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THE WHITE HOUSE  
REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY FIELDHOUSE  
VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

2:48 P.M. EDT

Jim Nolan, Father Driscoll, members of the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation, students, faculty and guests:

May I express my deep appreciation for the opportunity to accept the invitation of the political union and particularly you, Jim. I understand that this organization has a background as a political debating society. Well, following the three debates I had with my opponent, I was asked on several occasions, would I make suggestions for the future or comments on the past. I said, "Well, I hope they do become institutionalized in our political future," and then I said -- as I reflected on the debates -- that I would make two observations: One, I hoped that Jimmy Carter would answer his questions (Laughter) but I also said I thought I ought to question my answers. (Laughter)

But, as you have noticed, I have three very special guests here today that are close to me and have been very helpful. One you have met, our son Jack. Then I also have another special guest who has been working with me and traveling to help the cause, and I think it is especially appropriate in an educational institution with the great reputation that you have here at Villanova. One of the outstanding Members of the House or the Senate for 19 years was a Democratic Member of the Congress, Representative Edith Green. Edith Green, I can tell you, was a formidable opponent and a welcome ally. We worked together on many, many programs. We seemed to understand and try to do things in conjunction on educational matters. But Edith Green of the great State of Oregon, who retired two years ago, has been helping me. I just want you to know Edith Green is with me and helping in my ideas and recommendations concerning education. Edith, will you please stand up.

But there is another guest that has been going with us. You recognized him when he walked in, but let me tell you, when I was very young, as a matter of fact, I it was part of my ambition to be a baseball player. Obviously, I didn't succeed. (Laughter) But then after I came back from World War II, I was trying to practice a little law and I was doing a little high school football broadcasting. Obviously, I didn't succeed. (Laughter)

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But we have here Joe Garagiola. Maybe I shouldn't say this about Joe's career, but I think Joe feels it is good to be on a winning team for a change. (Laughter)

It is great to be here at Villanova, and I am deeply appreciative of the warm welcome. As we come into the home stretch of this great campaign, I can't think of a better place to be than at this great university. I can't think of a better place to be at this great university that has been the alma mater of so many fast runners. As a matter of fact, the only thing that would make me worry about running against Jimmy Carter would be if he had Jumbo Elliott as his coach. (Laughter) But let me tell you something else. This one long-distance run is one race I am going to win.

Villanova University is truly an outstanding example of those privately supported institutions which have contributed so much to America's greatness and to our country's progress. Your share in America's distinguished tradition of private higher education, a tradition that is a century older than our country itself.

I am strongly opposed to a suggestion made by my opponent in this campaign that the Government tax all church-supported properties other than the church building itself. This would have serious implications as I have analyzed the problem, not only for church-supported schools but for church-supported hospitals, orphanages and retirement homes.

As far as our Government is concerned, those activities are as much a part of the church's mission as the church's place of worship. There is a constitutional separation of church and State in this country, and I will not see that separation sacrificed for a few more dollars in Federal tax revenues.

Americans must never forget that privately endowed colleges and universities like Villanova serve important public functions. Today, as in the past, they help prepare our national leadership in arts, the sciences, law, medicine, religion and in business, as well as in Government.

The strength, the vitality of America's privately endowed colleges and universities are essential to our educational system in America. If these private institutions should close, shifting the burden from private donors to public taxpayers, the tax load would be infinitely heavier. We must not let this happen, and as far as I am concerned, we will not.

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Let me repeat with emphasis what I have said many, many times before. I approve, support and encourage the principle of volunteer giving to help finance higher education, and I will continue to strongly oppose any legislative proposals which discourage such support, including those which would limit charitable tax deductions, disallow the full value of appreciated assets or exclude the State tax deductions.

We must also find, and find as quickly and effectively as possible, ways through the tax system of actually easing the burden of families whose sons and daughters attend nonpublic schools and to help families cope with the expenses of a college education.

Although I am a product of public education through the University of Michigan, I was the beneficiary of a law school education at Yale Law School.

But, I believe very deeply that the competition of nonpublic schools to the public school system is helpful in upgrading and maintaining the level of the public schools.

Competition in education is just as important as competition on the athletic field, in business or elsewhere, and we must maintain our nonpublic school systems throughout the United States.

Let me tell you something else that I haven't forgotten.

Two years ago, in October of 1974, when I visited Philadelphia, some of your fellow students thoughtfully gave me a Villanova football jersey. (Laughter)

After a year or about a year after that, I understand that some of you saw photographs of my daughter Susan wearing it. (Laughter)

Well, Susan couldn't be here today, but I think you will recognize this jersey.

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As you obviously saw, that jersey had number 76 on it, and it is on there, as I understood it, because some of you were encouraging me to run in 1976. I took your advice. (Laughter) And with your help, we are going to win November 2.

I have come to this great university to share with you some views that I have of America in 1976 and my hopes for America in the next four years and beyond. During the last two years in the aftermath of a very difficult war and a painful ordeal of economic adversity and political crisis, we reached a very critical turning point in America's history.

Throughout most of your lives, as I look around this wonderful audience, America has been in turmoil. Some of our most beloved leaders have been assassinated; there was a war that seemed to have no end; there were destructive riots on our streets and on some of our college campuses; we suffered runaway inflation and the worst recession in 40 years; we were betrayed by corruption at the highest levels of our Government.

Fortunately, the skies are much brighter this October. And I think we can say that the Administration has had something to do in turning the economy around. We are in the midst of growing prosperity. More Americans were on the job in 1976 than ever before in the history of the United States, some 88 million people gainfully employed. Many, or I should say too many people are still out of work, but we are on the move and I will not be satisfied until every American who wants a job has a job.

We have cut inflation in half and we are making continuous headway in that regard. America is at peace. There are no young Americans fighting or dying on any foreign soil today, and I say with emphasis, we are going to keep it that way.

Perhaps most important of all, America's trust in the White House has been restored. As I said on taking the oath of office as President on August 9, 1974, our long national nightmare is over. In the last two years the United States of America has made an incredible comeback, and we are not through yet.

In 200 years as a free people, much has changed in our Nation, but America's basic goals remain the same. Americans want a job with a good future; Americans want homes in decent neighborhoods and schools with quality education; Americans want physical security, safety against war and safety against crime; safety against pollution in the water we drink and in the air that we breathe; we want medical and hospital care when we are sick and costs that will not wipe out our savings; we want the time and the opportunity to enlarge our experience through recreation and through travel both at home and abroad.

These are the goals which every politician and every citizen, I think, truly has for America. They are not some mystic vision out of the future. They are the continuing agenda for action in this great country.

So, the question in this campaign of 1976 is not who has the better vision of America. The question is who can best make that vision a reality.

The American people are ready for the truth, simply spoken, about what Government can do for them and what Government cannot and what it should not do. They will demand performance, not promises.

There are some in this political year who claim that more Government, more spending, more taxes and more control over our lives will solve our problems. More Government is not the solution. Better Government is the solution.

It is time that we thought of new ways to make Government a capable servant rather than a meddling master. It is time we trusted the American people with the truth, that a Government big enough to give us everything we want is a Government big enough to take from us everything we have.

It is not enough for anyone to say trust me. Trust must be earned. Trust is not having to guess what a candidate means. Trust is leveling with the people before the election about what you are going to do after the election.

Trust is not being all things to all people, but being the same thing to all people. Trust is not cleverly shading words so that each separate audience can hear what it wants to hear, but saying plainly and very simply what you mean and meaning what you say.

I am proud of the maturity of the American people who demand more honesty, truthfulness and candor of their elected representatives. The American people, particularly young people, cannot be expected to take pride or even participate in a system of Government that is defiled and dishonored, whether in the White House or in the halls of Congress.

Personal integrity is not too much to ask of public servants. We should accept nothing less and the American people will not do so.

On November 2, the thoughts, the feelings of our Bicentennial will be expressed in a specific choice: What will we take with us into our third century? What will we leave behind? What sort of Government will help us reach our goals, not burden us with excess baggage?

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Our Nation's founders did not seek to guarantee our happiness, only our freedom to pursue happiness in our own way. The Government alone cannot make life meaningful. It can protect your freedom to pursue happiness, but it cannot make you happy. It can protect your freedom to worship, but it cannot give you faith in God. It can help you to be healthy and well-educated, but it cannot plant purpose in your mind or in your body.

Only you, the individual, with the help of family, church and community, only you can do just that.

Recently, we have heard a great deal about the apathy and the frustration of American voters in this election. But I see hopeful signs in this Bicentennial election and every day that passes -- particularly in the last week -- I have become more and more encouraged. I see not sterile cynicism and skepticism, but the signs of a new realism emerging all over this great country. Americans are realizing that there is only so much the Government can do for you and that every promise has to have its price.

We have been laying the foundations for a great third century in America, not on false promises or empty optimism but on a sound and realistic attitude towards ourselves and towards our system.

For the past two years, I have done my best to put this Nation back on an even keel, to chart a steady course for our country's future. We have come a long, long way. We have a long way to go to do all the things that this country has the potential to do.

We can build an America that not only celebrates history but makes it, that offers limited Government and unlimited opportunity that concerns itself with the quality of life, that proves individual liberty is still the key to common progress.

I have been very proud to serve as your President. I love this country just as all of you do. It would be the highest honor of my life for you and your fellow Americans to say to me November 2, "Jerry Ford, you have done a good job. Keep right on doing it."

Thank you very much.

END (AT 3:13 P.M. EDT)