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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
CHERRYVALE MALL

8:09 P.M. CST

Thank you very, very much, John Anderson, Senator Chuck Percy, Governor Ogilvie, Dave Martinson, ladies and gentlemen:

At the very outset let me thank, from the bottom of my heart, this fine group of young Girl Scouts who are the Bicentennial Choir. Let's all give them a great big hand.

And we should do exactly the same thing for the Proud American Singing Group. Let's give them a hand.

May I ask everybody to be quiet for just a few minutes. What I will say won't take long but what I will say I hope you will listen to because it is what we have to believe, what we have to do if we are going to make America what it must be for older people, for younger people, for all of us. So please be quiet just a minute.

It is a great privilege and pleasure, it is an inspiration to be here in Rockford on this occasion. It is a great experience for me to come to this Cherryvale Mall where I see in brick and mortar what a vigorous America can do and will do.

I thank John Anderson, my very good friend, for the very kind and thoughtful comments he made in the introduction. Let me assure you that I will aspire to be all that John has said because that is what a President of the United States should be and I promise, John, and I promise you that I will seek to accomplish and to achieve personally and in policy what John Anderson has outlined for you tonight.

As we were driving over here this evening, I thought of what the circumstances were 19 months ago and let me quickly review where this country was at that time -- in August of 1974.

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The American people in Rockford, in Grand Rapids, in all of our 50 States, for reasons that we all know, had lost confidence in our country, in our Government. We all know that 19 months ago we were experiencing the most disastrous inflation, we were on the brink of a horrible recession with unemployment shortly to go up and employment about to go down.

We also know that 19 months ago our country was torn apart. No public official could go on to a campus in this country. Few public officials could talk to any group without confusion and chaos and all of the things that were so foreign to the country that we had inherited from our forefathers.

America was on the brink of the most frustrating and traumatic experience certainly during my life time.

But in the last 19 months, tremendous progress has been made. Most of the credit for that progress should go to you, the American people, because you did not panic, you did not lose your cool and you had faith in our Government.

But let me outline some of the things that I think have happened, that have come about because there was some leadership. It is my judgment that the American people have had a restoration of faith in our country and our Government, and you should have it.

It is my feeling that because you got some straight talk from the White House, from the Oval Office, you believe what your President tells you.

Let me be very straightforward. I don't intend to promise more than I can deliver, and I assure you we will deliver everything we promise.

I know that although we have made great progress in going from the depths of the recession in March and April of this year and that we are headed upward to a new prosperity in America, that in Rockford you have an unemployment that is much too high. I know that in many areas of this country unemployment is still too high, but let me give you some reassuring facts -- facts that should prove to you beyond any doubt whatsoever that the right policies have been in place and the right course of direction is taken whereas 19 months ago inflation was 12 to 14 percent, Today it is half of that, and the rate of inflation is going down, and it will keep going down.

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We also know that in the last two months there has been very encouraging news on the national front that employment is going up and unemployment is going down. Again, it is still too high, much higher than we want it and much higher than we are going to permit it to be, but from a high of 8.9 percent several months ago, it is now down to 7.6. The trend is right, and that trend is going to continue. Employment is going up, and unemployment is going down, and we are going to keep both trends going in the right direction.

But there are some other things I want to talk to you about. As I travel around the country and meet wonderful people like you, whether it is in Peoria or Champaign or other States and other cities, I find that people generally, regardless of what occupation they may be in, are disillusioned with the facts that Government is too big, that Government does not treat them right, that service to them for the taxes they have paid isn't in the right proportion.

What we are trying to do is to give to you the kind of Government service at the Federal level that will restore and renew your faith in what the Government is doing.

I think we ought to get rid of those programs that don't work. We ought to do better with the programs that are good, but that are not working as well as they should, and we ought to strengthen the good programs that have been helpful.

Let me take an example. Here in Rockford, you have been the beneficiaries of one of the very best programs that I know that the Federal Government has ever undertaken -- we call it revenue sharing. It is where Federal tax dollars are sent to Rockford and to Winnebago County so that the locally elected mayors, and some of them are here with their city councils or city commissions or board of supervisors, can make decisions with that money to provide services to you, to build public works, to do what they have been elected to do by all of you and in the four and a half years that general revenue sharing has been in effect, the City of Rockford will have received about \$8 million, and Winnebago County about \$16 million.

That money has been put to good use in your city and in your county, and we are fighting right now, with the help of John Anderson and Chuck Percy, to make sure that that program continues so that those tax dollars will be utilized at the local level by the decisions made by your elected officials. That is a lot better than having some bureaucratic do it in Washington, D. C.

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I said a moment ago that we were headed in the right direction to improve the status of our economy, to keep the trend of higher employment and lower unemployment and a lower rate of inflation going all in the right direction.

Now there are some in our Presidential campaign group that say that the answer is more Federal Government programs, that the Government ought to provide the jobs, that we ought to spend more money so that the Federal Government can take the credit for jobs throughout this country. I strongly disagree with that philosophy. The way to solve the problem is through the private sector of America.

Five out of six jobs in this country today are in the private sector, and if people are going to have permanent, meaningful jobs in the future, we have to stimulate the private sector. How can we do it? We ought to pass another tax reduction. We ought to pass tax reduction legislation that will give the industry more incentive.

John Anderson and Chuck Percy have been in the forefront for what we call the investment tax credit but I think we ought to expand that. I think we ought to extend it to give to business the incentive to build a plant and to buy equipment now so that they can give jobs now.

In the interim while our unemployment is too high I think we have to be compassionate, we have to be concerned about the people who want to work but can't find a job and for that reason we have extended our unemployment insurance and broadened the coverage. They don't like it because they want to work and they want a job, but we have to think of their families and of themselves.

But we want them that have an opportunity to get that job back or to get a new job and the best way to do it is through a tax incentive to individuals to stimulate consumption or to business to stimulate more factories and more expansion.

Let me make one other point. As I said in the Oval Office of the White House I get letters, I get communications, I get legislation sent to me from the Congress and there is a trend. People say why don't you do this, why don't you expand that program, why don't you spend more Federal money?

Let me give you two answers to that. If we followed that course of action, if we did what the expansionists wanted us to do as far as the Federal Government was concerned, I don't think they have understood one of the fundamentals that is so important, and let me phrase it this way. I warn them, I look them in the eye and I say "Do you realize that a Government big enough to give us everything we want is a Government big enough to take from us everything we have."

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You know, I have been criticized for saying that the Federal Government should not spend as much money as some of the big spenders would like us to do. Well, I am proud of the fact that in 19 months I vetoed 46 bills, most of them adding extra funding to the Federal budget. And I am also very glad to note that 39 of those vetoes have been sustained by one-third of the House and/or the Senate.

What does that mean? What has been accomplished by those vetoes that have been sustained? One thing we should not forget -- those vetoes that have been sustained have saved \$13 billion in Federal expenditures and that is a lot of money that we saved.

And to those that are telling me they are going to send some more legislation like that down to the White House, I have looked them in the eye and said, "We'll veto them more and more and more because that kind of spending is not good for America today and it isn't good for the future of America."

Now let me conclude with just one or two additional comments. As John Anderson said, this is one of the most inspirational meetings that I have ever attended. They tell me there are 10,000 people here. I can see that every place in this area is filled, and for that I thank all of you for coming out in a March night when it could have been just as easy to stay home, but you are interested in your Government and for that I thank you very much.

This is our Bicentennial year. We have had 200 years in America. Refresh your memories just a moment. About 200 years ago some 50 elected delegates put together this Constitution by which this country has been governed. They met from March until September. They deliberated, they compromised, they worked to put together the greatest document for the governing of people in the history of mankind.

There is a wonderful story that is told about Benjamin Franklin who left Constitution Hall in the City of Philadelphia, and as he walked down following the last meeting of that great Convention, he was accosted on the street and he was asked by a bystander, "Mr. Franklin, what have you given us -- a Republic?" And Mr. Franklin responded by saying, "We have given you a Republic if you can keep it."

Our forefathers for 200 years have kept this Republic for us. This Republic has gone through difficulties unbeknownst to us. We have met challenges from abroad and we had a war between us in America.

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We have had depressions, panics. We have had all kinds of difficulties at home, but through that span of time with the kind of Government that we have, America has met the challenge and America is great today.

I happen to have the belief that America will be kept great by the people here in Rockford, in Michigan and Wisconsin and the other 47 States. All of us of an older generation know that we inherited from our forefathers a great country. They worked and they labored and they did much to make America the great country that it is. And as I look through this audience and see some of these wonderful young people and those Girl Scouts and others here of a younger generation, I think everybody who has the chance to participate in Government -- whether it is an elective office or a party worker or as a voter -- feels a sense of obligation in the decade of the 70s to make sure that this country is good to these young people.

These young people deserve what we inherited from our forefathers. It is our solemn obligation to keep us strong at home and to keep us strong so that we can deter aggression, so that we can keep the peace, so that we can meet a challenge against our national security.

Let me say this country is strong. We have a Department of Defense -- the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, Marines -- some 2 million, 100 thousand of them; some stationed here in the United States, many of them stationed around the world who are alert, who are well equipped, who are well trained, who are well led. They are giving us the kind of security that protects America against aggression, preserves the peace and protects our national security.

So let me close by simply saying we are making headway at home in keeping America strong, and we have the military capability to make sure that our security and our lives are not in jeopardy.

This is a team effort -- the workers, the managers, the people in public office, the professional people, the young people and the old people. America's 215 million wonderful people under a wonderful form of Government with great hopes and aspirations, the protector of freedom. It is one country in the world that can give to others the inspiration to have what we have.

This is our mission, our responsibility. I know that America won't let us down, and I know America won't let others down. I am proud to be an American, and I am proud of America just as you are.

Thank you very much.

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(AT 8:35 P.M. CST)