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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
'AND  
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

VANDERBURGH COUNTY AUDITORIUM

9:37 A.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much, Governor Otis Bowen, Mayor Lloyd, Reverend Heady, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great privilege and a high honor to have the opportunity to be here in Evansville this morning. As you know, I am something of a sports fan. I know what a great basketball team you have from the State of Indiana. I thought Michigan was good (Laughter) and they had a good season. We had one unblemished record -- we lost three times to the national champions.

So let me also recognize some of your City's contributions to some of America's great professional teams. You gave Bob Griese to the Dolphins, Jerry Sloan to the Bullets, and you gave a home to the Tigers Triplets. I understand their first home game of the season is this evening and, naturally, I wish them an awful lot of luck, but judging from their record last year I don't think they are going to need very much luck in 1976.

It has been my experience that people with talent and energy create their own good fortune and Evansville is a very good example of just that. The people of Evansville have known hard times. The people of Evansville have shown that they have the drive and the initiative to overcome their setbacks and to build for a better future. The progress you have made over the years in this great community through the cooperation of your local Government, citizens and business community is a fine example of how Americans can solve their own problems at their own local level.

You are very right and proper to be proud of these accomplishments and I join many, many others in wishing you the best for the years ahead.

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It is also right that the Federal Government helped you in your efforts because that is exactly what I feel the Federal Government should do, not take responsibility away from the people at the local level but give them the freedom to use their own energies, their own initiatives and their own wisdom, and that is what we are going to do in the future as we have in the past under this Administration.

A little later this morning we are going to visit the walkway. I look forward to seeing that great project. Because the walkway was your idea, it was your project and City and private funds paid for some 30 percent of its cost, you should be proud of that effort.

But I must say that the Department of Housing and Urban Development also made some funds available so that you could realize your idea, so you could be free to do right here locally what was right for you.

Just recently you have seen another example of local initiative in how the Federal Government helped you to help yourselves. With the cooperation of your City Government under the fine leadership of Mayor Russ Lloyd, with the cooperation of unions and management, you have put together a labor management committee that is going to play a very, very important part in your community's economic future.

I am glad to announce to Mayor Lloyd and Governor Bowen -- announce to them as well as to you -- that next month this committee, this Evansville group, will be featured at a nationwide conference in Washington sponsored by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

At that conference the members of your committee will have a chance to tell the Evansville story to interested groups from all over the Nation. This is a great example of how labor and management, under the guidance and the stimulation of local Government, can make a high record of achievement and accomplishment and I congratulate all of you on this success.

Lately we have heard a lot of talk about what the Federal Government can't do, but as a Congressman for 25 years, as President for over 20 months, I have come to know what the Government can do and what it should do. One thing we should do is to extend general revenue sharing across this country. As we are all aware, the Federal Government is very good at collecting taxes, and at the local level you people on your own are very good at making good decisions.

So I propose that we extend the general revenue sharing program and channel even more of that tax money back to you through your State and local units of Government. Since revenue sharing began in 1972, the City of Evansville has received almost \$10 million in general revenue sharing funds.

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That money right here locally helped to pay for public services, it helped to improve your city by repaving half of the streets, by upgrading your Fire Department equipment. Right now those revenue sharing funds are being used to protect you and your families from crime.

Revenue sharing is a matter of common sense and on another front my Administration has used common sense and taken a very steady course, a very stable approach to our economy and, frankly, we can see the results almost every day. Everything that is supposed to be going up is going up and everything that is supposed to be going down is going down.

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In the first three months of 1976 we had our smallest quarterly inflation rate in four years, and in those same three months our national product grew at an annual rate of 7-1/2 percent. That shows we are in the middle of a very healthy economic recovery and that is good news for every American.

The sound and steady policies of this Administration have restored confidence in the American people. Our policies have created an economic climate that gives the American people the freedom to work, to earn and to buy and to invest as they want to.

I also believe very firmly, and have fought for all my life in political history, in a balanced budget, but I believe very firmly that it should be balanced by cutting the growth of Federal spending and not by increasing your taxes.

As a matter of fact, we cut your Federal taxes last year so you would have more buying power, and I have proposed an additional tax cut as of July 1, 1976, this year, and I hope the Congress does not deny that proposed tax cut to the American people.

We combined those tax proposals with strong efforts to hold down Government spending, and I say we have been reasonably successful despite the opposition and the problems in the United States Congress.

Since I have been President, some 20 months, I have used my veto to save the taxpayers of this country \$13 billion in Federal spending. They say \$13 billion is an unlucky number, but I would say \$13 billion is a pretty lucky number for you and all American taxpayers when it is in your pockets instead of in the Federal Treasury.

We are going to keep down or keep holding down the cost of living by holding down the cost of Government. We are going to make certain that your tax dollars work as hard for you as you did for them. And one thing I promise you, we are going to keep slicing away at Federal paperwork and red tape.

My Administration has made a good start. I have made a series of concrete, constructive proposals to reform our so-called regulatory commissions and I have appointed your great Governor Otis Bowen to the Federal Paperwork Commission, and I have directed all Federal agencies and all Federal departments to reduce the burden of paperwork they put on the backs of the American people by at least 10 percent by June 30 of this year, and I expect prompt results, and I think we will get it.

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I don't believe America's Government should waste its people's time or money but neither should they be stingy with common sense. America needs a government that protects its people's freedom, that respects their independence and that responds to their needs. That is the kind of a government I have been working for for the last 20 months as your President, and with your support on May 4 and next November, that is the kind of a government we will have for the next four years, as well.

Now I will be glad to answer the questions.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to know, if all Americans are considered equal, why aren't the laws consistent? My main question is concerning alcohol. Why can you drink in New York State at 18 and 21 in this State?

Now I know your answer is going to be States' rights, but don't you think that we could be a little more consistent in that main law, in that particular law?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if you --

QUESTION: Especially if you are old enough to die for this country, why can't you drink in this country? And I am a veteran.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if you really believe in States' rights and if you believe that those decisions are the decisions of the people of the individual States, they have the option or the choice to make that decision and I don't think the Federal Government should repeat the mistake that they tried to do back in, I think, 1918 when they made a comprehensive decision. It was up to the local States to make that decision, now, as well as at any time in the future, and if the people of Indiana want one age limit and the people of Michigan another, I think in all honesty if we really believe in States' rights they ought to have the option to make the choice one way or another.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in lieu of the present housing conditions throughout the country, I would like to know if there are any new housing projects planned within your Administration for the near future?

THE PRESIDENT: I signed a few months ago a new housing bill that would make a number of rather significant changes in order to stimulate the housing industry. For example, we increased the amount that a Federal agency could guarantee in mortgages and a number of other comparable changes that I think would be helpful in the financing of private residences. In addition, I put in the budget for fiscal year 1977 about, as I recall, 500,000 more Federal units of housing primarily for the disadvantaged.

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The net result is that we expect, according to the present estimates based on the last report in the month before, that there will be built in the United States in this calendar year approximately 1,400,000 to 1,500,000 housing units, which is an increase from something like 1,100,000 or 1,200,000 last year.

But as the economy gets better and as money becomes more available -- and the money is available in most loaning institutions -- and as there is a trend -- slow but I think developing trend -- for lower interest rates in the private sector, I think not only in the private sector but also in the Government subsidized housing industry, you are going to see more units than the 1,400,000 and the 1,500,000 that will come as a result of our policies in Washington.

I think the 500,000 housing units that will be in either 235 programs, 236 programs or Section 8 programs -- you will see more housing built through Government action than we have had in the past and also through the improvement of the economy you will have more housing generally without Government action.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am much concerned about the position of our country concerning the Panama Canal. It is my hope that your Government will deal with this question sincerely and with force, if necessary.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me give you what we are doing and what our aim and objective is. This Administration, like the Administration of former President Johnson and his successor, is determined to keep the Canal operating, maintained and defended by the United States during the term of any treaty as long as that Canal is economically justifiable. Now that, I think, is a responsible position to take.

We are not under any circumstances going to do away with the operational capability, the maintenance capability and the defense capability during the term of a long-term treaty that will last well within the next century.

Now some people have alleged -- and in this case my Republican opponent has alleged -- that in effect we should break off those negotiations which were started 12 years or more ago. I think that is a totally irresponsible position. Let me tell you why.

Those negotiations were started in 1964 or 1965 because there had been a riot where 20 people were killed that were Panamanians, and four Americans -- serious bloodshed.

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If we break off those negotiations, as my Republican opponent wants us to do, you will have riots, more bloodshed and also you will incur the enmity, the antagonism of every one of the 25 Latin and South American countries. They represent 309 million people in this hemisphere. And, in addition, because of the probability or certainty, I would say, of riots and bloodshed we will have to add to our present U.S. military personnel in Panama. We have roughly 10,000 American GIs down there now and if we have bloodshed and threats of sabotage we will have to send at least another 10,000 and probably 20,000 more Americans down there.

We can avoid all of that by continuing the negotiations for a responsible settlement, and those who advocate breaking off negotiations are irresponsible.

QUESTION: Mr. President, as the country continues to rebound from the recession and the jobs programs to train and employ the people are in full operation, and with the start of the summer jobs program to aid the nation's young who were one of the hardest hit segments of the economy, the question now arises as to what will happen in the years immediately following the Presidential election if, in fact, the private sector does not rebound sufficiently to employ those individuals now being assisted by the Federal programs. This is asked in light of the announcements of the gearing down and the ending of many employment programs by the end of 1977.

THE PRESIDENT: These public service jobs were initiated primarily when we got into our economic troubles in 1975. I recommended at that time, to meet that current emergency, a substantial increase in public service employment, adding to the so-called CETA programs where we have a comprehensive educational and training program plus the summer youth program.

Now that we are coming out of our economic difficulty, it seems to me that we do not need to have the emergency program that we required in 1975. On the other hand, I think we should fully fund the so-called CETA program, which is an education and training program, not necessarily a public service program, because there are always instances where individuals have a temporary loss of a job, they want to be retrained for another kind of employment, and that is what CETA programs seek to do, and we will fund those programs fully and we will continue to fund, as I have ever since I have been President, the summer youth programs -- the cost is around \$450 million each year -- and those programs will be utilized to give the youth of America, many of them in our disadvantaged areas in major metropolitan areas -- those programs will be continued as they have been in the past.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, not often does a Jobs citizen get a chance to correct the President of the United States, but I might like to take this opportunity to state that we did in Evansville give Jerry Sloan to the Bullets but they didn't want him so the Chicago Bulls took him and they really liked him.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, maybe I was thinking that the Bullets could use him in the play-off.

QUESTION: Now, sir, for my question: It is my understanding that the mandatory fuel allocation program that is administered by the Federal Energy Administration will expire June 1 of this year unless it is reinstated. I realize that this is a highly complex problem, but could you tell me what your position on the reinstatement of this mandatory fuel allocation program is, and why?

THE PRESIDENT: I recommended to the Congress within the last month or so the extension of the authorization for the Federal Energy Administration through 1978 or 1979. I think that agency must be in existence to manage the various programs where the Federal Government is trying to conserve energy, where the Federal Government is trying to stimulate new sources of energy and where the Federal Government is trying to make equitable allocations of what energy we have, oil sources, principally.

I think the program ought to be continued. I think they ought to be phased down as we solve a problem. That program should not go on ad finitum but I do believe that we ought to extend it to 1979, as I recall, so that we can continue to get equitable allocation, carry out our conservation programs and stimulate new production.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I hope this is a simple question. It might not be.

It seems to me that our country has always been most productive when we have had a national purpose or a national direction. What do you think should be our national purpose or direction, and what Federal programs would you propose to see that that direction is seen through?

THE PRESIDENT: I think in the third century of America's history we should put emphasis on the right of the individual. As we look back historically, in the first century of America's history we developed a good kind of government, a stable, constructive kind of government.

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In our second century of American history, we became the greatest industrial nation in the history of mankind.

Our third century ought to be emphasizing the right of the individual so that he is not overburdened by mass government, by mass industry, by mass labor, by mass education. The American citizen today is well enough educated that he ought to have more individual freedom and liberty and, in this next century, instead of passing more laws to overburden it, we ought to start rescinding some of the laws that inhibit and prohibit.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: So I am going to be very restrained in my term about advocating any new laws. I think we ought to undertake the job of trying to get some of them off the statute books.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, my name is John Berkshire. Our family has just returned from a visit to Washington, D.C., where we toured the White House. My little brother wants to know if you ever get to sit in the chairs in the rooms we saw. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I want to be very sure I understand that question. (Laughter) Am I going to keep the seat in the chairs where you and your brother saw them?

That is why I didn't want to answer.

QUESTION: No. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: As I understand it, do I ever sit in the chairs that you sat in, is that correct?

QUESTION: No, the ones that we saw behind the ropes. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, why don't you come back to Washington and we will go down there in person.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to know what your feelings are toward the ways the Federal Government is doing everything for everybody, and to be very specific, how do you feel about the Title IX law that will be introduced into the school systems next year stating that all gym classes will be co-ed?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it is my understanding, based on a law passed by the Congress, that the Department of HEW had to issue certain regulations indicating that in all educational programs in primary, secondary and higher education there had to be equality in the treatment of men and women or boys and girls.

Now this was mandated by a law passed by the Congress. I believe that some of the interpretations given to those regulations which were mandated have gone too far, and it is my impression that when we get down to the practicality of imposing those regulations which I insist were mandated by the Congress there, hopefully, will be some readjustments.

The enthusiasm that the Congress had when it passed that legislation I think has dimmed a little bit. Now these regulations that they mandated are creating, I think some unworkable circumstances.

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Now I am not saying all of the regulations are bad, but the one that you, for example, indicate, it seems to me, is not beneficial for either boys or girls in physical education classes. I think there ought to be equity in the treatment of facilities and coaches and competition and everything else for women and men and girls and boys, but I think there are some other areas where a little more common sense might be used.

QUESTION: Mr. President, as you know, Americans in the last five years have become very concerned about the availability of clean energy and my question is, as you know, a lot of scientists are now claiming that we do have technology as an aftermath of the NASA moon project to develop space stations in which solar panels could be set up and, in turn, supply this Nation with a continued supply of completely clean, free energy, and they came to the conclusion that the key to the project would be massively expanded funding for the space shuttle. What is your position on this?

THE PRESIDENT: I recommended in January of 1975 and again in January of 1976 the full goal on the space shuttle. In 1975 there were a number of applicants because of our economic situation that said we ought to cancel the space shuttle. I said no, it was roughly a third finished at that time, I think it would be unwise, uneconomic to cancel the space shuttle, so I recommended the funding necessary to keep the program going.

I did the same for the next fiscal year and I am glad to report I think the first vehicle is going to be made available for public display some time late in August or early September.

On the overall issue of the utilization--or development and utilization of solar energy, I have long been an advocate of that, and in the budget that I recommended to the Congress for the next fiscal year, we have recommended a 37 to 40 percent increase in research and development for solar energy, and this money will be spent by the NASA people, the National Aeronautics and Space program, by the Energy Research and Development Agency, by the Dr. Guy Stevers group.

We are putting about \$160 million in solar research for the next fiscal year, which is about what the technical people who advise me think can be usefully and responsibly spent. We are going to go on it because it has a great potential and we are going to do all we can to achieve it, whether it is the space program or otherwise.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, first off I would like to congratulate you on your handling of the MAYAGUEZ incident.

My question is, what is your stand on the Concorde being allowed to land in the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first let me thank you for your comments concerning the MAYAGUEZ. That, I think, should be a good warning to any country that thinks they can challenge us. If any country does any act of that kind, I think the MAYAGUEZ incident and the action we took ought to be a fair warning to them to the decisiveness of the Ford Administration.

Now would you repeat the other question?

QUESTION: I was wondering what your stand is on the Concorde being allowed to land in the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Secretary Coleman, the Secretary of Transportation, had that matter for his consideration and he has made a recommendation, issued the necessary orders that permits a very limited landing program of the British and French Concorde at Kennedy Airport in New York and Dulles Airport in Washington, D.C., for a 16-month period. So that through those operations -- taking off, landing and flying -- we can get specific technical information that will let us decide whether, on the basis of noise or any interference with the environment -- air or noise or otherwise -- and at the end of that 16-month trial period there will be an evaluation made by the Secretary of Transportation as to whether those flights should be continued.

But the only way you can find out is to actually undertake them on a limited basis for a limited period of time, and I fully support Secretary Coleman's decision.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, Mr. Kissinger has been characterized as having a deeply pessimistic view of the long-term future of Western democracy and believing that we should cut a deal now before it is too late. I stood in the Rose Garden last week and heard you praise Secretary Kissinger in the most glowing terms. I know you are not a prophet, sir, but I wonder whether you share Mr. Kissinger's long-range views, and if not, how do you evaluate our long-term will to survive?

THE PRESIDENT: In the first place, those allegations made that Secretary Kissinger is pessimistic about the long-range prospects of the United States are totally inaccurate. I spend a good period of time every week with the Secretary of State because we have a number of foreign policy matters that come up virtually every day and so I know precisely how he feels. His feeling is quite the contrary. He feels that with the right kind of leadership and the right kind of program the United States and the Western democracies, the free countries of the world, are going to prevail, not lose, and that is the way I feel.

Now what we are trying to do in a diplomatic way, what we are seeking to achieve through our military capability, is to encourage other people, other nations, to achieve the freedom that in many instances they do not have, and what we are trying to do in an economic way is to bind the Western nations, such as Britain, France, Italy, West Germany and Japan, and any of our other allies so that we can strengthen our economic policies, so we can work together, so we can convince the people in those countries as well as our own people that a free enterprise system is far better than a Communist controlled system, and through the meeting that we had in Rambouillet, France, with the heads of states of those countries we tied together our economic, our monetary, our fiscal policy and the net result is that the economy in the United States is going up and the economies of most of the Western countries are likewise moving upward.

I only give that as a concrete illustration that if you have the right policies and the right leadership we can be and should be optimistic about the free world, and that is the way I feel and that is the way Secretary Kissinger feels. I have full faith in the will and the resolve of the American people and our allies. We have met these challenges before, we will in the future.

QUESTION: Good morning, Mr. President. I would like to congratulate you on your fine performance on NBC Saturday night. (Laughter)

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THE PRESIDENT: For a thirty second performance, I appreciate it.

QUESTION: I would like to ask you, I have heard Senator Barry Goldwater's view and a couple other Senators. Do you favor support of the B-1 bomber?

THE PRESIDENT: Do I favor support of the B-1 bomber?

QUESTION: Building it.

THE PRESIDENT: You're darn right I do.

QUESTION: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: That, of course, is the bomber that will replace the three to four to five hundred B-52 bombers which are now anywheres from 20 to 25 years old, and if we are going to keep our strategic air capability strong in the future, we must build the B-1 bomber and we are going to build it.

Thank you all very much.

END (AT 10:18 A.M. CST)