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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE  
PRESIDENT FORD COMMITTEE  
FUND RAISING DINNER

CENTURY PLAZA HOTEL

10:02 P.M. PST

Thank you very, very much, John, Ed Carter, my good friends in the Congress, Clair Burgener, John Rousselot and Chuck Wiggins, Ev Younger, Bob Mosbacher, Your Eminence and Rabbi Magnin:

Let me, at the outset, express my deepest appreciation to Cary Grant, to Leona Mitchell and to Howard Keel. If I had had my preference, I wish all three would have extended their time about three times. I would have enjoyed it a great deal more.

May I say to Cary that I really enjoyed his performance as Master of Ceremonies. I liked his style, I liked the way he did it, but let me contrast it to a Master of Ceremonies of a program I attended last night. It was the Annual Dinner of the Radio and Television Broadcasters Association in Washington, D. C., and I was one of the guests and they had as their Master of Ceremonies a young star on television called Chevy Chase. I don't know how many of you know him but he has moved up very, very rapidly in the television business. He has a show on Saturday nights at 11:30 and the prime theme of his performance is mimicking me. (Laughter)

And he struck on a responsive cord a few months ago when there were some comments concerning my alleged clumsiness and he has made a pretty good profession out of it. (Laughter) But, anyhow, last night when he was introduced there was a big audience in Washington, D. C., and he makes his entry down a center aisle and he stumbles all over as he finally gets up to the rostrum here and he falls and, well, it goes on for about five minutes or more -- it seemed like an hour. (Laughter)

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But we were prepared for him, and if I may take a minute, we had some suspicion that he might do just this so we had a false tablecloth sitting where I was sitting and he was on the other side during the evening meal and we had two of those big coffee urns filled with silver -- knives, forks and spoons -- and as I got up following his very complimentary introduction I pulled the tablecloth and all this fell down and made a lot of clatter and made a big hullabaloo.

And then I came to the podium and I had my speech book and I had it on top with about 40 or 50 pages and I put my speech book down like this and I put the other things up like this and then they all went down like that. (Laughter) I hope I did not throw away your notes.

Then I turned to Chevy Chase and said, "Chevy, you are a very, very, very funny suburb. (Laughter) And I concluded with saying, "I'm Gerald Ford and you're not. (Laughter)

But then, if I might -- as you can see, I enjoyed your being Master of Ceremonies much more tonight, Cary, but I do appreciate very much Leona Mitchell's rendition of some of my most favorite songs, and although I am not an expert in the Metropolitan Opera, I certainly appreciated that wonderful voice and that selection.

Howard Keel sang from my favorite musical comedy, Oklahoma, which brought to my mind an incident that happened when I was the Republican Leader of the House for five terms. Every year, when a new Congress convenes, or every two years, the defeated minority candidate for the Speaker of the House has to act very generous in presenting the elected Speaker even though you wished you had gotten enough votes in the previous November election to prevail. And after I had done it three times as a generous gesture to Speaker McCormick of Massachusetts, the Democrats came up with a new man, Carl Albert, from Oklahoma.

Well, the truth is Oklahoma is one of my favorite musical comedies and I was trying to think of some new way of introducing the new Speaker after he had defeated me about 240 to 180, or whatever the score was, and I was trying to change from Boston, Massachusetts, to Oklahoma, and I talked to Bob Hartmann who has been with me for a number of years and I said, "Bob, we have to find a new way to do it," and I mentioned casually that Oklahoma was a favorite, so he came back with this version, Howard. He said, "Why don't you do it this way." So without singing it, I will go through the words as we did it. It goes something like this: "Oh, what a beautiful morning, oh, what a beautiful day, if I had 40 more votes in my pocket, everything would be going my way." (Laughter)

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I certainly want to thank Ed and John in particular, but I do want to thank all of you who are here this evening and giving your support to our effort, and I thank all of you on behalf of Betty and myself and Steve, also, and let me say without any hesitation or qualification we won't let you down for the next four years.

I am obviously delighted to be here this evening, and with a simple, straightforward message that I think is in keeping with this very happy occasion. The message is simply this -- 1976 is going to be a great year for the Republic and a great year for the Republicans.

I can see the good signs and so can the American people. They are the signs of a rejuvenation, the signs of health and vitality returning to a country that not too long ago seemed frozen in a long, long cold winter. I am sure you vividly remember what our economy was like last year, although I am sure many of us would like to forget it.

But, you may not remember what some of our opponents were saying a year ago, and I am sure they would like us to forget their doom and gloom predictions of about 12 months ago. For example, in February of 1975, George Meany warned that everything was pointing downward, down to a depression. He forecast that there would be a 10 percent unemployment rate by July, that it was inevitable.

In February of 1975, a leading spokesman of the Democratic Party, a good friend of mine, Hubert Horatio Humphrey, said, "Unless we take some very concrete and effective action very quickly within the next 60 or 90 days, I think we would be approaching what you would call the dimensions of a depression."

Those prophecies were false, and we knew they were false from the very beginning. We had far more faith than they did in the great American economic machine.

We weren't about to give in to the temptation of quick fixes and very empty promises. I pursued a steady, balanced policy aimed at insuring our nation's long-term economic health, not just for a week or a month, not just for an election, but for the long term.

I fought hard, and the odds on occasion were pretty tough. We fought against the shortsighted approach then, and I am going to keep on fighting against it now, and for the next four years as well.

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They have great imagination. In case you have not heard, they are cooking up a new legislative miracle position with a very attractive label. This one has some very familiar names on it -- Gus Hawkins and Hubert Humphrey.

If there ever was a bill or proposed legislation that promised more than it can deliver, this is it. There is a curious consensus that this bill is bad news. Conservatives say it would lead to a planned economy similar to those in Socialist countries.

Some labels say they doubt whether the Government can simply wave a magic wand and achieve specific numerical goals for unemployment, interest rates, and who else knows what.

A labor economist who supports the bill says, "It will do very little for the working poor." Practically everybody says that this bill does not take into account its own inflationary impact on the national economy. You can't get Hubert Humphrey or Gus Hawkins to tell you how much the bill will cost. Maybe they don't know or maybe they are just afraid to tell us.

But, whatever its cost, it is probably much too much, and I can assure you that if this bill gets to my desk in the Oval Office, I have got a ready veto to stamp on it.

The facts are, we are on the road to prosperity in this country, and we are not going to take any wrong turns at this point in the road. The fact is that today the American economy is good and getting better all the time. Inflation is way, way down, less than half of what it was, and we are going to keep it going down.

Unemployment is going down, too. We have recovered almost unbelievably all the jobs numerically that had been lost during the depths of the recession in March and April of last year. We are back up to 86 million 400 thousand gainfully employed, the same record of several years ago, before 1973 and 1974.

We are going to keep Americans working. I am going to keep up the pressure in the right way until every American who wants a job has a job. The fact is that people in this country have more cash and they have more confidence than they did when I became President 19 months ago and because they have that renewed confidence in themselves and in their country, they are going to use that cash.

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That is why retail sales have been rising steadily. That is why we have seen a substantial increase in new car sales and the purchase of durable goods. That new confidence is why American consumers are going to keep up their demands for the great products that America has to offer.

One recent survey looked at how many Americans plan to buy a car in the next six months and found the highest percentage in nine years. The same survey looked at how many Americans expect their personal income to rise in the next six months and found the highest level in seven years. Another survey looked at how many Americans are in the market for stocks, bonds, mutual funds and found the first clear increase in over two years.

These are all signs of a springtime economy. These are some of the signs that show our recovery is going to be full and complete, and that the American economy is going to be just as strong and healthy in the future as it has been in the best years of the past.

I am going to make sure that our economy stays on the right track. I am not going to risk our economy or our recovery by giving way to another onslaught of the budget busters in the Congress.

Some of you may know that I have already used my Presidential veto 46 times in the last 19 months. They tell me that is a record. But, we have gotten the Congress, or a sufficient number of them, to sustain 39 of those vetoes, which means that we were able to save you and all of the American taxpayers \$13 billion, and that is not bad.

I want to thank Chuck Wiggins, Clair Burgener and John Rousselot, who are here. Without checking the record, I would say that the odds are that they voted to sustain 39 out of those 39 vetoes. But, if this spendthrift Congress -- and they know it better than I -- comes back to me with more reckless spending bills, then I am going to use my veto again and again and again.

We are going to hold down the cost of living by holding down the cost of Government. We are going to make sure that your tax dollars work as hard for you as you do for them. The Democrats in the Congress have a slightly different idea. It looks like they are going to send me a budget for the next fiscal year of some \$20 billion more than I recommended in January of this year, and on top of that, they are talking about taking away the \$10 billion tax reduction that I recommended to go into effect on July 1.

That may be the Democrats' idea of fiscal responsibility, but let me tell you, Ford has a far better idea. My idea is to cut the growth of Federal spending and give the tax cut to you and to millions of others who need it and deserve it, and to the best of our ability we will do so in 1976.

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Our experience in the last year and one half has shown once again that the American economic system is strong and capable of meeting great, great challenges. Our experiences have confirmed our belief in the great free economic system and the great free society established by our forefathers 200 years ago, and the returning strength of other free economies. In Europe, in Japan and other parts of the world as well, is now adding to that momentum of our own recovery here in the United States.

Our experience has shown that the Administration's policies have been the right ones. The mistakes of the past have taught us to recognize that short-term solutions are what they are -- no answer. Quick fix solutions can look very attractive, particularly if they have a beautiful label, especially to a Democratic Congress in an election year.

But only a steady, long-term policy will lead us to a sound and prosperous economy with full employment, unburdened by a high rate of inflation. Obviously -- and I am the first to admit it -- we have not licked all of our problems yet. Frankly, the figures lately have been even better than we had expected. And I would not be surprised or discouraged if we occasionally saw a few figures that are not quite as good in the months ahead, but the trend is right and the trend is strong and we are going to keep it that way.

The figures are good but the United States is not composed of statistics. It is composed of people, and when those people feel good about where they are going, as they do now, then this country is clearly headed in the right direction, and when the people feel that way, it means they want continuity and stability. They don't want to change horses in midstream. I don't think they want to trade in their Ford for another model in 1976.

As I travel around the country, it is very clear to me that the majority of the American people are now returning to Republican values that I have always stood for and voted for during my quarter of a century in the Congress. I knew they were the right ones then. They are the right ones now and we are going to keep them in the record book for the next four years.

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If you want to see what I mean, just take a look at some of the popular themes being talked about by the Democrats in 1976. Just listen to this quotation. "The average American is fed up with footing the bill for high glown, unplanned bureaucratic schemes which fail to deliver effectives services." I did not say that. Bill Simon did not say that. Barry Goldwater did not say that. We could have said it but that particular quotation came straight from Jimmy Carter, the Democratic leading contender in the primary races.

And Mo Udall, my very good friend with whom I served in the Congress for many years, the most liberal of the leading Democratic candidates, does not even call himself a liberal any more. He says the word "liberal" is associated, and again I quote, "with big spending, wasteful extravagance in Government."

Well, some of us have been saying that for years. They seem to be a little slower in getting the word, but bet r late than never. Those are some of the borrowed ideas that the Democrats are using to appeal to the American voter this year along with some other ideas that sound awfully familiar to some of us Republicans, and that is why we are going to meet the Democrats in November, no matter who their nominee is -- whether it is Jimmy Carter, Scoop Jackson, Hubert Humphrey -- because we have had a lot more experience with and dedication to the ideas that they are now espousing.

They have just changed their tune, but we have been singing the same song a long, long time and that is the song that the American people believe in now and they will believe in, because it works, and they want success and progress.

The Democrats are just beginning to recognize the basic truth that I have maintained, and others have, for a long, long time, that a Government big enough to give you everything you want is a Government big enough to take from you everything you have.

It is my full intention to keep on giving the American people straight talk instead of empty promises. The Administration is going to continue its policy of promising only what we can deliver and delivering everything that we promise.

The only promise I am going to make here tonight is that we are going to win in Kansas City in August of 1976, but we are also going to win in November, all of us.

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May I say a word about a subject that John McCone mentioned. He talked about the bread and butter. As John indicated, I served most of the time that I had the privilege of being in the Congress on the Defense Appropriations Committee -- some 14 years -- and had the opportunity during that period of time to listen to all of the top witnesses, Secretaries of Defense, Assistant Secretaries and Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and on down, and I can say from that experience, and as Vice President, and now as President, that the United States of America has a capability that all of us should be proud of.

We are number one. When you take into consideration our great economic system, our industrial capacity, our agricultural production, our commercial strength and our military capability, this country is number one in competition with anybody else. And when you add to that formula of military strength, economic power and agricultural production, the one great ingredient of moral strength that we have in America, we have no fear whatsoever as to the future of our country.

But let me close by simply saying that anyone who doubts that we will win in Kansas City and finally in the country in November -- let me quote the words of the distinguished conservative philosopher, Edmund Burke, who said, "He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skills. Our antagonist is our helper."

Thank you very much.

END (AT 10:30 P.M. PST)