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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION  
TO THE  
PORTLAND YOUTH BICENTENNIAL RALLY  
  
PORTLAND MEMORIAL COLISEUM ARENA

8:25 P.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Wow, what an experience. I know we have an energy shortage, but I sure don't see any sign of it tonight. Thank you.

I just finished telling a banquet audience that I came to Oregon just to visit, not to stay. After an ovation like that, it won't take much convincing to make me change my mind.

Now I know why the Portland Timbers are doing so well. (Laughter) You sure know how to make a fellow feel like a champion. Thank you very much.

Let me express my appreciation to Dirk and your fellow MC's Governor Bob Straub, Senator Mark Hatfield and all of you great, young Americans -- and I say with confidence -- the future leaders of this great country:

Obviously, I am delighted and pleased to join with so many energetic, enthusiastic young Americans in this birthday celebration. I understand that this rally is one of numerous Bicentennial activities in this area of our country, and I commend your plans to remember the past but, just as importantly, to look at the future.

That is the right note for our Bicentennial celebrations through the length and breadth of America.

The youth organizations represented here tonight have contributed so much in a constructive way to this great country. America owes very special thanks to the thousands and thousands of men and women who donate their talents and time to work with this tremendous reservoir of youth talent and capability.

The tradition of service of the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, 4-H, Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA and the Boy's Club is a very solid part of our fine American system and tradition.

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Tonight, I want to thank those organizations and the men and women behind them for what they have done and what they are doing for America. We are deeply indebted to each and every one of you, 214 million Americans who are very grateful.

I know firsthand from a good many years in the Boy Scouts how meaningful and important organizations of this kind are to youngsters growing up. I challenge all of you in this audience and all young people nationwide to continue this fine tradition of service and the betterment of society.

As we celebrate America's 200th year, its 200th birthday, let's remember that this Bicentennial isn't solely about patriots who made a successful revolution. It is about all Americans who took the dream of a new land, a new land of freedom, and made it a reality over the years since 1776. Millions of men and women whose names we will never know and whose heroism went unsung made that dream live.

To be sure, we honor the wise and articulate men who wrote what I consider two of the greatest documents ever devised by man -- the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

But the Revolution and its aftermath could have been a temporary footnote in the chronicle of its day without the unsung, unnamed Americans who made it permanent and imprinted its achievements indelibly in history.

Before the Revolution, the first English settlers dreamed of a better life and more freedom. They matched that glorious dream with a willingness to cross an ocean and civilize the wilderness.

This beautiful Pacific Northwest was settled by this same brand of courageous pioneers who carried the concept of self-government and faith in individual freedom to each new settlement and each new State.

Although today we are the world's oldest Republic, we are still a very young country. Our past truly is close to us, and although we may not recognize the names of ancestors who made this Nation possible, we can see their deeds and their legacy everywhere, a firmly established free system of Government and the most productive Nation in the history of the world.

In 1876, at the Centennial exposition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, America celebrated the wonders of an age just dawning, the shifts over from a rural to an industrial society.

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The first bicycle was on display at the 1876 exposition. We can wonder today which of our modern inventions will prove historical. In the years before the end of the 19th century, there was an explosion of ideas and inventions: The automobile, the electric light and the telephone.

Just as the American Revolution required followers and believers, so did our Industrial Revolution. Without the people who invested in the inventions and put them into use, we would all have arrived here tonight in a horse-drawn buggy.

The Wright brothers made history at Kitty Hawk, but the first passengers to ride in a plane made history, too. The believers, the believers who were not afraid of the new and untried, made the age of flight just as sure as did the men who built those first rickety flying machines.

You are growing up, I say to all of you, with a depth of conviction. You are growing up in an age of space travel and worldwide communications, and the world in which your children will live may be as wonderously strange as the world is to your grandparents today.

As I look over this wonderful audience, at you who will lead America in the 21st century, I urge you to look to the past for inspiration, but within yourselves individually for courage and to the future for challenge.

Many, many years ago, a Sunday school teacher taught me that the beauty of Joseph's coat is its many colors. The beauty of America is its many, many individuals, each a little different from the other.

For America's third century of independence, I commend to each of you this great objective--freedom for everyone who respects the freedom of others.

You, all of us, are inheritors of a great trust. We must honor the past by working for the future. A Nation born of a dream and carried forward by action requires from each and every one of us, all of us, a commitment of faith to advance individual liberty and to make America strong, to make America secure for this third century.

Thank you very, very much.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, Ronald Reagan said that his running against you would strengthen the Republican Party and the Nation. What are your thoughts on this?

THE PRESIDENT: I have always believed that competition in the political arena is healthy. I have always had political competition whenever I ran for political office in the past.

I emphasize, however, that in my own campaigns, instead of discussing the views of others or being critical of others, my view is that a person seeking public office ought to have his own platform, his own program and sell that and concentrate on an affirmative program and an affirmative basis.

So, if and when there is competition for the nomination of my political party, I will run it in that way, affirmatively aimed at discussing the issues and not indulging into personalities. Competition is good in politics like anything else.

Yes.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the large corporations all around the Nation seem to be making the Bicentennial celebration too commercialized. Many Americans, young people included, believe the Bicentennial could be more relevant by realization of the revolutionary democratic principles our ancestors fought for.

What is the White House Commission doing to promote the revolutionary spirit for our 1976 Bicentennial?

THE PRESIDENT: It has been my privilege to participate in several Bicentennial celebrations and none of them were commercial. None of them had any aspects that would, in my opinion, undercut the thrust and the emphasis that I think is important, which is recognition of the tremendous commitment, dedication, sacrifice that was made by so many some two hundred years ago.

Let me illustrate. I am sure you have read, I am certain you know the story of Paul Revere and the Old North Church in the City of Boston. I participated in a celebration in the Old North Church, which is a historic facility that was there when Paul Revere actually saw the lantern and undertook his famous ride. Nothing commercial about that.

I had the opportunity of visiting Lexington and Concord where some heroic people made a great stand. Nothing commercial about that.

I think overall, overwhelmingly, really, the emphasis that has been given to the Bicentennial by the White House Commission has been at the proper level, really telling all of us of the historic events that took place some two hundred or more years ago.

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A few will commercialize the Bicentennial. You can't prevent that but, if you follow the step-by-step activities, I am sure you will be convinced that the thrust of the White House Commission, of John Warner, the head of the Bicentennial office and everybody else is trying to establish the right atmosphere, the right direction for the Bicentennial celebration. I think it is good.

QUESTION: Where are you going to go next after this?

THE PRESIDENT: Where am I going after Portland? Well, I am leaving following this wonderful evening with all of you and going to Sacramento, California, for a 7 o'clock breakfast and then I am going to speak at a joint session of the California Legislature and then I am going to spend some time with the Governor of California, who has invited me to talk with him about some problems. Then I have several other meetings in Sacramento. Then I am going back to Washington.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to know what I could do as a ten-year old girl to help my country?

THE PRESIDENT: Rhonda, simply by asking the question and indicating your interest in helping your country, you have already made a great contribution.

QUESTION: Mr. President, is it true that Mrs. Ford was once a Campfire Girl in Grand Rapids, Michigan?

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't know her then.  
(Laughter)

I didn't start courting her until she had outgrown her Campfire relationship or activities.

I can tell you this, however, we had three boys and a girl. She was a den mother for a good many years bringing up three boys, so I guess she learned to be a den mother by being a good Campfire Girl.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to ask you what your greatest moment in scouting was.

THE PRESIDENT: My greatest moment of scouting. Well, I suspect the greatest moment I had as a Boy Scout was when I was selected by Governor Green of the State of Michigan along with 70 other Eagle Scouts to be the first group of Boy Scouts as guides on Mackinaw Island in Northern Michigan to tell the people who come to Mackinaw about the history of that fortress. I spent a whole summer there with 70 other Eagle Scouts. That was probably the greatest recognition and probably the greatest thrill that I had among my many years as a Boy Scout, a Boy Scout Leader and Assistant Scoutmaster, and I guess everything else.

QUESTION: Mr. President, don't you feel that the opponents of detente are gathering more support and eventually will jeopardize the improving relations between the United States and the Soviet Union?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say with sincerity and strong belief that if the opponents of detente are able to destroy this relationship, there must be a recognition by them that they are potentially destroying a means of communication, a means of relaxing tensions between the two super powers. Detente has not been an answer to every conflict and confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, but detente has given the opportunity for the relaxing of tensions and the easing of confrontations and detente has avoided some very potentially explosive head-to-head confrontations between the Soviet Union and the United States. So if the opponents of detente, those who want to be a cold warrior in peacetime, destroy this means of communication, this capability of avoiding confrontation, then they have to assume a serious responsibility.

I would rather use detente for peace than to destroy detente and increase the possibilities of war. So I am in favor of detente because it gives us a tool to avoid war and I will strongly not only defend it but use it so that we can achieve peace, maintain peace and at the same time avoid a holocaust, whether it is in the Middle East or elsewhere.

QUESTION: Mr. President, what are you doing, like what is the toughest thing you are doing in Washington?

THE PRESIDENT: What is the toughest thing I am doing in Washington -- well, there are a number of very difficult problems, Brian. One is to get the Congress to pass an energy program. Either my program or one of their own.

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Unfortunately, they haven't done either. But there are some other very important matters. I can assure you that Secretary Kissinger and myself spent literally thousands of hours working on how to help in the negotiations between Israel and Egypt and that was a tough problem. We were very helpful, we were fortunately successful in keeping the momentum for peace going. That was a tough problem.

Of course, the decisions that had to be made at the time of the Mayaguez incident were very difficult. But there are many others. There are just a lot of them. It's kind of hard to pick out the ones that are the toughest, but it is a challenging and I think it is a great opportunity for me to have that opportunity to face up to those problems.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you feel Congress will approve Secretary of State Kissinger's Mideast peace program and if they don't, what course of action do you plan to insure peace in the Middle East?

THE PRESIDENT: I am very confident that the Congress will approve the role and support that I have recommended. We -- the United States -- undertake in relationship to that agreement between Israel and Egypt. I am confident the Congress will do it and I will be surprised if it is not an overwhelming support. Because I believe the Congress will act affirmatively, I don't think it will be necessary for me to, as President, to face up to what I will do if they reject it. I only will add this, that if the Congress does not affirmatively approve our responsibilities in relationship to this agreement, then the Congress has to face up to the alternative, which is a very great, a far greater possibility of war in the Middle East. So I think the Congress will opt for helping to maintain peace rather than risking the dangers of a war in the Middle East.

QUESTION: Mr. President, how come you don't have telethons for people who have sickle cell anemia?

THE PRESIDENT: Would you repeat that, please, I couldn't hear it.

QUESTION: How come you don't have telethons for people who have sickle cell anemia?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Tyler, as I understand the question, it is why don't we have telethons for people who have sickle cell anemia, is that right?

QUESTION: Yeah.

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THE PRESIDENT: Well, the telethons, Tyler, that are held are usually generated by individuals or organizations. Now I know a little about sickle cell anemia because in my hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, there was a great deal of research done in a hospital, a very outstanding scientist and doctor was one of the leaders in working on the problem not only in Grand Rapids but in Detroit. It is a serious disease and there is an increasing emphasis in the Federal Government and also in various parts of the country in trying to find an answer to it.

It is my opinion that as more cases are discovered and there is more publicity to the tragedy of it, you will find a broadening organization and once you get such an organization you will have a telethon develop. And I hope there will be one.

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QUESTION: Mr. Ford, were you ever a Cub Scout?

THE PRESIDENT: The question is, was I ever a Cub Scout. I was not. I joined the Boy Scouts, as I recall, the day that I was 12 years old, and that was the day that you could join in those days. I don't think there was a Cub Scout organization that far back. (Laughter)

I am told that that was supposed to be the last question, but I will take one more.

QUESTION: Mr. President, what is going to happen to all the Vietnamese in Camp Pendleton?

THE PRESIDENT: Could you repeat that again, please?

QUESTION: What is going to happen to all the Vietnamese that are stationed at Camp Pendleton right now?

THE PRESIDENT: The question is, what is going to happen to all the South Vietnamese, Cambodians, that are stationed at either Camp Pendleton, Fort Chaffee, Eglin Air Force Base, and there is one in Pennsylvania.

There are now approximately 40,000 Vietnamese, Cambodian refugees who have not been sponsored. There were 140,000 in total. So, we have, in effect, gotten sponsors for roughly 100,000. I think that is a lot of progress, and I believe that at the rate of about 650 a day and about 4,000 a week, we will be able to get all of the remaining 40,000 sponsored and living in the United States by the middle of December, or certainly by the end of this year.

May I thank you all, Governor Straub and the others, as well as the young people here, the audience, the participants, it has really been a great experience. I love this kind of an exchange between those of us who are older and those of you who are going to be the leaders in America.

I am proud of you. We all love you, and we know you will do a good job.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 9:00 P.M. PDT)