

**The original documents are located in Box D21, folder “65th Anniversary, National Electrical Contractors Association, Washington, DC, October 19, 1966” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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# NECA NEWSFLASH

NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION INC.  
610 RING BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036, FE 8-3585



*Paul*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Houston, Texas, October 19, 1966 ---- "Big government does a lot that affects you, and government does a lot to you," said Minority Leader of the U. S. House of Representatives, Congressman Gerald Ford (R-Michigan) at the 65th Anniversary Convention of the National Electrical Contractors Association in Houston, Texas today. He adds "... government must be controlled, and only the people can control it." Federal government size will be contained by strengthening state and local governments. Businessmen must participate in the legislative process if they would have a hand in shaping legislation. The best way to do this is by electing a voice in Washington through a wise choice of representatives.

The full text follows:

## THE POSITIVE APPROACH - BUSINESSMAN IN POLITICS

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very happy to be here with you, and to demonstrate my pleasure I am going to let you in on a new economic theory advanced by a newspaperman who recently shared it with me.

Over a long period going back nearly to the turn of the century, this newspaper chap has studied the length of women's skirts. By close and unceasing observation, he came to an unshakable and unswerving conclusion.

That conclusion was that the hemline of women's shirts rises in good times--



you know, things are looking up, as they say--and the hemline falls in bad times.

My friend says he has charts put together by the National Geographic Society to prove it.

The charts reveal that the skirt began sneaking upward about 1912 until it reached the middle of the calf. In the 1920's it kept on inching up. And by 1927, girls who blush easily were afraid to sit down. My friend says those were real good times.

Of course, when the stock market dropped into the cellar in 1929, hemlines on skirts fell too. The outlook was really depressing in the early 1930's.

Since then there has been an upward trend, except for some sag in skirts in the depression years.

Is there really something to my friend's theory?

Judging by what's happened in the stock market lately, I have the feeling that his ideas don't actually hold up. Or maybe government officials have been keeping too close an eye on hemlines instead of watching the Dow-Jones averages.

Current developments in women's hemlines and in the economy generally make it clear just how big a role government occupies in your life and mine.

The people who make women's skirts would like government to mind its own business. But for other businessmen, government is a big customer, and so they cultivate Big Brother.

When Big Government regulates, business naturally complains. When Big Government talks, business listens. When Big Government orders, business obeys.

Is Big Government important to you men in the electrical contracting business? You bet it is. Government does a lot that affects you, and Government does a lot to you.

Let me cite an instant example.

You men may not have been bothered too much by the recession in the home building industry. As I understand it, you are primarily involved in industrial construction.

Investment in industrial plant is of vital concern to you. So, too, are federal building plans, since the federal government is the largest single customer for construction services.

As you are well aware, this nation is in the grip of a dangerous inflationary upswing. Another way to put it is that the bloom is off the boom, and the country is in trouble, with high prices and high interest rates.

The home building industry is in deep trouble, and so the Congress has acted to pump more money into mortgage lending.

The American people are deeply concerned about inflation, and so Congress has acted to dampen what the President has called a highly inflationary sector of the economy--industrial construction. We have temporarily withdrawn the 7 per cent investment tax credit. The President has also indicated cutbacks in federal construction in a move to help cool off the overheated economy.

We know that suspension of the investment tax credit will slow down industrial building activity. I only hope that when the full impact of it hits that it will not cause a recession in that area of the construction industry.

It was with grave misgivings that I voted for suspension of the investment tax credit. But because the Administration had relied almost exclusively on high interest rates to curb inflation, there was really not much choice.

Without intending to be partisan, I feel compelled at this point to say that a cutback in federal non-military spending as early as last January would have been more effective and much more desirable than the investment credit suspension.....

Some businessmen look upon Washington as the fountain of all wisdom and power, the proper vehicle for solving most problems, the means of keeping the competition clean and avoiding recessions.

Others are happy to pocket whatever profits Big Government channels their way but look upon Washington as their natural enemy.

Still others figure Big Government is too big but decide the best approach is

to play the game, tune in at the tap and try to live with the monster.

Washington is many things to many people. But that the Government is Big--of that there is no doubt.

How big is Big Brother? He has roughly 2,600,000 civil service employees on his payroll--about 280,000 in Washington and the rest scattered throughout the country.

He spends more than \$140 billion a year, and his monthly worldwide payroll comes to a huge \$1.5 billion a month.

For businessmen, this giant bureaucracy often means a mountain of red tape and a steeper and steeper paperwork burden.

Let's be honest about it. Big Brother is a meddler. He calls this meddling protecting the public interest. Many Americans agree with him. Many others feel they are being smothered by Big Government.

The Government is a great collector of statistics, an arbiter of trends, a publisher of business indicators. Surely no economist is more listened to than the chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers.

But you can get hung on the law of averages. And that's why Secretary of Commerce John T. Connor, formerly with Merck & Co., has advised business firms to employ attorneys who are knowledgeable in economics.

"Many people have drowned in water only three feet deep." Connor points out.

The tone and the amount of federal meddling are pretty much dictated by the man in the White House, currently Lyndon Johnson. I don't have to tell you how Mr. Johnson operates with businessmen. Of course, it's only big businessmen he does business with. This administration has favored big business to the point that Republicans in Congress had to mount an all-out campaign to rescue the Small Business Administration.

It is Mr. Johnson, too, who has made the big decisions on what to do--or not to do - about inflation.

He chose to do virtually nothing about inflation until he sent his investment tax credit suspension plan to Congress. If that works, he can claim the credit. But if it flops, his will be the blame.

As the danger of inflation has deepened, so has the Administration's involvement in business.

You are all familiar with the federal government's wage-price guidelines.

We all know what the guidelines were--I say "were", because there's no question they're as good as dead--torpedoed by Mr. Johnson himself. We know that the guidelines were nothing more nor less than informal wage and price controls.

There is no such thing as voluntary guidelines -- not when government enforces the guidelines by an all-out bare knuckles assault on an entire industry or on its pace -setters. The guidelines were unworkable.

One reason the guidelines were unworkable was because they were arbitrarily applied. It just wasn't fair to single out one industry and club it down while allowing price increases in another area of the economy.

I won't do a post-mortem on the demise of the guidelines. It's obvious why they collapsed. I have mentioned the guidelines only to underscore the extent of government meddling in private business under the guise of protecting the public interest.

I have also cited the guidelines and other areas of government-business relations to underscore how important it is to you what kind of government you have in Washington.

It's great to rake in federal dollars, but there's always the rub of government regulations and sometimes the need to clear business decisions with Washington.

Getting along with the federal bureaucracy sometimes is compared to a Karate match. You need somebody who knows the ropes to give the federal agencies a good chop once in a while. You know, just to keep them loose. You need good, tough men in Washington. You need congressmen and senators who don't join the club but look

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I have talked of the expanding Government role in price-setting. This is done in the name of voluntary restraint and a fight against inflation.

But the ridiculous aspect of it is that this Administration fails to set an example. What you're hearing is a lot of doubletalk--from the President on down.

Let's put it this way. The Government preaches economy, but it keeps right on spending money like the proverbial drunken sailor.

Now what can you do about it? I offer you what I call a positive approach to politics for businessmen.

George Washington once said: "Government is like a fire which, if it is properly controlled, will light your homes and cook your food and run your factories, but if it is not controlled, it will destroy you."

I am not suggesting that the federal government be dismantled and shipped back to the states. Although I am an economic conservative, I don't think that would be desirable or beneficial.

But I do believe that government must be controlled, and only the people can control it.

I also believe that the more we strengthen our state and local governments, the less tendency there will be for federal government to grow ever-larger and more powerful.

I further believe that the more apathetic the people are about their federal government the more it will grow until it becomes virtually uncontrollable.

You men and women in business are important people. You are important not only in the business field where you carry on your work; you are important in politics.

You can do business with government, and you should do business with government. In many cases, it's your bread and butter. All the more reason why you must become intimately concerned with what kind of government you have.

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That is an excellent slogan. Legislative action is not something you can push off onto somebody else. You have to become personally involved.

One of the ways you should become involved is to persuade capable, attractive men and women to run for public office--or run for office yourself.

There are many other less dramatic ways, of course.

You can communicate on issues and candidates, through your publications, your forums and your advertising.

You can circulate public affairs information to your employees through newsletters.

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