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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION  
WITH  
TEXAS TECH STUDENTS

HILTON INN

1:37 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: First, it is nice meeting you and, second, I am not going to make a speech because I have been doing that, so why don't we just let you all handle it the way you want to.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in view of the fact that there seems to be increasing influence of the Communist Party in a number of countries in Western Europe, I am curious what the policy of the United States would be assuming the Communist Party came to power in a country like, for example, Italy?

THE PRESIDENT: That is a very good question and I am quite surprised we have not had a question like that for some time.

I have said, I said it several months ago publicly and when I met with the heads of the NATO nations in Brussels in May of last year, I said directly to them that the United States could not understand or tolerate NATO being undermined if the Communist Party took over any one of the NATO members. It would totally change the thrust of what the NATO nations have been trying to do in Western Europe since 1951 when, under the leadership of President Eisenhower, we started NATO.

Of course, the Secretary of State has followed what I have said with his warning to some of these nations that are being challenged today internally by the Communist Party takeover in a proper, elective way.

But my view is that it would totally change the thrust and the concept of NATO because it was organized for the purpose of meeting the challenge of the Warsaw Pact nations in Western Europe, and to have a Communist Government in one of the 15 members of NATO it just makes it a totally different situation.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, do you see Russia's rule in the Middle East increasing?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't. As a matter of fact, as I said at the arena earlier, the fact that Egypt, under President Sadat, has terminated all military arrangements with the Soviet Union, is a clear indication that the Soviet Union has lost ground rather than gained ground in the Middle East.

Egypt is the largest Arab nation, has the most people -- I think it is 50 million -- it has more territory, and to have Egypt decide on its own that it ought to terminate military arrangements with the Soviet Union and actually force their navy ships to leave the port of Alexandria where they have had sanction for many, many years is clear indication to me that the Soviet Union has lost some influence in the Middle East.

QUESTION: I was wondering, do you favor some of the national standards for secondary education to take the role of setting these standards out of the hands of the State governments, who we heard on the news recently, one State government who said attendance was more important than acquiring the verbal skills of reading and writing?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not familiar with that particular report but I don't think the Federal Government ought to intrude on the rights of individual States to set the educational standards at the secondary level. I assume you are talking about high school and that area. When you say primary and secondary, that is what I assume.

I don't see any need for the Commissioner of Education for the Federal Government to step in and to decide for all 50 States what the standards should be. That is one of those prerogatives that I think more properly should be in the hands of the proper authorities at the State level.

QUESTION: Does that go for the primary schools as well?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, sure, primary or secondary. I was only addressing secondary because I was asked that question, but I certainly would include primary as well.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford, there are a few people in this room who have been involved with the National Student Association, the National Student Lobby, and also there are probably a few students in here that may be on the BEOG program and working on the college work-study program.

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As I understand, your Administration is recommending a cutback in the college work-study program and an increase in the BEOG program for the upcoming fiscal year appropriations. Could you explain the reasons for that?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, we did recommend a very substantial increase in the BEOG program, so to speak, and a relatively minor reduction in the work-study program. We think that the BEOG program overall, with a ceiling of \$1,400, is the maximum that a person could get on BEOG and the average under our funding of about \$900 per student is the right approach.

Now if it is of any solace to you, I don't think the Congress is going to cut back the work-study program so whether I recommended it or not is immaterial. I think it would have been better to go much larger on the BEOG program and some minor reductions on the work-study program, but Congress, unfortunately, on one hand is going to cut back my recommendation on BEOG and continue the work-study program at about the same level.

It is a matter of priorities and where our people thought we could put the most money to the best advantage. But if they appropriate it, we will spend it, in this case.

QUESTION: Will you approve of the additional supplements to the 1976-77 BEOG programs that are in Congress right now?

THE PRESIDENT: We just sent up a very complicated readjustment in those four or five programs -- BEOG, work study, and there are several others -- and this was worked out with the leaders, I think, in the House and the Senate who have primary jurisdiction over that appropriation bill.

Quite frankly, if the one that I am thinking of is the one you are thinking of, yes, I will go along with it because it was worked out as a compromise between what we proposed and what they wanted.

QUESTION: President Ford, as you know, agriculture is the economic lifeline of this area and, as you probably also know, the water table here is being rapidly depleted.

What do you feel about water importation and what are your ideas concerning that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I was talking to the editor of a local newspaper about that flying up from Dallas today. We discussed the fact that about 10 years ago the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation made a study as to the diversion of water from the Mississippi into here and, at that time, that study decided that on a cost-to-benefit ratio it was not an economically feasible plan.

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But it is a different situation today. For example, you can go back and compare the price of grain, corn, any of the other agricultural commodities 10 years ago, and they were significantly lower than they are today, and the problem has probably become more acute today with the all-out production that we are now having in agriculture.

So it is my feeling that we probably ought to update that study. There are relevant facts that might make a change in whether or not such a project was feasible, and I am going to look into it. I think it is something that we ought to examine again in light of present day circumstances.

QUESTION: So you feel that plans will be made to try to update that survey?

THE PRESIDENT: That survey certainly ought to be updated based on current facts.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I was hoping that you could point out the differences to me between a Ronald Reagan social worker approach and your approach?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me point out what I first voted for in the House of Representatives. In 1972 I voted for the Family Assistance Program, which I think if it had been approved would have been a great improvement over the present program, no question about it, because our welfare programs have developed over the years. Going back primarily to the Depression days, we piled one program on another without any real scientific approach to the overall.

So I thought the family assistance approach was a great improvement over what we had.

Now, it didn't get through, so we are faced exactly today where we were in 1969 or thereabouts. We have one of two routes to go. We can either try to improve, tighten up the existing programs, which are a hodge-podge, or we can go to an overall approach such as family assistance -- I am not saying it is identical.

We are in the process right now, at the highest level in HEW and other affected agencies, trying to decide whether you can really sufficiently improve a hodge-podge program or whether you ought to go to something like a family assistance program.

After the end of this study -- which probably will completed the latter part of December -- we will make a decision. But at the moment I don't want to pre-judge exactly what our approach ought to be.

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I can assure you that we are going to try to put the emphasis, number one, on helping those who are in need, period. Number two, we are going to try and have a work incentive part of the program, which I think is basically sound. We are going to, if we could, consolidate the many programs that we have that, really, I think, don't help the beneficiary but actually frustrate the beneficiary.

So those are some of the guidelines that we are trying to use in making a final determination.

QUESTION: Mr. President, could you give us a general idea as far as what your priorities and your ideas are on guaranteeing an equal opportunity for an education and a quality education for America's young people, and include in that how you feel busing fits into that particular scheme?

THE PRESIDENT: My overall thrust, whether it is primary, secondary or higher education is that of quality education. Now the Federal Government is not the principal source of funding for education in any one of the three areas. It comes from local and State funding, primarily, but the Federal Government can assist, and we have assisted very significantly.

Now at the primary and secondary level we have had some serious developments going back as a result of the Supreme Court decision in 1954 -- the so-called Brown decision -- where courts, in my opinion, have sought to apply a remedy, in some cases arbitrarily, and forgetting what the aim and objective is -- quality education for all children -- black, white, disadvantaged and other.

Now the Court had a tough job. I am not discounting their difficulties, because they also have to protect the constitutional rights of all Americans.

But as I look at some of these decisions around the country I can't help but conclude that in some decisions they have gone so far to force busing to achieve racial balance as the way to achieve quality education that it has torn up communities.

In other cases, wise judges have moved in cooperation with proper authorities and I think we have gotten the ability to achieve quality education, protecting the constitutional rights of individuals, and the Federal Government can, in those areas, help with money, with some other top advisers -- for example, in the Boston situation, the Department of HEW, the Office of Education has had five or six people up there trying to help resolve the problem in Boston. It got out of hand tragically, but that is another way the Federal Government can participate in trying to give help and assistance, at least from the Executive Department's point of view.

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QUESTION: My question is along the same lines as far as discrimination in schools, and that is I believe there is a special project fact and part of that is the women's educational equity program, and that your Administration is recommending somewhere under \$6 million and the present level was \$6.72 million this past year, and that certain educational organizations are pushing for around \$15 million.

My question is, then, since those were the only programs to eliminate sexism in higher education in schools for women, why, for cutting pennies to balance the budget you would be pushing for a decrease in the amount of money under that program.

THE PRESIDENT: You are a very ardent persuader. (Laughter) But you know when a President has to sit there and listen to all of the requests for all of the money from all of the departments, there are some very able people, like you, who say, "Now don't save \$7 million, we need it," and somebody has to make those decisions.

But let me say, that is not the only program. You know the Department of HEW issued Title IX regulations and those regulations, if carried out, I think will really achieve significant, affirmative action in trying to accomplish what you are really seeking to achieve. Now that is not a unanimous program, as I am sure you understand. There are some who strongly oppose it.

But HEW took the initiative, and they are seeking to implement it, and I don't really think -- without getting into it personally -- that that dollar difference will have a significant adverse impact on what you are trying to achieve.

QUESTION: Have you ever thought of creating a separate department for education, at the Cabinet level?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that has been discussed pro and con. We have an outstanding Secretary of HEW now, David Mathews, formerly the President of the University of Alabama. I have talked to him about it, and here is an educator and if I properly reflect his views, he doesn't think we ought to have a separate Department of Education.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in an age of increasing complexity and which demands split-second decisions, I was just curious about what brand of skis do you use? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I use Rossinols most of the time, but I also use K-2s and use some others. I don't think the skis make much difference. (Laughter) I am just lucky to stand up.

It is nice to see you all, and thank you, and the very best to you. It has been a pleasure to be here at the campus of Texas Tech. You know, Michigan almost would have played Texas Tech in the play-offs of the NCAA, but unfortunately you lost to Missouri by one point.

We almost -- for three quarters -- beat Indiana. (Laughter)