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MARCH 6, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Marion, Illinois)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
UPON HIS ARRIVAL
AT THE
WILLIAMSON COUNTY AIRPORT

5:40 P.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: Gee, it's wonderful to be down here in Williamson County. It's wonderful to be down here in this just great part of Illinois.

I have had one of the most exhilarating, inspiring experiences in the last day and a half and I found this out -- I knew it before but it has been reemphasized -- what great agriculture you have in Illinois, what great industry you have in Illinois, what great resources you have in Illinois, but most important, what great people you have in Illinois.

And I have had the privilege and pleasure of being in the last day and a half with some of your outstanding public officials -- Senator Chuck Percy, Congressman Paul Findley, Congressman Bob Michel, Congressman Ed Madigan -- well, they're great. And I brought along with me one of my favorite people not only from Washington but elsewhere, a great guy who does a lot for one of your most important industries and I am talking about the Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz.

But let me take a minute, if I might. I mentioned agriculture, industry, your resources and your people.

In industry, what are we trying to do? We are trying to come out--and we are doing it very successfully--out of the recession that we had that bottomed out last March and every week for the last five weeks we have more people employed, we have less unemployment and we are doing it at the same time that we are cutting inflation.

In other words, your factories in Illinois are beginning to hum and they are going to be producing more and more and more in the months ahead and that's because we have had the right policies and the American people didn't quit, they didn't panic, they were strong and they believed in the free enterprise system.

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But as I said, you also have in this great State the most production in all areas of agriculture. Agriculture is vitally important for all America. It is important for a wide variety of reasons. It is important for the farmers. Some 5 percent of the farmers in this country--5 percent of the population--works on the farm and they produce more food and more fiber than we can eat and wear, and thank goodness for their productivity.

And their products are vitally important as we sell overseas, as we send the message from America that we are a great Nation, and the farmers of this country contribute significantly to that greatness.

But let's talk now about the resources. As I was flying in, I could not help but notice -- and I have done a little reading, too -- that in this area of the country, this great State, this land of Lincoln, you have probably the greatest inventory of bituminous coal in all of the United States. And what does that mean? It means that as we move ahead, as we try to solve the energy problem, as we try to free ourselves from the talons of the oil cartel in foreign lands, America has to come to this area of the country and utilize those great natural resources that you have right here, among them bituminous coal.

Let's talk for a minute about the people. I have had the great experience starting down there and coming up to here of shaking hands with a lot of wonderful young people, some in the middle age group and some of those senior citizens who have made a great contribution to the good America that we have today.

The older people who have worked and earned retirement must be protected as they live their older years in comfort and retirement. Those of us -- and I guess I am stretching it a bit -- in the middle age group have an obligation to continue the great work done by those who have worked and who are now retired, so that we can make America better step-by-step, day-by-day, month-by-month. And why do we really want to do it? Because we want to help all these young people that are right in the front row and others who are here so that when they get through school -- elementary, secondary, graduate -- that they can move into society and have a better America than we had. That is our obligation. They deserve everything that we can do for them to keep America prosperous at home and strong, to keep the peace, to deter aggression, to make it certain that we are strong enough that nobody would dare touch an inch of soil of the United States of America, and we are.

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And let me say that as I leave to go to another meeting, I am grateful for all of you who are here, and I understand there are quite a few who, for traffic reasons or other reasons, could not get here. Will all of you say hello to them for me.

Let me thank each of you for coming and saying hello to me. It has been a great, great opportunity here in this fine airport to visit with all of you and to say thank you for being here, and I hope on a week from Tuesday I can get a vote or two.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 5:47 P.M. CST)