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JIMMY CARTER

39th President of the United States: 1977 – 1981

## Merced, California Remarks and a

## Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting.

July 04, 1980

THE PRESIDENT. Before we start with the questions, let me say first of all that I deeply appreciate the welcome that I've received ever since I landed at Castle Air Force Base. Mayor Bob Hart has made me feel at home. And the people along the way and those outside when the helicopter landed who couldn't get in, and all of you have really warmed my heart. I also would like to say that you have one of the finest Members of Congress who ever served in Washington, Tony Coelho.

You don't know how it makes a farmer feel— [laughter] —who's been in Washington now for 3 1/2 years, to fly in a helicopter over this beautiful country. Not only do you have the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the

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background all during your lives, the gateway to Yosemite, and some of the most beautiful earth that was ever created, but the productive land that you have here is also an inspiration to me as a President and also one of the greatest natural resources that we have.

#### AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENTS AND STRENGTHS

I'm glad to come here, too, on a special day, the birthday of our country. It's a time to remember the spirit of those who first came to this region to settle it, pioneers facing danger, facing challenges, facing uncertain times ahead, sometimes families divided by death or by attacks. The times that they had—much more challenging, much more dangerous than the ones we face today, but we still have that same basic commitment to principles of freedom, innovation, pioneer spirit, courage, unity, patriotism in our country. And we do face serious problems, serious challenges.

The whole world looks to us for leadership, in human rights, in freedom, in the innovative spirit, that can attack the future that they don't quite understand, not with fear and trepidation and cowardice, but with a calm assurance in our own ability, in the strength of our Nation, and in the unity that binds us together and always has bound us together when our Nation was threatened from any source.

I'm deeply honored, as we look back on the 204 years since the Declaration of Independence was signed, we do pay homage and we remember those who came before us, who fought in the Revolution, who fought in the War Between the States to keep our country united, who fought in the Second World War and the First World War, the Korean war, who represented our country in Vietnam, who went through social change, that literally shocked this country and the world, to give equal opportunity to those who in the past have been deprived of that opportunity because of their own color or their own race.

And we remember in times of pressure that this is a country of immigrants, it's a country of refugees, who have come here for religious freedom or for personal freedom or for a better chance in life. And unless there are some native Indians here, every family

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represented came here earlier as immigrants, maybe 2 years ago, maybe 200 years ago. But we've never been weakened because we opened our arms to receive those who have been persecuted and in danger. This is a difficult thing for us to assimilate when we get here and enjoy all the advantages of full American citizenship and wealth and freedom, to say, "Let's keep it the way it is." I'm glad that folks didn't feel that way when my folks got ready to come over here a long time ago.

But in closing, let me say this: Ours is a generation that put the first man on the Moon. And ours is the generation that fought for civil rights in the South and transformed the attitudes of Americans one toward another. And ours is the generation that's been able, in the last few years, to accommodate the divisiveness of the Vietnam war and the divisiveness and embarrassment of Watergate and the embarrassment of the revelations about the CIA. And we've survived. And it may be that our country is even stronger than it was in the past.

We've got a long way to go, in energy, inflation, unemployment, the marketing of our products, but we're making good progress. We've not got a dismal, downhearted attitude justified by the future of Americans; we've got a great, glorious, exciting, challenging future that we can meet if we are united, and we are.

And one final sentence: What has let our Nation make this progress is the same thing that's important on this Fourth of July here in Merced, and that's the partnership that exists between people and government. And there's no better way to celebrate our birthday, in my opinion, than a direct relationship between the people of this great community and the President of the United States. I'm thankful to you.

And now we'll have the first question from microphone number one.

#### QUESTIONS SOLAR ENERGY

Q. Mr. President, my name is Laurie Says, and I live here in Merced when I'm home from college. And I would like to ask you a short question. Would you

favor a bill that would allow a tax break for homeowners who use solar energy to help meet their families' energy needs?

THE PRESIDENT. Yes. And we have already passed such a bill, with Tony Coelho's help, and I'll tell you how it works. If a family does invest in energy-saving devices in the home, like solar power, then the following year when you file your income tax returns for that particular year, you can take credit for it. I'm not sure about the exact details, but I believe it's up to \$2,000. So, we've got that already on the books. And this is one of the things that we've done the last couple of years, and that is to pass new laws in our country that do two things to reduce our excessive dependence on foreign oil.

This year we'll send overseas to buy foreign oil \$90 billion, kind of robbing ourselves in order to use too much oil from overseas. That's \$400 for every man, woman, and child who lives in this country.

There are only two things you can do about it. One is to save energy, not to waste energy, to be very careful about what we use, and the other thing is to produce more American energy. We've got the energy. Solar is a wonderful way to go about it. And by the year 2000, we hope and believe that when we put all these laws into effect that the Congress is now passing that we'll have 20 percent of the total energy used in this country coming directly from the Sun.

We've made progress. When I came into office 3 1/2 years ago, we were constantly going up every year in how much oil we bought from overseas. Today we're using 1 1/2 million barrels less oil every day from overseas than we did just that short time ago. So, we're making good progress and going to keep it up.

Q. Thank you very much.

#### STANISLAUS RIVER; SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN

Q. Good morning, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT. Good morning.

Q. I am the wife of an American farmer, and naturally my question will be related to agriculture. My name is

Eileen Dugson, and I'm from Winton, California. If a bill should reach your desk which designates the Stanislaus River as wild and scenic and prohibits the building of the new Melones Dam, would you approve that bill, or would you veto it?

And also, we approve of your effort to chastise the Russians in Afghanistan, but we feel that it has been at some expense to the American farmer with the grain embargo. When will you lift the grain embargo?

THE PRESIDENT. All right. Those are two difficult questions. And before I answer them, I think I'll take off my coat, okay? [Laughter] It's kind of hot up here.

As you know, on the Stanislaus River, the new Melones Dam, we have to go by what the law says and also how the courts interpret the law. We are now at the point where the Secretary of Interior, with my approval, has authorized the filling of the lake to the 818-foot level. And I believe in the wild river concept. And I think the Stanislaus River is one of the most beautiful rivers on Earth.

The Secretary of the Interior has informed the Congress in the last few weeks, accurately, that the upper part of the Stanislaus River was suitable for a wild river designation. I don't know yet what the Congress will decide. It'll be decided by all 535 of them in the House and Senate.

My guess is, my present prediction is that if the bill gets to my desk, otherwise acceptable and with that in it, then I would sign it, to answer your first question. Ordinarily legislation of this kind is extremely complicated, and it has literally hundreds, sometimes thousands of individual items in them. So, I think I've answered your first question—that if the Congress decides this, then I would sign the bill.

On the second point, I believe that it's important for our Nation to make sacrifice, if necessary, in order to stop aggression overseas. The Soviets have invaded Afghanistan in a completely unwarranted action. They now have approximately 85,000 heavily armed troops inside of this small, relatively defenseless, formerly nonaligned country, highly and deeply religious, committed to freedom. The freedom-fighters in

Afghanistan are literally offering their lives every day to fight for the liberation of their own country.

There are very few things that we have that we can do short of actual war. We can take political action, and we've done that in the United Nations when 104 countries condemned the Soviet invasion and demanded that they withdraw. Subsequent to that, I think 34 Moslem countries—Afghanistan happens to be a Moslem country, basically—demanded that the Soviets get their troops out of Afghanistan.

We have also imposed some economic restraints on the Soviet Union. One is that we've prevented Soviet ships from fishing within 200 miles of American coastlines. Another thing that we've done is to restrict the kinds of materials that we sell to the Soviet Union if it might contribute to a better and more effective Soviet military force or economic force that can be fed in to the military. And the other thing that we've done is to restrain the shipments of feed grains to the Soviet Union.

This year we are shipping the Soviets 8 million tons of food and feed grains in accordance with a treaty or an agreement signed between the two Governments. But we have cut down on extra sales of grain to the Soviet Union, while they are suffering through this year of intense shortages themselves. They have replaced some of that grain that we did not sell them, but they still are suffering now about a 10 or 11 million ton shortage in the Soviet Union, which, in my opinion, impresses on every Soviet citizen that not only are they suffering because the world is basically boycotting the Moscow Olympics in August but they're also suffering because they're not producing as much poultry and red meat as they would otherwise.

So, I am not going to lift the farm restraints on the Soviet Union in the foreseeable future unless the Soviets make some tangible and demonstrable move to stop their invasion of Afghanistan, but we will continue to sell the 8 million tons of grain to the Soviets which we have never interrupted. I think we ought to punish the Soviet Union for their invasion and convince them that aggression in this world does not pay. And I would like to remind you that everything we

have done against the Soviets is effective, but it's peaceful in nature.

And I would like to say one other thing. The most important responsibility on any President, no matter who it is, is to keep our Nation strong and at peace, and I don't believe that we can keep our Nation at peace, which I thank God we have done so far, without our Nation being strong—militarily, economically, politically, diplomatically, and, I believe, morally and ethically. And the only way you can keep that moral and ethical strength is to condemn aggression and the persecution of innocent people and to enhance human rights in accordance with the principles that have made our Nation strong. So, I will continue to punish the Soviet Union— [applause] .

#### USE OF CRUISE MISSILES AGAINST SOVIET UNION

Q. Mr. President, my name is Samson Glare, and I live in Livingston, California. I was wondering if your administration is presently reconsidering deploying the B-1 bomber, and if so deployed, will it be based at Castle Air Force Base?

THE PRESIDENT. We have decided not to build the B-1 bomber itself. I think it was a wise decision, and let me tell you why.

The Soviet defense capability within their own country against penetrating aircraft has been the subject of about \$100 billion investment on their part, with radar installations, fighter aircraft, and so forth. We don't need and don't have a similar air defense capability, because the Soviets cannot attack the continental United States of our country with conventional aircraft.

What they have built up over the last few years and can build up in the future would be very effective against any bomber, obviously the B-52, even the B-1, that penetrated their air space over Soviet land to make an attack. So therefore, I don't think it's a good investment to put so much money into that kind of penetrating bomber, and the Congress has agreed and the military has also agreed.

But we will need a way to penetrate the Soviet Union in lieu of sending our own manned bomber planes

over the Soviets if war should come. We decided to go with the cruise missiles, primarily the air-launched cruise missiles, relatively small, relatively inexpensive, highly mobile, almost invisible to radar, and which can pack a real wallop when they land. So, what we will do is to develop a new kind of carrier for these air-launched cruise missiles, which will be designed without delay, so that each one of these carriers, which is an airplane, like a bomber, can carry about 20 of them. And they would stand off the shores of the Soviet Union, like maybe a thousand miles, launch their war attack, if necessary-and I pray God we'll never have to do it, but if we do, we want to be ready-and then let those cruise missiles, 20 of them simultaneously from each plane, penetrate the Soviet Union much more effectively. It saves money, it's almost impossible to defend against them, and it's much more effective in the long run.

I have no doubt, however, that the Castle Air Force Base, no matter what kind of bombers or cruise missile carriers we have in the future, will be an important element in the defense mechanism of our country. And as Commander in Chief, I was just as thrilled to land at Castle and see what you've got there, which I have already known in that role, as I was to see the beautiful land where you grow food.

I might say, in closing, this: The best way not to spend American lives in war and the best way to have weapons that are never used to kill other human beings is to have fighting men and women that are ready and to have weapons that will be effective if they are needed. That's the best way to keep the Soviets in a mood to keep peace.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT. Thank you.

#### SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT; WELFARE AND HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS

Q. Mr. President, my name is Clifford Childers; I live in Atwater, California. I have a two-part question. First, I would like for you to remember in the next 3 years those who failed to give you any support and what have you for the next 3 years coming up, and treat



them accordingly. And I think you know what I mean.

[Laughter]

My question, Mr. President, is this: The rich are getting richer; 51 percent are taking a free ride, are freeloaders—medical and food. And people like the audience of this 2,000 people here are footing the bill, and I don't think it's right.

THE PRESIDENT. I understand. Clifford, let me respond. I guess you want me to respond to those comments.

An election year is, in a way, a difficult time for a country and obviously for those of us who hold public office. However, in many ways it's the best year of all, because it gives us a chance to confront difficult issues and to let the people be more deeply involved in shaping our country for the future. I learn a lot in a campaign, and I learn a lot in a meeting like this—what's on your mind, what your concerns are, what your doubts are, what your confidences are, what your hopes are.

And people that support me politically, I deeply appreciate it, and I won't ever forget them. And those that don't support me, I'll try to forget. [Laughter] I'm a human being though, and sometimes my memory is better than I want it to be. [Laughter]

Q. Good for that.

THE PRESIDENT [laughing]. Right.

And this other part about your question is an interesting one. What I've tried to do since I've been in office is to take programs like welfare and health care, which are quite expensive, and modify them so that they are more efficient and are preventive in nature.

The welfare proposals that I have put to the Congress, for instance, are designed so that able-bodied Americans will be even encouraged or required to work—

Q. Good.

THE PRESIDENT.—because of two reasons: I don't believe in the Government financing somebody's livelihood if a job's available to that person, and

secondly, with the limited amount of funds available for welfare programs, those funds ought to be concentrated on the people that can't work.

Secondly, health—our Nation needs a comprehensive health program designed for several things: first of all, to cut down on the expense of it; secondly, to prevent illness. It's very inexpensive to keep a child from getting a serious disease or illness that would incapacitate that person for the rest of their life and maybe cost 20 or 30 thousand dollars a year to take care of them, when, if they were given adequate examinations, adequate dental care, adequate immunization shots as a young child, they could be healthy the rest of their lives.

Also, we need to make sure that we don't destroy the personal relationship that ought to exist, in my opinion, between a family and the medical doctors and personnel that treat them.

And I've worked hard—the last point—to cut down on hospital costs. The hospitals are overcharging the American people for health care. The reason they are doing it is this— [applause] —one reason is that they give people services that they don't need, and the other is that there's not much competition in the hospital care field, because quite often, as Tony Coelho well knows, in recent years the amount of increase in hospital costs has been almost twice as much as the inflation rate. There are several reasons. In many cases a community is served by one hospital—which is okay; you don't want too many hospital beds, because the folks that are in the beds have to pay for the empty beds—but secondly, medical doctors quite often have a great deal of control over or even an investment in the profits of the hospital.

So, we'll try to hold down hospital costs, make sure we don't have excessive hospital beds in the country that sick people have to pay for when those beds are empty, prevent disease by giving health care for young people, and in the welfare program, encourage able-bodied people to work, so that can be the focus of our attention on those that cannot work. Those are the kind of approaches, I think, that would partially address the question that you just raised, and I believe

that's the best approach for the American Government to take. And we'll continue to work on it with those goals in mind.

Q. Thank you.

#### AMERICAN HOSTAGES IN IRAN

Q. Good morning, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT. Good morning.

Q. For one thing, my name is John Sells, and I'd like to welcome you to Merced.

THE PRESIDENT. Thank you.

Q. This question has been asked very many times. Do you have any idea when the hostages in Iran will be released?

THE PRESIDENT. John, if there's one subject that literally never leaves my mind, it's the 53 innocent Americans that have been held so long by the kidnapers and international terrorists in Iran, supported by and condoned by the Iranian Government. I have probably put more time and more prayer on that one subject than any other that I've faced as President. In the last few hours, as a matter of fact, I have been in touch with the State Department and with others that I can't name publicly in trying to have an avenue to the Iranian leaders to get our hostages released. As you know, we tried a rescue mission, which failed tragically; which, if it could have gone forward, would have been successful. We've tried diplomatic means. We've been to the world court. We've been to the United Nations.

We've got two considerations in mind today that we've had since the very first day of this tragedy. One is to protect the lives and the safety of the hostages. And so far as we know, although they suffer from imprisonment, their lives and their safety have been protected. Secondly, we've upheld the principles of our Nation. There are some things that I could not do in order to secure the release of the hostages if it meant embarrassing our country or apologizing for something which we have not done or bringing our Nation to its knees to beg those terrorists to do what they ought to do under international law and in the realm of human

compassion.

I can't tell you when the hostages will be released. The problem has always been that there is no one in the Government of Iran who has either the courage or the leadership capability or the authority to make that decision. We're trying now to work with the President of Iran, Bani-Sadr, the Foreign Minister of Iran, Ghotzbadeh. We have very little access directly to Ayatollah Khomeini. We're working with the opposition mullahs who have opposed Bani-Sadr and Ghotzbadeh when they announced they would return the hostages.

But we obviously are doing everything we can. I do not know what else we can do without endangering the lives of the hostages themselves. But every day, all day, by every possible means to reach the Iranian people, we are trying to induce them to release the hostages.

The last thing I want to say is this: We are punishing Iran severely for holding the hostages. It's costing them literally millions of dollars every day in lost revenue, lost trade, a poorer quality of life for their people. Their Government is divided, they're in chaos politically, because they're holding these hostages. But they are fanatics, some of them; they're terrorists, some of them; they're irresponsible, a large number of them.

And how to get the hostages home I've not yet discovered. But I hope that every American, every day, will remember those 53 hostages, remember them in our prayers. And I believe that they will be coming home safely.

I would like just to add one other point, because it is the Fourth of July. It's not a sign of weakness that a great nation like ours has been so deeply concerned about this issue. Many countries in the world would forget about 53 people. They're not famous people; they're not great people, as far as their past accomplishments are concerned. They're just common, ordinary, good, dedicated, patriotic Americans. We have never forgotten them. And when 220 million Americans are deeply obsessed with the lives and safety of just 53 people for months, to me

that's a sign of greatness.

#### MINORITIES

Q. Bienvenido, Senor Presidente. [Welcome, Mr. President.]

THE PRESIDENT. Gracias, Senor.

Q. Me llamo Jose Lada. [My name is Jose Lada.]

THE PRESIDENT. Gracias.

Q. I'm a bilingual teacher in the Merced city school district. As you may know, there is a high percentage of Hispanics in California. And my question is—

THE PRESIDENT. Yes, I've heard about this.  
[Laughter]

Q.— if you are reelected, what will you do to see that the Federal programs designed to help the minorities of this country will be protected and strengthened?

THE PRESIDENT. I will continue to do what we have done for this first 3 1/2 years.

There is no doubt that in the past 204 years of our Nation's history since the Declaration of Independence was signed, there has been a gross discrimination against many minority groups—discrimination against the blacks, discrimination against those from Ireland, discrimination against those who happen to be Jews, discrimination against those from Eastern Europe, discrimination against Asians, discrimination against those who don't speak English well, the Hispanics. But the important thing is that our Nation has made steady progress in accommodating differences among people, letting them preserve their heritage and their commitment and their religious beliefs and the closeness of their families, and at the same time letting them enjoy the benefits of American society. I think our country has got a good record in dealing with minority groups.

The latest, of course, problem that we have is the excessive number of refugees who've been forced out of Southeast Asia and Communist countries at the danger of their lives. Another very serious problem that we have faced is the large number of Hispanic people who've come here not because they were

under persecution politically, like from Mexico, but because they wanted a better life in our country. We're doing the best we can to accommodate those groups. It's not easy.

I believe, however, that we have had a rigid enforcement of the equal employment opportunity laws. And also, in my appointments to major positions, I've tried to bring in as advisers to me those who were especially knowledgeable about and especially sensitive to the needs of particular minority groups. And to make the answer to your question brief, I'll just give you one example.

In the Federal district courts and circuit courts, where policy is made and where the service is for life, I've tried to correct past discrimination in appointments to those positions that we all recognize now. And I've only been in office 3 1/2 years, but I've appointed more women judges, I've appointed more black judges, I've appointed more Hispanic judges than all the other Presidents combined since this Nation was formed. So, I'll continue that.

I'd like to add one other point. As each one of these groups have become more closely assimilated or absorbed in our society, keeping their own special characteristics as a matter of pride, they've become better and better Americans, and they have stood on their own feet. And they have started dealing with other groups, who might come later, with the same degree of concern and compassion that the Irish and the Eastern Europeans now exert toward Hispanics and those who come from Southeast Asia.

So, I see the time coming very rapidly when the status of Hispanic Americans is absolutely assured, when discrimination against them has been eliminated, when they are playing a major role in elective office, appointive office, making decisions, setting the policy and the character of our country, and being responsible, which you already are becoming, for dealing with other groups who might be more newcomers than you are.

So, this is the way our Nation grows, and I'll be sure and commit to you that that progress will continue.

Thank you very much.

Q. Thank you.

#### IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

Q. Mr. President, my name is Les McCabe, from Merced. Agriculture has the need for a large labor force, especially during the harvest time. Mexico is the nearest source of large numbers of people able and willing to work in the agricultural industry. Recent TV news stories showing the fence between the United States and Mexico and, later in the same broadcast, showing boatloads of people coming into the country seemed to portray a contradiction. Would you comment on the policy which seemingly excludes people able and willing to work, yet permits others to come into the country who in some cases will never work?

THE PRESIDENT. Les, I'll answer your question, but I can't agree with the premise of it, because I'm the one that has to deal with this question as the President, as you know, and I think I'm fairly familiar with it.

When I was sworn in as President by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, I took an oath, a solemn oath, to uphold the Constitution of our country and to enforce its laws. A part of those laws are the immigration and naturalization laws, and it's my responsibility, at the Mexican border, the Canadian border, or the shorelines of our country, to restrict as much as possible illegal entry of persons to our country.

We are blessed in this country by having friends to the north in Canada and to the south in Mexico. It's a great blessing. We also have a large influx of Mexican citizens who come into our country, many of them without being documented, and they provide good work. A remarkable number of them voluntarily go back to Mexico even if they haven't come here originally with the adequate certification from the Government. That will probably continue, and my guess is that the number of Spanish-speaking people in this country will continue to grow.

I would not want to see our Nation, coincidentally, or parenthetically, become a two-language nation. You've

seen what happened in Canada between the French and British-speaking people. And my hope and my expectation and my policy as President is to provide bilingual education, but to assure within the bounds of my authority and my influence that the Spanish-speaking people who come into our country ultimately learn how to speak English and become American citizens the same as everyone else. I might say that I hope that their families will also continue to know how to speak Spanish. My wife and I study Spanish, and we encourage our children to learn Spanish, because it is becoming a very important language throughout the world.

The other part of your question concerns the refugees who come by boat. We have an absolute, effective effort being made now to keep those illegal Cuban refugees from coming to our country. We have Navy ships between Cuba and the south coast of Florida. We keep Castro informed that we will not permit any further Cuban refugees come into our country unless they are first processed in accordance with American law. There was a massive influx of people who came from Cuba to our country back in the previous weeks; that's been stopped.

The people coming to our country from Southeast Asia, primarily again because the Communist government has failed and people are escaping persecution and for freedom, are processed very carefully. They go into a country like Malaysia or the Philippines or Thailand, they are processed there by American representatives, officials, and if they are qualified to come here under American law, then they are permitted to come.

The difficulty of Cuba, of course, is it's only 90 miles away, and there's a constant stream of boats coming from the Cuban coast. But we've got that pretty well under control. And I'll continue to do this as best I can, to make sure that those who do come into our country to work, to have a better life, to escape persecution are treated fairly.

There's a special provision in the law that we ought to remember, and that is that if people come here to escape Communist persecution, they have a slightly



different status. But my responsibility is to enforce the law.

The last thing I'd like to say—and I'm going to disagree with you again on this—I gather from your question that you don't believe that the boat people from Southeast Asia and from Cuba come here to work. I don't guess there's ever been a better—did I misunderstand you?

Q. Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT. Well, explain what you meant by that.

Q. I'm a farmer also, part-time, we once had a bracero program that made it easy to get workers during harvest time, Your immigration service has taken my picking crew several times. [Laughter]

THE PRESIDENT. I understand. Well, okay. I might say it's your immigration service too, right? [Laughter]

Q. I'll tell them to leave next time. [Laughter]

THE PRESIDENT [laughing]. No, they'll have to do their duty. [Laughter] They'll have have to do their duty.

But the point is, in my opinion, almost all of the people who come here from any foreign country are looking for a better life, and our record with those people has been remarkably good. It was good when my family came here from Ireland and England. I don't know where your family came here [from], but they came here to work and have a better life.

I think if you went into the Miami area, just as an example—I won't belabor this point any more—you would find that the Cubans who came here to escape Communist persecution, they came here, and they went to work, and they went to college, and they learned, and they have made darn good citizens. And I believe that that experience has been the same basically ever since our Nation was first founded. There are loafers in my own family; I hate to admit it—[laughter]—maybe even in yours, maybe even in your family.

Q. I don't talk about my in-laws. [Laughter]

THE PRESIDENT. Les said he doesn't talk about his in-laws. [Laughter]

But anyway, in general our country has benefited, and we'll try to enforce the law under difficult circumstances. The point we have to remember is that when almost any other nation has people leaving their country, there's one place they want to come: the United States of America. And I can understand why, can't you?

Q. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT. Thank you, Les. Les, how's your crop this year—a good crop?

Q. Very good. I grow persimmons, incidentally. [Laughter]

THE PRESIDENT. Oh, very fine. We grow wild persimmons on my farm in Georgia. [Laughter] I've eaten them all my life.

Thank you. Over here.

#### 1980 SUMMER OLYMPICS

Q. Mr. President, I'm Joy Basic, and I'm from Merced. And I was wondering if we're going to have Olympic games this year in Moscow.

THE PRESIDENT. Okay. How old are you, Joy?

Q. Eleven.

THE PRESIDENT. Eleven years old; Amy is twelve. You'll have to come see her sometime. [Laughter]

There will be Olympic games in Moscow. The United States will not participate. I'd like to add one other thing, Joy. I'm sorry this happened, but there are times when our country must stand for principle and for what is fight.

The Olympic games are supposed to be to enhance peace and brotherhood and friendship. When the Soviet Union, just before the Olympic games were scheduled, invades an innocent country and kills literally thousands of men, women, and children who have done them no harm and then professes with a great propaganda effort that they are the peace-loving

nation on Earth and that the Olympic games were actually assigned to Moscow because their foreign policy and their principles were right, it's time for other nations to let them know that they cannot get away with that false claim and propaganda.

We are encouraging the Olympic athletes in our own country, who are superb, as you know, to be recognized in every possible way. I've asked the Congress—and Tony Coelho helped—to award a special medal to every single American athlete who's going to be competing with one another and who finally wins a place on what would have been the Olympic team to go to Moscow. They'll be brought into Washington. They'll be honored at Kennedy Center. They'll be honored by the Congress with a special medal. They'll be honored by me.

And I intend to go to some of the Olympic trials myself this year to let the athletes know that we appreciate their sacrifice in not going to the Olympic games, but we also appreciate their willingness, as determined by the American Olympic Committee and the Congress and the people and myself, that we'll not condone aggression by the use of our athletes. So, we won't go, but we'll be honoring our athletes in every possible way as well. And I am grateful to them for the sacrifice they are making for our country. It's worth it.

Thank you.

Q. Thank you.

#### AMERICAN IMAGE AND STRENGTH

THE PRESIDENT. Good morning.

Q. Good morning. My name is Lee Wright, and I live in Merced. Today is so patriotic, I kind of hate to ask this question, but

THE PRESIDENT. It's all right. Go ahead.

Q. It seems that recently the American people and our allies are suffering from a lack of faith in our Government's ability to support its policies and respond to international crises such as Iran and Afghanistan. How do you explain this, and how do you intend to change this image which, surprisingly to

many of us, is weaker politically, economically, and militarily than we are accustomed to knowing it?

THE PRESIDENT. Lee, I'll try to answer your question. It's a good question, and it's a good day to ask it.

There are two superpowers on Earth, recognized by almost everyone: One is the Soviet Union; the other is the United States of America. Our country stands for openness, for debate, for the expression of opinion without restraint. We have the right to criticize our Government. We have the right to air publicly our disappointments, our grievances, our frustrations, our fears, our concerns, our doubts. And when we deal with other nations on Earth, like Canada or Mexico or Great Britain or Germany or France or Japan, they are free countries as well. And when somebody expresses a concern about the Chancellor of Germany, it's in the newspaper. And when somebody doesn't like what the Prime Minister of Great Britain did or said, it's top headlines in the paper, and it's on the evening television.

In open democracies, where freedom is important and where human beings are respected, any slight differences are the news. The strength of our country, the production of our land, the commitment to principles, the unity that binds us together, our success economically, what we're doing about energy, the strength of our Armed Forces, that doesn't make headlines in our country, because the Government doesn't control what the people hear or see or read.

In Russia the people only hear or see or read what the Government wants them to read. If there are sharp differences of opinion between the members of the Politburo about their invasion of Afghanistan or about the desire of literally tens of thousands of people to escape the Soviet Union for freedom, the people in Russia don't know about it. You don't read the Russian newspaper about how folks are dissatisfied with President Brezhnev.

And when you look at the refugee situation around the world, there are literally 3 or 4 million refugees who are starving and who are deprived. They're not escaping from the democracies. I've been to Berlin, and I've seen a horrible looking wall. That wall's not

built there to keep people out of East Germany; it's built to keep people in East Germany who want to escape to the kind of society that we have, as exemplified in West Germany.

And you don't see boatloads of Americans trying to escape to Cuba, right? [Laughter]

Q. Right.

THE PRESIDENT. No, you don't. And in Kampuchea, which was formerly Cambodia, the Vietnamese invaded it and now literally hundreds of thousands of people are escaping for their lives. In Ethiopia, a Communist country with Soviet and Cuban presence there, hundreds of thousands of people have left Ethiopia, willing to starve, just to seek freedom. Afghanistan—there are 800,000 refugees who have left their homes in Afghanistan to go into Pakistan looking for freedom.

So, there is a difference of opinion quite often among us. I guarantee you, knowing the facts, that these differences as reported in the press are exaggerated, greatly exaggerated. But that's the way our system ought to work, because there's no reason to have on the evening news that Germany and the United States agree on something, but when we disagree on something, it is news. If we disagreed all the time, then when we disagree, it wouldn't be news, right?

Q. Right.

THE PRESIDENT. Okay. So, there's no sign of weakness here when there's slight differences between us and France or us and Germany or us and Japan about trade matters or agriculture matters or defense matters, because we are acting in concert to a maximum degree possible.

The final thing I'd like to say to you is this: The United States of America is the strongest nation on Earth militarily; the United States of America is the strongest nation on Earth politically; the United States of America is the strongest nation on Earth economically; and the United States of America is the strongest nation on Earth, I'm convinced, morally and ethically. And those are the strengths, to me, that are important. And it's crucial that you as a young man and I as a

President and all the people here and the ones who might listen to our voice realize that the differences among us are part of our strength, and the fact that we bring those differences to the surface, and get embarrassed by them sometimes, that means that we are facing them frankly.

We've never made progress in this country in the last 204 years by weakness or cowardice or by avoiding an issue just because it was difficult. And when we face the energy problem and when we try to do something about high interest rates and we try to do something about inflation or unemployment or trade, that's not a sign of weakness; it's a sign of strength.

So, don't be concerned about the United States of America. We're the greatest nation on Earth now, and when you get old enough to run for President, it's going to be even greater.

Q. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT. This will probably be the last question. I'm sorry. Go ahead; I want yours.

#### ENERGY

Q. Boy, am I lucky. [Laughter] Mr. President, I'd like to welcome you.

THE PRESIDENT. Thank you.

Q. My name is Kathy Brent; I'm from Merced. My question is quite short. I've read in magazines about the synfuel project.

THE PRESIDENT. Yes.

Q. My question is: How much is it going to save us at the pumps if it's so expensive to make?

THE PRESIDENT. Okay. I signed last week the synfuels bill to which Kathy is referring. We had the biggest crowd on the South Lawn of the White House we have ever had to sign legislation into law, because the people assembled there knew the importance of this. That bill that we passed, Kathy, will probably change the life of Americans in the future and indeed the entire world.

We will now begin to produce other kinds of energy in

addition to oil and natural gas and also conserve energy. It's all wrapped up into that one bill. To produce synthetic fuels or heavy oil, cleanburning gas and oil out of coal, out of shale, or solar energy, to take growing crops like corn and make gasoline out of it or gasohol, to take trees that were formerly just wasted or parts of trees that were not harvested to make lumber and plywood and so forth and make fuel out of it that we can burn in our cars or burn in our homes—that's what's included in that bill.

The size of it is unbelievable. It's a greater program than the Marshall Plan that rebuilt all of Europe after the Second World War plus the total space program, including putting a man on the Moon, plus the total Interstate Highway System in our country. That's how big the synthetic fuels conservation program, gasohol program, solar power program is going to be.

And in this next 10 years, we'll be devoting American ingenuity and American money derived from taxing the oil companies with a windfall profits tax to let America be energy secure, so that we won't be vulnerable with a 12,000-mile pipeline coming out of a troubled Persian Gulf-Middle East area, to give us the lifeblood that creates jobs and a better life and warm homes and so forth for us. So, the synthetic fuels bill will be a major step forward.

Energy, to answer the last part of your question, is not going to be cheaper in the future; it's going to be more expensive. The cheap energy comes from two places. One is what you save. When you don't use a barrel of oil, that's cheap and inexpensive. When you drive carefully, when you have five or six people in a car instead of one going to and from work regularly, when your home is well insulated, when you walk instead of ride, that's cheap energy. And the other thing is the energy that comes from the Sun.

In this marvelous agricultural region, for instance, I think in the future we'll see much less cultivation of crops. Minimum tillage is already a very important element of the life of some agricultural communities, and the other thing is in the drying of crops. Instead of using natural gas or oil heat, more and more we'll use the Sun, so that farmers can still produce better crops,

better quality, and use the Sun more.

So, there are so many ways that we can change our lives, not going downhill, but going uphill. It'll be an exciting challenge to give Americans a better life at the same time we correct our overdependence on foreign oil. That's what the synthetic fuels bill will do. And we'll undoubtedly find ways in the future to produce energy that we haven't even dreamed of yet. So, in your lifetime you're going to see some wonderful, glorious, fine things happen in the energy field. Now it's kind of a depressing thing—energy. But in the future it's going to be a great, wonderful, glorious opportunity to show that Americans, a superpower, are still on the cutting edge of progress.

And when times change, with our ingenuity and with our human freedom we have always been able to accommodate those changes, not to give us a worse life, but to give us a better life. And I have no doubt that that's what we're going to do in the field of energy. And I'm very grateful that our country has that kind of characteristic, not only in the government, not only in our laws but in the hearts and minds of people who comprise its greatness.

I'm very deeply honored to be here in Merced this morning. You've made me feel at home. I hope that God will bless every one of you.

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*Note: The President spoke at 9:04 a.m. in the Merced College Gymnasium.*

*Earlier in the morning, the President left Mayor Wilson's residence and departed from Oakland International Airport on Air Force One.*

*Upon arrival at Castle Air Force Base, Atwater, Calif., the President was greeted by Lt. Col. Leo W. Smith, Wing Commander, and Mayor Greg Olzack of Atwater. He then boarded Marine One for the flight to Merced College.*

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Jimmy Carter, Merced, California Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The



American Presidency Project

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