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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION  
AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

LUNDHOLM GYMNASIUM

At 7:05 P.M. EST

President Mills, Mrs. Mills, David Farnham, members of the University System, Board of Trustees, members of the faculty, students, ladies and gentlemen:

It really is a great pleasure to be here with you at this very historic and very exceptional University of New Hampshire.

Now, I know that sounds pretty much like a traditional greeting, but believe me, any university that can take a distinguished faculty, a dynamic student body, a standard of academic excellence and then combine it with a meeting place called the Mub Pub, and one of the hottest hockey teams in America.-- it really is good to be here.

Let me for a moment make some remarks before responding to your questions and raise a question or two and hopefully give an answer

The first is, how can we help to create an economic climate so you can use your education in a rewarding job?

Secondly, how can we keep the peace so that you can stay on the job? The most important function of your education is to equip you for a satisfying job for which you can enjoy what life has to offer to you in the future.

My new budget was designed to bolster our economy by generating new jobs. In this budget, I have proposed an 11 percent increase in Federally funded research and development. This would bring Government R & D funds to a record \$25 million in a 12-month period with substantial increases, for example, in energy, solar, geothermal research, areas which are slightly important to your health, cancer, arthritis and the rest.

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This is a program that is not only applicable to applied research, but equally important in the field of basic research. As I indicated, this research helps to not only give us a better future, but to sustain our economy by creating an environment of innovation that will provide excellent private sector vocational opportunity for all of you after your graduation.

I want you to have real, permanent, challenging, satisfying jobs rather than temporary, dead-end make-work jobs provided by the Government.

The new figures announced in Washington on Friday show that genuine jobs are being generated by the demands of our economy, not by the commands of the Government.

The employment figures for January show that 800,000 more jobs were created last month. Ninety-six percent of the jobs lost during the recession have now been recovered, and we are going to do better. The pessimists were proven entirely wrong.

Then we must ask ourselves this question, how can we insure that your votes and your jobs will not be threatened by international events? Your lives are inseparably linked with the stabilities of the world. In a nuclear age there can be no lasting accomplishments without a lasting peace.

Here, too, I think we can be proud of our achievements. We are now at peace. Strengthening this peace remains our primary objective, and we will keep it as such.

Our principal alliances with the industrial democracies of the Atlantic communities and Japan have never been stronger. We are improving our relations with the world's most populous nation, the People's Republic of China. Our many friendships throughout the globe continue in the world.

A limitation on strategic arms to curb the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union is being sought on a mutually beneficial basis. Such a treaty would give hope to all humanity that despite difficult ideologies, great nations can interact in good faith for peace.

In our relations with the Soviet Union, we are working with firmness and frankness to consult rather than to confront.

To deter war and to preserve our national security, we maintain the words most efficient, alert and best equipped armed forces. They are all volunteers.

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And we intend to keep it that way, and they serve in a high state of readiness for the benefit of all of us. We remain the world's greatest democracy, symbolizing human aspirations for liberty as well as for progress.

The time has come to stop downgrading ourselves as a nation. We must, of course, learn from our past mistakes. It is our duty to see that we do not repeat past errors, but it is our duty to look to the future and provide enlightened leadership and strength to the countries throughout the world. Our positive accomplishments far, far outway our setbacks.

In the past year, we demonstrated the ability to experience severe difficulties and to emerge then even stronger than before. We did so because of America's vigor and America's determination.

We believe in ourselves and in our traditional values. Self-confidence in America is vital to our national security and survival. Acrimony and antagonism left over from another day only undermine our capacity to face the future with better results.

Blind criticism is no better than blind faith. The President, acting in consultation with the Congress, must be able to maintain our world status from a position of strength. This is impossible unless we can speak to the rest of the world with one voice. American foreign policy is motivated by the will of the American people.

Americans have an enlightened and determined spirit which combines firmness with frankness. It is in the spirit of our past and it will remain the spirit of our future.

I thank you, and now some questions.

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QUESTION: President Ford, my name is Ann Maloney. Do you plan to support health care insurance?

THE PRESIDENT: The question is, do I plan to support national health care insurance?

QUESTION: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not believe that we can, at the present time, embark on a broad Government organized, financed and directed health insurance program. I believe, however, that we should immediately, as I indicated in the State of the Union address, move to what is best known as catastrophic insurance for those who have extended illnesses, whose resources are drained and who have no means whatsoever of adequate health care, doctor care, hospital or nursing home care.

I think we must take first things first, make the program work and move from there after we are sure that program is operating properly.

QUESTION: Thank you, President Ford.

QUESTION: Mr. President, my question concerns gun control. What is your opinion on the control of all handguns, and how do you feel about the passing of a law which would ban entirely the sale, manufacture and possession of the so-called Saturday night specials?

THE PRESIDENT: My basic philosophy is that we should make it as difficult as possible for the person with a criminal intent to have possession so he can use a handgun. You can do this in a number of ways.

Number one, I think we should stiffen the penalty for those individuals who commit a crime while in possession of a handgun. This includes for those types of crimes mandatory criminal prison sentences.

In addition, I think we should extend the restrictions on the availability of so-called Saturday night specials. The Congress passed about four years ago a law prohibiting the importation of Saturday night specials. That has not been effective because the importers send the parts over and Americans put them together and then sell them.

I have recommended to the Congress -- and I hope it passes it -- a strict limitation on the sale of so-called cheap Saturday night specials. I think that is a step in the right direction.

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In addition, in the budget for fiscal 1977, I recommended an additional 500 employees for the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division of the Department of the Treasury, so that they can move into major metropolitan areas of high crime and incidents and really go after the trading of handguns in those areas where the danger is the greatest.

I am categorically opposed to the registration of guns and or individuals who own handguns.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I was wondering how you feel about the illegal possession of marijuana?

THE PRESIDENT: There is a great controversy in the scientific world as to whether or not the use to a substantial degree of marijuana is good or bad for a person's health. Until there is a higher degree of unanimity among the scientific world that marijuana is not harmful to the individual, I do not think we should decriminalize marijuana.

I think that we should do as the White House Domestic Council review recommended, that we should concentrate our effort at the Federal level on hard drugs, the trafficker and the others.

QUESTION: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: But, I re-emphasize I do not believe in the decriminalization of marijuana under the present circumstances.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford, my name is David Mason from Manchester. I am a member of the New Hampshire People's Bicentennial Commission.

They are planning to build a nuclear power plant in Seabrook and people around here don't want it. Recently, three officials from G.E. who have been working -- they have comprised 54 years of research and technology on the nuclear plants -- have stated nuclear plants are unsafe.

Mr. Reagan told me Thursday night he wants a moratorium on them. How do you stand on nuclear power plants?

Be careful.

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THE PRESIDENT: The safety record of nuclear plants to date has been good. It is not good enough. In the budget that I submitted to the Congress in January there includes a substantial increase in research and development funds to improve the safety and the reliability of nuclear plants.

It is my judgment that we can do better in safety and in reliability, and that is why there has been a substantial increase in the budget that I suggested. In the long run, I am confident that our scientific community can improve so that we virtually eliminate any problems whatsoever in this area so that we can proceed with the utilization of the atom for peaceful purposes.

There is no reason in the world why we should not take this capability and utilize it so we don't have to be reliant on Arab oil for the movement of our society.

QUESTION: It is my feeling that nuclear power is being put in for movement. I think we should get tons of more research into alternatives like hydropower, solar power.

THE PRESIDENT: Let's be specific. Let's not talk in generalities.

Again, if I might refer to the budget that I submitted to the Congress this year, I had a 35 percent increase in the funding for solar research, and we had a substantial increase in the funding and research and development for geothermal energy development.

We have increased very substantially the research and development fund in the fossil fuel area. We are doing our very best to find development and utilize these various exotic fuels.

But, I don't think we can totally ignore the atom when we can, through sound research, improve safety and reliability. It is the best insurance right now in the next five to ten years for escaping complete dependence on Arab oil and America shouldn't be put in that position.

QUESTION: Mr. President, first of all, I would like to apologize for some of the people in our audience.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

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QUESTION: About the situation in Angola, if that is developed into another Vietnam, would you have sent aid in the form of manpower and money over there?

THE PRESIDENT: I want to be very careful how I answer this so will you repeat the question again, please?

QUESTION: If Angola had developed into a situation such as there was in Vietnam, would you have sent manpower and money over?

THE PRESIDENT: There was no possibility that this country would, in any way whatsoever, get involved with U.S. manpower in Angola.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. President, last night I was part of a very peaceful, very well organized demonstration in Nashua, where you were speaking in front of the Chamber of Commerce.

We were restricted to a parking lot a mile away from where you were speaking and kept there by the Secret Service. I believe this is an infringement of my rights, and the rights of 500 other demonstrators, and I would like a comment on that, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: You know, I have always learned -- and I learned it the hard way -- that you can disagree without being disagreeable.

QUESTION: I don't think I was being disagreeable at all.

THE PRESIDENT: I respect your right to ask a question, whether we agree or disagree, and I think in deference, good politeness dictates that everybody listen, whether they agree with your question or my answer. So, would you ask the question?

QUESTION: What, in 25 years of public service, have you ever done to challenge the power and influence of multinational corporations and big business?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say that I have an Attorney General by the name of Mr. Edward Levi, who is a very firm and a very forthright lawyer who has been very tough on major corporations and antitrust areas, including multinationals, and he asked for additional manpower to carry out that responsibility. In the budget that I submitted, we gave him additional money and additional manpower, and I think you will find that he will carry out his responsibilities as Attorney General under the Constitution, under the law against anyone who violates our antitrust laws, including multinationals.

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QUESTION: If I could make one more comment and then I will sit down and let everyone else ask questions. We took a poll of student opinion, 1,520 students answered the poll. In one question it said some people say that public officials in Washington tend to dominate and determine the actions of America's major corporations. Others say that America's major corporations tend to dominate and determine the actions of our public officials in Washington.

The results of the 1,520 students polled, 83 percent think corporations control Washington. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: I have known a great many Democrats as well as Republicans in the Congress, and I have known six Presidents, and I think the comment to the effect that corporations control those individuals is completely and totally false.

QUESTION: President Ford, my name is Dan Smith. I am also with the People's Bicentennial Commission.

Recently you have been quoting some of the most important founders of this country, Patrick Henry last week, Thomas Jefferson in your State of the Union Address, you have talked a lot about common sense.

The People's Bicentennial Commission has been meeting all candidates, peacefully. There are many people here who are not with us who are expressing their opinion as well. The American democracy is the most incredible experiment in a political system that this earth has had.

We are very concerned that that democracy is being subverted, it is being undermined, and is being dictated to by the giant corporations of this country.

Now, for example, Chase Manhattan Bank estimates -- Chase Manhattan Bank says that 17 percent of the people in this room right now will be unemployed permanently in ten years because the multi-nationals are exporting capital and jobs and technology from this country.

What will you do to prevent the multi-nationals from subverting our jobs, the students in this room and the people of New Hampshire?

THE PRESIDENT: Reliable statisticians tell us that we have to create approximately 2 million, 100 thousand new jobs for young people entering the labor market every year.

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This is possible if we carry out economic plans and programs that give greater opportunity to the free sector, or the private sector of our society. Five out of six jobs in this country today are provided not by Government but by the private sector. That is where we have to provide by law and by regulation, by incentive, the opportunity to create those extra jobs -- 2 million, 100 thousand every year, and that is what we are seeking to do.

Now, the other course of action is to restrict the private sector and provide Government jobs. I don't think that works. It has never worked in any country that has ever tried it and where you are able to continue freedom as far as individuals are concerned.

I am confident that our society, our form of Government which has done more for more people in the history of the world in 200 years can do the same thing in the future, and I am an optimist about it and I think we are on the way to achieve it.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I first apologize for my imperfect English, but I hope we are not going to lose much in the translation.

A very interesting thing happened which I want everybody to know. When we were waiting for you to go to the Mub, the State Police said, "Would you please move behind the ropes"? I want the people to know that that is something everybody should be thankful for because a lot of places police do not usually say "please". All right?

My question, however, is a mere sensitive issue, Section 505(b) and 505(d) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1962.

THE PRESIDENT: What act?

QUESTION: Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 states that military aid is only given to foreign countries if and only if it is to be used for defensive and peaceful purposes.

In view of that, why is your Administration in constant support of the military aid to Turkey when Turkey, in using American arms to invade Cyprus, has violated the American law, as you state, to this day does not obey any of the United Nations' resolutions, and further, has made no minor, let alone major, concessions in solving their problem of the Cyprus refugees. Please address that.

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THE PRESIDENT: In the first place, in December the Congress passed an exception to that provision to which you refer.

QUESTION: The exception is overruled, I think.

THE PRESIDENT: Isn't that right?

But I think to understand the very complicated and very controversial problems involving Cyprus, we have to go back, not just in recent history, but back to what started the conflict in Cyprus and the tragic results that have taken place. I am sure you are familiar with the fact that the previous Government in Greece stimulated an attempt to assassinate Bishop Makarios and they sought to move in Greek National Guard forces to strengthen the Cyprus Greek National Guard forces at the time they sought to assassinate Makarios and put in a man by the name of Sampson.

The attempted assassination of Makarios failed, thank goodness. But at the same time, the Greek Colonel's Government sought to move in and take over Cyprus. That precipitated a counter action by the Turkish Government, and they moved in with very substantial forces, up to some 40,000, and the net result has been the Turks, having been stimulated by what the Greek Colonel's Government did, is now virtually in possession and control of Cyprus.

It's a bad situation. We have roughly 250,000 Greek Cypriot refugees. We are having a great deal of difficulty trying to get the refugees properly taken care of, to get a resolution of the dividing line between the portion that would go to Greece or the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots. I can tell you this, that this Government, our Government has been working with the Greeks and the Turks.

I have met twice with Prime Minister Demirel of Turkey and I have met twice with Prime Minister Karamanlis. Secretary Kissinger has worked with their foreign secretaries.

I believe a very crucial meeting is being held February 17 where Clerides and Denktash, the two from the Greek and Turkish negotiators are going to be hopefully resolving the problems of the dividing lines, the refugees and the kind of Government. It is vitally important for Greeks and Turks and the whole Mediterranean area for a solution to come from a very bad situation that was precipitated in the first place by a bad Greek Government under the Colonels.

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QUESTION: President Ford, if I may add, that military Government which all the Greeks despise was aided by the United States Government. That is perhaps my question, perhaps that is the heart of my question. Why all this foreign aid support to essentially corrupted Governments which can escalate to a global destruction of the world?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have to admit that the Turkish Government have a legally elected Parliament and the Prime Minister, who is the head of his party, Mr. Demirel, will probably have some elections sometime in 1976, and his competitor is a man named Ecevit, and the small party is headed by a man named Erbakan.

Now, they do have a free election in Turkey, so it is not a dictatorship, military or otherwise.

QUESTION: I was referring to the dictatorship in Greece in 1967, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: The Karamanlis Government in Greece today is a free elected Government.

QUESTION: I was simply referring to the fact that when Greece started the coups against Makarios, it was a dictatorship supported 95 percent by the United States Government, something which people do not appreciate.

Thank you for your time and consideration, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am a student from Africa, and I understand in the past the American foreign aid to South Africa was stopped to demonstrate the good will of a justified Government.

Right now, I think America is deciding whether they should open that aid again. If this is true, why is America deciding to reopen the foreign aid to South Africa if the South African Government still remains as it was before?

THE PRESIDENT: We have no foreign aid program for South Africa, none whatsoever. We gave no intention of instituting a foreign aid program for South Africa, none whatsoever.

QUESTION: My next question is, do you understand the situation in South Africa?

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THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me.. I didn't hear you.

QUESTION: If the American people understand the situation in South Africa, is America doing anything to discourage that or stop that situation?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think the United States should involve itself in any internal situation in another country.

QUESTION: During the Egyptian-Israeli war --

THE PRESIDENT: Pardon?

QUESTION: During the Israeli-Egyptian war, the Middle East war, the war in the Middle East, during that time a million dollars in the form of military aid, in the form of ammunition, was given to Israel, I think, and during that period there was a drought in Africa.

That, I think, is away from Americans, private dollars to protect --

THE PRESIDENT: If I understand your comment or question, it is true that the United States has given substantial military and economic aid to the legitimate Government of Israel and that has been for the purpose of trying to create stability in that part of the world.

At the same time, we have sought over the years to help Jordan. We have a new and far better relationship with Egypt, which is helping us keep some stability in that very volatile area of the world.

If I understand your question, I have sought to answer it.

QUESTION: In other words, why is military aid given to other countries? If you give military aid, to my understanding they will fight and kill each other. That is what it really means.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is a very idealistic view. But, if you look at the Middle East -- let's be very categorical and frank -- if you look at the Middle East, we have had substantial military hardware given and/or sold by the Soviet Union to Syria.

They did the same thing for Egypt until Egypt learned that their better future rested with us rather than with the Soviet Union. You have to live in the real world, not in some world that you would like, but it isn't that way.

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So, as much as I would like to not send any military hardware to any of these countries, if they ask it in their self-defense, and we don't get American military forces involved, and they think it is in their national interest, and they are willing to pay for it, I think we have to at least consider it and, in a number of cases, be forthcoming.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: President Ford, my question involves Angola. How is the Cuban involvement in Angola going to affect the future economic relations with the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: The 10,000 to 12,000 Communist-oriented Cuban mercenaries that are an expeditionary force for all intents and purposes have stopped any possibility of U.S.-Cuban relations improving, period.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you talked in your speech about a strong military posture for the country, and yet it has become recently very evident that the Russians have been increasing their naval powers at a much faster rate than we have; the incidents in Somalia with the new large naval bases on the coast and things like that.

Is there any consideration being given right now to revamping our Navy and getting rid of some of the older ships and bringing up the technology level?

THE PRESIDENT: There certainly is. We have had a new and expanded Navy shipbuilding program for two years, and the third year is included in the budget that I submitted, and in that budget we are recommending to the Congress \$6 billion 900 million in spending for 17 new capital ships.

It is very true in the last five years the Soviet Union has moved forward unbelievably in the building of a new, major naval force for worldwide operations. At the same time, the United States, during the Vietnam war, was neglecting the modernization of its naval force.

We did a lot of repair and rehabilitation, but few, if any, new capital ships were started.

But three years ago we came to the conclusion that we were in a short span of time going to be outdistanced by the Soviet Union on the seven seas. So, the Navy shipbuilding program we have at the present time, both in submarines and carriers and frigates and the rest of them, if we keep the pressure on, will give us high quality ships, very versatile, and a sufficient Navy to meet the challenges of the Soviet Union or any other naval force.

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QUESTION: The shipbuilding industry and the electronic industry that goes along with it is very important for Massachusetts, and Senator Jackson recently made some remarks that Massachusetts may have been punished, so to speak, by the Republican Administration since it was the only State that didn't vote with the rest of the Nation.

How do you respond to that remark?

THE PRESIDENT: I think, if you will look at the contracts that have gone to the shipyards that are in operation on the East Coast, we have a fine naval shipyard here at Portsmouth -- which we are not going to close, incidentally -- and we have another privateyard -- I have forgotten the name of it here -- but then all along the Eastern Seaboard we have very fine Navy, as well as private, yards, and any allegation to the effect that I or my predecessor said you can't award a contract to a Massachusetts shipyard just doesn't know what he is talking about.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

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QUESTION: President Ford, I would like to know, can you tell me what your Government is doing to increase my support of Israel?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me be very specific about that. At the time of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, when the United States supplied tremendous amounts of military hardware, tanks taken from our own forces in Western Germany, and other equipment sent from the United States to Israel to replace the losses they have, in the period of 18 months the United States spent \$3 billion 200 million on behalf of Israel's military and economic assistance.

In the budget I submitted for the current fiscal year, that is in this 12 month period, I recommended \$2 billion in additional military assistance with a forgiveness feature of 50 percent so they got half of it for nothing and, in addition, about \$750 million in what we call defense support.

So for this 12 month period that began July 1, I recommended \$2 billion 750 million for the State of Israel in military and economic assistance. And for the next fiscal year coming up, I recommended \$1 billion 500 million in military assistance and around \$750 million in economic aid and assistance. They got more economic, more military assistance than any other country supplied by the United States.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: There has been an increasing problem to apply a price tag to the environment, by this I mean how much do you charge a factor to pollute waters, foul airs and dispose of waste? Our quality of these environmental necessities is deteriorating. How do you propose to immediately deal with this threatening problem on the Federal level?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the Federal Government has to make a major effort to help local communities with waste water treatment plants. Let me give you the facts concerning what the Federal Government is doing. In the budget that is on the Hill now for the next fiscal year, we are going to spend \$6 billion 500 million to help local communities build modern waste water treatment plants. That is a 65 percent increase over the current fiscal year and a 90 percent increase over the past fiscal year.

This is a major effort and it is beginning to pay dividends.

I don't know if you are familiar with the situation in Lake Erie. Lake Erie was rapidly becoming a dead body of water. Because of the things that have been done -- and they all aren't done yet -- Lake Erie has turned and is now becoming again an inland lake that can and will be swimmable, will be a very viable body of water in our economic and overall society in the United States.

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We are making a massive effort in this regard, and we are tightening the screws -- I hope in a responsible way -- on the private sector.

But, you can't make up 100 years of neglect in three or four. It takes a little time, and we are taking the right steps.

QUESTION: Good evening, President Ford. I am from Buffalo, New York, which is right on Lake Erie, so I know it is getting a lot cleaner and, in fact, this summer we were even able to swim there, so he is telling the truth.

President Ford, what concerns me today is the Federal welfare system that just last week you seemed to categorize it as being in a mess. Could you kind of tell us what we can expect in the future?

THE PRESIDENT: Unfortunately, our Federal welfare system has grown like Topsy. It has, over the period of years, come from the welfare system that developed in the Depression, and there hasn't been any really honestly fashioned program that coordinates all of the programs where people who are disadvantaged get what they need.

Now, at the present time, there are too many people who are getting welfare, food stamps, who don't need them.

On the other hand, there are many of the needy who are being shortchanged. But, the fault is that we have so many programs that are proliferated all over the Federal lot, and what we are going to have to come to at some point -- it didn't seem feasible to try and do it this year in a national election year -- to have one single plan.

Let me give you an idea of what it might be, but we haven't finalized it. Back in 1971 there was a plan put together called Family Assistance Plan, which did away with the traditional welfare.

It provided a work incentive. I thought it was a good plan. I was in the House of Representatives, and I voted for it. Unfortunately, the United States Senate wouldn't go along.

I think we can build from that structure, get rid of all the programs we have and start with a single plan that will give to the needy what they deserve and need and cut out the ones that are the chislers in the overall.

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QUESTION: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I respect you and I believe in your policies and I wish you luck in the elections. But, my question is that last year in June Mrs. Ghandi took away the fundamental rights of the people and put all the opposition leaders in jail.

But, your Government, or you yourself, don't do anything to save the people in India. I know that your answer will be that we don't want to interfere in the internal matters of the other Governments. But, isn't it the responsibility of the United States, who is the biggest democracy in the world, to save the democracy?

THE PRESIDENT: I had the temerity to make a comment somewhat critical of the developments of which you speak in India, for which I was castigated by some very prominent public officials in India.

They told me that it was none of our business what happened or transpired internally in India.

It is not good policy for one country to interject itself in the internal affairs of another. I would simply answer the question you raise by saying, out of 155 nations in the world today, there are less than 38 that have one form of democracy or another. That is a very small percentage, and some in that group of 38 really, we wouldn't categorize as democracies.

Now, what we have to do is by persuasion and proper diplomatic representations do what we can to help the restoration of democracy in any of the countries.

What we are trying to do is to handle it in a proper way.

I deplore the loss of democracy anyplace, and we will do what we can in a proper way to seek its restoration.

QUESTION: Do you plan to support Mrs. Ghandi as she is doing now? As you just said, we want to support the Government as Mrs. Ghandi is doing now. Do you think it is good on your part to support Mrs. Ghandi's Government that is there?

THE PRESIDENT: I must admit I did not hear the key word, and I would like to make sure I do before I answer.

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QUESTION: Do you think it is good to support Mrs. Ghandi's Government in India when she is putting everybody in jail and imposing her own ambitions for what she wants?

THE PRESIDENT: We simply recognize the Government of India. We neither support nor condemn it. It is a typical diplomatic relationship that we have with countries like the Soviet Union who has an ideology different than ours.

It is purely a pragmatic diplomatic recognition. That does not indicate that we support the things that have happened internally, not at all.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: I have one last comment for you. I would like to also apologize for some of the people here, and I would like to remind them that while they will assert their right in the United States of America to have freedom of speech, I also have a right to listen on an intelligent basis without interruption.

My one last comment is, as far as the CIA goes, I would like to know if you intend to get to the bottom of the leak which is taking place in the Congressional hearings that I believe it was -- I am not sure how long ago -- but published the entire findings of the CIA and FBI reports because I definitely feel that the CIA and the FBI are organizations which should be researched, and I would like to know if you are going to get to the bottom of it.

THE PRESIDENT: The United States needs, must have, for our national security in peace and/or in war, a very top-grade, the very finest intelligence community, whether it is the CIA or any one of the other organizations.

QUESTION: I want to thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: But, I want to add that there should be careful control to make certain and positive that they concentrate on their Constitutionally, legislatively assigned responsibilities. They should not, in the process, violate the individual right of any citizen. They can do it, and they will do.

QUESTION: Mr. President, my name is Cathy McLaughlin. I am from the People's Bicentennial Commission Common Sense Campaign.

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I would like a simple yes or no answer, please, if that is possible. According to a recent Hart survey, it showed a majority of the American people believed there should be a major political movement to challenge the influence of big business. Do you agree or disagree?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not going to defend --

QUESTION: Yes or no?

THE PRESIDENT: -- or criticize big business.

QUESTION: Agree or disagree, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I was about to say that a question of that kind deserves more than a yes or no answer.

QUESTION: I have been informed by the gentleman sitting next to me that this will be the last question.

There seems to have been a great deal of criticism on your now terminated clemency program that it was too limited and restricted in its scope and its effectiveness. The small number of applicants in the program out of the larger number who are eligible seem to bear out this criticism, in my mind, of this being valid.

Do you have any plans to institute a real, substantive, total and complete amnesty to those young men who in good conscience refused to fight in the Southeast Asian war?

THE PRESIDENT: Shortly after I was sworn in, I instituted a program that said that individuals, draft evaders or draft deserters, could return and, after consideration by an impartial panel, would have an opportunity to earn the restoration of their rights.

There were approximately 105,000 who fell in that category. As I recall, roughly 20,000 applied. I wish that more had because roughly 18,000 were given an opportunity and have restored their rights.

I think it was a good program. I think it was tragic that more didn't apply. You should read some of the letters that I have gotten from individuals who returned from a foreign country or came out of hiding who took part in the program and have just felt that it was a great program, the ones that tried it.

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I think it was just tragic that more didn't. But, we have no immediate plan at the present time for any extension of the program or a change. I wish more had taken advantage of it.

What happens in the future, we will have to wait and see.

QUESTION: Mr. President, one more question.

would you support or oppose a Constitutional amendment on abortion?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not support the better known amendment that would preclude any abortion whatsoever. I want to add this because I think it is a subject that deserves more than the simple answer that you might have gotten.

I have many reservations and oppose the decision of the Supreme Court of 1973. I think there can be a moderate middle ground position.

Now, in our own family, my dear wife, she differs substantially with me. But, let me just say I don't take the extreme position on either side. I think it is a matter that has to find some better solution than what we have at the present time.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. President, my name is Dennis Moore, and I am not from the People's Bicentennial Commission.  
(Laughter)

I want to compliment Mrs. Ford tonight. She looks pretty well, a little old-fashioned, but okay.  
(Laughter)

My question has to do with veteran benefits. I used to be a veteran, and while I was in the service, I saw the benefits just decrease at an amazing rate.

Now that I am not of service, I don't know how I stand because benefits are sometimes there and sometimes not. I just want to know how they are going to stand under your Administration -- excuse me, I am nervous.

I want to know, under your Administration, now that we are an all-volunteer force, what is going to happen to our benefits? Are we going to keep them or will they decrease? Like our commissary? What is going to happen to it?

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THE PRESIDENT: Let me take care at a time.

Our prime responsibility is to provide the finest medical care for those who were injured in wartime and we have 170 or 180 USVA hospitals, and we have substantially increased the medical and nursing care personnel so that we give quality care to those veterans who are in these hospitals.

Number two, there is not going to be any elimination of the GI educational benefits for those veterans who have served in wartime.

Let me make one alternative comment. The GI bill was passed during World War II for those 16 million Americans who served so when they got out they could get an education. It expired after World War II. Korea came along, again combat, and it was re-enacted.

After the end of the Korean War -- combat having ceased -- it expired. When the Vietnam War came along, it was re-enacted. The Vietnam War has now been over for a year or more, as far as we are concerned.

Now, the question is whether in peacetime you should continue giving educational benefits to those who serve under an all-volunteer system?

QUESTION: I think you should. How do you feel?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me raise a question. We want an all-volunteer service, and we have got it. There is no more draft. I am all for it. But, if you give educational benefits to an all-volunteer force, and you want them to stay in so we have career personnel and, at the same time, you give them educational benefits so that is an incentive for them to get out, it doesn't make much sense from the point of view of the Government.

So, we are going to give every GI who enters the service his GI benefits if it was a matter of law at that time. But, it raises a serious question of whether you should give it to some fellow who volunteered on his own initiative and then provided incentive for him to get out at the end of three years so he can go to school.

Now, I think we can solve it, and this is the way it ought to be solved.

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If a young man volunteered, he has a high school education, we ought to give him educational opportunities in the service so that he can go to school, get his college degree so the service will have him with a higher education rather than having him get out to get an education.

That is the better way to solve it.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

QUESTION: Mr. President, sir, my name is Bonzo, and I am an escapee from an old Ronald Reagan flick. I have been challenging him all over the country as the candidate of big business, as the fat cat's candidate.

The way you talk about freedom for the giant corporations, I will be forced to challenge you as well, sir.

Why should you not be called the big business candidate?

THE PRESIDENT: Why should I not be?

QUESTION: Why should you not be called that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I think if you look at my voting record for 25-plus years in the House of Representatives where I voted over 4,000 times, if you will look at the voting record, you will find that it could not be categorized as a candidate of big labor, big business.

It was a voting record that called them as I saw them for the overall benefit of the United States, and as President I have carried out precisely the same policy.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: President Ford, my name is Paul Walton, and I am on the California Exchange Program from San Diego.

I would like to know that if you were elected to the Presidency of the United States, what new changes would take place?

THE PRESIDENT: Let's take foreign policy. We are at peace, as I said in my opening remarks. We have strengthened our relations with the NATO nations in Western Europe, and they are getting better every day.

We have the best, the finest relations with Japan we have ever had. We are making excellent headway in pushing for a permanent and a fair and equitable peace in the Middle East.

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We are keeping a dialogue with words and not bullets with the Soviet Union, and we are making, improving relations with the People's Republic of China. In foreign policy we are going to keep moving ahead on the same policy of achieving peace, maintaining peace that we have had.

In the domestic policy area, I think we are on the right course for us to continue to improve our economic situation. We are going to continue the downward trend in inflation. We have made a lot of progress from what it was 18 months ago. It was over 12 percent a year. It is 6 percent a year now, and it is going down.

Unemployment is headed in the right direction down, the trend of the Gross National Product is in the right direction, so we are going to keep a firm, steady hand to make sure that these trends continue.

That will take a lot of hard work, a little confrontation with my friends in the Congress, but I think we will come out in good shape, and America will be a better country in 1977 and the years thereafter.

Thank you all very much.

END (AT 8:13 P.M. EST)