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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF THE PRESIDENT'S ACCEPTANCE ADDRESS
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BEFORE
THE 1976 REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

KEMPER ARENA
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Delegates and Alternates to this Republican Convention: I am honored by your nomination -- and I accept it.

I accept with pride, with gratitude, and with a total will to win a great victory for the American people.

We will wage a winning campaign in every region of this country -- from the snowy banks of Minnesota to the sandy plains of Georgia.

We concede not a single state. We concede not a single vote.

This evening I am proud to stand before this convention as the first incumbent President since Dwight D. Eisenhower who can tell the American people: America is at peace.

Tonight I can tell you straight away --
This nation is sound.
This nation is secure.
This nation is on the march to full economic recovery and a better quality of life for all Americans.

I am deeply grateful to those who stood with me in winning the nomination of the party whose cause I have served all my adult life.

I respect the convictions of those who want a change in Washington. I want a change, too. After 22 long years of majority misrule, let's change the United States Congress.

My gratitude tonight reaches far beyond this arena, to countless friends whose confidence, hard work, and unselfish support have brought me to this moment.

It would be unfair to single out anyone. But may I make an exception for my wonderful family, Mike, Jack, Steve and Susan -- and especially my dear wife, Betty.

We Republicans have had some tough competition. We not only preach the virtues of competition; we practice them.

But tonight we come together, not on a battlefield to conclude a cease-fire, but to join forces on a training field that has conditioned us all for the rugged contest ahead.

Let me say this, from the bottom of my heart: after the scrimmages of the past few months, it really feels good to have Ron Reagan on the same side of the line.

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To strengthen our championship lineup, the convention has wisely chosen one of the ablest of Americans as our next Vice President, Senator Bob Dole of the great State of Kansas.

With his help, with your help, with the help of millions of Americans who cherish peace, who want freedom preserved, prosperity shared, and pride in America, we will win this election.

I speak not of a Republican victory, but a victory for the American people.

You at home, listening tonight -- you are the people who pay the taxes and obey the laws. You are the people who make our system work. You are the people who make America what it is. It is from your ranks that I come, and on your side I stand.

Something wonderful happened to this country of ours these past two years. We all came to realize it on the Fourth of July.

Together, out of years of turmoil and tragedy, of wars and riots, assassinations and wrongdoing in high places, Americans recaptured the spirit of 1776. We saw again the pioneer vision of our revolutionary founders and of our immigrant ancestors.

Their vision was of free men and free women enjoying limited government and unlimited opportunity.

The mandate I want in 1976 is to make that vision a reality. But it will take the voices and the votes of many more Americans, who are not Republicans, to make that mandate binding and my mission possible.

I have been called an unelected President, an accidental President. We may even hear that again from the other party despite the fact that its elected representatives in Congress certified my fitness for our highest office. They voted for me 387 to 35 in the House of Representatives and 92 to 3 in the Senate.

Having become Vice President and President, without expecting or seeking either, I have a special feeling toward these high offices.

To me, the Presidency and the Vice Presidency were not prizes to be won, but a duty to be done.

So tonight, it is not the power and glamor of the Presidency that leads me to ask another four years. It is something every hard-working American will understand -- the challenge of a job well begun, but far from finished.

Two years ago, on August 9, 1974, I placed my hand on the Bible which Betty held and took the same constitutional oath that was administered to George Washington. I had faith in our people, in our institutions and in myself.

"My fellow Americans, " I said, "our long national nightmare is over."

It was an hour of our history that troubled our minds and tore at our hearts. Anger and hatred had risen to dangerous levels, dividing friends and families. The polarization of our political order had aroused unworthy passions of reprisal and revenge.

Our governmental system was closer to stalemate than at any time since Abraham Lincoln took that same oath of office.

Our economy was in the throes of runaway inflation, taking us headlong into the worst recession since Franklin D. Roosevelt took the same oath.

On that dark day I told my fellow-countrymen: "I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots, so I ask you to confirm me as your President with your prayers."

On a marble fireplace in the White House is carved a prayer which John Adams wrote. It concludes: "May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof."

Since I have resided in that historic house, I have tried to live by that prayer.

I faced many tough problems. I probably made some mistakes, but on balance, America and Americans have made an incredible comeback since August 1974.

Nobody can honestly say otherwise.

And the plain truth is that the great progress we have made, at home and abroad, was in spite of the majority who run the Congress.

For two years, I have stood for all the people against the vote-hungry, free-spending Congressional majority.

Fifty-five times I vetoed extravagant and unwise legislation. Forty-four times I made those vetoes stick. Those vetoes have saved American taxpayers billions and billions of dollars.

I am against the big tax spender and for the little taxpayer.

I called for a permanent tax cut coupled with spending reductions to stimulate the economy and relieve hard-pressed middle income taxpayers. Your personal exemption must be raised from \$750 to \$1,000.

The other party's platform talks about tax reform, but there's one big problem -- their own Congress won't act.

I called for reasonable, constitutional restrictions on court ordered busing of school children.

The other party's platform concedes that busing should be a "last resort"; but there's the same problem -- their own Congress won't act.

I called for a major overhaul of criminal laws to crack down on crime and illegal drugs.

The other party's platform deplors America's \$90 billion cost of crime; there's the problem again -- their own Congress won't act.

The other party's platform talks about a strong defense; now here's the other side of the problem -- their own Congress did act. They slashed \$50 billion from our national defense needs in the past decade.

My friends, Washington is not the problem -- their Congress is the problem.

You know the President of the United States is not a magician who can wave a wand, or sign a paper that will instantly end a war, cure a recession or make a bureaucracy disappear. A President has immense powers under the Constitution, but all of them ultimately come from the American people, and their mandate to him.

MORE

That is why, tonight, I turn to the American people and ask not only for your prayers, but also for your strength and your support... for your voice and for your vote.

I come before you with a two-year record of performance, without your mandate. I offer you a four-year pledge of greater performance, with your mandate.

As Governor Al Smith used to say, "Let's look at the record."

Two years ago, inflation was 12 percent.

Sales fell off, plants shut down, thousands were being laid off every week.

Fear of the future was throttling down our economy and threatening millions of families.

Let's look at the record since August 1974.

Inflation has been cut in half.

Payrolls are up, profits are up, production is up, purchases are up.

Since the recession was turned around, almost four million of our fellow Americans have found new jobs or got their old jobs back. This year more men and women have jobs than ever before in the history of the United States.

Confidence has returned. We are in the full surge of a sound recovery to steady prosperity.

Two years ago, America was mired in withdrawal from Southeast Asia. A decade of Congresses had shortchanged our global defenses and threatened our strategic posture. Mounting tension between Israel and the Arab nations made another war seem inevitable.

The whole world watched and wondered where America was going. Did we in our domestic turmoil have the will, the stamina, the unity to stand up for freedom?

Look at the record since August two years ago.

Today America is at peace and seeks peace for all nations. Not a single American is at war anywhere on the face of this earth tonight.

Our ties with Western Europe and Japan, economic as well as military, were never stronger. Our relations with Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and mainland China are firm, vigilant and forward-looking. Policies I have initiated offer sound progress for the peoples of the Pacific, Africa and Latin America.

Israel and Egypt, both trusting the United States, have taken an historic first step that promises an eventual just settlement for the whole Middle East.

The world now respects America's policy of peace through strength. The United States is again the confident leader of the free world.

Nobody questions our dedication to peace, but nobody doubts our willingness to use our strength when our vital interests are at stake.

MORE

I called for an up-to-date, powerful Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps that will keep America secure for decades to come. A strong military posture is always the best insurance for peace.

But America's strength has never rested on arms alone. It is rooted in mutual commitment of citizens and leaders to the highest standards of ethics and morality.

Two years ago people's confidence in their highest officials, to whom they had overwhelmingly entrusted power, had twice been shattered. Losing faith in the word of their elected leaders, Americans lost some of their own faith in themselves.

Again, look at the record since August, 1974.

From the start, my Administration has been open, candid, forthright.

While my entire public and private life was under searching examination for the Vice Presidency, I reaffirmed my lifelong conviction that truth is the glue that holds government together -- not only government, but civilization itself.

In the 24 years of serving my Michigan neighbors I learned to listen to them and level with them. As your President, I have met with thousands of citizens from all walks of life, from all fifty states. I have listened to disagreements, to criticisms. I have answered all questions and explained my positions to the nation freely and fully.

I have demanded honesty, decency and personal integrity from everybody in the Executive Branch of the government. The House and Senate have the same duty. The American people will not accept a double standard in the United States Congress.

Those who make our laws today must not debase the reputation of our great legislative bodies which have given us such giants as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Sam Rayburn and Robert A. Taft. Whether in the Nation's capital or the state capital or city hall, private morality and public trust must go together.

From August of 1974 to August of 1976 the record shows steady upward progress toward prosperity, peace and public trust.

My record is one of progress, not platitudes.

My record is one of specifics, not smiles.

My record is one of performance, not promises.

It is a record I am proud to run on.

It is a record the American people -- Democrats, Independents and Republicans alike -- will support on November 2nd.

For the next four years I pledge to you that I will hold to the steady course we have begun.

But I have no intention of standing on the record alone.

We will continue winning the fight against inflation.

We will go on reducing the deadweight and the impudence of bureaucracy.

We will submit a balanced Federal budget by 1978.

We will improve the quality of life at work, at play and in our homes and neighborhoods.

MORE

We will not abandon our cities. We will encourage urban programs which assure safety in the streets, create healthy environments, and restore neighborhood pride.

We will return control of our children's education to parents and local school authorities.

We will make sure that the party of Lincoln remains the party of equal rights.

We will create a tax structure that's fair for all our citizens, one that preserves the continuity of the family home, the family farm and the family business.

We will ensure the integrity of the Social Security system and improve Medicare so that our older citizens can enjoy the health and happiness they have earned. There is no reason they should have to go broke just to get well!

We will make sure that this rich nation does not neglect citizens who are less fortunate, but provides for their needs with compassion and dignity.

We will reduce the growth and the cost of government, and allow individual breadwinners and businesses to keep more of the money they earn.

We will create a climate in which our economy will provide a meaningful job for everyone who wants to work and a decent standard of life for all Americans.

We will ensure that all of our young people have a better chance in life than we had -- an education they can use and a career they can be proud of.

We will carry out a farm policy that assures a fair market price for the farmer, encourages full production, leads to record exports, and eases the hunger within the human family.

We will never use the bounty of America's farmers as a pawn in international diplomacy. No embargoes!

We will continue our strong leadership to bring peace, justice and economic progress where there is turmoil, especially in the Middle East.

We will build a safer and saner world, through patient negotiations and dependable arms agreements, which reduce the danger of conflict and the horror of thermo-nuclear war. While I am President we will not return to a collision course that could reduce civilization to ashes.

We will build an America where people feel rich in spirit as well as in worldly goods. We will build an America where people feel proud, about themselves and about their country.

We will build on performance, not promises; experience, not expediency; real progress instead of mysterious plans to be revealed in some dim and distant future.

The American people are wise, wiser than our opponents think. They know who pays for every campaign promise. They are not afraid of the truth. We will tell them the truth.

From start to finish, our campaign will be credible. It will be responsible. We will come out fighting. And, we will win!

Yes, we have all seen the polls and the pundits who say our party is dead. I've heard that before. So did Harry Truman.

I'll tell you what I think: The only polls that count are the polls the American people go to on November 2.

And I predict right now that the American people are going to say that night: Jerry, you've done a good job. Keep right on doing it.

As I try, in my imagination, to look into all the homes where families are watching the end of this convention, I can't tell which faces are Republicans, which are Democrats and which are Independents. I cannot see their color or their creed. I see only Americans.

I see Americans who love their husbands, their wives and their children.

I see Americans who love their country for what it has been and what it must become.

I see Americans who work hard but who are willing to sacrifice all they have worked for to keep their children and their country free.

I see Americans who in their own quiet way pray for peace among nations and peace among themselves. They do love their neighbors and they do forgive those who have trespassed against them.

I see a new generation that knows what is right and knows itself -- a generation determined to preserve its ideals, its environment, our nation and our world.

My fellow Americans, I like what I see. I have no fear for the future of this great country. And as we go forward, together, I promise you once more what I promised before: to uphold the Constitution; to do what is right, as God gives me to see the right; and to do the very best I can for America.

God helping me, I will not let you down.

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