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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA

MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

7:05 P.M. CDT

Thank you very, very much, President Mark Mayfield, the 13,000 Future Farmers of America registered for this wonderful 47th Convention, the 500,000 Future Farmers of America in every State of the Union, and your guests, it is a great privilege, a very high honor to have the opportunity of participating in this wonderful convention, and I thank you.

And I thank you on behalf of Betty because she wanted me to come, too.

One week ago I asked the Congress and the American people to help me revitalize the economy, slow inflation, and save energy. At that time I proposed specific and urgent actions.

The American people, I can report tonight, have responded magnificently. A great citizens' mobilization has begun and is beginning to roll. It is already evident here in this eager, up-beat convention of the Future Farmers of America. And I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

In this last week, I have received inflation-fighter enlistments from Americans of every conceivable occupation, economic circumstances, and political persuasion. Support has been freely offered by organizations and groups representing all ages, races, religions, and reaching into every corner of our great land.

America is arousing itself, as it always does in time of great challenge, to prove that we are people who can do anything we want to do when we really want to do it. We are going to win in America.

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(OVER)

Now some have said that instead of asking Congress and the Nation to bite the bullet, I offered only a marshmallow. Well, I had already asked the Congress to postpone for three months a 5.5 percent pay increase for Federal Government employees which would have saved \$700 million. Congress wouldn't even chew that marshmallow. They haven't, as yet, shown much appetite for some of the other "marshmallows" in my latest message.

But if they don't like the menu, I may be back with some tough turkey.

It is my observation and view that the American people are hungry for some tough stuff to chew on in this crisis. I don't know of any better place to look to the future of America than right here in the 13,000 faces of the Future Farmers of America.

I don't see anyone in this auditorium, not one, wearing a button that says "lose". You ought to win and we are going to win.

When your State Presidents came to Washington last July during a time of tension in our national affairs, I pointed out to them that people around the world have great faith in America.

I asked Future Farmers to have confidence in themselves, in our system of Government, and in our free competitive society. I appreciated their response. I think it is well expressed in the creed of the Future Farmers.

I believe with you, for example, in the future of farming with a faith born not of words but of faith in the promise of better days through better ways, even as the better things we now enjoy have come to us from the struggles of former years. It couldn't be expressed better.

Number one of the major points in my address to the Congress last week was food. In a war against inflation, farmers are the front line soldiers. They have done a great job in America, making our country the bread basket of the world.

To halt higher food prices, obviously they must produce more food. I called upon in that message every farmer to grow to full capacity, and in return -- and properly so -- I promised every farmer the fuel and fertilizer that he needs to do the job, plus a fair return for the crops that he produces.

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It is not only the young people in this auditorium who must lend their hand and their hearts to this task. I need help from young Americans all over this great land. The creative energy and the enthusiasm of youth in my judgment is a sure guarantee of winning.

But in all honesty, youth has the most to gain. Restoring stability and strength to our economy doesn't call for sacrifices so much as for contributions to one's own future well-being.

Last Saturday, 22 members of the Citizens' Action Committee to Fight Inflation met with me at the White House. It was a beautiful fall afternoon and I am sure many would have preferred on that committee to watch their favorite football game or play some golf or be with their families.

But I am deeply grateful that this fine committee took the time and made the effort to join with me on a Saturday to work on our national enemy number one.

Let me stress this point, if I could. This is a volunteer working committee, a completely non-partisan group dealing with a non-partisan problem. It will seek to mobilize America against inflation and for energy conservation.

I told the committee that if there was a scintilla of partisanship or if the group seemed to be merely a front for the White House, it would be doomed to failure.

Columnist Sylvia Porter, who has agreed to serve as national chairperson of this committee, responded that if I tried to manipulate the committee or seek to influence its actions, she and the other members would not participate. We understand each other.

And I say with all conviction that I have that I was greatly impressed with the membership of this committee and the cross-section of America which it represents.

Let me illustrate, if I might, in addition to Sylvia Porter, the committee elected four co-chairmen at its meeting last Saturday, and I want to congratulate them at this time.

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They are Carol T. Foreman, executive director of the Consumer Federation of America; William J. Meyer, president of a small business company in Lansdale, Pennsylvania; Leo Perlis, director of Community Service, AFL-CIO, and Frank Stanton, president of the National Red Cross.

A task force headed by Ralph Nader, one of the committee's members, came up with suggestions which coincide to a large extent with the views emanating from the Conference on Inflation which the Future Farmers of America and many other groups attended, and your fine President, Mark Mayfield, was one of the participants, and made a substantial contribution on behalf of all of you.

I had touched upon some of the proposals in my message to Congress a week ago -- grow more, waste less, drive less, and heat less. But the committee last Saturday added a few suggestions of their own. And I promised to pass the committee's recommendations along to all of you here tonight.

I will add some of the comments I have received, for example, in the mail at the White House from thousands upon thousands of individuals who responded enthusiastically to my request at the summit Conference on Inflation.

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Committee recommendation number one: bring budgeting back in style. Balance your family budget and expect your Government officials to do exactly the same thing.

I have already asked the Congress to work with me on this, the handling appropriately of the Federal budget. As to your family budget, I know how hard it is to balance, but many of your letters prove that it can be done. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Roland Spaek live in Holland, Michigan. He is a locomotive engineer working on a freight run between Grand Rapids and Chicago. Mr. and Mrs. Spaek describe in their letter to me how they are cutting their household budget, but they urge, and I quote, "Our Federal budget should be pared to the bone." Don't we all agree?

Robert Stewart writes from Waverly, Tennessee that he has a heart condition, unfortunately, and draws a pension of only \$251.28 a month. This allows him just two meals a day. "But thank God, we are not on welfare," says Mr. Stewart. He asks me, and again I quote, "Cut our Government spending except for national defense." Again, I think his example is a good one for all of us to observe.

Committee recommendation number two was stated to me this way by Sylvia Porter: Learn how to use credit wisely. Postpone unnecessary borrowing. Wait for interest rates to come down, as they will, and pay down as much as you can and pay off as quickly as you can. The cheapest way to buy anything, we all know, is to pay cash. But credit wisely used is essential to our way of life in America.

Committee recommendation number three is to save as much as you can and watch your money grow, which it will. Mrs. Frank Tennant writes from Climax, Michigan that her husband works hard and she helps stretch the paycheck through systematic savings. Mr. Tennant is a self-taught machinist and a veteran who lost his leg in Korea. But it is his ability rather than his disability that comes through in his dear wife's letter. The Tennants report they do not use credit cards. They put something in their credit union each week and buy a Government bond every month. They should be applauded.

James Kincaid of Belleville, Illinois, suggests a new type of Government anti-inflation bond, purchased through payroll deduction in which the interest rate is more competitive.

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Because I received many communications in this area, I have asked the Treasury Department to look at the possibility of issuing a new series of WIN bonds and report to me the feasibility of Mr. Kincaid's idea.

Meanwhile, if you can save more, the hard-pressed mortgage market, homebuilders and home-purchasers need your dollars. For those who can't save much, or anything, under the present circumstances, here is a very simple formula -- everytime the cost of living drops one percent in the Index, put just one percent of your spendable income into savings.

Committee recommendation number four: Conserve energy, save on fuel and take the pressure off scarce supplies. The committee advocates observance of the 55 mile speed limit. It urges that we use public transit and carpools. And they respectfully suggest that all of us walk a bit more.

Enforcement of the 55 mile speed limit is largely a State and local responsibility with volunteer cooperation from all of you which is an essential ingredient. Here, we can save both gasoline and lives.

Yesterday, I wired every Governor and many local officials urging them to follow through on this recommendation. At the same time, I directed the strict enforcement of the 55 mile speed limit, except in emergencies, on all Federal property and by drivers of all Federal Government cars, including my own.

And I say this now, with some firmness, but some trepidation, I will ask for volunteer cooperation and compliance from the four younger Fords in our family.

From Hillsboro, Oregon, the Stevens family writes they are fixing up their bikes to do the family errands, they are also using fewer electrical appliances, turning the thermostats down and the lights off.

Bob Cantrell, a 14-year-old in Pasadena, California, gave up his stereo to save energy. Bob urges the initiation of high school courses that teach students how to conserve energy. He adds, and I quote, "If a kid nags his parents to conserve energy long enough, it will help."

And I might add from my own experiences, believe me, it will.

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Committee recommendation number five is directed at business and labor. It calls upon them not to raise prices or wages more than costs or services absolutely require.

Admittedly, this is a very complex subject, and it cannot be handled on a nationwide basis. I believe that local citizen action committees, including labor and management representation, should be set up in every community to interpret this recommendation, set realistic goals for themselves and to report by Thanksgiving -- just six weeks away -- which plants, which stores, or other enterprises are doing the best job of holding the line in their community on costs and on prices.

If they do a good job and we find the winners around the country in every community in every State, I will then award WIN flags to the most outstanding as public recognition of their contribution to the fight on inflation.

Similar recognition will be given to outstanding energy savers, both individual and groups. Saving energy is, of course, a major way to save costs.

The national committee will help local groups to organize.

Committee recommendation number six: To help offset pay increases, insist on productivity improvements where you work from the boss on down the line. In short, work better, waste less, both of time and material.

And there is not a place where business is done or activity is undertaken where the boss and everyone else can't work better and save more. And we should urge them to do it as soon as possible.

Now, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Monson write from San Antonio to urge support of companies showing a higher degree of concern for energy solutions and the unemployment problems.

Mrs. Hannah Folsom of Ojai, California, offers an additional suggestion. She urges that steps be taken to cut down on the proportion of administrative personnel to productive workers in plants and stores and the like. I think this is a great idea.

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And let me say to Mrs. Folsom, I will apply this good idea to the Federal bureaucracy.

Committee recommendation number seven proposes we make economizing fashionable. Let me repeat that -- economizing fashionable. Shop wisely, look for bargains, go for the lowest-cost item, and most importantly, brag about the fact that you are a bargain hunter. You should be proud of it.

The committee certainly is not suggesting Americans should buy less. We should all buy smarter, stick to a shopping list. The experts tell us that is the best way to get a real bargain.

Kathy Daly, a student at Sacred Heart High School in Weymouth, Massachusetts, has one formula for shopping wisely and saving energy. Kathy suggests buying warmer clothes this winter.

G. M. Knapp of Tuscon, Arizona, puts it this way: "Only you can stop inflation. Buy only if you need it."

Committee recommendation number eight asks Americans to work with others to eliminate outmoded regulations that keep the cost of goods and services high, and to enforce regulations that advance efficiency, health and safety.

W. A. Taylor of Cambridge, Massachusetts, points out that because of Interstate Commerce Commission regulations, many, many trucks return empty, deadheading, so to speak. I have already asked the Congress to undertake a joint review of restrictive and outdated rules by the Federal Government and its independent regulatory agencies.

Yesterday I called upon Governors and mayors and others to do the same thing.

Committee recommendation number nine is do it yourself. Plant WIN gardens for yourself or within your community. Pool other do-it-yourself skills, and you can.

Sylvia Porter tells me that \$10 worth of seeds on a 25-by-30 plot will grow \$290 worth of vegetables. And she contends that community gardens can grow even in the inner cities of our major metropolitan areas.

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Many letters to the White House propose WIN gardens.

Rick Jacobsen of the Fifth Grade at Sault St. Marie, Michigan, writes the White House that "we planted our own garden so we could save on vegetables." In southern areas of our country, there is still plenty of time to plant WIN gardens. The rest of us who come from the northern States can plan for the next spring.

Committee recommendation number ten asks Americans to assist in recycling programs and the reuse of scrap metals.

Margaret and Bill Dolton of High Falls, New York, write me on recycled paper that one ton of recycled fibers saves 17 live trees and a ton of waste.

Talbert and Elaine Stein of Detroit ask for more recycling centers at local sites so you don't have to travel so far to deposit a few cans or bottles.

Mrs. Laird Barber of Morris, Minnesota, wants to know if a national program can be organized to collect cans, glass, newspapers. The Citizens' Committee is going to stimulate local organizations throughout our country in this regard.

I cite these because they are typical of thousands and thousands of creative suggestions from Americans in all 50 States.

I would like to add, if I might, just two points on my own to round out the committee's ten to make it a daily dozen.

Number eleven, waste less in every way. Unfortunately, Americans have an international reputation as the world's worst wasters. We waste food, gasoline, paper, electricity, natural resources. As a matter of fact we waste most everything. We litter our streets and countryside with waste.

One friend told me we could probably whip -- understand this -- whip inflation with the contents of our trash cans.

In your own home, let me make a simple suggestion. Just take one hour to make a trash inventory. In the letters that I have received at the White House are thousands of good suggestions. For instance, take all you want, but eat all you take.

The first words I can remember in my dad's house were very simple but very direct. Clean up your plate before you get up from the table. And that is still pretty good advice.

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When you aren't using them, turn off the lights, turn off the television, turn off the radio, turn off the water, use less hot water, insulate attics and windows, shut doors, keep rooms at 68 degrees in wintertime when you are awake, and at lower temperatures when you sleep.

Reducing waste, we know, can save money and energy. At the very same time, it is a double duty for inflation fighters.

My 12th and final point is an important one to every one of us: Guard your health. One of the worst wastes we have in America is days lost through sickness. Statistically, we are one of the healthiest nations in the world and your Government and the medical profession are constantly trying to improve public health and disease prevention.

But the facts are we can do much better. This will materially strengthen our attack on inflation by increasing individual productivity, by reducing demand for health care and the checking of its soaring costs, by helping balance the family budget in this essential but unpredictable cost item.

The success of cooperative volunteer action will depend on a mutuality of effort, a sense of fairness and a widespread support of goals. The benefits of such action will lead to greater civic efforts by millions of Americans and a focused awareness of what directions public policy should take for economic justice for all.

I have requested the Governors of every State and the governing authorities of our territories, and the District of Columbia, to form WIN committees on the State and local levels. It is my observation that a chain reaction has started. Our Government will not dictate this drive but will use its existing mechanisms to assure the cumulative effort.

I have asked the Federal Energy Administration to continue and make public, to exhibit for all of us to look at, monthly reports on gasoline consumption so we can make sure that we save that one million barrels per day from foreign imports.

Earlier, I asked every American to drive or to cut his car mileage by five percent. That is not very hard. That would save one-fourth of the 1975 goal for petroleum savings.

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Tonight, I ask, I ask those who can, to make it ten percent and I am ordering an even larger reduction for all Federal vehicles.

A national reporting system will be instituted before this year ends to assure a new year of less inflation and greater self-confidence for all Americans. We will know exactly where we are going and how fast we are getting there.

As I listen and travel, I hear each day of new and exciting efforts by individual and volunteer groups in our great country. This is the real WIN spirit of America. I am greatly encouraged. I think we are on our way.

With your help, each new day will bring more good news than bad news for our economy. Yes, there will be some setbacks. We will not be out of the economic trenches by Christmas, but I remind you, if I might, of just one fact: Every battle in history has been won by the side that held on for just five minutes longer. Our enemy in this battle has been called inflation. But perhaps Pogo was wiser when he said, "I have met the enemy and he is us."

If we, the people, can overcome ourselves as we have other enemies in our history, we will surely overcome our economic difficulties and come out a happier and a better people.

Let me close by reading you an energy-saving suggestion of an eight-year-old girl in Bristol, Virginia. Her name is Lurette Brumheller and here is what she wrote:

"Turn off lights when not needed and if you are scared when you go to bed without the light, tell your mother or father and they will do something about it."

Lurette, we are not going to be scared of the dark, any of us, because we are all in this together -- mothers and fathers, grandparents and great, great grandparents, sisters and brothers -- until together, we turn back on the lights of the brighter tomorrow in America.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 7:38 P.M. CDT)