

file

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 8, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: RAY PRICE *RP*
SUBJECT: Resignation Speech

The fifth draft is attached.

In marking up the 4th, you had made it "constitutional duty" instead of just "duty" in what's now the fourth paragraph of page one. In this draft, I've handled the constitutional duty question instead of elaborating further the discussion of it on page 2. I think it helps to do it this way, because it more directly answers the question of why you changed your mind about it. Also, where you speak of duty on page 1, I think you really mean something broader -- including, but not limited to, a constitutional duty.

As you'll see, I've also developed a little bit your new opening (which I like) about the number of times you've spoken from the Oval Office. I'll be getting the number from Ron.

I'll be standing by.

Attachment
5th Draft (8/8/74)

Price

FIFTH DRAFT

August 8, 1974

Words: 1835

RESIGNATION SPEECH

Good evening.

This is the _____ time I have spoken to you from this office, where so many decisions have been made that shaped the history of our Nation.

Each time, I have done so to discuss with you some matter that I believed affected the National interest, and to explain to you why I believed that a particular course of action was right.

In all the decisions I have made in my public life -- in all the decisions I have announced from this desk -- I have always tried to do what was best for the Nation.

Throughout the long months of Watergate, I have felt it was my duty to persevere, and to make every possible effort to complete the term of office to which you elected me.

In the past few days, however, I have met with leaders of the House and Senate, including my strongest supporters in both parties.

Those leaders have unanimously advised me that I no longer have a strong enough political base to justify continuing to wage that fight.

As long as there was such a base, I felt strongly that it was necessary to see the Constitutional process through to its conclusion -- that to do otherwise would be unfaithful to the spirit of that deliberately difficult process, and a dangerously destabilizing precedent for the future. But with the disappearance of that base, I now believe that the Constitutional purpose has been served, and there is no longer a need for the process to be completed.

The leaders have also advised me that because of the Water-gate matter, I do not and will not have the support of the Congress that I would consider necessary to back the difficult decisions and carry out the duties of this office in the way the interests of the Nation will require.

I would have preferred to carry through to the finish, whatever the personal agony it would involve. My family solidly supports this view. But the interests of the Nation must always come before any personal consideration.

Because of my lack of support in the Congress, I have concluded that I cannot any longer provide America with the leadership it needs at this critical time.

I have never been a quitter. To leave office is abhorrent to every instinct in my body. But as President, I must put the interests of America first. America needs a full-time President and a full-time Congress. To continue to fight through the months ahead for my personal vindication would almost totally absorb the time and attention of both President and Congress, in a period when these must be focused on the great issues of peace abroad and prosperity without inflation at home.

MORE

Therefore, I shall resign the Presidency effective at noon tomorrow. Vice President Ford will be sworn in as President at that hour, in a ceremony in _____.

As I recall the high hopes for America with which we began this second term, I feel a great sadness that I will not be here in this office working on your behalf to achieve those hopes in the next two and a half years.

But in turning over direction of the Government to Vice President Ford, I know -- as I told the Nation 10 months ago, when I nominated him for that office -- that the leadership of America will be in good hands.

In passing this office to the Vice President, I also do so with a profound sense of the weight of responsibility that will fall on his shoulders tomorrow -- and therefore of the understanding, the patience, the cooperation, he will need from all Americans. As he assumes that responsibility, he will deserve the help and support of all of us.

As we look to the future, the first essential is to begin healing the wounds of the Nation -- to put the bitterness and divisions of the recent past behind us, and to rediscover together those shared ideals that lie at the heart of our strength and unity as a great and free people.

By taking this action, I hope that I will have hastened the start of that process of healing.

I regret deeply any injuries that may have been done in the course of the events that led to this decision. I would say only that if some of my judgments were wrong -- and some were wrong -- these were made in what I believed at the time to be the best interests of the Nation.

To those who have stood with me during these past difficult months -- to my family, my friends, the many others who joined in supporting my cause because you believed it was right -- I will be eternally grateful for your support.

To those who have not felt able to give me your support, let me say that I understand the considerations that led you to that conclusion. I leave with no bitterness toward those who opposed me.

All of us, in the final analysis, have been concerned with the good of the country, however our judgments might differ.

So let us all now join together in affirming that common commitment, and in helping the new Administration succeed for the benefit of all Americans.

I shall leave this office with regret at not completing my term, but with gratitude for the privilege of serving as your President for the past five and a half years.

These years have been a momentous time in the history of our Nation and the world. They have been a time of achievement of which we can all be proud -- achievements that represent the shared efforts of the Administration, the Congress and the people.

But the challenges ahead are equally great -- and they, too will require the support and the efforts of the Congress and the people, working in cooperation with the new Administration.

We have ended America's longest war, but in the work of securing a lasting peace in the world the goals ahead are even more far-reaching. We must complete a structure of peace so that it will be said of this generation of Americans, by the people of all nations, not only that we ended one war, but that we prevented future wars.

We have unlocked the doors that for a quarter century stood between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

We must now ensure that the one quarter of the world's people who live in China will be and remain, not our enemies, but our friends.

In the Middle East, 100 million people in the Arab countries, many of whom have considered us their enemy for nearly 20 years, now look on us as friends. We must continue to build on that friendship, so that peace can settle at last over the Middle East -- and so the cradle of civilization will not be its grave.

Together with the Soviet Union, we have made the crucial breakthroughs that have begun the process of limiting nuclear arms. But we must set as our goal not just limiting, but destroying, these terrible weapons so they cannot destroy civilization, and so the threat of nuclear war will no longer hang over the world and its people.

We have opened a new relationship with the Soviet Union.

We must continue to develop and expand that new relationship,
so that the two strongest nations of the world will live together
in cooperation rather than confrontation.

Around the world -- in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America,
in the Middle East -- there are millions upon millions of people
today who live in abject poverty, and even starvation. We must
keep as our goal turning away from production for war, and
expanding production for peace -- so that people everywhere
on this earth can at last look forward, in their children's time
if not in their own, to having the necessities for a decent
life.

Here in America, we are fortunate that most of our people have not only the blessings of liberty, but also the means to live even full and good and, by the world's standards, abundant lives. We must press on toward a goal not only of more and better jobs, but of full opportunity for all -- and of what we are striving so hard/right now to achieve, prosperity without inflation.

For more than a quarter/century in public life, I have shared of a in the turbulent history of this era. I have fought for what I believed in. I have tried, to the best of my ability, to discharge those duties and meet those responsibilities that were entrusted to me.

Sometimes I have succeeded. Sometimes I have failed. But always I have taken heart from what Theodore Roosevelt once said about the man in the arena: "whose face is marred by dust and

sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumphs of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly..."

I pledge to you tonight that as long as I have a breath of life in my body, I shall continue in that spirit. I shall continue to work for the great causes to which I have been dedicated throughout my years as a Congressman, as a Senator, as Vice President and as President: for the cause of peace, not just for America but among all nations; and for prosperity, justice and opportunity for all of our people.

There is one cause above all to which I have been devoted,
and to which I shall be devoted.

When I first took the oath of office as President five and a
half years ago, I made what I described as a sacred commitment:
to "concecrate my Office, my energies, and all the wisdom I can
summon to the cause of peace among nations."

I have done my very best, in all the days since, to be true
to that pledge.

As a result of these efforts, I am confident that the world
is a safer place today not only for the people of America but for
the people of all nations -- and that all of our children have a
better chance than before of living in peace rather than dying in
war.

This, more than anything, is what I hoped to achieve when I sought the Presidency. This, more than anything, is what I hope will be my legacy -- to you, and to your country -- as I leave the Presidency.

To have served in this office is to have felt a very personal sense of kinship with each and every American. In leaving it, I do so with a prayer that God's grace will be with you in all the days ahead.

TR quote used
in navigation speed,
as found by Ron Ziegler used
night (requested by husband
used night by phone
to me), RP

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumphs of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt at the
Sorbonne, Paris, France,
April 23, 1910

August 1974