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REMARKS BY SENATOR GEORGE MCGOVERN
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It is a pleasure to be here, and to consider with you ways to make growing old in America a time, not for loneliness and despair, but for new security and fresh hope.

It is said that youth is not a time of life, but a state of mind. I want to see that state of mind--of confidence and comfort, of inquiry and growth--made real for the senior citizens of America.

For if there is one thing we all have in common, it is that we are all growing old. And depending on the choices of American leaders, we will all sense one day either the sorrow of being left out of America's richness, or the respect, the honor, and the tribute of a grateful land.

When we have a government that forgets the people, and limits its concern to the privileged few, the old are the first to feel it. We have such a government today.

And that is why I think we need a new President of the United States.

Every dollar of your pensions, your Social Security, and your savings has had fifteen cents shaved off the top by the Nixon inflation.

That has happened for one reason: Mr. Nixon's price commission hears the pleas of big business for higher profits. But it tunes out your plea for a decent standard of life. And next year, they'll want to add a national sales tax to the cost of everything you buy.

That alone is reason enough for this campaign, to recapture the White House for the people.

This year we'll build half as many homes as we need to fill senior citizens' housing goals.

Mr. Nixon can find an extra $5 billion to bomb homes and dikes and people in Southeast Asia. But then he insists on a spending ceiling that denies you a decent roof over your head. Next year he'll offer more of the same.

And that is another reason we need a new President.

When Congress finally passed the 20% Social Security increase, Mr. Nixon gave us a lecture on inflation. He wanted you to settle for 5%.

He told us that programs to help older people will weaken the dollar. Then he asked billions of dollars for an ABM that will waste our dollars and add nothing to our security.

Yet when your higher Social Security check arrives, it will have a note from Richard Nixon describing not how he fought it tooth and nail, but how he signed it into law. He'll take all the credit for a program he opposed. Next year he'll oppose it all over again.

And that's another reason for new leadership next year.

Richard Nixon became President after nearly a decade of progress for senior citizens.

Medicare, despite all its shortcomings, had finally been passed.

An Older Americans Act had become law.

Social Security was nearing the worth intended by its authors--real security for those whose life's work is done.

And Congress had directed the President to conduct a White House Conference on Aging in 1971--not a program of useless talk, but a session to set new priorities on behalf of the old.

Richard Nixon was presented with a fine foundation, and even the first few floors, of a solid retirement structure. It was a warm invitation to build further.

But there has been no construction these past four years. Instead, the wrecking crews were brought in, and they're still working now to shake that structure to the ground.

And that is why I want your help--so we can repair the damage and start building that important structure for senior citizens again.

Let me tell you the kind of administration I have in mind.

It will be committed to a liveable income for every American who has passed the age of 65--with no exceptions. If the dollar ever goes down, Social Security will go up to keep pace. Pensions will be fully protected from inflation, mismanagement and company failure. And there will be a flat, universal Social Security minimum of at least $150 per month.

I am determined to meet elderly housing needs. That means building new homes and apartments. And it also means reversing the cruel spiral in property taxes that is driving older people from their own homes today, with no relief in sight.

A new administration will make sure that 65 is not a dead end but an open door--a chance to learn, to gain new experience, and, if you choose it, to work or play. We need the experience and the commonsense of our older citizens every bit as much as the energy and the strength of our youth. So let us remove the penalties on retired people who want to supplement retirement benefits with earnings of their own. And let us seek out ways to use your talents, so we can enrich your lives and the quality of life for us all.

A new administration will spare no effort on health. There will be no White House attempts to cut Medicare back. There will be no more fancy schemes to place the profits of big insurance companies ahead of the health of our people. With firm White House support, instead of the bitter opposition we have now, the Kennedy health bill will be passed.

And we will multiply the number of well staffed recreational and creative retirement centers of the kind I recently visited near Portland, Oregon.

These are some of my priorities.

But all of these issues grow out of some broader questions we must ask ourselves this year.

We were founded on the promise of life, liberty, and happiness for each of our people. Regardless of income, regardless of station or rank, regardless of race, or age or sex, each one of us deserves a fair chance at life, the respect of his fellows, and the protection of his government. The dignity of the individual is the first premise of our patriotic faith.

But we have strayed dangerously far from those values.

When young people die before their time--and when old people die from neglect--then there is something wrong in America.

When a widow can get tangled for two years in bureaucratic red tape to get the pension she deserves--then there is something wrong in America.

When government lures older citizens to the White House with a promise to listen--and then locks their recommendations away to gather dust in the attic--then there's something wrong in America.

When 6 million senior citizens live in poverty--in hovels instead of homes, without enough food, gouged by the high cost of drugs and health care, without decent clothing and shelter--when a society as wealthy as ours provides such treatment for those who worked to build it--then there is something wrong in America.

So come with me and we will meet your needs, not because it is politically wise, but because it is morally right.

Come with me and we will call America back from a savage war abroad, and home to attend to her own people.

Come with me and we will refresh the American spirit with a people's campaign and a people's government.

We will make real the words of Robert Browning: "Grow old along with me; the best is yet to be; the last of life for which the first was made."

And while we complete that task, we will renew our love for this sweet land of liberty.

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