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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION  
AT THE  
GOODRICH HIGH SCHOOL FARM FORUM

9:43 A.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much, Bill, Governor Knowles, Mel Laird, ladies and gentlemen:

It is really a great privilege and a pleasure to have been in the greatest dairy State in the whole Union for the last day and a half, and the warm welcome and the wonderful reception I deeply appreciate and to see this great crowd here this morning touches me very greatly.

But just as Wisconsin and my own home State of Michigan share the upper Great Lakes, Michigan also shares your great attachment to America's bountiful dairy and pasture lands. We cannot compete in the production but we have the same warmth and affection toward the dairy production and all the things that make your State so great.

I also congratulate Wisconsin on all of its great achievements and its accomplishments, its production and warm and fine people.

I think all of us recognize that America's future depends upon America's farmers. Our national heritage was created by farmers. All Americans -- actually, the entire world -- today depend more than ever upon all of you.

Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act which embodied our fundamental belief in the importance of the American family farm. Lincoln was so right.

Thomas Jefferson, George Washington had shared the same great vision. They were convinced -- so am I -- that a man with a stake in his own land is a free man. His family is a free family and together the family farm is the basis of our free society.

There is a saying in Michigan that the only way a young person can get started in farming is to marry one or inherit one. (Laughter) And it is getting much harder to do either. (Laughter) Particularly the latter. (Laughter)

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Not only in Michigan but in Wisconsin, throughout our country, we have got to do something about this problem. That is because the individual who inherits a farm is often too severely pressed to pay the estate taxes on it. Our outdated inheritance laws, which have not responded to inflation, are a very real threat to the family farm, and that is why this Administration is working so hard for new laws to solve this serious problem.

We must maintain the continuity and the strength of our family farm. Too much labor and too much love go into the development of a paying farm to dismantle it with every new generation. That is particularly true on the dairy farm where the hours are endless -- and you know them better than I, those cows must be milked twice every day.

Women are also involved, as men are, in the operation of a farm and every child and every family contributes his or her share. So it is only fair that the family farm, already a vital institution, continues to flourish as a profitable and free enterprise.

You and all farmers must have a fair return for your long and tireless and hard work. That is your goal and it will be mine, as I continue to work for strong markets for our farmers' production.

We must never forget that American farmers must profit if America is to be a profitable going country. There must be enough income for each of you to buy new stock, to replace equipment, to build new barns, to conserve and to enrich your soil, to adopt new techniques and to buy essential supplies. That is what keeps the entire American economy moving.

A decision was required on the unfair competition on certain foreign dairy imports just a few days ago. The question involved foreign nonfat dry milk mixtures designed to evade our dairy import quotas. Importers tried to buy past our limitations by mixing dried milk with other ingredients. As President, I will not tolerate such practices.

Accordingly, last week I signed a proclamation to put a zero quota on such imports. The last three years have been the highest three years of net farm income in America's history. That is the way it should be. That is the way it is going to be. It took hard, hard work on your part and it took the right kind of farm policies.

In recent days the world's population passed the 4 billion mark. Looking ahead, we will be hard put to feed the entire world. There is certainly no time to pull back our efforts to help increase your productivity and your efficiency.

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For 25-plus years I had the privilege and the honor of representing farmers, including dairy farmers, when I served in the Congress. As President, I refuse to go back to the old, harmful farm practices we had during most of those years. They meant disaster for too many farmers. They created great surpluses. They damaged the free market economy. I will not go back to those programs that require the Department of Agriculture to interfere in the daily operation of every farm in America and I will use every power in my command to inject some common sense into the operation of the Federal agencies which seek occupational safety and health and environmental protection. We have to do a better job in that regard.

We all believe in safety, health and the environment, but the farmer is also entitled to safety from those who would create an environment in which his farm cannot function.

Under this Administration we have worked toward a minimum of Federal regulation. We are making some headway but we have got a long way to go and, with your help, in the next four years we will make the kind of progress that is needed and necessary to make a better America.

Had it not been for your productivity, it would not have been possible to increase agricultural exports to \$22 billion in 1975. Wisconsin depends mostly on imported petroleum. Without the increase in farm exports, we would have been hard put to pay the increased price for foreign oil.

Imported petroleum costs America -- this is the one-year cost -- last year \$27 billion, and the figure, unfortunately, will be even higher in 1976.

I appreciate very deeply what the American farmer is doing for America. Whether you are a dairy farmer, raise hogs or grow soybeans, you bolster our economy. Farm families also enhance our ethical, religious and moral values, our patriotism and our national character.

To be strong externally, we must reassert traditional values that strengthen us here at home and we must reject big Government concepts in favor of a true partnership in which private land-owning men and women can achieve prosperity without undue Federal interference.

Farming is far too important to be left to the politicians in or out of Washington.

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To the dairy farmers of America I say you must have every opportunity to make a fair profit out of your milk. You must have adequate incentives for full food production. We must keep the dead hands of Federal regulation off your farms so that you can use the live hands of the farmers and produce and produce and produce.

As one travels around the world, you see some nations with other economic and political philosophies. They have virtually the same tractors and the same bailers that you use but those nations do not have the greatest piece of farm machinery ever built -- the free enterprise system of the United States of America.

We have turned things around in rural America but we must keep moving in the right direction. We have much more to do. I am ready, willing and able to work with you to get that job done. I am fighting to cut Government spending, to curb inflation, to assure a growing economy for the future, but this struggle can only succeed if you, our farmers, will succeed. I am on your side. Let's work together.

Thank you very much.

Now, let's get to the part that I enjoy the most. Those good hard questions that always seem to --

QUESTION: I am a producer of raw materials. I am a little strange to the mike yet.

It is a known fact that pseudo-money to stimulate our economy will also cause inflation. Why can't it be known by our lawmakers that our raw materials are our real wealth and the more we pay for them the more we have to employ the unemployed, stimulate our economy, and pay our debts, or to put it short, why does our Government insist on monetizing debts rather than wealth which ties in with the takeover of our freedom.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, as I understand the question, your are in effect saying why do we have Federal deficits and why do we have the Federal debt that we have. Is that correct, sir?

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QUESTION: Well, partly, but if the farmers were paid for their product, that money would multiply and help the whole Government. In the years that the farmers were paid we had no deficit in Government, and if the farmers were paid for their product, then we could employ unemployed and everybody would have more money.

THE PRESIDENT: I totally agree with you, sir, that in order to have a healthy, prosperous economy in the United States we must have a healthy agricultural segment of our economy.

QUESTION: That is right.

THE PRESIDENT: Now as I indicated in my prepared remarks, the last three years we have had the highest three years of net farm income in the United States. That does not mean that every segment of agriculture has profitted as well as others. This year the cotton farmers are doing very well. The previous year or two they did not do well. A year or so ago some other segments of our agriculture were doing well. They have had a fall-off. The cattle producers are now having a difficult time. What we have to do is try to get some basic stability so that all agriculture does well, and if it does, then the farm machinery producers will do well, the banks will do well, the American people will be well fed. But we have gone through a traumatic period in the last 20 months, for example. Our economy was seriously upset by the oil embargo. We had a three times increase in petroleum costs because we were so dependent on foreign imported oil.

We have got to get this imbalance rectified so we have an economy which is a stable, upward trend. I think we are making headway. Inflation has been cut in half. Unemployment is going down. Employment is going up, and this will have a stabilizing effect, and we are headed for a balanced budget in the Federal Government if we can get the Congress to cut the rate of growth in Federal expenditures, and I think we are going to do it.

QUESTION: The Federal Reserve Board regulates our monetary system, and it is a good tool to be used when the economy is overheated, but when this happens, it causes undue hardship for that individual that has just started or expanded his business and his funds are committed and the only way he can get out from underneath this is liquidation. What do you feel can be done to alleviate that problem?

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THE PRESIDENT: You are exactly right that the Federal Reserve Board controls the supply of money and basically the interest rates throughout the country. In the past we have had too much fluctuation, they have either contracted too severely or they have inflated it too greatly and the net results is, to some extent at least, they have contributed to the peaks and valleys in our economy. Under the present leadership in the Federal Reserve Board they have agreed to have a range of increase in the supply of money of four and a half to, I think, seven percent and that is a reasonable range, depending upon the fiscal policy of the Federal Government and other factors.

At the present time, as I understand it, they are, more or less, in the middle of that range over the two or three or four month period, and, consequently, it does appear that interest rates are falling. I know the Federal Government is paying less today than it did a few months ago for the money it borrows and long-range interest rates are beginning to ease a bit.

I don't think we have to take any dramatic action right now. It is my understanding that savings and loans and mutual loaning institutions have had a great inflow of money from the American people putting it in there for their savings and that, in turn, is going to make not only more money available to those that have to borrow, but money available at a lesser interest rate.

So I think we are moving in the right direction, and I can assure you that the Federal Reserve Board is cognizant of the precise problem you are talking about and we will try to make certain that they don't pinch off anything to create the problems that we have had in the past on some occasions.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: I'm from Campbellsport where you had breakfast this morning.

THE PRESIDENT: A real good breakfast. More than I could eat.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, how are you justifying Mr. Meany's delaying action of the grain shipment to Russia?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the decision on Mr. Meany's part to embargo grain shipments, I think, was unjustified, but the problem was, how do we solve it?

Now, if there had been court action and some people had undertaken court action to stop it, that would have been a long process. It would have taken under our court system a local court decision, it could have been appealed, it could have been appealed for a period of six or eight months, and the whole shipment of grain would have been held at the ports and that would not have helped anything because grain would have backed up all the way to the farms here in Iowa and Nebraska and Wisconsin, and elsewhere.

So the better way to do it was to undertake what we did -- was to negotiate a long-term grain shipment arrangement with the Soviet Union so we have a guaranteed minimum of 6 million tons per year and for five years. In that way we got the labor unions to back off and we could continue to ship the grain that was already contracted for and we didn't have the back-up that would have created a catastrophe in transportation and a storage problem for the farmers on their own farms.

So in order to avoid that we did what we did. It was not capitulation to Mr. Meany, it was a practical solution to a practical problem and we ended up with a firm arrangement for the shipment or the purchase of at least 6 million tons of American grain, an assured market and the family and farmer is going to be the beneficiary.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am president of the Lake Winnebago Area Health Systems Agency. I am very concerned as a farmer about rural health care or the lack of it. Even in the best of rural areas health care is wanting and this situation does not appear to be changing since statistically the doctors in the rural areas are older doctors and it is questionable for replacement.

What do you have as a program to help rural health care and the rural health care needs?

THE PRESIDENT: In the first place, in the last five years there has been a tremendous increase in medical school education facilities. Mel Laird had a lot to do with that program when he was in the Congress. We are expanding our medical schools. We have many, many more doctors being trained all over the country. We have a number of new medical schools. So the supply of doctors will increase.

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The problem is how to get them out into the rural communities. I am told that there is a growing trend as they discuss with medical students what they want to do, whether they want to be a specialist or a general practitioner, et cetera, that more and more of them for a wide variety of good reasons are indicating that they want to move to our small towns and into rural America. That is one trend that I think will help solve the problem you are discussing, particularly with more doctors. There are so many of them in most of our major metropolitan areas that it is not a good ratio and we need the ratio changed.

But the other problem of how to get our Federal funds for health care properly distributed--I recommended a change from the 26 categorical grant programs that we now have in the Federal Government for health care in one block grant program. And what does that mean? It means that the State of Wisconsin, for example, that has many rural health problems, will get a total sum, as much as they have gotten in the past from the 20-some categorical grant programs.

That money will go to the State agency and the State agency can then decide how they want to distribute that money, and how it is done in Wisconsin will probably be different than how it is done in Pennsylvania or in South Carolina or in Florida. So your local people at the State and local level can decide how that Federal money will be spent, and I suspect that people in Wisconsin will have a little influence on how your State people make those decisions so a greater proportion of those funds can go to rural Wisconsin, but that is a local decision with the same or more Federal money made available.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

QUESTION: Mr. President, my wife and myself and family operate just a medium-sized dairy farm, I would say. You touched on the transferring of estate before and the amount of exemption involved and so on, and this is a concern that I am very interested in. I feel that it is extremely outdated.

The modern family dairy farm has an investment of anywhere from \$250,000 to \$300,000 -- many of them are much larger, some are smaller, but I would say a good share of them come in that category. I feel that the exemption should be raised so that this property could be transferred to a spouse who is remaining, at least, I would say, to the area of \$240,000 to give them a little opportunity to transfer this without being taxed out of existence.

I would like to hear your views a little more extended.

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THE PRESIDENT: Well, the present law which was passed in 1942 provides for a \$60,000 exemption and no real provision for any relief in the payment of the estate tax monies that are owed. I have recommended that that \$60,000 exemption be increased to \$150,000 and, in order to help those who have an estate of more than \$150,000 the remainder that is taxed, the payments for that can be spread over a five-year period with no payments and the payments that are left would be spread over a 20-year period at four percent interest on annual increments paid.

So it does provide for better than a double increase in the exemption, from \$60,000 to \$150,000, plus the capability to spread the payments for any additional tax over a 25-year period. Instead of having to borrow the money from a bank and pay whatever the bank charges, you will have a five-year moratorium and then 20 payments, paying the Federal Government four percent interest. I think that is a good way in which to help finance the transfer of the farm from one generation to another.

Now, this is presently before the House Committee on Ways and Means, which is the taxation committee of the Congress, and I hope that that legislation or something comparable to it will be enacted by the Congress this year. It is long overdue.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am a dairy farmer from Sheboygan County and the town of Greenbush. I must say I would like in my heart to support you because I believe you are an honest and a good man, but your farm policy from my point of view leaves much to be desired and I refer specifically to the cheap food policy of Mr. Butz.

I would like to ask you if you would consider removing Mr. Butz from office because of this policy and if you would also consider some kind of a method of establishing some kind of a board or something, an advisory board maybe, where we farmers from the grassroots level could possibly help you in establishing farm policy and give you advice on what we really need?

THE PRESIDENT: I respectfully disagree with you. I think Earl Butz is the finest, or certainly one of the finest Secretaries of Agriculture this country has ever had, and I will tell you why.

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Before Mr. Butz became Secretary of Agriculture, we had farm policies which resulted in unbelievable surpluses being owed or owned by the Federal Government. They had piled up to the extent that Uncle Sam, your Government and my Government, was paying almost \$400 million a year just in storage policies. There were storage fees. That is not a good farm policy. That kind of a farm policy with the heavy surpluses overhanging the market kept farm prices down.

Farm prices generally have gone up under Secretary Butz' policies and programs, and we don't have any surpluses and we are selling more agricultural commodities all over the world than we ever have in the history of the United States.

The worst kind of farm policy would be one to go back to this surplus that we had for 15 or 20 years because those surpluses depress your farm prices and Mr. Butz has sought to get rid of them, we have gotten rid of them, and farm prices are better now than they were when he took over.

All I can say is we are going to do everything we can to keep surpluses from getting accumulated and depressing farm prices. We are not going back to those old farm policies which in many, many cases contributed significantly to the flow of family farm owners from the farm to the city. We want to reverse that policy and get more people owning family farms in this country.

Now, on the second question that you asked, I have established what we call the Farm Policy Board. It is a Cabinet policy -- a policy committee, the chairman of it is Secretary Butz. It has three or four other Cabinet members plus other top advisers. That agricultural policy committee will recommend to me policies as to farm decisions of one kind or another.

I think that incorporates the best thinking of the people in the Executive Branch of the Government, but I am sure that Secretary Butz himself, in the Department of Agriculture, consults freely with the Farm Bureau, the various dairy organizations, the Farmers Union, the Grange and all of the others to get their considered judgment as he recommends farm policy to the board and they to me.

We want the input of agricultural people at the grassroots level, and I am sure that the department is getting them and by the meetings that I have held in Illinois, the one in Wisconsin last week and the one here this week, I am getting a pretty good input, too, and I like it.

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QUESTION: Well, Mr. Ford, I will agree with what you said about the opposite of the policy that we have, but I think somewhere in between there must be a policy where we can make more stability in agriculture. The dairy portion of agriculture has been hurt extremely along with the livestock portion. We cannot tolerate peaks and lows when we must live in these lows for -- not the last time was an 18 month period, and particularly the young farmer with a huge amount of borrowed money has found it nearly impossible.

This is what I mean, that we have to have something different than that.

I thank you for the privilege of talking to you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am a dairy farmer from Fairwater, Wisconsin. It might just interest you to know that I am also President of the Ripon Republican Club, birthplace of the Republican Party.

I want to, first of all, commend you on all your vetoes that you have made in Washington and even the dairy support veto, but it bothers me. I am wondering, what do you plan on doing about labor? They keep on striking and they get higher and higher wages and the cost is passed on to those of us who buy the supplies and the tractors. Probably three-quarters of us can hardly afford anymore to buy a new tractor, they start at \$10,000 and they run up.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first let me thank you for mentioning the vetoes. I vetoed 46 bills in 19 months. Thirty-nine of those vetoes have been upheld by the Congress and as a result of those vetoes and 39 of them being sustained by a third of the Members of either the House or the Senate, we have saved the taxpayers \$13 billion.

We are engaged right now in a very difficult negotiation between the truckers and the Teamsters. It is a tough negotiation and I got word this morning that there had been a settlement of approximately 60 percent of the trucking industry and there are several other segments of it that have not yet settled, but they are optimistic that that will take place.

This is the kind of a negotiation that I think has to take place between labor and management and only as a last resort should the Government get in and use the legislation that is available. It is far better, from our national point of view and the philosophy that I think most of us have, that the parties themselves should settle their differences.

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We are trying to hold down to the extent that we can. Indirectly we don't want to go back to wage and price controls. I don't think agriculture wants a wage and price control policy, it was disastrous and the gentleman that I talked to a minute ago probably was thinking of the 90-day freeze that we had on cattle prices in 1971, as I recall. It was disastrous and caused some of the problems that later took place.

We have got to make sure that labor and management understands that they have to act in the national interest as well as in their own interest and here is what the Secretary of Labor, Bill Usery, is trying to do -- to convince both parties as they negotiate, they just can't get a bigger piece of the pie, they have to understand that all of us will suffer, including themselves, if they are too selfish in their negotiations. We are trying to keep down some of these costs, the labor costs, in a responsible way, but for us to put wage controls on, I think, would not be the answer. I think it would be the wrong approach just like it was the wrong approach on food prices two or three years ago.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

QUESTION: I am a Winnebago County dairy farmer, I guess I am considered a young farmer. I would like to add that I am pretty happy with dairy farming the way it is, I think the efficient farmers who are doing a good job are making a pretty good living right now.

My question is I am at kind of a loss as to who to support for President. I think you are very sincere in being here, but I wonder how much emphasis we have only being five people out of a hundred who voted for you. It just seems to me that people who are going to get elected President are going to have the support of the non-farm people because we don't have that much voice.

Another question is it seems to me that George Meany has more influence on our foreign grain policies than you do, and I would like your response to that.

THE PRESIDENT: I would categorically disagree that George Meany has more influence on our grain policies than I do. I made the decision for us to move to long-term agreements with the Soviet Union. I think that is in the best interests of agriculture because if you look at the sale of grain to the Soviet Union, going back to 1971, in one year you will have virtually no sales. The next year, in 1972, we had around 13 million tons of grain sold to the Soviet Union. The next year we had virtually no such sales. It has been a yo-yo, a peak and valley proposition, and that has been very disturbing to our grain crop sales throughout the world.

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Now we have a guaranteed 6 million ton per year for five years and we can sell them higher if we want to, and if the farmers want to sell more than that and the Soviet Union wants to buy it, they can make the deal.

So I respectfully disagree that Mr. Meany has anything to do with foreign agricultural sales policy, he has none.

Let me just indicate another area where Mr. Meany and I have many, many differences. I vetoed the common situs picketing bill much against his wishes.

Now I got off the track here a little bit (Laughter), but I just wanted to make sure that I was running the Government and nobody else. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Thank you very much. I realize you have a tough job and I wish you good luck.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am a dairy farmer here in Fond du Lac County and also Chairman of the Agriculture Committee of Fond du Lac County.

I have one question in regard to imports. We in Wisconsin are now in the process of the referendum vote by the dairy farmers as to a two cent check-off as far as our milk advertising program is concerned. There are a lot of us here in this room that are very much interested in this. We believe in advertising. We believe we have to do this to create a market for our product.

Now if we can establish this, if we can get this job done, what kind of a guarantee can we have from the Federal Government that once we have a market created that the Government does not open up their doors to imports to the point where they take up and make up the difference between our profit and loss?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let me assure you that this Administration will not tolerate foreign Government subsidized dairy products, period. We will use the best wisdom we have to make sure that there is a fair treatment as far as your products competing with any foreign products, subsidized or non-subsidized.

I think we do have to be honest with one another and say that if we expect to sell \$22 billion worth of farm commodities overseas, there are some foreign imports that have to be sold in the United States, it has to be some balance. We can't sell to them unless we buy from them, but there certainly will be no subsidization of foreign farm exports to the United States -- that is absolutely clear.

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In the other areas like I mentioned on the non-fat dried milk mixture proposal, when they did that we cut them off, period, and we will act just as decisively on other matters of that kind.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. President, this will be the last question.

THE PRESIDENT: We will take one more over here after this. Okay.

QUESTION: Mr. President, Manitowoc County Ford Headquarters head coordinator.

My major concern is what is happening in the Postal Department. We have just had this three cent raise and unless I heard very incorrectly last night on the media somewhere within the near future we could go up to 36 or 38 cents for one ounce of first class postage which could put small businessmen who depend on the charge system or perhaps mailing as a major part of their business out of business. Do we in Federal Government have any plans beyond just simply trying to cut back small Post Offices or will we perhaps make our American people have to cut back a little bit of their services or do something about this so that some of us small businessmen can stay in business?

THE PRESIDENT: The Postal Service problem is one of the most perplexing ones we have. We had a system up until about four years ago that was rampant with politics. Democrats abused it, Republicans abused it, and it was in a mess, to be honest with you. The Federal subsidy was growing every year. We went to a Postal Service and supposedly, and I hope it is true, wiped out all politics in the Postal Service. They have been trying to put it on a pay as you go basis. It was recognized that during this transition period there would have to be a subsidy. At the present time the Federal Government is contributing about a billion dollars a year to subsidize the Postal Service plus whatever other revenues they get.

I must say in many respects I am disappointed the way it has turned out except I think it is better than what it was. Now there are some areas where I think the Postal Service will have to make some adjustments in service; otherwise, it will require more subsidy from the Federal Government.

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The head of the Postal Service says he needs another billion dollars from the Federal Treasury. Well, that is \$2 billion in subsidy in 12 months. I think there has to be a better solution than that. We have got a special study going on now in the Office of Management and Budget and they are working with the Postal Service to try and see if there can't be responsible economies, some better personnel management policies, but I think everybody probably will have to tighten their belt -- the management, the employees, and the recipients -- unless we are going to call on a bigger and bigger subsidy or less and less service.

QUESTION: Is there any possibility of having private industry handle part of this or is that unconstitutional?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it is disallowed by law, but let me tell you what probably would happen. There are some companies that want to, in major metropolitan areas, move in with their postal system which is now precluded by law. Frankly, that is where the Post Office service or Postal Service makes money. So if you take a private delivery system and let it just go into the markets where the Postal Service makes money, the Postal Service will be in worse shape.

So I don't think that is an answer either because they will take the cream of the area of revenue and then the Postal Service will have more problems, not fewer.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes?

QUESTION: I am a dairy farmer down at a little town called Waukesha, a little south of here.

About two months ago you vetoed a price support bill at 85 percent of parity that disappointed me a whole lot, but I applaud you for raising it as much as you did, ordering Secretary Butz to give us the new rate on April 1. I understand that there is a new bill in the hopper at the level that is more to your liking at 80 percent of parity for the next two years. Will you sign this bill when it hits your desk?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, as I understand, Earl Butz has agreed, and I fully approve, to increase, as of April 1, the price supports to 80 percent of parity and we have agreed to review the situation every quarter. I think it is better to have that kind of flexibility as long as you all understand that we will continue to do what we have done -- and we have not broken an agreement yet, we don't intend to break one.

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I think flexibility is better than a rigid figure set at a certain level. I can assure you when we make an agreement with the dairy industry we will keep it, and the record shows we have in every instance.

So without making a final judgment on a piece of legislation, I am just trying to explain to you how I generally feel. I usually have a policy of saying I will or won't veto something until I read the fine print and that is not a bad idea.

So generally I think we have got a good arrangement, that every quarter we are going to review it and we are not going to break any agreement, and that generally is a better approach than some firm, fixed figure as I see it.

QUESTION: I disagree with you on that, but that is -- I think that I like the two-year time on this thing because it runs quite a bit after the election, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: We will take a good look at it, but I -- (Laughter)

Let me say this to the gentleman that just spoke to me. I wish we could get politics out of the farm problem -- that would be best for the farmer and best for the country.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to be here. I deeply appreciate your views as you have expressed them in questions. If we have had some disagreements, and in a couple of instances we have, the great thing about these kinds of meetings, as I see them, is that you can disagree without being disagreeable, and that is the strength of this country.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 10:32 A.M. CST)