

President Ford attended a reception at the state department in honor of Congressman John Rooney, who is retiring. About ~~120~~ 120 guests were invited, consisting of members of congress, friends of Rooney, and state department officials, both past and present. Dean Brown, deputy under secretary of state for management, served as host.

The Jefferson Room on the 8th floor of the Department of State was crowded as the President entered about 6:45, and he mingled with the guests for several minutes. Rooney was seated throughout the reception, except when he made remarks.

The President made a short speech, with a number of 1-liners, most of them related to Rooney's reputation for wielding the knife on money requests. He has been chairman of the house subcommittee on appropriations and the State Department was under his jurisdiction.

Some of the quotes: "You know it's very nice of congressman John Rooney to come over here to the State Department to visit his money."

"As chairman of the subcommittee on State, Justice, Commerce and Judiciary, it's no secret that John Rooney is a man of some consequence around this place. You know Henry Kissinger flew to Peking in a 707. One word from you, John, and the secretary comes home in a Greyhound bus."

"He has a well-earned reputation as a tight-fisted, penny-pinching guardian of the public money. John tries to scrimp and save and cut corners whenever he can. If you don't believe it, look at those pants I wore in Japan. Any shorter and I would have been arrested for streaking."

Seriously the President spoke of the congressman's great dedication and distinction. "John's impact is a great tribute to a great man." "I've known and respected you, John, despite some of our infrequent differences, because I knew you had the right instincts and the right aims and the right objectives."

The President noted Rooney will be 71 Friday and joins all of his friends to wish him well. "Thank you, John, for 3 decades of very distinguished public service."

Congressman Rooney stood at the microphone with some help, and responded in good humor. At the close he said, "Mr. Pres., you have no idea what pleasure you have brought to my family and to me by your coming here this evening to honor an enemy of the department of state."

Then Rooney asked if the President would do one more thing for him, and he called up one of his staff aids, a man of Chinese origin, named Wang Kam Fock, who placed a big kiss on the President's cheek. Rooney said "here's a fella who's done better than a fella born in this country." And added, "by the way, he's a legal alien."

The President was back at the White House about 7:25 p.m.

--- Forrest Boyd