deal with us.

I have taken very firm steps to assure that our major alliances are strong, our commitments are valid, and our defenses are without equal throughout the world.

I have proposed in the last two years -- and I hope you will listen to this because it is true, and some people have made some sly, slight remarks about it -- I have proposed the largest two peacetime defense budgets in America's history, reversing a trend that was reducing our defense expenditures year by year to levels that were dangerously low.

The price of our national defense may be very high, but the price of freedom is one that Americans have always been willing to pay in blood, in sacrifice, in treasure. We are no less willing to pay that price in America today to keep our nation secure.

If we continue the kind of defense budget that I have recommended, and if the Congress cooperates and doesn't slash them as they have in the past, America will have peace and freedom, we will deter war, and we will maintain our national security.

Help me. The Congress needs to get the message.

But, America's security rests on more than armaments alone. It rests in part on our determination to make the lives of our own citizens here secure at home. This is especially important for America's older citizens, to whom this nation is so deeply indebted.

In my State of the Union address to the American people and to the Congress, I pledged to insure the integrity and the solvency of the Social Security system. I am fighting to maintain that solvency.

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American working men and women who have labored too long and contributed too much to the greatness of America to be denied the income that they have earned for their retirement in late years.

I will continue to push, prod and press the Congress to make sure that your Social Security benefits now, as well as in the future, will be responsibly funded and fully protected.

To be sure, strong and secure from within is a great bulwark of your liberty, and that is something that we must never, never forget.

But, our ultimate strength is the one of the spirit, the love of freedom, the pursuit of justice, the commitment to progress which Americans have shared for 200 years. We live in a nation that is the envy of the whole wide world.

Frankly, let me just say this: I am darned fed up with those Americans who downgrade America, and I hope you are, too. Obviously, you and I agree. We believe in America. We believe in its strength. We believe in its purpose. We believe in its goodness and, believe me, I believe in you, the American people, and I thank you for your support.

Let me say something that means very much to me. We in America need frankness, candor, forthrightness. We shouldn't promise more from Washington than we can produce, and we shouldn't tell the American people that they can have everything.

We should tell them the facts, and we should produce everything that we promise. I say to all of you here, the wonderful people from Tampa, everything I promise you, we will produce, and we won't promise you anything we can't produce.

Let me add this: Working together -- that is you and me -- we can look to an even brighter future for our children and their children. These wonderful young children, boys and girls, give me an inspiration. We inherited -- those of us alive today -- a country that was given to us by our forefathers, and they gave us a great country.

I think we, through wars and depression and recession, and other problems, when the scorecard is kept, when the historians write the books, they will say we didn't do too badly, either.

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But, we have some things we have got to do, not for us, necessarily, but they are great kids, these great young people. That is our obligation, and I know that you will join me in making certain that that obligation, that responsibility, is maintained.

But, let me conclude with just this observation and comment. I look out that way and you are looking here, but all of us can see an America today in which all men and women live in dignity and security and harmony and peace.

We can see a people taking pride in the work and finding pleasure and purpose in their lives. We can see America, Tampa, Florida, and 49 other States in which Government is the capable servant and not the master of its people.

We can see an America which cherishes those old values of honesty, compassion, determination and courage. We can see an America in which those dreams we have dreamed since our youth -- and these young people are dreaming today -- we can see an America in which those dreams will come true.

That is my goal. That is what we want for all of America. That is why I ask you, and I ask you very deeply, I ask you for your support in these coming days and these coming years.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 4:33 P.M. EST)