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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

3:51 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Dr. McCall, Senator Tower, President Jay Wolfe, students, faculty members: (Laughter)

I really am delighted to be here at Baylor University, the home of the Baylor Bears and its great coach, Grant Taft, to whom I had the honor of presenting the 1974 Coach of the Year Award from the American Football Coaches Association last year.

Baylor has a very great right to be proud of Coach Taft, and I congratulate him as well as you. Now, before I go any further, to all of you CBers in the audience, I bring a special hello from the First Mama, (Laughter) and secondarily from the First Papa, too.

But, I am deeply grateful to have the opportunity to meet with you today, and you know the saying anything is possible in Texas. I always leave this great State with a great optimism and a very positive attitude. But, before I get to your questions, let me say a few words concerning the future of our country.

We have come a long, long way since the birth of the United States two centuries ago. Yet, we have a long way to go in the third and the fourth and on and on. We began our first century with a political experiment, a daring and a very unique experiment in the concept of self-rule.

Our first century saw the firm establishment of a free system of Government, based on the right of the individual to determine his own destiny. That concept was carried into the second century of our great nation and along with it, we transformed an underdeveloped country into the mightiest and the strongest and most productive nation in the history of mankind.

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As we begin our third century, we should appreciate the wisdom and foresight of our founding fathers, and we should reaffirm the contributions as we confirm our efforts to secure lasting freedom, lasting peace and lasting prosperity.

It is vitally important that we preserve the individual freedom of all Americans, but beyond that, we should strive to improve the quality of life for the individual. We must devise safeguards for the individualism of every American to protect personal freedoms in our individualities from the pressures of mass Government, big or organized labor, from massive education or massive communication.

We must not smother the individual expression and creativity that exists in each and every one of us, and we must not stifle individual opportunity. The opportunity that you have to pursue a higher education is a very, very important one.

But, what about the opportunities for a fulfilling career in a stable world once you leave this great university campus? My new budget for the Federal Government was designed to bolster our economy by generating new jobs, not make work, dead-end Government sponsored jobs but jobs in the private sector where five out of every six jobs exist and are available in this great economy, the free enterprise system of the United States.

These jobs in the private sector have careers attached to them. They offer you more than a temporary Government paycheck. They offer you a future, they offer you a challenge.

Today, because we made some very tough decisions and stuck with them, we are recovering in this country in a strong and vigorous way from the worst economic conditions that America has suffered in a period of 40 years.

We are recovering, not because Government undertook to put every unemployed American on the Federal payroll but because we stimulated the great American private enterprise system to produce more goods, more services, more investments and, as a result, far, far more jobs. They are genuine, long-term jobs generated by the demands of an improving economy, not by any quick fix gimmicks by the Federal Government.

We provided that stimulation through my program of tax cuts for individuals to increase their purchasing power and tax incentives for business expansion and job production, not through massive new Government spending programs. In fact, over the last 20 months, I vetoed 48 bills. Thirty-nine of those vetoes have been sustained and without weakening or threatening our economic recovery in any way whatsoever, and you might be interested to know that those vetoes sustained by the Congress will have saved the taxpayers of this country some \$13 billion. That is not bad. I know a little bit about the Congress. If they send any more of those wasteful legislative proposals down to the Oval Office, we will veto them again and again and again.

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We now have more Americans on the job than we have had at any other time in the history of the United States, and all of this happened because the American people did not panic, because the great American system of free enterprise is working.

Finally, we must ask ourselves how can we insure that your jobs and your hopes for the future will not be threatened by international events. Your lives are inseparably linked with the stability of the rest of the world. In a thermonuclear age there can be no lasting accomplishments without a lasting peace.

Here, too, we can be proud of our achievements, our accomplishments. Today, America is at peace, no Americans are in combat any place in the world and I intend to keep it that way by the right policies.

We are meeting the active duty manpower requirements of the Joint Chiefs of Staff by an all-volunteer recruiting program without the draft. We are at peace and we will stay at peace because we are strong enough to keep the peace, to deter aggression and to protect our national security.

Since I became President, I have recommended to the Congress the two largest military budgets in the history of the United States, the last one a 14 percent increase over the previous year. They were needed to make certain that our military capabilities continue to be strong in the years ahead as they must be, if we are to find the peace and the security that we all seek. I am determined, as I have always been, to keep America's military might unsurpassed by any other nation.

If I might extemporize for just a minute, it was a great privilege for me to serve in the Congress for some 25-plus years and probably the most challenging, the most interesting experience that I had in that 25 years was the opportunity to serve on the Committee on Appropriations where I served for 16 years, and 14 out of those 16 years I was privileged to serve on what we call the Subcommittee on the Department of Defense, and also the Subcommittee on Foreign Aid Appropriations.

On the Department of Defense appropriation bill we used to start hearings -- and I started them first back in 1953 and went through 1965 or 1966 -- we used to start in January every year and we would go five days a week, five hours a day, five months a year listening to Secretaries of Defense, Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, all the Secretaries of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, all of the top Generals and Admirals.

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I think that subcommittee, composed of six Democrats and 5 Republicans probably knew more about the history and the facts and the figures and the policies and the programs and the personnel of the Department of Defense of any committee in the Congress of the United States -- and we did this every year.

So, when I say to all of you wonderful young men and women that the military capabilities of the United States today are unsurpassed by any country in the world, I think I am qualified to say that with complete and total assurance.

You know sometimes when I hear critics complaining about American defense policy and American foreign policy, always complaining but never offering any program of their own, I am reminded of one of the finest Texans I ever had the privilege to know and serve with in the Congress of the United States.

Sam Rayburn, who served as Speaker of the House longer than any person in the history of the House of Representatives -- he served 50 years in the Congress with over 3,000 Congressmen and Senators and 8 different Presidents, Democrats as well as Republicans -- at the end of a very long day, after he had worked very hard to make a better life for America, when he heard from the chronic complainers, Sam Rayburn used to love to recall what his father once told him, and let me quote: "Any donkey can kick a barn down, but it takes an awfully good carpenter to build one up."

Now, as far as the national security, the policies involving our security, are concerned, I am convinced that the American people would rather have a President who is constructively seeking to build the foundations of lasting security than someone who spends most of his time trying to kick them down.

I invite you all, then, to join me in a journey to a challenging future, to walk with me on the path of peace and on the road to lasting prosperity, for there lies the honor and the achievement and the happiness for the United States of America and for the 215 million Americans that I am honored to serve and proud to lead.

It has been a great privilege to say a few words, and now I will be delighted to answer your questions.

Thank you very much.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, Hi.

THE PRESIDENT: Hi. How are you?

QUESTION: I am fine, thank you.

I know that getting inflation under control is one of your important issues, and I am very firmly behind that. But, you have also said that unemployment is going to have to increase in order to accomplish this goal. This is rather frightening to me because I am graduating and will be out trying to find a job to support myself.

What I would like to know is to what degree do you think unemployment is going to have to go in order to get inflation under control?

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me set the record straight. I never said that we could lick inflation by the process, for the need and necessity of increasing unemployment. What I said was that they are twin problems and we can affirmatively be successful in winning against both of them.

Now, some of my critics, when I took some rather firm and tough action a year ago in January, said oh, President Ford is going to whip inflation but he is going to increase unemployment. The facts are we have made substantial progress against both of them.

Let me cite some statistics.

First, when I became President in August of 1974, the rate of inflation was 12 to 14 percent. The first three months of 1976, on an annualized basis, the rate of inflation for this country was under 3 percent. That is a 75 percent cutback in the rate of inflation, and I think we should be darned proud of it.

I can vividly recall last April when my good friend Senator Hubert Humphrey was saying we are on the brink of a depression (Laughter) and when George Meany was saying there would be ten million unemployed in this country, but we didn't panic. Unemployment went to 8.9 percent. It got up to almost eight million Americans.

But you know, since 8.9 percent we are now down to 7.5 percent, and the most important thing you are interested in is jobs.

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Now, what has happened in this 12-month span? From last April to the end of March this year, we have increased 2,600,000 jobs in the United States and we have reached the total of 86,700,000 jobs. More people were employed in the United States in March of this year than in any time in the history of the United States.

So, when you graduate, you are going to have a lot better opportunity to get a job in June than you did last June.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to ask you this question, please, sir. You are currently leading Governor Reagan in the contest for the Republican Presidential nomination. In the event that Governor Reagan should win the Texas primary and then go on to win the Republican nomination, would you as a loyal Republican support Governor Reagan for the Presidency? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: First, I don't expect him to win in Texas, and I don't -- (Laughter) It is going to be close, but I am getting more and more optimistic. (Laughter) I certainly don't expect him to win in Kansas City, so I don't think I have to worry about the question you asked. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President, my question concerns the 1976 campaign. When you were campaigning in the Massachusetts primary, you hinted that Massachusetts' Senator Edward Brooke would be considered for the Vice Presidential nomination. Now that you are campaigning in Texas, you have hinted that John Connally might be your choice. (Laughter)

My question is, who do you plan to suggest as your choice in the Indiana primary? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: In Texas I have suggested that both Senator John Tower and John Connally would be good possibilities. (Laughter) But, let me say the Republican Party has a wealth of outstanding talent, some in the United States Senate, like John Tower, some in the Governorships, some former Governors, some individuals in private life.

I think we are very lucky in the Republican Party to have a wealth of talent that is available for the Convention to make a choice.

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When I say Ed Brooke is a potential as a qualified person, I mean it, and I will say it right here in Texas. I don't back away from that, and when I am up in Massachusetts, I will speak affirmatively about the possibility of John Tower and John Connally. If we had a couple of good Senators in Indiana, I will say something nice about them, too. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President, Time Magazine recently reported that Governor Reagan's interpretation of the ongoing of the Panama Canal negotiations was basically correct. In a House subcommittee meeting, Ellsworth Bunker has reportedly said that we are negotiating right now to give away the Panama Canal.

What I would like to know is, why is the United States giving away the Panama Canal when it is major source of income for this country?

THE PRESIDENT: First, I think we have to be factual about it. The Panama Canal is not a major source of income for the United States. As a matter of fact, the United States pays the Government of Panama \$2.5 million a year for the rights to have the Canal go through the country of Panama. That is a factual statement.

We don't get any revenue. As a matter of fact, it is a loss, and we pay Panama \$2.5 million a year for the rights that we exercise in the Panamas.

Now, I am not going to give away anything that involves our national security as far as the Panama Canal is concerned. But, let me just give you the situation as we approach the negotiations.

In 1964 there was a terrible riot in the Panamas and in the Canal zone. Twenty Panamanians and four American GIs were killed. At that time, President Lyndon Johnson decided the wise thing to do was to sit down and negotiate with the Government of Panama to see if we could avoid that kind of bloodshed, if we could find a responsible solution.

Those particular negotiations have gone on, carried out by President Johnson, by President Nixon and by myself. Those negotiations are an attempt to find a responsible solution so that the United States of America loses nothing in the capability to traverse or transit that Canal, to use it along with all other countries and for a long, long period of time, well into the next century, probably 50 years, we would have the right to maintain, to operate and to defend that Canal, which is more or less the expected economic utilization lifetime of that Canal.

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Now, my friend and my opponent in this Republican primary says -- I have forgotten the word -- but anyhow, in effect what he says, we should terminate negotiations that have been going on for 12 years in a responsible way. I can assure you that if those negotiations are terminated, you will have a resumption of rioting, unquestioned additional bloodshed. You will have a very serious problem maintaining the operation capability of that Canal because it is easily subject to sabotage, so you will have to increase the U.S. Army contingent down there which is now 10,000 by at least another 10,000 and maybe another 20,000. In the interim, you will have 25 Latin and South American neighbors and 309 million Latin and South Americans angry, antagonistic against the United States, all in this hemisphere. I think we ought to carry on those negotiations responsibly as we are doing. We are going to maintain, as long as I am President, the necessary responsibility, the necessary influence to make sure that we don't give away one thing involving our national security.

QUESTION: Hello, Mr. Ford. The problem of overpopulation and world hunger is no longer theoretical speculation but is an unfortunate reality. This country consumes a disproportionate amount of the world food because we are fortunate enough to have productive, fruitful lands where other countries aren't so lucky.

If there is going to be a concerted effort to prevent millions of people from starving, we are going to have to be willing to give up some of our good fortune and spread it around. What should this country's responsibility be?

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me say that the United States of America is fortunate in more than having good land. We have the most productive farmers in the history of mankind. We have the greatest economic system in the history of mankind. We have less than 6 percent of the population, and we produce, as I recall, some 30 percent of the food throughout the globe.

Now, I don't think that -- well, let me just say I am not a doomsayer. I have heard these predictions, these forecasts, these pessimists come up and say America and the world, we can't make it for another 50 years. I don't believe that. I am affirmative enough about the ingenuity and the drive and all the other things in this country to believe that we will surmount the problems in ten years, in 20 years, in 30 years, just as well as our forefathers have in the past.

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But, to get down to the food problem on a world-wide basis, I concede that it is a serious one and that is why the United States in the current fiscal year is making available, under what we call PL 480, about \$1 billion 300 million of rice, of corn, of wheat and other agricultural commodities produced in the United States.

In effect, we are giving them away because of our productivity and their lack of knowhow, or their system, or whatever it is.

Another thing we can do aside from this annual contribution -- and this is about the 20th year of the PL 480 program -- about six months ago I approved a \$200 million contribution to the International Food Commission. It is a program that was established three or four years ago. A former President of Michigan State University that I am sure Dr. McCall knows, John Hanna, was the head of it. We are contributing \$200 million as a fund to be utilized by these underdeveloped countries that have the land but not the knowhow, so we can give to them the expertise and the capabilities that we have developed in this country.

So, between an annual grant of \$1.4 billion to the \$200 million that we have made available on my recommendation to give them a long-range capability, I think the United States is meeting responsibly its responsibility in this area.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford, I thank you for this opportunity for me to ask you a question that I have wanted to ask for several years now, and thought I never would be afforded the opportunity. I came with a list of questions to ask you about foreign policy in Vietnam, and Panama, such as this. But, as I listened to the Star Spangled Banner I was reminded, as I always am, of a trip I took to Moscow two years ago.

It was on this trip that I visited several Christian churches and talked to people in the streets who were afraid to talk to me because they knew I was a Christian. I sang the Battle Hymn of the Republic outside of Trinity Baptist Church in Moscow and as we were singing a truckload of Soviet troops pulled around the corner and drove all the people in the church back in just out of sheer fear.

I wore a wrist band around my wrist for two years in high school of a man named Georgy Benz, who, when he was my age, was thrown in prison for conducting Sunday school classes in his neighborhood, and he is still in prison today.

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What I would like to know is why you continue the policy of selling wheat to an enemy which has constantly stood up against every Christian principle we have ever held in our country, has suppressed every Christian person and every Christian young person in Russia?

Why do you continue to let them bull their way throughout the world -- in Angola, in Panama, where pro-Communists live and especially in wheat deals?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say that Mrs. Ford and I attended that same church in Moscow in 1958 and we were proud to go there as Americans who believe in God and made a commitment. We are proud of that, and we don't approve of the internal domestic policies of the Soviet Union. We don't agree with the domestic policies of a great many countries throughout the world, whether they are military dictatorships in one part of the world, whether they have a Communist form of Government in another part of the world.

I think it is sad and tragic that out of 140 nations in the world today there are only about 25 of them that are democracies like our own. I think that is sad. Our job is to do something about it in a responsible and in an affirmative way. But, I don't think that we ought to go to war about every one of those problems, and I don't think you do either.

If you are suggesting that the United States should start shooting every time we disagree with the internal domestic policies of a country, I just think that is wrong.

QUESTION: I merely suggest that we expect the Soviet Union to concur as much with the detente as the United States does and have as much integrity as a nation as the United States does. If they are going to back down on detente, then I feel that we should also.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say as long as I have been President we have never backed down once from the Soviet Union, with one exception, when the United States Congress decided we couldn't do something in Angola against the policies that I had which would have challenged the Soviet Union, and we could have succeeded in Angola if the Congress had not lost its courage and will. So, that is not out problem.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, I am Barry Reno and you are not. (Laughter) I just have a simple question here. (Laughter) Assuming that you receive your party's nomination this summer, who do you think would be the most difficult for you to beat in November -- Mr. Carter or Mr. Humphrey?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say you are not a suburb in Washington, D.C., either. (Laughter)

I think either Hubert Humphrey or Jimmy Carter would be very formidable opposition. In the one case, with Hubert Humphrey, he and I took the oath of office together back in January of 1949. He was a Senator, I was a House Member.

We have clashed ideologically for 25 or 28 years. He is on one side of the political spectrum, I think I am to the other side. So, a contest between Ford and Humphrey would be a good ideological confrontation. I think it would be healthy.

Now, Ford and Carter, well, we don't really know what Jimmy Carter stands for. (Laughter) But, if he gets the nomination, we will darned sure find out.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, did you have the opportunity to read his position paper in the New York primaries that he handed out to the people there? I believe it was about 35 pages long and it went into a little detail.

THE PRESIDENT: I read his foreign policy -- all I am quoting in part is what some of my Democratic friends are saying about his position, and I have read his foreign policy speech which he gave before the World Council in Chicago and it discussed all the problems but it didn't offer any solutions.

It talked about this area of the world and that area of the world. It was a very outstanding academic dissertation but it didn't have to grapple with the day-to-day problems where you have to decide yes or no. Now I think that is the problem he is running into when he talks about some of the other areas.

I listened to him explain. I didn't read about it, I listened to him explain his proposal for national health insurance with the Government in effect controlling the whole system. Well, I diametrically oppose that kind of a program.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am Susan Phillips and in all probability Jimmy Carter will get the Democratic nomination. Do you think that it is going to be a tough race because of the statement he made concerning ethnic purity?

THE PRESIDENT: As I said a moment ago, I think a contest between myself and Jimmy Carter will be a very tough race. I always assume in any competitive situation, you know, if you prepare for the worst, the best will take care of itself. So I assume it is going to be tough.

Now, let me just make a comment or two about Jimmy Carter's comment concerning ethnic purity. First, I would not under any circumstances use that term because that term doesn't describe any of the policies that I have or any of the policies of my Administration.

Secondly, I have the job at the present time where I have to uphold the law. The Constitution says that we must give each and every individual an opportunity for quality education, for the opportunity to live and work where that individual wants to. I think that is a mandatory prerogative in this country. The Supreme Court has said it; it hasn't backed away from it.

At the same time, I think we have to recognize that there is a great benefit of diversity in this country. Diversity is one of our strengths in America.

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There is an old saying, you know, that the beauty of Joseph's coat is its many colors, and that may be the strength of America.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I was wondering if you have done anything to insure that the men on your White House staff cannot supersede the power of Haldeman or Ehrlichman, and is your White House staff smaller or larger than that of President Nixon's?

THE PRESIDENT: To answer the last question first, when I became President, as I recall the figures, there were roughly 540 employees on what we call the White House staff. That staff is now 485, so it is less than what it was under my predecessor's guidance.

Number two, my staff is first selected by me. So I know them, I know the kind of people they are and, secondly, there is no one boss. I exercise that power. And I have an excellent staff where there is a contribution by many and so no one person is going to have the kind of authority that I think contributed to the problem that existed and which ended in August, 1974. So I think we have the kind of people, we have the kind of organization and we have fewer of them, so we are in a lot better shape.

QUESTION: Mr. President, we appreciate your taking the time to be with us this afternoon and, as the concluding question I would like to ask about what you think makes you a better candidate for students to support?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think students such as yourselves ought to take a look at the candidates and see which one has a proven record, and if you approve of that record -- I hope you will -- I think students as well as other Americans ought to exercise their sacred privilege by voting for that person who has a record, who has experience, who has achievement and when I look -- and I try to be objective -- certainly the facts and figures justify it, we have done a first class job in trying to achieve a successful, prosperous and healthy economy. Nobody can doubt that and that ought to be important to students.

It is a proven record, and when you look at the fact that we took the responsibilities or the reins of Government in August of 1974 when the world was uncertain, as well as many Americans, about the future of this country-- and we have re-established the best relationship that this country has ever had with Japan, with the NATO countries in Western Europe, we have made more progress in the Middle East under this Administration in settling the volatile, controversial, complex problems in that area where we have been able to get Arabs on the one hand and Israelis on the other who have been fighting four or five wars in the last quarter of a century, we have been able to get Egypt and Israel to sit down and settle a Sinai II agreement--when I look around the world and see the progress we have made with allies, where we are trusted and where our adversaries respect us and where we have peace and the capability to keep it, if I were a young person, that is the kind of a record that would appeal to me. I hope it does.

Thank you very, very much.