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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

LENOIR RHYNE COLLEGE

9:30 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Congressman Broyhill, Governor Holshouser, distinguished guests and all you wonderful people of Catawba County and this area of North Carolina:

You didn't let me down; you stayed. I won't let you down, I promise you faithfully, for the next five years.

I especially want to thank your great Congressman, Jim Broyhill. I understand Jim held the fort here and came out very forcefully and very forthrightly on my behalf and, Jim, I thank you very, very much for those kind words.

Jim was in the forefront when I was a potential as a Vice President. He has been strong and helpful in the Congress, and I thank him very, very much.

May I also thank here, at the end of a long day, my good friend -- and obviously your good friend -- and your superb Governor, Jim Holshouser, for being out in front, working with me, helping me. Jim, I can't thank you enough.

Over the years I have been in Catawba County. I have been throughout the great State of North Carolina. In fact, I don't feel like a stranger in North Carolina at all. I went to school here one time for the summer at the University of North Carolina. I was stationed at Chapel Hill in the Navy for nine months early in the war, and my oldest son and his wonderful wife both graduated from Wake Forest College a couple of years ago.

As Jim Holshouser and Jim Broyhill know, I have traveled the length and the breadth of this State, trying to be helpful in various political campaigns for Governor, for Senator, for Congressmen, for the ticket, and I really feel at home, and I thank you, obviously, for this tremendous welcome.

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There is no way that I can express my gratitude sufficiently. Quite honestly, I thought maybe we would have a handful here, and I just thank you so much for this wonderful appearance here, and I won't let you down, believe me.

Before we go any further -- and I mention this because as I walked in to this fine facility, your outstanding football field out there that I, as a former Wolverine has been on the gridiron -- let me congratulate you and this school on your own great football team -- the Bears.

In football, as in politics, winning always feels real good. (Laughter) This area has had so many of the fine qualities I have always liked best about North Carolina, not only Catawba County, but Burke, Caldwell, Iredell, Lincoln and Alexandria Counties are full of good people.

I knew I would mispronounce that one county, but excuse me. (Laughter)

You are all as strong and sturdy as those who come from Hickory, and thank you all for coming from those various places.

The mountains of North Carolina are one of my favorite parts of the State. We had a little mountain dew up there at Spruce Pine today, and the ceiling was a little low. We couldn't see some of the tops of them very well.

But, they had 3,000 people out there who had waited and waited and waited, and I danced with some of those mountain loggers, and can they move their feet. (Laughter)

But, right here at Lenoir Rhyne College I can see the same signs of drive and initiative that are typical of your great State. Your President Emeritus, Dr. Cromer, launched a construction program that gave you 13 modern campus buildings.

Under the leadership of your own current distinguished President, Dr. Bost, you have almost doubled your college endowment as well as strengthening and expanding the academic program.

Having had some executive experience myself, let me say that any President would be proud of dynamic progress like that, and I congratulate both Dr. Cromer as well as Dr. Bost.

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As a footnote, let me add we are going to revitalize the United States of America just like they have done it here in Lenoir Rhyne. Incidentally, I know that in 1968 Hickory won the title of an All-American City. I can see that just wasn't the title for one year because the people of Hickory today show the same spirit of independence that has always helped make America a great, great country. That is what helped you to make your remarkable recovery from recent economic problems and that is what has been helping America to make its recovery as well.

We can see the signs of your healthy economy not just in Hickory but in Newton and Conover just as well, and we can see the signs of America's recovery in each new set of statistics that are released.

One piece of good news in those statistics is that housing starts in February showed a record increase of 27 percent over the previous month and that is movement in the right direction. That is going to mean a lot more business for your wonderful furniture factories right here in Hickory and North Carolina generally.

But that is only part of the story. Unemployment is down and we are going to keep it down. The rate of inflation is down, too -- way down. In February, the figures were just announced yesterday, the consumer price index showed its smallest increase in more than four years. The rate of inflation is one-half or more of what it was when I became President, and we are going to keep the pressure on and keep it going down.

The good news for the future is -- and this is the crucial, vital statistic of all of them -- the confidence of American consumers is up and we are going to keep it up. America's confidence is up and that is the crux of the whole matter. I think it is time, quite frankly, with all of this new good news, that people should start talking about what is good for America.

I stand here tonight and say I am proud of our great country. Our agriculture, our industrial, our economic might is second to none and so is our ability to defend it from any aggressor. I don't believe that those who are downgrading America's military capability are fully acquainted with the facts.

The facts are the United States of America is strong, it is capable of deterring aggression, of meeting the challenges from any source. It is capable of giving us total national security under any circumstances, and I am sick and tired of those who are downgrading America, whether it is our economy or our military capability.

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You know I didn't believe them when a few people up in Washington on the liberal side of the political spectrum -- when they said we needed a lot of Government interference to get out of the recession. In contrast, I charted a steady, constructive course. I pursued a balanced policy with tax cuts to help people spend, and incentives to help the business community to grow, expand and create more and more jobs.

To fight inflation I fought to keep a tight control on Federal spending, control those who would bust the budget. I used my Presidential veto. In fact, I used it 46 times and it was sustained 39 times, and those 39 instances where the Congress sustained those vetoes the American taxpayer was saved \$13 billion, and that is not bad.

That is real progress by any standards and if the Congress keeps sending down to the Oval Office of the White House those reckless spending bills, I will veto them again and again and again, until the big spenders up on Capitol Hill finally get the word. They are a little slow but they might finally get it.

Now we are going to hold down the cost of living-- let's be practical--by holding down the cost of Government. We are going to make sure that your tax dollars work as hard for you as you did to earn them. We are going to keep a balanced approach.

Here in Hickory I know you appreciate what that means because your motto, as I understand it, is the "Best Balanced City." I think that motto applies not only to your city but to your whole State. North Carolina is one of the best balanced States of all the Union. It is a State with mountain ranges, ocean beaches, with industry as well as agriculture. It is a great State to work in, a great State to relax in and a great State to live in.

Well, I like a well-balanced approach as well, like the Federal budget, and we can balance the Federal budget by 1979, and we will balance it by 1979 with your help and, incidentally, with the help of the Congress. Frankly, that would make possible further major tax cuts.

What we really want to do is put more money back into your hands for you to spend for the purposes of your family and your future.

I happen to believe, also, in a balance between Federal and local Government that will give more freedom to your State and to your local authorities, not hundreds of miles with the authority up in Washington, D. C., where the people don't understand the problems of Hickory or Catawba County or the other counties that are represented here. I believe we should strike a new balance between Government responsibility and private initiative, a new balance between those who pay taxes on the one hand and those who benefit from taxes, on the other.

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To me, balance means stability and stability means a firm foundation for the future of the United States of America. In fact, there is only one place I don't like an even balance, and that is in election results. (Laughter) I like to see solid victories, the same kind of victories that put men like Jim Broyhill and Jim Martin and Jim Holshouser to work for you in the State government or in the Congress, the same kind of solid victories that we have won in the last few weeks in New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Florida and Illinois, five times in a row, and the same kind of solid victories we are going to keep on winning, and winning, from March 23rd right on through November 2, 1976.

I am asking for your help to make sure that we keep up this momentum, to make sure that we keep a realistic, responsible Government, a Government that promises only what it can deliver and delivers everything that it promises. That is my trust to you. I am asking for your help so that we can work together to build an even greater America, and I am asking you here in North Carolina to give me your support because when a Tarheel decides to do something, it sure gets done.

Thank you very, very much.

Now I will be glad to respond to the questions, but I sure wish we were going to have one of those Balls Creek fish fries so I could get some dinner. (Laughter)

Okay, who is number one?

QUESTION: Mr. President, it is clear that you are going to be the Republican nominee for President, and I was wondering, what are the chances of us seeing Governor Holshouser on that ticket with you? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: As I have said before in North Carolina and elsewhere, Jim Holshouser is one of my best friends. I have known him a long time. I know he is not only dedicated to the principles of the Republican Party and has been a great Governor here in the State of North Carolina, and I have said very forthrightly that in the new Administration we want him on the team, but I think it is premature for me to make any categorical announcement here about my running mate.

I can just tell you that we want Jim Holshouser in Washington helping us to do a better and better job after January 20, 1977.

QUESTION: Mr. President, speaking of running mate would you consider having a woman as a running mate this year? (Laughter)

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THE PRESIDENT: I better say yes or I will get run out of the house when I get home tonight. (Laughter)

As a matter of fact, I have answered that question affirmatively in the past because we do have some extremely talented, able women, such as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Carla Hills, and others. So, I really would say yes, but again, it is premature to make any categorical determination.

Yes?

QUESTION: Mr. President, this is my question.

For our 200th birthday we have been studying how our country changed. What do you think our country will be like when I grow up? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: For the benefit of those who might not have heard the question, the young lady asked what will the United States of America be like when she grows up.

I can't be specific, I can only tell you what I hope this country will be like. In the first century of America's history we developed the greatest kind of Government in the history of mankind, where people had a right to participate and to control the Government, not the Government control them.

In our second century we developed the greatest industrial base in the history of any country in the world, and it gave us all the material things that we have. What we ought to strive for, and what I hope takes place in the third century, is that we can have that century of freedom for the individual.

This is what we should concentrate on. We should free ourselves and this country from mass Government, from mass industry, from mass labor, from mass education. The emphasis in the third century, when you grow up, ought to be on individual freedom so that you, as a person, and the 215 plus millions like you in a few years will feel that they are not oppressed by the mob, but they have a right and an opportunity to utilize their own talents, their own desires, their own ambitions and their own dreams.

QUESTION: Mr. President, what are you personally, and your Administration in general, doing on behalf of our MIAs in Southeast Asia?

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THE PRESIDENT: The question is what am I doing or the Administration doing on behalf of the MIAs who are in Vietnam, either in South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia.

In the first place, we have continued working in every way possible with the North Vietnamese Government, which is the controlling Governmental power in that part of the world. They are not a very flexible group of individuals. They, of course, allege that they would be more helpful if we would take away the trade embargo, if we would recognize them, if we would do a lot of other things.

We will continue to work to try and get their cooperation, and I have worked closely with the Congressional committee that went over and talked to the top people in the North Vietnamese Government. I can simply say that we will keep pressure on them, as we have, but we must be certain that we do not capitulate to a Government that has broken its word every time we have ever made a deal with them.

We can't trust them. We shouldn't trust them. We have to make sure that there is a bona fide quid pro quo. We want our MIAs back. I hope we can. But, it is a very delicate situation.

I can simply promise you that we will continue our efforts and will do our best, but we are -- quite actually and quite frankly -- dealing with a bunch of international pirates.

QUESTION: President Ford, I want to thank you for appearing in our city. I believe you are the first President in modern times to do so. We appreciate it.

President Ford, on business and Government, the Federal bureaucracy, the burden of Federal bureaucracy is almost unbearable. City Managers, Governors, County Managers spend most of their time working for the Federal Government.

One agency that is almost strangling to death in its own red tape is the EPA. Ours is a State of beautiful streams and lakes, and many of our rivers are becoming open sewers for the lack of sewer plants.

Here in Hickory we have done everything a small city can do. We have passed a bond referendum several years ago. They asked for study after study, and we are just getting nowhere, it seems. We are polluting our lakes and our rivers here, and that condition exists everywhere, nearly.

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If there is something you could do to get the EPA to release some money for sewers to improve our water quality, it might be the best thing we could do in America.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me answer it this way: I obviously don't know the facts in their entirety, but I can give you some factual information that is a matter of record. The EPA has all the money it can spend. There is no limitation on it. As a matter of fact, in the fiscal year budget for 1977, they will spend roughly \$6 billion 900 million all over the United States. There is no excuse whatsoever as to a lack of money, none whatsoever. So, I don't understand what the problem is.

I can assure you that I will work with Jim Broyhill. It is incomprehensible to me because money is not the problem. Isn't that right, Jim?

Jim says it is red tape. Well, if it is, we will cut some and we will get that taken care of.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

QUESTION: I can't tell you how happy I was when I heard you say a little while ago that America can defend itself. I am really sick and tired of these Communists pushing us around. I tell you what really burns me up is when these Cubans think they can push us around in all these places like Angola and Africa, and I want to know what your ideas are, your policy is, if it can't contain the Communists and all these enemies of ours?

The media keeps bombarding us with all these things like NATO is falling apart, the Communists are taking over in Italy and all this stuff, and young people like me, we just get so pessimistic. They are even getting on Dr. Kissinger, and we just don't know what to think and people get so pessimistic.

So, just tell me what can you do with this mess?
(Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Let me answer that question very specifically. You should be optimistic, not pessimistic, because the United States is the leader in the world, whether it is economically or whether it is militarily.

May I add this: The only place that the Communists have made any inroads are when the Soviet Union and Cuba went into Angola.

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In that case, as President -- and Secretary of State Kissinger said to the Congress -- we have a plan that will stop them. We have a plan that, if the Congress will approve the money, \$28 million, we will be able to take two Angolan groups that form the majority of the population of Angola and they will be able to gain control against the Soviet-Cuban backed group.

But, when the Congress turned us down, wouldn't give us the money, we couldn't support the two factions that could have won. Communism, whether it is Soviet Union or Cuba, wouldn't be in there today. That is unforgiveable, but that is the fact.

Now, let's take a minute. We have told Castro -- and these were measured words -- that he, under no circumstances, should undertake any adventures either in Latin America or elsewhere because we were going to take appropriate action.

If we do -- and I think we have to -- I hope the Congress will back me better than they did in the case of Angola. We have got to get the Congress to come along with the people and the President.

Let me quickly tell you why you should be optimistic in general. Our alliances with the NATO countries has never been better. Our relations with Japan are the best in the history of the United States. Our relations in the Middle East have been such that the United States of America could take a leading role in bringing Israel, on the one hand, and Egypt, on the other, to a very significant negotiation that kept the momentum for peace in the Middle East moving.

No other country in the world could have taken that leadership except the United States.

We could go around the globe and I could give you other illustrations that would show beyond any question of a doubt that the United States is respected in the world. The United States is a leader in the world. These people who go around downgrading our reputation, our credibility, our effectiveness, unfortunately don't know what they are talking about.

QUESTION: Mr. President, this is my question.

Mr. President, I understand that you were an Eagle Scout. (Laughter) What role has scouting played in your life, and how can scouting help benefit the American boy? (Laughter)

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THE PRESIDENT: I was an Eagle Scout. I am proud of the fact that I was an Eagle Scout, and I am proud of the Boy Scouts of America.

You know, the Scout oath and the Scout laws are the best guidelines I know to give you the right direction in school, in marriage, in your career to make your life happy and prosperous. So, if you live up to the Scout oath and the Scout laws, you are going to make it. I can just tell you, you can't go wrong. Good luck to you.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford, in recent months you have made two crucial decisions on consumer affairs; one, your threatened veto of the Agency for Consumer Protection, a nonregulatory agency which would have provided legal representation for consumers before regulatory agencies and, two, a story which just came out this week that you have apparently reversed your position on a bill currently before Congress which would permit State Attorney Generals to represent consumers in Federal antitrust cases.

Would you please explain your apparent reluctance to place consumer representatives on a more equitable footing with industry representatives before both regulatory agencies and in antitrust litigation?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me answer the first one first.

We hear continuously that we ought to reduce Federal interference, that we ought to cut down on bureaucracy, that we ought to get rid of one bureau after another. Under the consumer protection legislation you are talking about, we would add another one, another layer.

That agency, if it had been approved by the Congress -- and it hasn't yet, and I hope it won't -- if that legislation were to go through, you would have that group in that independent agency interfering with the orderly processes in every agency of the Federal Government today.

If you think things are slow -- and that gentleman was talking about red tape -- the Consumer Protection Agency would slow it down 100 percent more.

Now, Jim Broyhill knows more about that legislation in the Capital because you are on that committee, aren't you, Jim? But Jim is an authority on the legislation. It is bad. It would have added to red tape, added to bureaucracy, and it cannot be justified.

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Now, what we have tried to do -- which I think makes a lot more sense -- we have told every Cabinet officer and every other administrative officer that in each department there should be a consumers subdivision so that if a consumer has an objection to a ruling or a regulation of that department, that complainant can go to that agency and get an opportunity to get a fair hearing.

I think that is a better solution than adding more bureaucrats and another bureau in Washington, D.C.

Now, on the other one, it is called the *parens patriae* bill. It was legislation first approved in May of 1974 by the previous Administration. It never came to my desk until about ten days ago, the Republican leader in the House of Representatives called me and said, "Are you familiar with this legislation?" I said, "No, it has never been called to my attention."

We went back and checked the records. The Department of Justice had continued with the same recommendation that was approved by the previous Administration without any additional consultation with me in the White House.

When I got into it, what did I find out? In the first place, it would have deputized every State's Attorney -- in North Carolina, Michigan, elsewhere -- to undertake on their own class actions to allegedly enforce antitrust legislation. I don't think State Attorneys General should be seeking to enforce U.S. Federal antitrust legislation. That is the responsibility, as I see it, of the Department of Justice.

Secondly, since I have become President, I have recommended higher penalties, both criminal and civil, for violations of our antitrust laws, and Congress passed that legislation.

In the budget for the next fiscal year, I recommended 25 more antitrust lawyers in the Department of Justice because we want the laws on the books fully enforced, and they will be, but it ought to be done by Federal authorities, not by Attorneys General of various States who would use that as a political stepping stone for their own political ambition.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I have had the privilege of talking to three Presidents before in my life: You, General Eisenhower, Woodrow Wilson and -- let's see, I can't remember the other name.

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THE PRESIDENT: Teddy Roosevelt?

QUESTION: Well, three besides you, and I think you are the greatest President we have ever had in the United States. I also have a boy named Gerald. He made straight A's in high school and grammar school for 12 straight years.

THE PRESIDENT: He did better than I did. (Laughter)

QUESTION: He was a quarterback, he weighed 260 pounds. He played end, he played fullback. He starred in baseball and basketball.

I asked him one day, I said, "Gerald, what do you want to be when you grow up to be a grown man?" He said, "I want to be President of the United States." I said, "Well, if you go to school long enough, you might be one." So, I sent him through school.

I said to him the other day, I said, "Gerald, how would you like to be in President Ford's place?" He said, "No, I don't want that, that is too much work for me." Well, he has got a job as traffic manager for Singer Industries in Lenoir, and he looks after a fleet of truck lines and also railroad cars and other things, and he comes in cussing every night about how hard he has to work.

Also, I want to ask you why you like to be President so good and when do you ever plan to quit and rest some? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I like the job of being President because I like the challenges that come across that desk every day. I like the challenge of working on problems, whether they are domestic or international. I like the opportunity to serve people and to do what I can to improve the lot of America, both at home and abroad.

It is a great challenge. I have always responded to challenges, and every working day is a better day, and I think every working day is going to be better.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: There is one more thing I want to say. I got to thinking about you yesterday, so I made a piece of antique furniture and brought it to you. When you get tired of going all over the United States and working yourself to death, I want you to take a rest. I brought you a big chair with a hard rock bottom, and it has a back in it where you can lay your head back and sleep up a storm --

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much, sir.

QUESTION: -- and get shaded with a big tree over the top of it. I wish I could bring it out and show it to the crowd of people.

THE PRESIDENT: . Thank you very much.

QUESTION: What have you done because of a strong personal belief that you thought might have opposed public opinion?

THE PRESIDENT: The question is, what have I done where I had a strong personal conviction where I recognized that there was substantial or majority opposition on the part of the public?

Probably the one that is most recent is the initial reaction to the decision that I made to support the two elements in Angola. I don't think that was a popular decision at the time, but I think now that the public recognizes the consequences, that Cuba sent 12,000 mercenaries into Angola and the Soviet Union now controls that very rich country, I think the American public wishes we had made that investment.

But, at the time I knew it was right. There was a great similarity -- and this is important -- in the 1930s the United Nations did not respond when Italy went into Ethiopia. That didn't seem very significant. It didn't seem like it was anything that related to Western Europe or to the United States.

But, most historians will agree that if the League of Nations at that time had moved in and stopped Mussolini from moving into Ethiopia, a lot of the potential problems of World War II never would have materialized.

Now, the circumstances are not identical, but there is enough similarity that we ought to learn from history. I felt at the time that we should have acted, and I believe there is a growing sentiment that we should have done it, but a President has to make some decisions that are not always popular as long as he thinks they are right.

I can assure you that I will do what is right, and hopefully will have the backing of the American people.

Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. President, my question is, how do you stand on school busing? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I have had the same position for the last ten years, so it is not something that has been developed in relationship to this Presidential campaign. I have never believed that court-ordered forced busing was the best way to achieve quality education.

I firmly believe that our goal should be quality education. I firmly believe that we have to make certain that the Constitutional rights of people are upheld.

In other words, we can't just have segregation in our public schools. But, there is a better way to get quality education and to achieve desegregation than by court-ordered forced busing to achieve racial balance.

As Jim Broyhill knows, I have vigorously, from the beginning, said we have got to find another answer. I can assure you that the pressure that we have exerted across the board is getting some better results today than we got five years ago in some of the decision-making process.

Let me conclude by just thanking all of you. It has been a long night. I have enjoyed the opportunity to see so many of you, to respond to your questions. I ask you again, I would most gratefully appreciate your support next Tuesday.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 10:12 P.M. EST)