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For Release
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TEXT OF ADDRESS OF
Representative Gerald R. Ford, Jr.
at
Michigan Press Association, Inc.
Luncheon

East Lansing, Michigan
January 28, 1956

THE POLITICAL PICTURE IN 1956

Mr. Chairman, Congresswoman Griffiths,
other distinguished guests, members of the
Michigan Press Association, ~~and guests.~~

It is a very rare privilege and high honor for
me to participate in this program with my Colleague,
the most attractive and very able Martha Griffiths.
Let me assure each of you her presence on this
program to represent the views of the Democrat
Party makes my job infinitely more difficult,
for she is not only extremely personable,
but very competent. Although we may differ
on certain issues, I sincerely believe we can
make a constructive contribution to this
meeting, for both of us adhere to the principles
that in America the best interests of the people



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are served by the two-party system, and that we as individuals can disagree without being disagreeable.

Today's topic is the Political Picture for 1956. In a Presidential election year such a title has universal appeal, but most of us here have a particular interest in the subject. From now until November 6th our newspapers will be filled with political copy, written by you, or published in your papers, while we as office-seekers will be actively jousting in the political arena.

To analyze properly the Political Picture for 1956, it might be helpful to re-run several of the pictures which were on the screen in January, 1952, when the American people were then viewing their first glimpses of that historic Presidential election. Mr. Truman was our president, and on January 9th, he delivered to the Congress and the American people the traditional State of the Union Message. The message was read, as you will recall,

*Texas
story
Langham*



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in a tense and uncertain atmosphere, both at home and abroad. Our Army, Navy and Air Force were heavily committed in a war 8000 miles from our shores. Inflation was rampant. Hard earned savings and wages were being devoured as the cost of living advanced precipitously. O.P.S., with a budget of over \$100 million annually and thousands of investigators and prosecutors, was heckling and harassing our retailers and producers, but particularly the small merchant and manufacturer. Government officials, some in positions of trust and responsibility, such as the Bureau of Internal Revenue, were being exposed as grafters and violators of our criminal and ethical codes of conduct. Congressional committees had alerted the public to the menace of Communist infiltration within the government itself. With these ^{*sad + sordid*} conditions prevailing, the 1952 campaign got underway.



President Truman's own words in this State of the Union message painted a discouraging picture. He said, in one of the opening paragraphs --

"The United States and the whole free world are passing through a period of grave danger."

A few lines later Mr. Truman stated --

"We are moving through a perilous time."

Now, in contrast, hear a few sentences from President Eisenhower's ^{similar} message of this month.

"The opening of this new year must arouse in us all grateful thanks to a kind Providence whose protection has been ever present and whose bounty has been manifold and abundant."

"Our country is at peace."

"Our Economy is at an unparalleled level of prosperity."

"The outlook is bright with promise."

In the four years from 1952 under Mr. Truman, to 1956 under President Eisenhower, in the words of the Presidents themselves, we have



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passed from a "period of grave danger" to one with an "outlook bright with promise."

In contrast to Truman's "perilous times" report, President Eisenhower's message was optimistic and encouraging. Our nation is not at war, and we have the most powerful offensive and defensive national defense forces in our history.

To better view the political picture today, this year, it might be helpful to retrace our steps to another State of the Union Message submitted by Mr. Truman on January 5, 1949. I can vividly recall that occasion since it was my first term, and my initiation to such Presidential reports. In his opening remarks Mr. Truman said -

"I am happy to report.....that the state of the Union is good."

On what facts did Mr. Truman justify this statement. Presumably he relied on data supplied by responsible federal agencies. Their records show that in December, 1948, total U.S.



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civilian employment was 59,434,000; average weekly hours were 40.1 in all manufacturing plants; average hourly earnings were \$1.40 in all manufacturing; average weekly earnings were \$56.14; and the consumer price index on all items was 103.

For comparative purposes let us turn now to the present, and review current conditions to see if "the state of the Union is good" today.

If Mr. Truman could speak glowingly of economic conditions in 1949, and the same in 1952, although the latter was dependent on a war-fed economy, President Eisenhower had good reason to be even more optimistic in 1956. Today approximately 66 million Americans are gainfully employed, a 12 percent increase over December, 1948, when Mr. Truman found, "the state of the Union to be



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good." In the same period from 1948 to 1956, hourly wages have increased 38 percent, and weekly earnings have zoomed 42 percent, while the cost of living has climbed only 11 percent. ^{In other words} Wages are up while the cost of living has been stabilized. In the three years of the Eisenhower Administration the cost of living has changed very little so that the savings of our workers, and the pensions of our older citizens are worth just as much today. The man who saved a dollar in 1942 and invested it in Social Security, life insurance or government bonds, received only 61 cents back if he retired ^{10 years later} in 1952. But the man who saved a dollar in January, 1953, will find his dollar will buy a dollar's worth of goods today, over three years later. These economic facts of life, all of them definitely on the plus side, will inevitably have a major impact on the political picture in 1956. The state of the Union today is



It's
not only good, it is better. It is at its best
in history.

As we survey the economic conditions of the past three years, and read the business forecasts for the months ahead, we can be certain that the Democrats ^{*definitely*} will lack the issue in 1956 that they sought to exploit in 1952, namely that a Republican Administration, and a depression are synonymous. Actually Republican policies under President Eisenhower have brought about the greatest and soundest economic growth in the history of the United States.

America's 70 million voters in 1956 will be called upon to determine which of our two major political parties is best equipped to lead the nation for the next four years. Will they select a President and Members of the Congress from the Republican Party where there has been a growing record of party unity and sound performance, or will our voters choose the Democrats whose



philosophical splits are historical,
irreconcilable and bitter.

In the past, right now, and in the months ahead Democrat Party policy as expressed by its spokesmen is widely divided. On many paramount issues one wonders whether there is party leadership and policy. The situation is befuddled and the party is rudderless.

The leading Democrat candidate for the Presidential nomination allegedly pleads for a policy of moderation, while our own Governor, who some say is an aspirant for the nomination, vigorously, in comments throughout the Nation, condemns this approach. Their other potential candidates run from Governor Harriman, another exponent of "immoderation" and Senator Kefauver whose voting record belies the Stevenson line, to Governor Lausche who more nearly typifies the true Jeffersonian Democrat philosophy. This widespread and fundamental difference must be confusing to the American voter who has seen the



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leadership of President Eisenhower bring about an ever increasing unity of purpose and philosophy in G.O.P. ranks.

On individual issues the division in Democrat ranks is even more noticeable. The northern wing of the Democrat Party proclaims its allegiance to civil rights legislation, but their Southern Democrat brethren who hold committee power in the House and Senate, stifle any effective action, and did so for all the years under Presidents Roosevelt and Truman.

Two powerful Texans, Speaker Sam Rayburn and Senator Lyndon Johnson, are splitting the Democrat Party wide open by trying to ram the natural gas bill through the Congress. Senator Paul Douglas, Illinois Democrat, and others in the party who violently oppose this legislation are daily condemning their Congressional Democrat leaders who allegedly want the Texas tail to wag the Democrat mule.



Foreign aid is another issue where the Democrats are at opposite ends of the pole with no unified party position. Governor Williams has expressed "profound disagreement" with those Congressional Democrats who oppose an expanded foreign aid program. Apparently the Governor and Senator McNamara favor a foreign aid program "considerably broader in scope and resources than that of the Eisenhower Administration," whereas the Democrats, Senator George, Senator Mansfield of Montana, and Representative Passman of Louisiana, the latter chairman of the House Subcommittee handling foreign aid funds, all want less than Ike has proposed. These widespread intraparty divisions on foreign policy can hardly stimulate public confidence.

Basic splits within the Democrat Party are most evident in the area of labor-management legislation. Most northern Democrats favor outright repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act, and the restoration



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of the discredited Wagner Act philosophy. In sharp contrast the Democrats from below the Mason-Dixon line voted for Taft-Hartley and have vigorously opposed any weakening of its provisions.

This same wide division of opinion exists within Democrat ranks on the McCarran-Walter Act.

Governors Williams and Harriman and Democrat Congressman Manny Celler, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, condemn this legislation which was sponsored by two Democrats and approved in a Democrat controlled Congress. Democrat Chairman Barden, of the House Education and Labor Committee, vehemently opposes the Davis-Bacon Act as it may apply to School Construction. Yet some of his party colleagues believe that prevailing wages should be paid on any construction project using Federal money.

Are the Democrats unified on farm policy?

Decidedly not. Senator Clinton Anderson, formerly Secretary of Agriculture under Mr. Truman before



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Mr. Brannan's tenure, forthrightly endorses the flexible price support program, and in 1954 he was joined by 11 other Democrat Senators who voted for the program. In contrast you have the House Democrats from the rural areas and the cities, with little deviation, going down the line for the restoration of rigid supports, despite the fact that under such a law surpluses mounted and income to farmers declined.

The party differences which are basic *to say the least* ideological conflicts within Democrat ranks are congenital, but are magnified when there is no real party leader. These days it's every Democrat for himself with no one qualified to speak for the party. The public is understandably confused by these divergent views, and consequently should hesitate to entrust national stewardship to a party with internal and deep-seated policy conflicts.



American voters

There may be some who are dissatisfied
1
with Republican peace, prosperity and progress,
ask
but, to whom among the Democrats can they turn?

Shall it be to the reckless who abhor moderation --
to the vacillating who leap from position to
position -- or to the reactionaries who would
deny natural and human rights to all men.

At this point, let us turn to the Rep-
ublican portion of the Political Picture in
1956. The personalities in the race of course
will vary considerably, depending on the President's
decision, but the basic principles will remain the
same. In passing, it is fair to say that some
Republicans are panicky that Ike won't run, but
there are more Democrats who are panicky that he
will. Probably the sanest of all is the President
We all
himself. I believe Ike will do only what he feels
best for the Nation as a whole.



Through the President's wise and forceful leadership the Republicans in 1956 can come before the electorate with a record of performance. In the previous four Presidential elections, the G.O.P. was limited to criticism of the opposition, and promises for the future. Now, in this election year we have a record of substantial accomplishment which will have considerable bearing on the results in November.

As we survey the political, economic and social fields for 1956, one finds the Republican forces deployed on a ^{very} broad front. One of the most astute Washington correspondents recently said the Eisenhower Republican policies bear a strong resemblance to those embraced by Teddy Roosevelt. Progress was the key to his philosophy, and that is the generating force in the Eisenhower program.

The 1956 G.O.P. will prove to the American people you can be economically sound, progressive and humanitarian without top-heavy federal bureaucracy

*and a concentration of control
in Washington*



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and a concentration of control in Washington.

The Republicans this year can point to a balanced budget and the restoration of fiscal responsibility.

Peace and prosperity will be among the heavy G.O.P

weapons. At the same time the Republicans can

speak convincingly of broad humanitarian gains such

as an expanded social security, more housing and

highways, better medical care and greater civil

liberties and opportunities. Best of all the

Republicans can show and prove that these social

gains for the individual and the community can be

accomplished without complete reliance on Uncle Sam.

It can be shown by the record of the past three years

that these needs for an expanding nation can be

met with the federal government working in partner-

ship and cooperation with state and local govern-

ments and private enterprise.

The American people know that in the decade ahead our Nation needs highways, schools,



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hospital beds, engineers, scientists, nuclear and thermonuclear development. They realize that political decisions made in 1956 will determine how soon and how well these needs will be met. I feel the voter in November will have confidence in a party and its candidates that can show more hourly and weekly wages in the workingman's pockets, a stabilization of the cost of living, a stronger national defense program with less reliance on manpower from the farm, factory and classroom, and a firm foreign policy that stopped the war in Korea and kept us out of others.

The alternative is a party, badly divided traditionally and ideologically, a party that talked about civil rights and the plight of the negro, but did nothing, a party whose last three Presidents and Secretaries of State let us fall over the brink of war, a party that was impotent to control inflation in either World War II or Korea, and a party that



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has a horrible record of fiscal irresponsibility.

I am convinced that in November, 1956,
the American people will retain the tried and
proved G.O.P., which will remain their guardian
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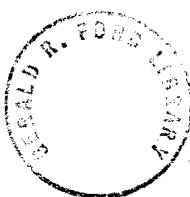
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On individual issues the division in Democrat ranks is even more noticeable. The northern wing of the Democrat Party proclaims its allegiance to civil rights legislation, but their southern Democrat brethren who hold committee power in the House and Senate, stifle any effective action, and did so for all the years under Presidents Roosevelt and Truman.

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At this point let us turn to the Republican portion of the Political Picture in 1956. The personalities in the race of course will vary considerably, depending on the President's decision, but the basic principles will remain the same. In passing it is fair to say that some Republicans are panicky that Ike won't run, but there are more Democrats who are panicky that he will. Probably the sanest of all is the President himself. I believe Ike will do only what he feels best for the Nation as a whole.

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