

March 9, 1976

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
RECEPTION FOR B'NAI B'RITH

THE EAST ROOM

Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Rockefeller, my daughter Susan, and all of you wonderful members of this great organization, B'nai B'rith -- and I see a few men chiseling in on your -- really, Betty was supposed to be here along with Mrs. Rockefeller. Unfortunately, she is out in Arizona and California today and tomorrow.

Let me give you some inside dope, sort of a family secret. She is going to Arizona and California to try and get my votes up to her polls. (Laughter)

But I do want to welcome you all to the wonderful White House. You are going to have the privilege of hearing Happy Rockefeller and Susan and they are very good speakers and they have got -- (Laughter) -- and when I heard that you were all here I thought I would come over and pre-empt about a minute or two of your time.

I have had the privilege and the pleasure of working with your organization as well as your male counterparts over the years when I was in Michigan and particularly when I was in -- we have only got 47 more States to go. (Laughter)

I do want to say a word very seriously for a moment. The United States has long had a history of supporting the Government of Israel. I think all of us recognize that this is an issue that is not partisan. Great Democratic Presidents, great Republican Presidents have stood firm and fast in recommending programs, recommending policies, recommending appropriations for the security and the survival of Israel and this Administration is doing exactly the same thing.

We recognize, of course, that Israel is a democratic country in an area that is controversial, complex, volatile, and the three million-plus citizens of Israel, because of their staunch and steadfast defense of freedom, need the help and assistance of 215 million Americans whether they are Democrats or Republicans.

I happen to have heard on the way over here that you have a great theme for 1976, one that ties in with the Bicentennial of our country and that we should be celebrating this beginning of a third century because of the great heritage that we have inherited from our forefathers who gave us what we have through their hard work, their wisdom, their knowledge for the last 200 years.

There is an old saying that I used to hear in Sunday school, and that goes back a long time, that the beauty of Joseph's coat is its many colors. The strength as I see it of America today is what our forefathers gave us through their hard work and all of the other wonderful characteristics that they exhibited during this period of two centuries.

We started, as you know, with something less than three million Americans when the Constitution and our government was actually formed but over the years America has welcomed people from all over the world. We have opened our doors and the net result is we have a special character, a special strength in this country because we are, as I said, the beauty of Joseph's coat is its many colors.

And in the future the United States must equally welcome those who come from other shores because we have been given an opportunity here that exists no place in the world except America to enjoy the blessings of freedom, the blessings of opportunity and politics and economics and professions and elsewhere. We are so fortunate in this great country and it is our obligation and our responsibility, regardless of any political persuasion we may have, to stand tall and strong for America at home and America abroad.

And let me just close with this final comment. I know that in the breasts and the minds of each and every one of you, as it is in all of your fellow Americans, a great sense of pride in this country and I literally at night when I go to sleep say to myself, and I think you probably do, too, that I am proud to be an American and I am proud of America.

Thank you very much.

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