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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
ONONDAGA COUNTY WAR MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

9:25 P.M. EDT

Thank you, Bill Walsh and Senator Jack Javits. I can't express adequately my appreciation to Jack. Whether I am in California or St. Louis, Missouri or Syracuse, New York or New York City, Jack Javits is out there fighting for the principles we believe in. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Jack.

It is great to see Bob McEwan. You know, long before some of you were born, I used to go up skiing in Lake Placid, and I look forward to going to the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid as your President in 1980. I know Bob McEwan will be your Congressman at that time, too. But Bill Walsh, former great Mayor of this City of Syracuse, when I was in the House as the Minority Leader, Bill did a super job. For your benefit, for the country's benefit, let me say you darn well better send Bill Walsh back to Congress.

Then I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dick Rosenbaum. He did a tremendous job and significantly helped me have the opportunity of representing our party in this great campaign. I thank you very much, Dick.

I know Joe Garagiola was introduced, but Joe has been campaigning with me for the last ten days. I will tell you, his enthusiasm, his integrity, his support, his friendship I will never forget. Joe, in front of these great people from Syracuse and upper New York, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

You know we are in the last quarter or we are in the ninth inning. That is when you win. That is when Dolph Schayes used to win for you here in Syracuse, that is when Joe Garagiola pulled it through, and that is when Jerry Ford is going to win this election on November 2.

I said in Kansas City that I wouldn't concede a single State, I wouldn't concede a single vote, and we haven't. Let me invite all of you wonderful people here in the War Memorial Stadium -- I want to invite you to a great party on January 20, 1977. Betty and Jerry Ford invite you to the inauguration on January 20, 1977.

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You know, as we come to the final countdown -- that is where we really are, and I think you know but I want to re-emphasize it -- I stand on your side for limited Government, for fiscal responsibility, for rising prosperity, for lower taxes, for military strength and for peace in the world.

I am the first President to seek election since Dwight D. Eisenhower who can go to the American people and say America is at peace. I remind you that not a single young American is fighting or dying on foreign soil tonight, and they won't under the Ford Administration.

But as we talk about things that are good, things that we have done, I can't help but let my mind drift back to 26 months ago when I became your President and stood in the East Room of the White House-- never having sought election as President--becoming President under the most unusual circumstances, but I found that this country was in tough shape at that time.

Unemployment was beginning to rise. We were on the brink of a serious recession. Inflation was over 12 percent. The American people had lost faith and confidence and trust in the White House itself. We were still engaged in Vietnam. It was a tough and troubled country.

But as I stood there and took the oath of office and then had a few words to say, I said, "Although you have not selected me by your ballots, I hope you will confirm me with your prayers."

Over the long sweep of 26 months, those prayers have helped. We put the ship of State on a steady keel. We had a firm and common sense hand at the tiller, and the net result is we made substantial progress. We have cut the rate of inflation by more than half. We have gained four million jobs in the last 18 months. We have 88 million people gainfully employed in this country, an all-time high. I think we have restored honor and trust and confidence in the White House by being frank, forthright and talking straight from the shoulder. I don't believe in promising more than I can produce, and I believe in producing everything that I promise.

But, we have a long way to go. I am not satisfied. I won't be satisfied until every American who wants a job will have a job. We can do it in the next four years. I won't be satisfied until every young American, with his wonderful wife, can afford to buy a house in a decent neighborhood because that is the bulwark of our society -- a home where you raise fine children, where you live in security and safety -- and we are going to make it possible by lowering down-payments, by adjusting mortgage payments and by lowering the problems of inflation. We are going to give this new spirit to the younger generation on the one hand and the building industry on the other. That is a goal of our next four years.

As I look around this wonderful hall tonight, I see some of what are called our senior citizens. We owe them a special obligation. They have built the America that we live in today. Your parents and my parents and all of our grandparents, what a great country they have given us.

So, as they live in their retirement, they should have our full and total support. They shouldn't have to worry about the problems of inflation, even though they live mainly on fixed incomes. That is the principal reason we have an obligation to put a restraint on the increase in Federal expenditures, because the best way to beat inflation is to cut Federal expenditures.

But we also owe them the opportunity of the best medical care that is obtainable in America, and we have the best. Everybody in this room knows a family, maybe your own, where somebody has had an extended illness with terrible medical and hospital costs. It is a catastrophe for the individual and for the family. We owe an obligation that no person among our senior citizens should go broke just to get well.

Among the other things that involve quality of life in America is the finest education. We have the teachers and the administrators and the facilities and, believe me, under this Administration we will make a maximum effort to make sure that quality education with control at the local level exists under the Ford Administration.

Nobody in this country can feel safe unless we do something effectively about crime in America. We have made significant progress in the last two years in reducing the rate of crime, but I am not satisfied, nor are you.

There are two programs that must be implemented: The hardened career criminal who is a repetitive individual in robbing or stealing must go to jail, and that person must stay in jail.

Then, let me talk for just a minute about taxes. In January of last year, I submitted to the Congress a sound tax reduction program. The best tax reform that I know is tax reduction for the middle income taxpayers. The middle income taxpayers have been short-changed, and so I recommended to the Congress last January that we increase the personal exemption from \$750 to \$1,000.

The other day I was out talking to some workers in a plant and one of the men said, "What have you done to give me some tax relief?" I said, "How many children do you have?" He said, "I have three." It ended up he had a wife, three children, and himself. I said, "If the Congress had been responsible, if the Congress had done the right thing and followed the recommendations that I made to give a fair break to the middle income taxpayers, they would have accepted, approved, my increase of \$750 to \$1,000 for the middle income taxpayers with a personal tax exemption.

Now, what did that mean to that family of five? It meant \$1,250 more in personal exemption. That is a lot of dough to a family that is trying to make it with a new house, send kids to school and improve their own status in society.

That gentleman said to me, "Well, supposing Congress doesn't pass it next time?" I said, "When they get back in January, they are going to have it on their desks. If they don't pass it in 1977, then we will submit it in 1978, and if they don't pass it in 1978 to give you the kind of tax relief that you deserve, we will go out and beat them in the 1978 election."

So, when you come right down to it, we have peace, we are on the move to prosperity, and we restored trust. So, in every field, America is on the move. The Nation is sound. The Nation is secure. This Nation is on the way to a better quality of life.

I say to you, my record is one of progress, not platitudes; performance, not promises. We have our problems, but I think we are making the kind of headway that gives us pride in America.

So, I say to you, on November 2 -- it has been tough the last two years, but I have been proud to be your President in a period when adversity almost overcame us, when difficulties were awesome, but because you supported me, because our form of Government worked, because America is great, it was a privilege to be your President.

Now, as skies get brighter, I ask you to give me an opportunity. I would be highly honored to serve as your President for the next four years.

We had a magnificent Bicentennial. There was a rejuvenation of the American spirit. There was a rebirth of our faith.

So, I would look forward to representing you, to doing the best I could, and I pledge that to you. Therefore, on this occasion I ask you not only to confirm me with your prayers but to support me with your ballots. I won't let you down.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 9:45 P.M. EDT)