

The original documents are located in Box 14, “8/19/75 - Remarks Before the White House Conference, Peoria, Illinois” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

REMARKS BEFORE THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

PEORIA, ILLINOIS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 1975

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - PEORIA

THANK YOU, BILL (BILL BAROODY INTRODUCES YOU)

SENATOR PERCY

MAYOR CARVER

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

(ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS)

BECAUSE OF THE EMPHASIS ON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS,
RATHER THAN SPEECHES, I AM CERTAIN THIS CONFERENCE WILL BE
LONG-REMEMBERED IN THE HISTORY OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION.
IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT A DIALOGUE IS WHEN YOU EXCHANGE
VIEWS WITH A COLLEAGUE -- AND A MONOLOGUE IS WHEN A
POLITICIAN EXCHANGES VIEWS WITH YOU.

TODAY, I THINK WE HAVE TAKEN A MODERATE-SIZE
STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF ELIMINATING THAT MONOLOGUE.

AND SO, I COME TO PEORIA, NOT JUST TO BE HEARD --

BUT TO LOOK, LISTEN AND LEARN.

AS A STARTER, I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE
GOALS AND PLANS OF MY ADMINISTRATION. BUT I ALSO
WANT YOU, THE PEOPLE OF PEORIA AND OF ILLINOIS, TO TELL ME
YOUR FEELINGS AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE VITAL ISSUES FACING
US AS A NATION.

ONE THING IS CERTAIN: WE HAVE PLENTY TO DISCUSS.

I HAVE BEEN PRESIDENT FOR ONLY ONE YEAR -- BUT WHAT A

YEAR IT HAS BEEN!

EVEN THOUGH MOST OF US WOULD

NOT LIKE TO GO THROUGH IT AGAIN, WE'VE HAD MORE PLUSES

THAN MINUSES.

YES, THERE HAVE BEEN DIFFICULTIES AND REVERSES
ALONG THE WAY. BUT AMERICA HAS WEATHERED THE STORM
BOTH IN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. ONCE AGAIN,
THE AMERICAN SYSTEM, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE
HAVE MET THE TEST.

CONSIDER THE ECONOMY. SINCE MARCH,
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT HAS RISEN BY 1.2 MILLION, INDUSTRIAL
PRODUCTION BY ONE PERCENT, PERSONAL INCOME BY FOUR
PERCENT, AND RETAIL SALES BY 8.8 PERCENT.

NOT ONLY OUR ECONOMY BUT OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM

HAS DEMONSTRATED ANEW THE STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE THAT

HAS MADE US THE FREEST -- AS WELL AS THE STRONGEST AND

WEALTHIEST -- NATION IN THE WORLD. WHERE IT COUNTS,

AMERICA HAS NOT AND WILL NOT EVER BE SATISFIED WITH

SECOND PLACE.

DON'T MISUNDERSTAND ME: I'M NOT SAYING THAT

OUR TROUBLES ARE OVER -- THAT WE HAVE REACHED THE

PROMISED LAND. BUT WE HAVE A DARNED GOOD VEHICLE

TO GET US TO THAT PROMISED LAND -- AND IT'S CALLED THE

FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM. THE JOB OF ALL AMERICANS

IS TO HELP PUT THAT VEHICLE INTO HIGH GEAR.

ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE EVIDENCE IN SO FAR POINTS
TO A HEALTHY ECONOMIC RECOVERY, WE CANNOT AFFORD TO
TAKE THAT RECOVERY FOR GRANTED. THERE ARE PLENTY
OF PROBLEMS LEFT THAT REQUIRE OUR PROMPT AND CONCERNED
ATTENTION.

TAKE INFLATION.

THE LATEST FIGURES SHOW

AN ANNUAL RATE INCREASE FOR JUNE OF JUST OVER NINE PERCENT

IN THE COST OF LIVING AND OVER 15 PERCENT FOR JULY IN THE

WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX.

THIS SHOULD SERVE AS A

WARNING THAT -- WITH THE WORST OF THE RECESSION BEHIND

US -- WE MUST GUARD AGAINST THE KIND OF EXCESSIVE

NEW FEDERAL SPENDING THAT COULD TRIGGER ANOTHER PROTRACTED

ROUND OF DOUBLE-DIGIT INFLATION.

FOR MY PART, I WILL DO EVERYTHING I CAN
TO HOLD THE LINE AGAINST INFLATIONARY FEDERAL SPENDING.

I CANNOT STOP A RUNAWAY CONGRESS FROM
VOTING APPROPRIATIONS THAT FAN THE FLAMES OF INFLATION.
BUT I CAN AND WILL CONTINUE TO USE MY VETO AUTHORITY TO
CURB THE INFLATIONARY SPENDING EXCESSES OF A MAJORITY
OF THIS CONGRESS.

THERE HAS TO BE -- THERE MUST BE -- ENOUGH
GOOD MEN AND WOMEN OF BOTH PARTIES IN THE CONGRESS WHO
WILL BAND TOGETHER TO SUSTAIN MY VETOES -- IN THE PUBLIC
INTEREST.

REMEMBER: INFLATION DOESN'T RECOGNIZE PARTY
LABELS. WHEN THE COST OF LIVING ZOOMS UPWARD, WE
ALL PAY THE PRICE -- ESPECIALLY THE OLD, THE POOR, THE
JOBLESS AND THOSE ON FIXED INCOMES, BE THEY DEMOCRATS,
REPUBLICANS, INDEPENDENTS OR DROP-OUTS. THE BURDEN
IS SHARED BY ALL.

INFLATION IS A COMMON ENEMY. WE MUST

FIGHT IT WITH A COMMON FRONT.

AND SO, EACH TIME I USE THE VETO TO BATTLE

INFLATION I AM TAKING A POSITIVE -- NOT A NEGATIVE -- STEP.

THE VETOES I HAVE EXERCISED SO FAR WILL SAVE YOU --

THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER -- AN ESTIMATED 6 BILLION DOLLARS

BY 1977. IN TAX PAYMENTS OR LOSS OF PURCHASING POWER

THROUGH INFLATION.

WE ARE TALKING ABOUT PRESERVING YOUR PURCHASING POWER

AND THE VALUE OF YOUR PAY-CHECK, YOUR PENSION AND

SOCIAL SECURITY CHECK AND YOUR SAVINGS. WE ARE

TALKING ABOUT YOUR FUTURE ECONOMIC SECURITY.

NOW, I AM WELL AWARE OF THE FACT THAT SOME
PEOPLE DO NOT ACCEPT THIS ARGUMENT. THEY SAY THAT
THERE IS NO INFLATIONARY PRICE TAG ON MASSIVE GOVERNMENT
SPENDING. BUT THEY ARE WRONG.

IN THEIR VIEW, THE SOLUTION TO ALL OF OUR ILLS
IS FOR GOVERNMENT TO SPEND MORE OF YOUR MONEY AND FOR
GOVERNMENT TO REGULATE MORE OF YOUR LIVES.

UNFORTUNATELY, THEIR ARGUMENT FOR BIGGER GOVERNMENT --
AND BIGGER GOVERNMENT SPENDING -- HAS BEEN ACCEPTED
ALL TOO OFTEN IN THE POST-WAR YEARS.

THE RESULT HAS BEEN A GROWING AND UNWARRANTED
TREND TOWARD FEDERAL INTERFERENCE -- INTERFERENCE IN
THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM; INTERFERENCE IN STATE AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT; AND, AS WE ARE NOW BEGINNING TO
DISCOVER, EVEN INTERFERENCE IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES.

THIS TREND MUST BE REVERSED -- AND IT WILL BE

IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT.

DESPITE ALL THE OBSTACLES THAT WELL-MEANING

GOVERNMENT HAS PUT IN THE WAY, THE AMERICAN SYSTEM --

AND THE AMERICAN WORKER -- CONTINUE TO PROVIDE US

WITH A LIVING STANDARD THAT IS THE ENVY OF THE ENTIRE WORLD.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOOK ANY FURTHER THAN PEORIA

FOR PROOF OF WHAT I AM SAYING.

THANKS TO PRODUCTIVE,

COMPETITIVE INDUSTRIES AND SKILLED, WILLING WORKERS,

THE PEORIA AREA TURNS OUT INDUSTRIAL GOODS THAT SELL,

NOT ONLY COAST TO COAST, BUT AROUND THE GLOBE. AND

ONE BLESSED RESULT OF THIS PRODUCTIVENESS IS THAT YOU HAVE

AN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE WELL UNDER THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

THAT'S A FINE RECORD -- ONE TO BE PROUD OF.

AND YOU HAVE ACHIEVED IT IN SPITE OF -- NOT BECAUSE OF --
BIG GOVERNMENT.

LET ME GIVE YOU JUST ONE EXAMPLE. I UNDERSTAND
THAT THERE IS SERIOUS LOCAL CONCERN HERE ABOUT THE
POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE NATURAL GAS SHORTAGES.

NOW, IF THIS IS THE CASE, WHAT IS THE REASON?

IS IT BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH KNOWN

SOURCES OF NATURAL GAS?

NO. FOR THE PRESENT AT LEAST, THERE IS

ENOUGH TO MEET OUR NEEDS.

THE PROBLEM IS NOT ONE OF SUPPLY. IT IS

ONE OF REGULATION -- OBSOLETE FEDERAL REGULATION THAT

MAY COST THIS PART OF ILLINOIS AND OTHER REGIONS OF AMERICA

JOB AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

THE BASIC PROBLEM IS THIS: FOR TWENTY YEARS,
THE FEDERAL POWER COMMISSION HAS BEEN REQUIRED BY LAW
TO SET ARTIFICIALLY LOW PRICES AT THE WELLHEAD FOR
NATURAL GAS SOLD IN INTER-STATE MARKETS. THE RESULT
HAS BEEN THAT GAS PRODUCERS SELL AS MUCH OF THEIR PRODUCT
AS THEY CAN INSIDE STATE BORDERS AT FREE MARKET PRICES,
CREATING SHORTAGES IN NON-PRODUCING STATES -- AND
COMMUNITIES LIKE PEORIA SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES.

BELIEVE ME, THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME I'VE
SAID THIS: AS VICE PRESIDENT AND NOW AS PRESIDENT, I HAVE
CONSISTENTLY URGED THE CONGRESS TO DE-REGULATE NATURAL
GAS TO EXPAND ITS SUPPLY NATIONWIDE.

BUT THE CONGRESS HAS DONE NOTHING -- EVEN

THOUGH COMMON SENSE SAYS IT MUST BE DONE AND PUBLIC

OPINION POLLS SHOW GROWING POPULAR SUPPORT FOR

DE-REGULATION. FURTHER DELAY IS INTOLERABLE.

EVEN IF THE CONGRESS ACTS THIS SESSION, IT WILL STILL BE

ONE OR MORE WINTERS BEFORE WE FEEL THE BENEFICIAL RESULTS

OF THAT ACTION.

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE HERE TODAY -- TO HEAR
FROM YOU, TO URGE EACH OF YOU TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD
FOR THE KIND OF FREE, PROSPEROUS AMERICA WE ALL WANT
AND BELIEVE IN.

FREEDOM IS MORE THAN A WORD. IT IS

A WAY OF LIFE -- A VITAL, LIVING THING. AND EACH

GENERATION MUST STRENGTHEN AND RENEW IT OR IT WILL SURELY

PERISH -- AS WE HAVE SEEN ALL TOO OFTEN ELSEWHERE

IN THE WORLD.

THE TIME IS NOW FOR OUR GENERATION TO KEEP THIS
IDEAL ALIVE. WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT OUR FIRST
TWO HUNDRED YEARS AS A FREE PEOPLE -- GLORIOUS AS
THEY HAVE BEEN -- WILL BE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE
AMERICAN SUCCESS STORY. TOGETHER, LET US PROVE
TO THE ENTIRE WORLD THAT THE AMERICAN DREAM IS BEST
REALIZED WHEN WE ARE WIDE AWAKE!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

END OF TEXT

(QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD NOW BEGINS)