

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 1, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Livonia, Michigan)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
WONDERLAND CENTER

4:38 P.M. EST

Thank you very, very much, Governor Bill Milliken, Bob Griffin, Congressman Marv Esch, Lieutenant Governor Dammon and, of course, my wonderful wife, who I have just met at the Detroit Airport, Betty Ford.

Let me take just a minute before saying something about the election. It is just great, of course, to be home in Michigan and to see some of the Michigan football greats -- Ron Cramer, Bill Freehan -- and Johnny Orr, the great basketball coach.

But there are some other people that I would like to express my appreciation to, individuals who in their own business or their own area of talent have contributed significantly to this momentum that we have going. You have, I guess, been introduced to them: Hugh O'Brien, Wayne Rogers, they are great. Of course, when I came off the plane and Betty was at the stairs meeting me, there was the great Chuck Connors, and I thank Chuck, too.

But we have had some others who have traveled the length and the breadth of this country, because they believed in what I stood for: Peter Graves. You have known him from Mission Impossible. And then one of those fabulous people on television, also from sports, Joe Garagiola. He has been fighting for Jerry Ford for the last ten days. Thank you.

I want to say two things to you: You are going to lose a great Congressman in Marv Esch, but he is going to be a great Senator, and you send him back to Washington, D. C. But you can't leave a void, You have to have a good replacement, and I hope and trust you send Chuck Purcell to replace him.

I can't express deeply enough -- I hope you will be quiet enough to hear a pin drop -- between now and 8 o'clock tomorrow night, when the polls close in Michigan, you and millions like you in the great State of Michigan are going to help make a basic decision that could well turn the tide as to where this country goes in the next four years. Yes, it could be a decision that would affect the next 100 years.

MORE

So, I ask you to listen to where I stand. I stand for lower taxes. I stand for more jobs. I stand for a balanced budget. I stand for less Federal spending. I stand for winning the battle against inflation. I stand for a clean environment. I stand for less crime. I stand for peace and liberty all over the world, and that is where we are today.

Let me phrase it this way: From your ranks I come, and with you I stand -- and will -- for the next four years.

In the last two years, America has made incredible progress. In Kansas City, I told the American people I would not concede a single vote, I would not concede a single State. I don't intend to concede Michigan. We are going to win it in Michigan.

And now, listen carefully. You may miss something. On the way over here from the airport, Betty and I had a little conference. We decided that all of you wonderful people had our personal invitation to come to the inauguration of Jerry Ford and Bob Dole on January 20.

There are many, many issues that I could discuss, but let me take just two. In the first debate, my opponent said there would be a \$60 billion surplus in the Federal Treasury. He made a commitment. He said if we have a \$60 billion surplus, we are going to spend it on program after program after program. That is his point of view. You know what I said in that first debate? I said if there is a \$60 billion surplus, I am going to give it back to the American people in a tax reduction.

On taxes, I believe the best tax reform is tax reduction. The middle income taxpayer in America has been short-changed, and we are going to change it in the next Congress. Jerry Ford is for the little taxpayer, and he is opposed to the big tax spender. On taxes: The last couple of days, my opponent has said perhaps we can have a tax reduction. My opponent has said if, if, if, if we could have a tax reduction.

I will tell you where I stand. I have been consistent. I have been firm. The American people, the middle class people, the middle class taxpayers need tax relief, and they are going to get it under Jerry Ford. As a matter of fact -- again, listen now, listen, because this affects you -- last January, as Bob Griffin, Marv Esch, and all the other fine Members of Congress know, I recommended to the Congress that the Congress, in order to give equity and fairness to the middle income taxpayer, we should increase the personal exemption from \$750 to \$1,000.

MORE

The other day I was walking through a plant, talking to people on the production line, and one of the men said, "President Ford, what will you do for me and my family?" I said, "Well, how many kids do you got?" He said three. I said, "You got a wife?" He said, "Sure, and I love her." Then I said, "All right." I said, "If the Congress had been responsible in the last session and done what I recommended they do, you, next April, when you made out that income tax return, could have taken \$1,250 more in personal exemption, and you could have spent it instead of having some bureaucrat spend it out of Washington, D. C."

Listen to this -- you are a great audience, I love you -- when Congress reconvenes next January 3, I am going to have that tax reduction proposal on their desk. Now, if they don't pass it in 1977, we will have it on their desks in 1978. But, if they don't pass it in 1978, you and I are going to go out and beat them in the 1978 election.

MORE

Let's talk about one other big issue. I am the first President -- and I am proud to say it -- who can stand before the American people since Dwight D. Eisenhower and say America is at peace. But, we are at peace in America because America is strong. Our Army, our Navy, our Air Force and Marines are number one, and we are going to keep them number one.

Now, my opponent, he wants to cut the defense budget by \$5 billion or maybe \$15 billion. Let me tell you, that is too big a gamble for the security of the United States, and President Ford won't take that gamble. One of the greatest accomplishments of this Administration is that because we are strong, strong internally and strong externally, there is not a single young American fighting or dying on any foreign soil tonight, and we are going to keep it that way.

On August 9, 1974 I stood in the East Room of the White House and took the oath of office. Betty held the Bible. After that was over, and as I realized the troubled times we were in -- with inflation over 12 percent, with America still involved in Vietnam, with us on the brink of the worst recession in 40 years, and trust and confidence in the White House gone -- I made a few remarks to the American people.

I said, among other things, "I know that you have not confirmed me by your ballots, but I ask you to confirm me by your prayers." In those two tough years since August 9, we have made incredible progress in this great country. Reflect for a minute on our 200th birthday. It was a great occasion, where all over America we found that there was a new togetherness. We could disagree without being disagreeable. We could move forward as we have, shoulder to shoulder and arm in arm.

That spirit is infectious, and America is on the move. I thought then -- as I did on August 9 -- how wonderful the people of Michigan have been to give me the chance to serve not only Michigan, but to serve the people of 50 States.

Everything I have in politics comes from you, and I express my deepest appreciation and gratitude. But now we have that crucial decision to make. America is respected. Some of you may have seen those tall ships in the harbor of New York. Ship after ship from country after country had come to pay respect to the greatest country in the history of mankind, the United States of America.

Now, between right this minute and 8:00 tomorrow night, you have that critical decision to make. Tomorrow, yes, you can confirm me by your prayers -- and your prayers truly help -- but now you have the opportunity to confirm me with your ballots. I ask for your support, and I promise you from the bottom of my heart I will not let you down.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 4:57 P.M. EST)