

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 4, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY EARL L. BUTZ
SECRETARY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

THE BRIEFING ROOM

12:59 P.M. EDT

SECRETARY BUTZ: Gentlemen and ladies, I have just submitted my letter of resignation to the President, and he has accepted it. I want to say that this was completely my own decision in terms of what I and Mrs. Butz felt would be in the best interest of the President, of the campaign for election and of Government itself.

At no time was pressure put on me from the White House to do this. They left it entirely to me.

We have -- Mrs. Butz and I have -- considered this very carefully and prayerfully. I have gotten a lot of input from staff, from friends, and this is our decision.

I want to read you the letter I have written the President and read a statement that I want to make for the record.

"Dear Mr. President: I hereby submit my resignation as Secretary of Agriculture.

"I sincerely apologize for any offense that may have been caused by the unfortunate choice of language used in a recent conversation and reported publicly.

"It has been a high privilege to serve as a member of the Ford Administration. American farmers will always be grateful to you for your solid support of our efforts to raise their incomes and to permit them to manage their farms without excessive governmental regulation.

"I shall always be your ardent supporter.

"Sincerely yours, Earl L. Butz."

Here is the statement that I penned last evening at home. It reflects my genuine feelings, and I wish now to read it for the record.

MORE

(OVER)

"I have submitted my resignation to the President as a member of the Cabinet.

"This is the price I pay for a gross indiscretion in a private conversation. The use of a bad racial commentary in no way reflects my real attitude.

"By taking this action, I hope to remove even the appearance of racism as an issue in the Ford campaign. President Ford is a decent man with high moral values, who insists that every American be treated equally and with dignity. Every member of his Administration must and does subscribe to the same values.

"The record of the Ford Administration with respect to minorities is one of generous program support, sympathetic and dignified treatment and genuine progress in economic and social terms. This area will continue to receive top priority.

"My resignation must in no wise be interpreted as signaling a change in the farm policies of the Ford Administration. Under President Ford, net farm income in the U.S. is more than double the level of 1965-1968 -- the last four years of the Johnson Administration. Exports have tripled, cost to the taxpayer has been reduced by three-fourths and 60 million acres formerly held out of production at public expense have been released for production. Farmers have had the yoke of bureaucratic control lifted from them. World and domestic food needs are being filled more adequately than ever before. The use of food and food assistance programs for humanitarian needs is much higher than in the 1960s.

"It is important that the agricultural program of this Administration be continued. That is why farmers should support Gerald Ford in the election. That is why I shall continue to work tirelessly for his election."

That is the end of the statement.

Thank you very much.

END

(AT 1:03 P.M. EDT)