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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
PRESIDENT FORD COMMITTEE RECEPTION

THE WESTGATE PLAZA HOTEL

6:05 P.M. PDT

Thank you very much, Maggie, and thank all of you for being here. I am darned encouraged by what I find in California. One of the very nice things that I find in traveling around the country and meeting people like all of you here is not only to make new friends and acquaintances, but to see some of the people I have known over a long, long period of time.

There is a very good friend of mine from a good many years back, Phil Bengtsen. He played football at the University of Minnesota when I played at the University of Michigan. We were good rivals in those days. He probably gave me a hard time, and I tried to reciprocate, but we were also friends when we came out to the Shrine East-West football game, played on the eastern team against the western team in San Francisco, and then later went on and played in the All-Star Game in Chicago.

But what I am saying is that it is a great opportunity for me to renew acquaintances, to make new friends. But let me be very clear on one point. I appreciate your help. I think we have a program that is good for America, and it is a program I want to work on and to achieve in a better way and a longer process for the next four years, and I need your help.

What you all do between now and June 8 can make a significant difference in California. You will man the phone booths, you will talk to your friends, you will talk to your neighbors, you can get others enlisted to do what you are doing. Underdogs -- and I frankly think we are an underdog -- but I want to be very clear on this point -- I have seen underdogs win, and I think we have the potential of winning, and I want to make a pledge to you right here and now that Jerry Ford is going to be fighting until the last hour in the State of California.

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We are going to do it because what has happened in the last 22 months I think justifies the need and necessity for us to have an opportunity to serve the American people for the next four years.

What have we done? Reflect, if you will, or recollect the circumstances in August of 1974. We were going through a traumatic economic experience. Inflation was over 12 percent. The American people were on the brink of a serious economic recession, where unemployment went up and employment went down.

We were faced with some serious problems overseas. Our allies were apprehensive, our enemies, our adversaries, were in a position where they might have sought to take advantage of the uncertainty of American will. There was a lack of faith and trust in the White House itself. In the last 22 months -- because we didn't panic, because we held a firm hand on the tiller -- this country has turned around. We restored faith and trust in the White House.

The open, candid, frank policies that we pursued all the time of my political life we have carried out since I have been in the Oval Office, and we will do exactly the same thing for the next four years. The American people like that, and that helps us in trying to recruit people and to get votes between now and June 8.

Now, in addition, go back just 12 months ago. The economic recession we were in was the worst in 40 years. A few of us here can remember the depression of the 1930s. But in 1975 we were on the brink of very serious economic problems. But we have turned it around. The rate of inflation has gone from over 12 percent to 3 percent or less in the first four months of 1976. That is a 75 percent reduction.

The people have to have jobs, and if you go back for the last 12 months and bring it up to date, we have added 3,300,000 jobs in a 12-month period, 710,000 more jobs in the last month, and at the present time we have 87,400,000 people gainfully employed, people who have jobs in America.

It is an all-time record. This is, I think, a great accomplishment. We did it without busting the treasury, without adding to our deficit significantly. It is my judgment that the policies we have pursued in the economic field have been healthy for America.

Now, I know you have some particular problems right here in San Diego, but I might add we have had some terrible problems in my State of Michigan. I was up there before the primary, and the people in Michigan had a real strong feeling that things were on the right track, we are on the "up" side. As a matter of fact, if you look at all the economic factors that economists shower you with from time to time, everything that is supposed to be going up is going up and everything that is supposed to be going down is going down, so I am darned proud of the record. It is good for America.

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So, when you add up increasing prosperity, restoration of faith and trust in the White House and the fact that we have achieved the peace, we are maintaining it and we are going to keep it in the future with our military capability and our diplomatic skill, I think the record justifies, another four years.

One final comment. As much as I want a strong and prosperous American automobile industry, I don't think it is the time for the public to trade in a reliable Ford for a flasher model.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 6:12 P.M. PDT)