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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION
AT THE
BROWN COUNTY VETERANS ARENA

2:40 P.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Bart, Governor Knowles, Congressman Bill Steiger, Mel Laird, Mrs. Starr, Mr. and Mrs. Dilweg, and all of the other wonderful people who have been helping on the President Ford Committee and, most importantly, all of you great people here in Green Bay and this part of Wisconsin:

It is just wonderful to come here on this occasion, the home of the Green Bay Packers. It was a thrill for me to participate just a few moments ago in the dedication of the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame. It is a great, great opportunity and a great thing for me, a "has been" football player, to see all the greats from Green Bay and participate in that. Thank you for the opportunity.

But let me say at the outset I really don't mind if the Green Bay Packers have a linebacker by the name of Jimmy Carter, it is a great team anyway.

If I might transgress for a minute, I did participate in this dedication and it gave to me an opportunity to think of the great traditions of the Packers and the wonderful struggles they have had and the games that they have won, and then I began thinking, as I flew up here, of the association that I have had with some of the people, the greats of the Green Bay Packers.

Back in 1935, in August, I played in the Chicago Bear All-Star Game and Don Hutson was on the team, the All Stars, and we lost it to the Chicago Bears five to nothing. You would not remember that -- many of you. As you know, Don went on to become one of the peerless ends of all time in professional football.

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Then in December of 1934 I was a member of the East Team of the Shriners East-West football game, and we met down here at Northwestern University campus, practiced for a week or two, and then took the train out to San Francisco, and on the way out Curly Lambeau, your great coach for many, many years, was on the train and he was looking around on the East squad and I think we had 24 members and he didn't spend much time looking at me because we had lost seven games and won one at Michigan that year and we didn't have many good ball players.

Anyhow, we got out to San Francisco and we were playing the Western team and the other center, Brooks Atchinson from Colgate, who started, got hurt in the first minute so I played 59 minutes and had a pretty good game and all the way back from San Francisco to Chicago Curly Lambeau spent an awful lot of time talking to me about coming up and playing for the Packers and he offered me \$200 a game and 14 games during the season of 1935.

Now that does not sound like a lot of money to some of you, but in 1935, 200 bucks a game or \$2800 in what -- three months, Bart -- was an awful lot of dough. I decided to go to Yale and, frankly, I have always had a lot of interest in and spirit for the Green Bay Packers just because of that incident.

Then I did have an opportunity over the years to meet Bart Starr, know him and I think he exemplifies not only perfection on the football field, but the kind of outstanding leadership that is needed in a community on the football field as a coach, as a player and I value my friendship with Bart Starr and he is going to give you a great ball team in Green Bay.

Then I had the privilege of knowing Gary Dilweg's father when I was in Washington as a young Congressman, and it is awfully nice of you, Gary, and your wife, to help in the leadership of my campaign in this part of Wisconsin.

Then one final note. I got to know Curly--Vince Lombardi--when he came to Washington, and what an inspirational person. He just exuded the good things, the things that are good about America, the things that are good about competition, the things that are good about you and me, and so my experiences with Green Bay have all been good and I am just delighted to be here because I feel so strongly about the people here, the people I know and what you stand for.

I look forward to answering your questions, but prior to that let me make a few remarks. Let me tell you what I see as I look at the United States of America in the spring of its Bicentennial year. Of course spring is always a good time of the year, it is a time when nature seems to come alive again and the weather turns pleasant and mild, but there is a lot more this year to that than it has been in previous springs.

People in the country are feeling a whole lot better this spring than they did last spring. For example, a year ago about this time some people thought we were headed straight for a depression. Others said unemployment was going to reach 10 percent or more and gas would be selling for a dollar a gallon. But you and I know that is not the way things turned out.

Instead of a cold, hard depression we have got a bright springtime economy and it is going to get better and better if we follow the right courses.

We made a lot of headway. We cut inflation in half in the last 12 months and we are going to keep it going down. We have recovered 2,600,000 jobs since last March. Just yesterday the Department of Labor announced that we had 86,700,000 Americans gainfully employed in the month of March -- an all-time record we should be darn proud of.

What it amounts to is that the rate of unemployment is going down and total employment is going up and we are making significant headway in the battle against inflation. We had the fourth straight month of improvement in our leading economic indicators. In February, retail sales were up, new orders received by manufacturers reached the highest dollar volume in the history of the United States.

This means -- and this is the crux of the matter -- that consumers have enough confidence to spend their money and businessmen have enough confidence to invest their money. It means that the signs of faith and optimism, the signs of health and vitality are returning to a country that not too long ago seemed to be frozen into a long, cold winter.

We have come through some hard times together and now we can see that not only has our system survived but it is getting stronger and stronger. I think the policies that this Administration followed, that this Administration kept to, had a significant impact on how much better things are getting.

Common sense, for example, told us that the way to cut unemployment was not by padding the Federal payroll but by strengthening America's free enterprise system. Common sense told us that the way to hold down the cost of living was to hold down the cost of Government -- and I did that with 46 vetoes, 39 of those vetoes were upheld by the Congress -- and because we were able to sustain 36 of those vetoes we saved the taxpayers \$13 billion and that ain't hay.

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We fought to get you off the treadmill of inflation and we are going to keep on fighting and we are going to continue to be successful. We are going to keep our policy of sound and stable price levels and we are going to keep our common sense.

Common sense tells us that State and local governments close to the people frequently have a far better sense of their needs than some Federal agency hundreds and hundreds of miles away from you in Washington, D. C.

Common sense tells us that one program that has worked for the American people is our Social Security system, which insures a decent standard of living for our elderly Americans. I am determined to preserve the integrity of the Social Security system and I have made concrete proposals to achieve it and the Congress better respond to it.

Common sense tells us that we really don't want to dismantle the Federal Government and destroy good programs along with the bad ones. We should improve the programs that do work and get rid of that extra luggage that does not work and we are in the process of doing that right now.

But, as some of you know, one of our best programs is general revenue sharing and if you want to look at the author of general revenue sharing, look at the author, Mel Laird here who back at least 10 or 12 years ago was the real author, the principal sponsor of general revenue sharing, and it has done a lot to help local government, State government do the job at the local level a lot better than some of the bureaucrats are doing it or have done it in Washington, D. C. So we ought to thank Mel, but let's get the Congress to extend it.

You know, common sense tells us that you don't switch quarterbacks just when your team is hitting its stride, just when you are gaining ground or, to put it another way, this is no time to trade in your Ford for another model, especially one that has not been road tested.

What America needs now is experience. America needs to continue the sound and stable policies that have proven their value by helping this country through its hard times. America needs a Government that does not raise false hope or conjure up false fears.

What we need is a Government that promises only what it can deliver and delivers everything that it promises. That is the policy that my Administration has followed and that is the policy we are going to keep on following for the next four years.

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With your help both next Tuesday and next November we will make sure that America continues to have the solid, the responsible Government that it needs, not just this spring but every spring for the next four years as well.

I thank you. It has been a great opportunity to be here.

Let's get to questions.

QUESTION: Mr. President, my question is in regard to Mr. Reagan's charge that the Administration's policy is to be second best or number two in defense.

THE PRESIDENT: I am glad you asked that question because I have some very strong feelings about it and I will give you the facts.

Let me talk first about strategic capability. The United States has the most accurate ballistic missiles, the United States has the most survivable ballistic missiles, the United States has many, many, many more ballistic missile nuclear warheads than the Soviet Union. Those are the facts.

In addition, the United States has about three to one over the Soviet Union in what we call strategic bombers -- our B-52s and other comparable bombers. The United States has, in addition, our Polaris submarines, our Poseidon submarines. We are in the process of building for deployment our Trident submarines. We are in the process of procuring and deploying our B-1 bomber. The United States has an unsurpassed ballistic nuclear strategic capability, and anyone who says to the contrary does not know what they are talking about.

As long as the question has been raised, let's talk about ships. I don't know how many people in this audience have served in the Navy, but in World War II I served four years in the Navy, better than two years on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific, so I know a little bit about the Navy, both as a Member of the Congress and as President and as a former person on active duty in World War II.

The allegation is that the Soviet Union has three to one, or whatever the number was, more ships than the United States, but that is not the way you judge the capability of a navy. You can't equate a gun boat with an aircraft carrier. You can't compare a landing ship or an oiler with a nuclear-powered cruiser.

The truth is that we have far, far, far more fire power with the Navy than the Soviet Union. We concentrated our naval capability for fire power both from ships and from aircraft and that is what makes the difference. It is not the number of rowboats you have. It is the number of combat ships you have with the kind of ships that are needed and necessary.

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Let me just add one feature and then I promise not to add any more. The United States is number one. We are unsurpassed in military capability. We have the greatest industrial capacity in the history of mankind. Our agriculture out-produces any nation in the history of the world. We are ahead in science and technology. We have the greatest moral, spiritual and religious capabilities in the history of mankind.

All of this makes the United States number one, and let's keep it there and let's not let any critics undercut it. We are proud of America and we are proud to be Americans.

Hi. How are you?

QUESTION: Fine. My name is Tart Smith.

Is being President better than being Bart Starr?
(Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, on a few occasions I have been envious of Bart but I must say that the training as a player and the five years as an assistant coach at Yale University taught me that competition on the gridiron is pretty good training for politics.

You get a lot of Monday morning quarterbacks in both, Bart. (Laughter)

I get more fun out of watching those great football players play on Sundays, the day that I usually relax a little bit, so I guess I do envy Bart and the ball players and the coaches a lot, but we are going to stick on this job. I can't make that league. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President, we all realize what a demanding and difficult job Secretary Kissinger has and just lately we have heard rumors that when you are re-elected there is a possibility that he may not be serving on your team. Is there any truth to this rumor?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have said publicly that I would like Secretary Kissinger to be Secretary of State as long as I am President, and I can't expand on that. I think it answers your question.

And let me tell you why. When we look at the Middle East, probably the most volatile, the most controversial area in the world where four times in the last 20 years they have had wars and each war has gotten bloodier and more serious, Secretary Kissinger has had a tremendous impact in getting the trust of the Israelis on the one hand and the Arab nations on the other so that we could get peace and keep peace there.

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I just use that as an example: to tackle the hardest area in the world to achieve success and to accomplish peace. He has done it with the direction and the implementation and the support that I have given him. I think you don't throw away a winning player, you keep him and that is what he is.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am the vice president of the Wisconsin State Employees Union. On behalf of our 27,000 members, I would like to welcome you to Wisconsin.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

QUESTION: As a vice president whose constituency is composed entirely of State, county and municipal employees, my question will be in that direction.

Your opponent in next Tuesday's election, Ronald Reagan, has stated that if any State, county or municipal employee participates in a strike or a similar job action, in his opinion he has quite his job. What is your feeling toward a right to strike or a limited right to strike for State, county, municipal employees?

I also would like to know what you feel or what would your reaction be to a bill that on a nationwide basis would give State, county and municipal employees a right to collective bargaining?

I also would like to know what your reaction is to the repeal of 14(b), the right to work legislation?

THE PRESIDENT: I am vigorously opposed to the repeal of section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act. As a matter of fact, in 1950 or thereabouts I participated in the debate and voted on that issue in the House of Representatives. I think if a State wishes to have the right to work, as 19 States do, under our Constitution that is a right that they ought to be able to exercise and I would not recommend the deletion of section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act.

Number two, I don't believe that the Federal Government either has the authority on the one hand or should exercise it on the other to pass comprehensive legislation involving the labor-management relations of State employees and their government or county employees and their government or city employees and their government. Those are decisions that ought to be made at the local or State level and the Federal Government should not get involved in them.

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Now, the first question that you asked. We have 50 States and we have 39,000 Governmental units below the level of statehood. I don't think that somebody in Washington ought to tell 39,000 Governmental units or 50 States how they should handle their labor-management relations. That is the prerogative of those units of Government.

If a government in Green Bay wants to handle it with the right to strike -- and I just use that as an example -- and Waukesha wants to have a different policy or the State of Wisconsin wants to have a different policy, that is the responsibility and obligation of those units of Government.

If a city council or a State legislature or Governor passed some legislation one way and the people don't like it, they know who to get rid of, and I think that is the way it ought to be handled. Washington should keep its fingers out of the situation. The responsibility and the obligation rests here, right in your State and your local units of government.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I was wondering what can you do to help us teenagers get more jobs so we can go on to school and make money so we can afford our education?

THE PRESIDENT: Would you ask that again? I missed the first part.

QUESTION: What can you do to help us get more jobs so we can have enough money to go on to college and that?

THE PRESIDENT: You are talking about high school graduates?

QUESTION: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, about two million young people enter the labor market every year as they go from either high school into the labor market or from college into the labor market. As I said a moment ago, we have picked up 2,600,000 jobs since last year but that is not enough. Our unemployment is still too high and it is still too high particularly among our young people, and especially among our young people in the minority categories.

Now what we have to do is to stimulate our economy primarily in the private sector where five out of every six jobs in this country exist today. And how do we do that? We do that by providing an incentive to business to expand, to modernize, to improve so that they will be more competitive and more jobs will be available in the private sector.

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I don't think the answer is to put young people on the Federal payroll. They have a greater opportunity for the future, for advancement and permanency in the private sector rather than in some temporary payroll padding job in the Federal Government.

On the other hand, if a young person like you wants to go to college and you don't have the funds available to do so, there are grant programs, there are scholarship programs. As a matter of fact, I recommended for the budget for the current fiscal year \$1 billion 100 million, as I recall, for what we call the basic opportunity grant program. Bill Steiger knows -- he is a real expert on that program. We recommended the full funding of that program, which would have a maximum assistance of \$1,400 and the average amount, because it varies, is around \$900. We want to help you if you want to go to college, and once you get out of college we hope our economy is such that you will have a permanent job in the private sector.

QUESTION: Mr. President, this is a little bit of a different question than you have been harangued with or whatever. It is a medical question.

Expenses are going up and I have had experience with cancer. I had to leave the country to get information to obtain relief from such cancer or trichinosis. I have had experience with doctors here in this country, not just in this State but in other States, that didn't know how to diagnose the subject or the disease or worms -- plain old worms, trichinosis.

Now you say we have all kinds of technology. When will the American Medical Association let loose some of that information that you talk about?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think the American Medical Association has control over the cures or the things that are done to analyze the illness of a person or the recommendations for remedies to cure an illness. The AMA does not have that responsibility. That is the responsibility of a hospital or a clinic or an individual doctor.

Now, I am not familiar, obviously, with your personal case or individual case but if you look, I think, across the length and the breadth of this globe and compare our medical profession with any other, the United States is lucky to have the quality of care that is given to save people's lives and to protect them from disease and to repair them from disabilities.

I can only say that the Federal Government is spending better than \$1 billion for research under the National Institute of Health in Washington, D. C. on cancer, arteries and heart and -- well, the whole range of things, and we are going to get some of these cures that don't seem to be available.

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I just say again that our medical profession by the standards that I have seen is a good medical profession. Now they make a mistake, like I have made one or you may have made one, but they are not deliberate, I can assure you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I have a two-part question, please. First, I would like to know your views on the present status of the U.S. Postal Service. The second part is, do you plan on either signing or vetoing House Bill 8617 and if a veto, some of your reasons why? The House Bill 8617 is the provision to the Hatch Act.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let me answer the second question first.

That bill, the so-called Hatch Act abandonment bill or the destruction of career Civil Service legislation, when it gets down to me -- and it will be down to the Oval Office probably in a couple of days -- everything I know about it, I am going to veto it. I think it ought to be vetoed.

You can't have a career service for Government employees and get them involved in the partisan political arena. It just doesn't work. So I probably under any circumstances I see will veto the legislation.

Number two, the Postal Service. Up until it became the Postal Service, the Post Office Department was getting less and less efficient and it was costing more and more money out of the general Treasury and the net result was Congress decided that it ought to become a nonpolitical patronage organization because the Post Office Department was bedded down with partisan politics, it was not an effective and efficient mail delivery service.

Now the present Postal Service in time is going to remedy that. I must say I am a little disappointed in the progress they have made but it is going to be a lot better in the future than the old Post Office Department would have been.

Now there are those who say that the \$1 billion a year that Congress puts in to subsidize the Postal Service isn't enough. That is what we have been subsidizing -- the Postal Service -- each year for the last several years.

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We recognize we have to pay something for what is called public service but you cannot go on taking that much money or double that much money from the general taxpayer to keep the Postal Service going. So we either have to improve the efficiency of the Service, cut down on some of the uneconomical operations, or you have to increase the rates or you have to take more money out of the general Treasury. Now one of those three alternatives is what we are faced with.

The Director of the Office of Management and Budget is trying to work with the head of the Postal Service to find a better solution, but right now you have got three bad alternatives -- either more money out of the Treasury, restricted service or increased rates -- and none of them are very good alternatives. So I think the study that is now being undertaken, hopefully, will come up with a better answer and we will try it if they do.

QUESTION: Thank you for your comments, Mr. President.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, being in an educational field, if re-elected, what do we have in store for the area of education, and in your remarks could you direct it especially to the aid of the handicapped children?

THE PRESIDENT: Are you talking about primary and secondary education, or are you talking about higher education?

QUESTION: Primary and secondary.

THE PRESIDENT: I have recommended to the Congress what is called a block grant approach to primary and secondary education. At the present time, we have 15 different educational programs. They are all categorical grant programs. They each have their own bureaucracy, they each have their own little pot of money, and they each deal with a special problem in education at the primary and secondary level.

I have recommended that you consolidate all of those in one block grant program, and the money should go to the States and then down to the local communities so the people in Green Bay can decide how they want to spend that money. Their problems might be different than those in San Diego, and if so, they ought to spend their money differently here in Green Bay.

Now, the problems of the disabled across the board are a very special one as far as my wife is concerned, and me, too. I happen to think that we have to recognize that the disabled, for reasons in most cases beyond their own control, have to be given some special attention.

Like in the District of Columbia, the new Metro system, the subway system -- by law there has to be the means of access and exit so that people who are blind or disabled or elderly can have a certain way of getting on the new subway. I think across the board we have to recognize the fact that this group in our society needs some very special attention, and this Administration will carry out that promise and pledge.

QUESTION: Mr. President, we are seventh graders from St. Jude's School. My question is, what led you to becoming President?

THE PRESIDENT: The question is, what led me to become President. (Laughter)

Well, I got to be a Congressman, and then Vice President, and on August 9 of 1974 I had the opportunity to serve the American people, and we have tried hard to do a good job for 19 months. I would like the opportunity to serve another four years to do a better job.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, I am from Marquette, Michigan. I would like to know why the Congress and you are closing these air bases and also the Government cutting down on them and the unemployment?

THE PRESIDENT: The Department of Defense has made a number of recommendations for studies to close down certain military installations, including Kinchloe Field in Michigan; including Fort Devens, an Army installation in Massachusetts; including a number of other military installations.

The reason is very simple. As the weapons system use changes, as you go in the Air Force to more missiles and less aircraft, you have to change how you use your facilities and as the numbers in the Army go down, you have to close the number of Army forts, camps or stations. In other words, you have to tailor the use of facilities to the men and the weapons that you have and the mission.

At the time of the war in Vietnam, we had 3,300,000 Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force personnel. We now have 2,100,000. We, therefore, don't need as many bases. We don't need as many installations. So, in a responsible way we are trying to adjust, or the Department of Defense is, the men and weapons to the installations that are needed.

I should say in the case of Michigan, because I know it well, there are three SAC bases up there -- Kinchloe, K. I. Sawyer and Wurtsmith. One of the three was closed. K. I. Sawyer and Wurtsmith were kept open. K. I. Sawyer is up in the Upper Peninsula. Kinchloe is in the Upper peninsula. It was closed. It is just that you can't keep a base open if there is not a mission for it. It is just that practical.

Now, as I said, these are studies and there is a provision of law that says if a base is closed, the Department of Defense and the Department of Commerce and all of the other departments have to maximize their effort to try and adjust the adverse economic conditions that inevitably result from the closing of a base.

I can assure you if the Defense Department decides that that base ought to be closed, other departments will maximize their efforts to take care of any transitional unfortunate circumstance to any individuals who were previously employed there.

QUESTION: Unemployment, why is that --

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THE PRESIDENT: On unemployment, I said that last March we had 8.9 percent unemployment in the country. At the present time, the unemployment has dropped to 7.5 percent as announced as of yesterday. We have regained in total employment 2,600,000. We had a gain of 375,000 in the month of March alone. We have an all-time employment figure of 86,700,000.

Now, we still have too much unemployment, but the momentum is going in the right direction. We are selling more automobiles, retail sales as a whole are up, and industrial orders are up. You are going to find this momentum coming from increased public confidence so that I think in the months ahead you are going to see more employment and less and less unemployment.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President. You are the first one I have ever seen of our Presidents of the United States of America.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: One more.

QUESTION: I have a tax related question for you. In your State of the Union address you had mentioned that there would be tax incentives for long-term investors. I wonder if anything has come about on this or if you could elaborate on it, please?

THE PRESIDENT: In the State of the Union Message I recommended certain specific tax proposals that I thought would be helpful in the area of unemployment. One was that in a geographical area of unemployment where the unemployment was high, 8 percent as I recall, that we would give a special tax incentive for an employer to build a new plant there or to expand or to improve his plant facilities.

I think that would have been a better way to get unemployment down than to actually add extra payroll. That is one proposal.

The other was to provide for greater opportunity for employees and others to own shares of stock in American industry and give a tax deferral in order to stimulate investment in America's industrial capacity.

Those two proposals and several others are now before the Committee on Ways and Means on which Congressman Bill Steiger serves. I would hope that some of them at least will be approved by the Congress in 1976.

Thank you all very, very much. It has been wonderful.

END (AT 3:25 P.M. CST)