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MAY 5, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE  
ETHNIC LEADERS

THE ROSE GARDEN

11:34 A.M. EDT

Mayor Cianci, Mayor Perk, Monsignor Baroni,  
members of the Administration and guests:

Obviously, it is a great pleasure and privilege to welcome you to the White House and the Rose Garden this morning. This conference has been called to give new insight into some very, very old questions: How to maintain, how to strengthen the ties of community and neighborhood within our society.

America has always been drawing much of its strength from the bonds of family, community, church and volunteer organization. Yet, as the face of America has been changed over the years, there is a growing realization that some of our oldest traditions and some of our oldest institutions are now in jeopardy.

A sense of community has been eroded in some of our largest cities. A sense of neighborhood, a sense of belonging, of cultural identification, are threatened. I can appreciate your deep concern for the future of institutions which you work so very hard to establish. The ethnic church, the school, the credit union, the fraternal lodge, and an increasingly centralized Government in Washington, which has grown more and more powerful and very impersonal is a big part of the problem.

It is time to begin de-emphasizing the bureaucracies in Washington and re-emphasizing the community, the efforts that we can make to improve our American way of life. One way to do this is by extending the general revenue sharing program, which over the past five years has turned the flow of power away from Washington and towards your own cities and your own States.

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Another way is through the vigorous enforcement of the anti-redlining bill, which discourages credit discrimination based on neighborhood location and in mortgage and home improvement loans. I signed the law prohibiting that discrimination, and I intend to see it stopped.

By replacing the urban renewal programs and many similar programs with a single Community Development Act, we have given local residents a much, much greater voice in rebuilding their own communities. Red tape has been cut enormously. At my direction, Federal regulations for community development have been reduced from 260 pages to just 25 pages.

Application forms have been reduced from 1,400 pages to only 50 pages. The whole process between application and approval for these projects has been reduced from an average of two years to less than two months. We want to do more, and to do that we want to hear your views and to enlist your support and your cooperation. I have asked Bill Baroody and Myron Kuropas to give me a full report on your activities here today, and I hope each of you will let us know what you think needs to be done.

As we enter our third century, I believe that we can have a rebirth of individual freedom and that we can protect the diverse heritage which gives so much strength and so much richness to our society. Working together, we can achieve these goals, and I think today's conference is a very good start.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 11:39 A.M. EDT)