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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION
AT THE
INDIANA BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION
STATEWIDE CONVENTION

RODEWAY INN

8:45 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: I think the best way to proceed on this is to limit my remarks to the minimum and give all of you the maximum opportunity to ask some of the questions that might be on your mind.

I just want to notify all of you I paid off my bet with Bill Hudnut which I made with him before the Michigan-Indiana basketball game. I had lots of hopes. Our boys tried real well, but, you know, we are not really disgraced. We have an unblemished record. We are the only team that lost to Indiana three times in one year. (Laughter)

Well, thank you very much. You come from a great industry. I like the idea of the competition that you have within your industry -- AM,FM radio, television, private, public. This kind of competition is healthy just like competition in athletics or in politics. I enjoy it -- obviously you all do -- and as a result your industry is stronger, more effective and I think better in the public interest.

So thanks for the chance to answer your questions and good luck in the years ahead.

So please ask the first question.

Okay, don't be so shy. They aren't this way up in Michigan. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President, should we return to single platoon football? (Laughter)

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THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, back in the days when I played when the ball was round most of us did play, if we made the team, 50 or 60 minutes. But, no, I really think that the caliber of football today is infinitely better for the spectators -- gets more kids to play, more interest in the student body. I would not go back to single platoon football. I think the way it is now the quality is better, more kids play. I am for what we have.

Do I see a young lady coming towards me?

QUESTION: Mr. President, in your opinion do you think there is a realistic possibility that the Congress will defeat the revenue sharing renewal?

THE PRESIDENT: The Congress has been very dilatory in extending the general revenue sharing legislation which expires December 31 of this year. Last year, about nine months ago, I recommended a five and three-quarter year extension of the existing law. It increased in my recommendations the annual amount that would go to States and local units of Government.

We have put all kinds of pressures on the Congress because I think the general revenue sharing program has been tremendously successful, and let me say this: If it is not extended, as I recall, Indiana will lose roughly a billion dollars in the next five and three-quarter years. That means that the State and the local units of Government will either have to reduce services or will have to increase State or local taxes.

So if we want to avoid either one of those bad alternatives, the proper way to handle it is to get the Federal Congress to extend general revenue sharing along the lines that I have proposed. We are doing all we can, but let me ask all of you who are public information educators, we need some help and assistance at the local level where citizens in Evansville or Kokomo or Fort Wayne or Indianapolis or South Bend understand that if we don't extend this, either their taxes are going up or their services are going down. It is just that simple.

So if you can help us educate people to be cognizant of the danger, it would be very beneficial.

QUESTION: Well, we are in the process of doing that and hopefully everyone will be trying to get the book that we have just published on revenue sharing, it has just come out. It tells everyone how it works and it would make them more aware in the community so that they can do something.

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THE PRESIDENT: I am going to Evansville later this morning and I understand that in Evansville over the last four or five years Evansville has received roughly \$10 million. They have used it for substantial repaving of their streets, they have used it for the modernization of their fire fighting equipment, they have used it to help in their Police Department, citizen protection organization.

Well, if we don't get general revenue sharing extended, either those services in Evansville will go down or their taxes will have to go up, it is just that simple.

QUESTION: Do you feel that it will not be defeated?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't believe the Congress would be that stupid. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. President, according to a story in yesterday's Wall Street Journal, I believe, with a Pittsburgh dateline, you are lacking in blue collar support. Could you comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't agree with that analysis. If you look at the votes we got in all of the primaries, I think we did quite well and I don't know on what basis that story was written. I think it was pure speculation -- made a good story but I don't think it has any factual background. Certainly I got a lot of blue collar support when I was a candidate for Congress for the 13 terms and I am sure that the policies we have which are aimed at tax reduction and a reduction in the rate of growth of Federal spending and with the tilt toward the middle class in our tax reduction program, that should have a great appeal to the blue collar workers in this country.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, I was very pleased to see that your Administration at least introduced or caused to be introduced in the Congress a bill supporting public broadcasting. What do you see as the role of public broadcasting in the United States today, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I think public broadcasting has a very definite role in that it isn't dependent upon the commercial market. It should have its emphasis on more public service-oriented programs. It does not have to compete in the same way that the private or commercial television organizations do in the entertainment field, as such. So I hope and trust that public television continues as it has. We support it.

On the other hand, I don't want you encroaching on the field of the private television people and I don't want them to molest the responsible role that you have in the information field.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

QUESTION: Mr. President, on our last yearly ascertainment in our area seven of the ten top problems were either caused by the Government or Government-related, and on several of our talk shows and citizen input with the top priority in terms of problems they see is in terms of the bureaucracy in our country and its cancerous effect it seems to be having on the free enterprise system.

A general question, but I would like to ask you your feelings and also where do you think we are going in the next 10 years in terms of the size of government and its, in some cases, insidious control over our lives?

THE PRESIDENT: Number one, the first thing that I did when I became President was to cancel the projected increase in Federal employment and ordered that there should be a ceiling that would eliminate an anticipated 40,000 extra jobs in the Federal Government. As a matter of fact, we not only eliminated that proposed increase but we saved about 10,000 or 15,000 jobs, as I recall.

Number two, I know that the Federal bureaucracy has imposed on business, on welfare recipients, on everybody this problem of forms that have to be filled out, and I checked on it shortly after becoming President and found that the Federal Government was requiring a total of approximately 5,200 such forms to be filled out by various individuals or organizations.

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I ordered a 10 percent cutback. We are going to make that by June 30, which was the date that I set, so we are making headway not only in holding the level but reducing Federal employment, and we are trying to get rid of some of the onerous burdens the bureaucracy puts on individuals and organizations.

Now, where are we going? I see no reason whatsoever for any expansion of the Federal bureaucracy. I think we have got enough agencies. I think we have got enough commissions. I don't see any need to have a proliferation of the kind of bureaucracy we have.

Let me give you an example: There is a tendency every time somebody comes up with an alleged problem that they want to create a separate bureaucracy, the so-called Consumer Protection Agency. They want, through legislation, to have a separate bureaucracy that can go around and interfere with the day-to-day operations of the various agencies and commissions of the Federal Government.

I don't think we have to do that, and I have said that I would veto that legislation. I think it is totally unnecessary. It would be another bureaucracy that would not serve a useful purpose.

I think we can handle the legitimate claims of consumers without establishing another bureaucracy -- no, I am opposed to it -- and if we continue that kind of attitude, I think the future in the next 10 years will be brighter as far as the Federal Government is concerned.

QUESTION: Mr. President, one very quick question: How do you feel about the possibility of the tie-up with Ronald Reagan?

THE PRESIDENT: A tie-up, as Vice --

QUESTION: As a Vice Presidential candidate, right. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have said that after getting nominated I would be certainly looking at him along with about 10 or 15 others as potential runningmates. He certainly has qualifications that would include him as among the 10 or 15 other Republicans from the Senate, from the House, from the Governors, from former Governors. And the hot accusations that he has made without foundation in a number of cases, I understand -- that is part of the political rhetoric in a campaign. So I would not use that. I would not be prejudicial. I just know that you grab for issues, you sometimes go beyond the facts, and so I would not prejudice his possibilities by that kind of campaign rhetoric.

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QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

QUESTION: Mr. President, last night in the broadcast interview you seemed to put aside all thoughts of any kind of negotiations with North Vietnam as almost a final statement, except for those negotiations through the Congress for finding MIAs. So is that cut and dried as much as seemed on the interview last night, or is there more to it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think you have to understand it was in reference to an alleged commitment that we had made to recognize North Vietnam. Now that is totally without foundation. Let me give you the sequence of this.

We had a Congressional committee headed by Congressman Sonny Montgomery of Mississippi -- some Democrats, some Republicans. They wanted to go to North Vietnam to try and find any evidence concerning MIAs. We approved of that. They went over. They talked to the responsible North Vietnamese officials. They came back and said that the North Vietnamese were interested in some movement toward normalization.

I wrote back and said we are primarily interested in MIAs. We are willing to discuss some humanitarian efforts. For example, I let some -- I think it was the Friends -- take some food over there but I never said that we were going to normalize relations or recognize the North Vietnamese. This was a report from the committee that said that they, the North Vietnamese, were interested in a normalization of relations.

We are not committed. As far as I can see, there is no prospect of it and there is nothing that would convince me otherwise. We are interested and will do, below that level, anything to get our MIAs back.

QUESTION: Has anything happened on that in that area, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: On what? The MIA?

QUESTION: On the MIA.

THE PRESIDENT: There is nothing specific. The Congressional committee brought back, I think it was, the remains of four, and when a staff member or several from the Senate committee went over to, I think it was Cambodia or Hanoi, they brought back the remains of several of the others, but there is nothing beyond those specifics thus far.

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QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am now with the Hook Drug Company. Chris has just led you into the foreign field with his question.

Now that you are responsible for all of us in this country, from your position do you believe that it is our Government or the people that are afraid to defend this 200-year-old dream on the world stage? I refer exactly to the fact that since World War II we have had an absolute sequence of non-victories.

THE PRESIDENT: I would not say that we have had a sequence of non-victories. As a matter of fact, the position of the United States today, as we look around the world, I think, is a good one. We didn't do well in Vietnam. We didn't do well in the incident in Angola, but that was a lack of will on the part of Congress.

But, other than those incidents, I think the United States is strong and more highly respected today than at any time, and it is a good relationship we have throughout the world, both from the point of view of our allies, on the one hand, and our adversaries, on the other.

So when you look at the overall picture, I think the United States should be proud of what has been done and we should under no circumstances apologize for it.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, another Republican candidate has alleged, or suggested, that the position taken by this Administration in respect to the Panama Canal is endangering our national security. Would you comment on that, please?

THE PRESIDENT: I would be very happy to. (Laughter)

I have read my Republican opponent's comments and if you read them as he has said them himself, the net result is this Government should break off any future negotiations or current negotiations with Panama. I think that is wrong. What we are trying to do is to make certain that we have the right to operate, the right to maintain and to defend the Panama Canal during its useable economic lifetime -- a long period of time that would extend into the next century, and I think that is in our national interest. Even after what we consider to be the useful economic lifetime of the Canal, if it continues to operate, it would be operated for the total utilization of all parties.

But let me talk now for a minute about what breaking off negotiations means, as my Republican opponent wants us to do.

Number one, you would undoubtedly have a recurrence of the bloodshed that took place in 1964 and 1965 when 20 Panamanians and four Americans were killed. I don't know whether you saw the other day the news stories or films taken during that bloodshed, those riots down there. Undoubtedly you would have that repeated, not once but many times.

Every Latin American country, about 25 of them, are against us if we break off negotiations. That means 309 million people in South America are against us. I don't think that is the right course of action, to break off negotiations and get the alienation of 309 million people in South America.

Number three, if we break off negotiations and riots begin, bloodshed is repeated, we will have to send at least ten to twenty thousand more U.S. military personnel down there to defend the Canal.

Now all of those bad things can be avoided, as President Johnson decided, as his successor decided and I decided by continuing negotiations. Now if you break off negotiations, you have to be willing to accept the things that I have indicated -- bloodshed, riots, more U.S. troops down there and the animosity and antagonism of 309 million people in South America.

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If you continue negotiations, as President Johnson did, his successor and I am doing, you can continue to try and find an answer to avoid those things that I think are wrong.

So I am delighted to have the position I am taking and I think my opponent's position is totally irresponsible.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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

Mr. President, many of us in this room have just done an extensive survey of our community for our license renewal and in addition to bureaucracy which you have discussed we see a real problem in the erosion of confidence in governmental leaders. I wonder if you could discuss what we feel is a dangerous problem?

THE PRESIDENT: I recognize that all the surveys you see indicate that the public has very strong feelings against the Congress, against the Judiciary, against the White House. I think this is an outgrowth of some of the trauma that has taken place in the span of time primarily during the Vietnamese war. I recognize that we have to restore that confidence. We have tried to do it and that is the only part I can control by frankness and candor and open administration and an honest attempt by this Administration to minimize the red tape and the bureaucracy and the attitude that bureaucrats too often have. We are doing our very best and I think everybody would admit that we are open and candid, and I hope that in a period of time we can convince them that our efforts are successful in the using of bureaucracy and getting the right attitude on the part of Federal employees.

We are sure going to try.

QUESTION: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. It is a privilege and a pleasure to be here.

Thank you very much, Kelly.

END (AT 9:08 A.M. EST)