

December 16, 1969

Suggested Remarks for the Press Families Reception

I have no opening statement, we'll go directly to your questions.

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I'm impressed by the long hours the White House press corps puts in every day. I know why you want more news conferences on TV -- it's the only time your wife and children get to see you.

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Just to show I have nothing against television, on Christmas Eve, I intend to return to Ron Ziegler those two television sets the Vice President removed from his house.

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Theodore Roosevelt was the first President to make provision for the press in the White House. He saw a group of reporters huddled together in the rain outside the gate, and he ordered that room inside be provided for the press. Teddy Roosevelt was a great president, but he didn't know what he was letting his successors in for.

As you know, we're improving those facilities now. Soon you'll take over the space that used to house the swimming pool. The plumbing, however, will be left in -- I still want to be able to give the order to fill the pool.

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I'm proud to say that at no time has this Administration cancelled the subscription of any newspaper. But maybe you've been wondering why all the fireplaces in the White House seem to be blazing all the time... (I can

stay warm for two hours on the Sunday New York Times alone).

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We have some souvenirs to hand out today. For those of you who covered our European trip this year, and for those who covered our round-the-world trip, we have sets of engraved glasses; for those of you who covered our Western White House, there was only one appropriate memento -- an ashtray.

To the young people present, I want to say that the fact that the two gifts selected for our reporter friends -- the glasses and the ashtrays -- symbolize drinking and smoking, is not intended in any way to reflect on the habits of the members of this honorable profession.

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On a serious note: Presidents come and go, but the White House press corps goes on and on. Doug Cornell of AP covered his first story at the White House when Herbert Hoover was President; Merriman Smith of UPI has been covering the Presidency continuously since the third term of Franklin Roosevelt.

To the wives and children of the members of the press here today, I would like to make this point about the relations between the press and the President, whoever they are and whoever he is:

There are times -- an occasion like this is one of them -- when we can confess to an affectionate bond that ties us together. We are all in this house together; we are all fascinated by life at the center of activity; and we would not be here if we all did not enjoy what we do.

There are other times when the tension gets high. But in good times and bad, in periods of stress and moments of relaxation, at times when a President is getting what is called a "good" or a "bad" press -- there is this single overriding fact about our relationship:

We are responsible, not to each other, but to the people we serve. We serve the same people, each of us in different ways, and we pursue that service here in this house in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

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① This room is usually a Press Conference

① I can say that today marks a new era in the President's relation - after 11 months of confrontation - we now move into a period of negotiation.

② I use this to clear the record:

① T.A. was first to provide a press

② I am first to provide a Swimming Pool -

③ there's no water in it indicates no bad intention -

④ there's no diving board

③ ~~A.V. Conville goes back to Hoover~~

③ Conville goes back to Hoover Smith

④ This tree is from N. York -

⑤ Time for gifts:

glasses - for those who went to Europe + Asia -

ask Tracy for Sam Clements

- I have a present for the Regis -

I'm sending Agnes and her back

the two T.V. sets

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Press & President