

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 7, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Toledo, Ohio)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

8:03 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Congressman Del Latta, Dr. Moore, Governor Rhodes, Senator Bob Taft, Congressman Pat Brown, Congressman Chuck Whalen, Mr. Shanklin, students, faculty and guests of Bowling Green State University:

It is great to be here. I have been looking forward to it. I have been here before. And let me say, it is a pleasure to be here at the home of the Falcons.

When I left home to go to the University of Michigan a few years ago, some people called it leaving the nest. Here in Bowling Green I hear you have a nest of your own that some people never seem to leave. (Laughter) But I am not sure whether they are talking about the Falcon's nest or the campus cemetery. (Laughter)

Well, I had a prepared speech and now I am going to talk to you straight.

I have had a wonderful trip to the great State of Ohio today. We started in Cincinnati. We went up the western side of the State stopping in seven or eight communities, and the warmth and the reception of the people of Ohio has been just tremendous. And it is culminating here in this fantastic gathering here in Bowling Green State University field house, gymnasium -- whatever you call it. (Laughter) It is a wonderful facility and I congratulate you on having a beautiful campus.

But let me talk about some things that I think interest everybody -- students, faculty, townspeople -- and I ask you to go back just about 22 months ago when I became President of the United States. This country was in tough shape. We had serious problems. We had gone through a traumatic experience.

August of 1974 wasn't the happiest period in the history of the United States. August 9 I became President. The American people had lost confidence and trust in the White House itself. The American people were faced with some serious economic problems. Inflation was going along at a rate of 12 percent or better. We were on the brink of the worst economic recession in 40 years. Unemployment was about to soar and employment was about to plummet.

MORE

We were faced with serious problems around the world. Our allies were wondering whether we had a will and a resolution to continue the kind of foreign policies that had been successful for the free world ever since the end of World War II. Our adversaries around the globe were tempted, I am sure, as to whether or not they could or should take advantage of the uncertainty and the problems we faced at home.

It wasn't an easy job to take that oath of office and say we had to turn things around. And let me say the first and most important responsibility was to restore the confidence and trust of the American people in the White House itself.

I was very pleased to hear Del Latta, who I served with for 18 years, make the comment that he did. But I decided that the Ford Administration right from the first moment after the oath of office would be straightforward, would be candid, would be open, would be willing to talk to anybody, whether I agreed with them or disagreed with them, because all of the wisdom does not reside in that little Oval Office. It resides in some 215 million Americans, young and old.

I was checking the other day, and in the 22 months we have had 15,000 people come into the West Wing of the White House and either talk to me or the top people in my Administration. They have been farmers, they have been workers, they have been minorities, they have been businessmen, they have been academicians. We want to get the full benefit of the views and the criticisms of the American people.

Therefore, I think in all honesty that I can say to all of you here at Bowling Green State University, this President has restored the faith and confidence that is needed and necessary in the White House if we are going to do a job for our country.

Let's talk about the economic problems. I said inflation was at 12 percent or more. We were about to hit the kind of a recession that had never hit us since the days of the 1930s, during the Depression, when I was going to the University of Michigan. We had to do something about it. The question was whether we should have faith and trust in the great free enterprise system or whether we were going to load up the payrolls around the country with the taxpayers' money and come up with some alleged quick fix that had been tried in the past but had not really solved the problems.

So I decided that it was needed and necessary to have faith, trust, in the system that has given this country so much in the 200 years. You know a little history doesn't hurt. When this country started with 13 poor, struggling colonies, they faced adversity beyond comprehension but they believed that an individual ought to have the right to pursue his occupation without the heavy hand of Government resting on his shoulder or hitting him over the head.

MORE

The kind of system that our forefathers gave us permitted this country to grow to the wonderful land where some 215 million Americans have more opportunities and more blessings than any other country in the history of mankind.

So we decided that we would give the free enterprise system a chance. And what has happened? First, inflation, which was 12 percent or more, is now 3 percent or less for the first four months of 1976, and that is a good record.

And what does that mean? It means the paycheck of the man in the factory, the student -- in 1976, he has got more spendable income than he can use, and use as he wants to. He is not robbed by the ravages of inflation as he was when I took that oath of office in August of 1974.

But we are going to do better. We are going to stay the course and we are going to get the rate of inflation down to the kind of a level where this country can grow and prosper and people, whether they are on fixed income or working in a factory or tilling the soil or teaching in this university, or students who are going here, will get a fair shake and not be robbed day after day after day by the kind of inflation we had in 1974.

Then, just about a year ago, we were in the depths of the recession. We had to do something and, again, I had some faith and trust in the kind of a system where five out of six jobs in this country come from the private sector -- and those are permanent jobs that give some opportunity for advancement for the young people who go from high school or college into the working world.

And what has happened? In the last 12 months, 3,700,000 more people are gainfully employed in America -- 300,000 more in the month of May, 700,000 more in the month of April. We had announced last Friday afternoon or Friday morning by the Department of Labor that 87,700,000 people are gainfully employed in this country -- an all-time record, and we should be darned proud of it.

I am not going to talk about unemployment statistics. Let me put it this way: 87,700,000 jobs, an all-time record. That does not satisfy me. We are going to get 9 million jobs as soon as we possibly can, and we are well on the road for that objective.

Let me add one final note: President Ford is not going to be satisfied until everybody has a job who wants a job. That is the only criteria by which this Administration will judge whether we are going well or badly. Everybody who wants a job has to have a job under this Administration. But let's talk for just a minute about how we did this.

MORE

In January of 1975, I recommended to the Congress that if we were going to beat inflation and provide the kind of economic opportunity for people who needed jobs, we had to put a lid on the growth of Federal spending. We had to also give some tax relief in order that people, the working people, the farmer, the academician, the professional man, anybody could have more money in their pockets so they could spend it, so they could provide the kind of incentive for people to modernize their plants, to expand their facilities.

We gave 75 percent of a \$23 billion tax cut to the people of this country, the individual taxpayers. The other 25 percent, we gave to the business community. Business has to expand. Business has to have an incentive to modernize. And the net result is we started to turn this economy around.

Then last January of this year, I decided that the rate of growth of Federal spending needed another cutback and I recommended that instead of a \$54 billion growth figure in Federal spending we ought to cut it in half, and I recommended to the Congress that they put a lid on it and I also recommended that we have another tax reduction on July 1 of this year.

And what kind of a tax reduction did I propose -- and this is the thing that in my judgment will really keep us moving to give jobs and to whip inflation -- it seems to me that as I looked over the Internal Revenue Code for the last 20 years the middle income people in this country had gotten short-changed. So far as personal income taxes are concerned, I said, "House and Senate, Congress of the United States, you better increase the personal exemption from \$750 per taxpayer to \$1,000." They haven't done it yet so you better get after them because that is what we ought to do to keep this economy moving and to get equity and fairness in our Internal Revenue Code.

But there is another area of taxation that I think all equity and fairness demands that we do in the Federal Government. We haven't treated the family farmer, the small businessman appropriately. Do you realize that in 1942 we set the estate tax exemption -- it has not been changed since 1942, since \$60,000. In the meantime, family farms have had to be sold, small businesses have had to be sold as it went from one generation to another. Those kinds of operations are the strength and the core of this great country of ours.

So, I proposed to the Congress that they go from \$60,000 to \$150,000 and they make it so that when a piece of property -- whether it is a family farm or a family business -- goes from the husband to the wife or from the wife to the husband there is no Federal estate tax that has to be paid.

MORE

Now let me say that the job isn't done because we have to sell 535 Members of the House and the Senate, or at least the majority of them. Give me some help. We will get the job done.

I talked about confidence and trust. I talked about the progress we have made in the economy and how we are going to keep it moving. Now let's talk about peace.

When I became President we were still engaged in a long and costly and tragic conflict some 8,000 miles from here. That war is over. We have peace and we have the military capability, we have the diplomatic skill to maintain that peace, and the Ford Administration is going to keep the peace.

Let me just talk about how we are going to do it. First, we have strengthened our relationships with the NATO allies in Western Europe. The NATO forces today economically, diplomatically, militarily are stronger and more competent to meet any challenge from the Warsaw Pact. We have strengthened our relationships with our allies in the Pacific, the Japanese and the others who have stood with us over the years.

We are continuing to make progress and headway with 800 million people in the Government of the People's Republic of China. We are meeting with the Soviet Union to try and put a cap on the nuclear weapons that could, as we all know, start a holocaust that could destroy mankind. I happen to think it makes much more sense to negotiate rather than to confront.

There isn't a scintilla of evidence that the Ford Administration has given up anything to the Soviet Union or to the People's Republic of China. We can talk. We can discuss. Let me just give you an illustration of something that we did and got some success with.

For 25 years, American Presidents have been trying to negotiate the peaceful experiments in nuclear explosions. We have been trying for 25 years to get on-site inspection in the Soviet Union, to see whether they were living up to those agreements.

I just signed, about 10 days ago, a negotiated settlement that gives the United States the right to make certain, to make positive in the Soviet Union, that the agreement they signed is lived up to, and that is progress under this Administration.

Let me tell you about a meeting that we are going to have down in Puerto Rico the latter part of this month called Rambouillet II. Last November, it was decided that the heads of Government of West Germany, of France, of Italy, from Japan and Great Britain and the United States, ought to meet to see what we could do to coordinate our economic efforts so that the depressions or recessions, whatever they were, in those countries and in America, could be ended as quickly as possible so we could whip inflation and get more jobs in the industrial democracies of this country.

That meeting was helpful, beneficial. It was the kind of a meeting that was beating the problem before it became a crisis.

The meeting we are going to down in Puerto Rico in a couple of weeks is the kind of a meeting that is going to react ahead of a crisis and not wait until a crisis occurs, and that makes sense.

Let me just conclude with this. As far as foreign policy is concerned, we have got the peace, we are going to keep it, and I remind you tonight of two things: The United States has no American fighting forces on any battlefield anyplace in the world. Our American forces there are for peace and not for war.

I might say that the Ford Administration is not going to assign any U.S. troops to Southern Africa.

But now let me make a little different pitch, if I could. You have got a big decision to make tomorrow, all of you who are eligible to vote. You have got to decide if you are a Democrat, who you are going to select in that ball game, but if you are going to vote in the Republican primary tomorrow I want you to take a look at my record -- peace, prosperity, the restoration of trust. It is a record. And, furthermore, I think that if I am the nominee leading the party that I represent, I can be elected and I can carry on the record for the next four years.

One other fact: If I am the nominee -- and I expect to be -- I can help restore some balance in the United States Congress, in the House as well as in the Senate. I think President Jerry Ford being the Republican nominee can help Bob Taft get reelected to the United States Senate.

Let me assure you for the benefit of Ohio and the United States, he darn well better be reelected to the United States Senate.

But let me add this: The Congress needs some balance and I think it needs some changes. I think the Congress can do a better job, and I spent 26-plus years there, and I think we need some better balance and some new faces. And let me say this: We can get that if President Ford is leading the Republican ticket.

You know as much as I happen to believe in a healthy and prosperous automobile industry -- coming from Michigan that is almost an absolutely mandatory point of view to have -- but I don't think 1976 is the year that you ought to trade in a reliable Ford for a flashier model.
(Laughter)

MORE

And one other point: You know, there is a school down in Columbus that has been giving my alma mater a hard time. I saw Woody Hayes the other day and I was delighted that Woody endorsed me, and I am very pleased that he indicated without any hesitation or qualification that he was going to vote for me, but you know, there is one time I would like the State of Ohio to beat the State of Michigan.

A couple of weeks ago we had a primary up in Michigan and I got 65 percent of the votes. I challenge you in the State of Ohio to beat that record.

Thank you very much. I do ask you seriously -- I think I have done a good job. I have been open and candid and we have restored the trust, we have turned the economy around, and we have achieved -- and we are going to maintain -- the peace. That is a record I am proud of, and I want your help and your vote tomorrow.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you spoke favorably about your employment record but I am finding a lot of college students are going out to find jobs and are not finding them appropriate with their degree plans. I just wonder if that is a concern of your Administration? What have you done and what are you planning to do to alleviate the problem?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say it is a matter of deep concern to this Administration, and a year ago the situation was even more precarious and much more serious. But I have checked the circumstances very carefully and I have had the Department of Labor and the Department of HEW take a look at the situation.

The circumstances in 1976 are far, far better than the circumstances were a year ago. They are not as good as we are going to have them, and I can't promise every one of you who graduates this year the kind of a job you want, but the opportunities are there a lot more than last year, and this Administration is going to make certain that in the years ahead those opportunities are available for talented, well-educated, well-motivated young people, including the kind that you are.

QUESTION: Mr. President, still on the employment issue, would you please comment on the Humphrey-Hawkins Act?

THE PRESIDENT: The question is, what do I think about the Humphrey-Hawkins bill.

Let me say very categorically, I don't think it will work. Therefore, I am against it.

MORE

Let me tell you why: They have some unrealistic aims and objectives. They have the wrong way to go about it and it will be absolutely inflationary because it will put a heavier and heavier burden on the Federal Treasury, adding to the deficit which inevitably means more and more and more inflation. It is a bad program for the solution of our problems here in America.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in March you set up a Cabinet level task force to investigate the recent bribery scandals. Has Mr. Richardson or that task force reported their findings to you and, if so, how do you tend to lead the American multinational corporations regarding this question?

THE PRESIDENT: About two months ago I appointed Secretary of Commerce Richardson to head a task force to study the problem of bribery by American business in foreign countries. It is a matter that we have to resolve if our American businessmen are going to be able to compete and live within the law of those countries and the United States.

I imposed on them a demand that they report to me every quarter. The first quarter has not expired, but I can assure you that it is a top level group and most of you know of the absolute integrity and the capability of Secretary of Commerce Richardson.

We expect an answer probably some time by around the first of July and I can assure you his recommendations will be carried out by this Administration to stop American business bribing in foreign countries or in the United States.

QUESTION: Sir, could you comment on the Social Security retirement benefits problems, the fact that Social Security seems to be running out of money?

THE PRESIDENT: The Social Security Trust Fund is now about \$40 billion. It is running a deficit this 12 months of about \$4 billion. If nothing is done about it, the deficit for the next 12 months will be about \$4-1/2 billion, and it will finally get down to zero. Something has to be done about it because millions and millions of Americans -- 32 million of them at the present time -- have earned and retired and expect a retirement income, and literally thousands and thousands and even millions are going to retire in the future, expecting that they have made an investment by the deduction of their taxes and expect their Government to treat them fairly. It is a situation that has to be met head-on.

In January of this year, I recommended a solution. Unfortunately, the Congress had not faced up to it. They are going to pass it off until the next term of the Congress. They have been doing that far too long. And if we don't do something about it we won't be treating fairly either the people who are retired or the people who are working and expect to retire. So, give me some help and get the Congress moving on this.

MORE

One more. I can't resist this beautiful young lady here.

QUESTION: I was just wondering, what kind of person are you looking for for Vice President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Betty tells me I ought to have a gal.

To be serious, I want -- and this is the absolute criteria -- the person that I select to be my Vice Presidential running mate has to be fully capable, totally qualified to be President of the United States. That is number one. After that, we have a whole range of things that have to be put into the formula.

I think it is premature to make a final selection. We have lots of good Republican talent and we will pick a good one, but that person, I can assure you, will be qualified to be President of the United States, and that is the only basic criteria that has to come.

Thank you all very, very much.

END (AT 8:45 P.M. EDT)