

Stump Speech-Rapid City, South Dakota, 5/31/76

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GOVERNOR JIMMY CARTER

May 31, 1976

5:00 P.M.

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

A RALLY AT
CANYON PARK, SOUTH DAKOTA

"A Standard Stump Speech"
Transcript

GOVERNOR CARTER: Thank you. That is a great introduction and I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

This is a beautiful crowd. And, I really appreciate your warm friendship and your hospitality on this Memorial Day.

As I drove here from the airport, I thought about your own terrible tragedy of four or five years ago, and the special day we have to honor the tragedies of the past, the times when men's and women's minds and hearts in different lands throughout the world were unable to find a common ground on which to settle differences and on which to base the preservation of human life.

We have a great country. We have made some serious mistakes in the past, and we don't want to make them again.

1976 is the time of celebration. It is also a time to look backwards. It is a time to look two hundred years ago, at the time that George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine and Patrick Henry. It is a time to look back at the time, at the years of Abraham Lincoln, when our nation was torn apart, and it is a time to look back on the great depression years when Franklin Roosevelt was President and then later for Harry Truman when the war was ended, and then John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

It is a time also to think about the recent years, times of Viet Nam and Cambodia, when our nation for the first time made a major commitment of lives and money, without the American people being a part of the process. We didn't decide as a people to start a war in Viet Nam or to bomb Cambodia, and see hundreds of thousands of women and children killed, and fifty thousand American lives lost, and a hundred and fifty billion dollars spent. But, it happened, It happened in our country. It happened with out government -- my government and your government.

And, later we didn't decide to wrap secrecy around the White House and to see the professional reputation of the F.B.I. destroyed, and the Attorney General's office prostituted, and the terrible shame of Watergate come on our country, and the President of our country caught lying. We didn't make those decisions as a people, but they happened, and they happened in my government and your government.

And, later we didn't decide to plot assissanations and murder against leaders of countries with whom we were not at war. I wouldn't plot murder, and neither would you. But, it happened in our government. In my government and in your government.

So, looking back two hundred years ago, or a hundred years ago, or fifty years ago, or two or three years ago, we see a nation that is growing. We are still a young

country. We have made a lot of mistakes. Not just recently, but long ago. And, we have corrected those mistakes as we progressed as a country. In spite of the fact that sometimes we have been ashamed, and we have been embarrassed, and we have had to apologize for our own government.

That doesn't mean to look into the future, we can't be proud once again, and inspired once again by our nation's government. That is what 1976 can mean. Fine things, proud things, clean and decent things, inspirational things, idealistic, compassionate things, loving things, compared to the mistakes of the past.

So, how do we make sure that in the future our country will not repeat its past mistakes? There is only one way to do it, and that is to be sure that to the degree that we are capable, that our government is what the people are. The American people are competent, good managers, good organizers, good salesmen. There is no reason why we should have a horrible, bloated, confused, overlapping, wasteful, inefficient, ineffective, insensitive, unmanageable, bureaucratic mess in Washington. This is not part of us, and it is not a necessary part of our government.

The American people are fair. There is no reason why we should have an unfair system of taxation. Our present income tax is a disgrace to the human race. The surest income to be taxed is the income earned from manual labor.

There is not any hidden secret loopholes for someone who draws a paycheck every two weeks, or retirement check every two weeks. But, there are hidden secret loopholes for everyone else.

The average family in this country now that makes less than ten thousand dollars a year, pays a higher proportion of their income in taxes than does a family that makes more than a million dollars a year.

I know that we are smart enough and fair enough to develop a tax system that is fair.

I happen to be a farmer. My father was a farmer. My grandfather was a farmer. For two hundred and ten years in Georgia, all of my father's family who ever had a chance to finish high school. I know what it means to work for a living. I know what it means to sweat in the hot sun, to plow a mule, to pick cotton, to pull fodder, to pump water. Also, I know what it means to have a good chance in life, a better education, a better opportunity than my father and my ancestors didn't have.

That is what this government, this nation is also, a chance for us to give our children opportunities that we didn't have.

Our nation ought to have a system of education based on individualized instruction, where every child is considered to be unique, with special characteristics, talents, abilities, problems. I think this is the kind of educational system that we can have.

We need on our farms to realize the tremendous truth, that is what is best for the family farmer is exactly what is best in the long run.

For the consumers of this country, we need maximum production, an aggressive sale of American products overseas. Fifty percent of all the food or feed grains that cross any natural border come from the fields of the United States of America. A tremendous resource that would help us to insure favorable trade balances, beneficial influence on the world economy, prosperity for our farm families, better growth in industries depending on agriculture. We need predictable agricultural policy, where we can make decisions for the future, with some assurance of what our government policy is going to be on acreage, basic price supports, import quotas, an aggressive sales of our exported food items.

These kinds of things are part of a farmer's life. They have got to be part of the Federal government that deals with farmer's lives.

I was in the Navy foreleven years. I am a graduate of Annapolis -- that is how I got my education -- at public expense. I was in the Submarine Force. I worked under Admiral Hyman Rickover.

I recognize very clearly that the number one priority of any President has got to be to guarantee the security of our country, its freedom from successful attack or threat of attack or blackmail, and an ability to carry out a legitimate foreign policy.

But, I also recognize, being familiar with the defense establishment, that the most wasteful bureaucracy in Washington is in the Pentagon. We need to have, there again, tough management.

We have got too many military bases overseas, about two thousand of them. We have got too many troops overseas, too many support troops for combat troops, twice as many as the Soviet Union has.

We have got a lot of waste in other ways. For every instructor now in the military, we have got less than two students. We build too many weapon systems we don't need.

But, in making these changes, we could have a simpler, better organized, more muscular, more effective, fighting force. And, with that capability understood throughout the rest of the world, that is the best way to guarantee peace.

We have in our people a realization that government lacks competence. I don't want anyone in this group to vote for me tomorrow, nor next November, unless you want to see the Executive Branch of the government of our country completely reorganized, and made efficient, economical, purposeful and manageable for a change. And, I don't want anyone in this audience to vote for me, unless next January, you want to see a start, with a basic comprehensive tax reform program, to give us an income tax system that treats people fairly, and puts the burden where it ought to be,

on those with a higher level income. And, I don't want anybody to vote for me unless you want to see us have an aggressive foreign policy that accurately represents the character and interest of the American people.

I don't claim that I know all of the answers. Nobody could. I am just an average human being like you are.

I started campaigning for President last January, January 20th, 1975. Nobody knew who I was. I didn't have any built in campaign organization. I didn't hold public office. I lived in a little town, with 683 people population. I was not a lawyer, I was a farmer. I wasn't in Washington or New York, the center of the national news media.

But we started working one living room at a time, and going to factory shift lines and shopping centers and high school auditoriums, and union halls and bingo games, and trying to get people to know us.

I have a good family, an almost built-in campaign organization. There are eleven of us who campaign full time.

My wife and I have been married almost 30 years, 30 years in July. We have got three sons, the oldest son is almost 29 years old. He was born in Virginia. My second son is 26 years old. He was born in Hawaii. My third son is 23 years old. He was born in Connecticut. And, then, my wife and I had an argument for 14 years, and we have an 8 year old daughter who was born in Georgia.

And, all of my sons are married.

(Applause.)

And, my sister campaigns full time, and my mother's youngest sister campaigns full time, and my oldest son's mother-in-law campaigns full time. So, we have eleven of us. And, as we went through Iowa, and Oklahoma, and Maine, and New Hampshire, Vermont, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina, and other states, we accumulated a growing campaign family, people who shared with us a belief that this nation can represent the characteristics of the American people.

I haven't depended on endorsements of powerful political people to put me in office. When they have come, I have appreciated them. But, I have taken my case directly to the voters. And, I have tried to form a close relationship between myself as a candidate and the voters in individual states.

here are obviously some important political decisions to make. All of the other candidates, without exceptions, decided to enter just a few states, to hope to win a small group of delegates, to take those delegates to the National Convention in July in Madison Square Garden, to create a deadlock or broken convention, to get in the back room and horse trade, for the highest elective office in the world.

I decided to do it differently, We have got thirty primaries in this country where you can win delegates. I am in all thirty of them. I haven't skipped a State, I haven't avoided an opponent. I haven't evaded an issue. We have been very careful about this. We have now been through I think 23 or 24 States. I have won in 17 of them.

In the next seven days, you have got seven more primaries. The last ones are California, Ohio and New Jersey. In between, we have got Delaware. And, as you know, tomorrow, we have got three very important primaries. One of them is in Montana. One of them is in Rhode Island. And, one of them, of course, is in South Dakota.

(Applause)

I have come in this afternoon to get to know you and to let you know me, to ask you for your help. I have got more than a thousand delegates. But, I need to form a relationship with you that hopefully will be permanent.

There is no way that anyone could take a single voter for granted, or a single state for granted. It is very important to me what happens tomorrow in South Dakota. You have a great state. Independent, beautiful, agricultural, industry. You have had your tragedies, and you have overcome them. You have demonstrated courage.

This state has also produced great leaders. And, I am proud that some of them are my friends. And, I look forward to the time when our party and our nation can overcome the divisions among us, and work towards common purposes.

The eyes of the country tomorrow are going to be focused on you. And, I would like to have your support.

As I said earlier, I don't know all of the answers. I am learning, as I campaign around the country.

I don't even claim to be the best qualified person in this country to be President. I am sure there are a lot of people in this nation, I am sure a lot of people in this audience, who are more intelligent than I am, who know more about management, who may be more sensitive to our people's needs. I want to express my personal thanks to all of you for not running for President this year. I have got enough opponents.

(Applause.)

But, I want to close by saying this, and then answer some questions from you.

We have got a long way to go. And, although I do intend to be President, with your help, it is just as much your country as it is mine. If there are things about our nation that you don't like, if we have made mistakes in the past that you never want to see made again, if there are divisions among our people that you would like to see healed, if there are injustices or discriminations or hatreds that you would like to alleviate, if there are hopes or dreams in your own lives that you would like to see realized during the life of your children, I hope that in this next 24 hours you will realize the tremendous responsibility on your own shoulders, and make an effort, even a sacrificial effort, for this brief period of time to help change what our country has been into what our country ought to be and can be.

I would like to answer some questions now. We will start with the local news media. I will repeat the questions so the audience can hear them, and I would like to have questions about the campaign, about foreign affairs, Korea, Detente, Middle East, Angola, or about domestic affairs, agriculture, welfare, health, transportation, education, tax reforms, environmental

quality, defense, amnesty, abortion, gun control, right-to-work, whatever issues you want to discuss, and I will try to answer all of your questions, and I will be as brief as I can.

Is there any questions from the local news media first of all?

The question is: That Congressman Udall is campaigning for the last week, and he considers South Dakota, according to his statement, to be an important part of the stop-Carter movement. Do I think that my visit here this afternoon can off set that?

Well, I can't answer that question very well. I don't consider South Dakota to be part of a stop anything movement. I consider South Dakota to be part of this country who is not trying to stop something, but trying to elect a President. And, as I said earlier, I have not run in one State and skipped the others. I am running simultaneously right now in seven different primaries. Last night I was in Georgia, this morning I was in Rhode Island, this afternoon I was in Ohio, tonight I will be in California. And, I have tried to make sure that I have covered this country as much as I possibly could. Last week I was in South Dakota again. But, that

is the point I was making earlier, with my family members, I don't have to be here all of the time. My wife has been here before, my son and his wife have been here before, my oldest son's mother-in-law has been here before, and we hope that in my absence that I can depend on all of you to join our campaign and to realize that the decision to be made tomorrow is just as much in your hands --

(End of Side A)

-- without working a lick all year, and that income, as you know, for a farmer comes not just from one person, it comes from the husband, a wife and all of the children who live on the farm. So, we need to do something to make sure that the farmers do get a fair part of the national income.

All right. The question was about the legalization of marijuana. I do not favor the legalization of marijuana. I do favor the decriminalization of it by States. We now have six States in this country who have decriminalized the possession of small quantities of marijuana. The first one was in Oregon. We moved towards that posture when I was Governor of Georgia. What it is is this, for those of you who are not familiar with it:

The possession of small quantities of marijuana is still a crime. It is punished, however, not by a felony sentence or imprisonment, it is punished by a heavy fine like two hundred dollars. It doesn't leave a permanent criminal record on the life of a young person or old person who is caught with that small amount. At the same time, you increase, if possible, the penalties for the sale or distribution of marijuana and other drugs, and put the pushers in jail. That is a good approach to it. I think -- I know that Oregon, Alaska, California and three other States now have this process. So, I would not favor legalization, I would favor the States decriminalizing marijuana, for small quantities of possession.

One more question is all I can take. Yes ma'am.

Oh, no. The question is, speaking of inefficient bureaucracies, what would I do about the Post Office.

(Applause.)

Let me say two or three preliminary things to avoid answering the question, which I can't answer.

First of all, my grandfather was a Postmaster in Richland, Georgia. And, he was a Third District

Campaign Manager for Tom Watson, who was a great Populist Congressman.

My grandfather was the one who had the original idea for the rural free delivery of mail. So, anyone who lives on a rural route can thank my grandfather for the idea. It was passed, introduced by Tom Watson, our Congressman, and eventually, twenty-five years later, the Republicans finally financed it, and the farmers started getting mail directly.

My mother also worked in the Post Office, and my wife's mother just retired from the Post Office this December 31st.

I don't know how to answer the question about what we should do about the Post Office.

If I could bring one political issue in, I think the only piece of legislation that my opponent in South Dakota has ever passed was setting up the present Post Office system. Senator -- I mean Congressman Udall is responsible for the present Post Office arrangement. That was his Bill, and I think it is the only one he ever passed that amounted to anything.

I was asking the other day about what we could do about the Post Office, and somebody said,

"well, you could at least have good mail delivery twice a month by sending all of the checks for Post Office employees through the mail", that they thought it would get delivered on time at least twice a month.

Somebody else said that the reason they raised the rates on post -- on mail, on letters from ten cents to thirteen cents, was that the extra three cents went for storage.

Well, I can't answer your question, I will have to admit that. But, I will say this. I am a good manager, I have run the government of Georgia well, I am a businessman, a farmer, a planner, an engineer. And, I would assume the responsibility for the Post Office Department as part of my Presidential duties. It wouldn't be taken on lightly.

First of all, I would choose people in whom I had complete confidence to assess how much of the mail could be delivered by electronic means. I would keep control of the delivery of first class mail in the Post Office to have some financing. I would not hesitate to subsidize the delivery of mail from general funds to make sure that our people do have that service.

I would very carefully analyze the Postal Service of other nations to see what we could learn from them, and let the American people know about all of these procedures as they went forward.

I can't answer your question any better than that, I am sorry.

Let me say this in closing. I have got to go. But, I have got an address that I would like for you to write -- you don't have to write it down -- but, I would like, if you have any questions about issues or my stands on those that I mentioned earlier in passing, write Box 1976, that is this year, Atlanta, Georgia, and we will send you back in written form comprehensive speeches that I have made on things like nuclear arms limitation, the disposal of atomic waste, reprocessing of plutonium, the testing of peaceful devices, nuclear devices, the Middle East, Angola, general foreign policy principles, Detente, all other things concerning domestic affairs, agricultural policies, defense policies, and so forth, these are written down in position papers of mine.

So, if you have an interest in any of those,

if you would write to my Headquarters, Box 1976, Atlanta, Georgia, we will send you those position papers.

Let me say this in closing. I am glad I came to see you. It means an awful lot for me to have this large crowd come out and make me feel welcome. My wife said this was one of the most beautiful cities she had ever seen. And, not only was the city beautiful --

(Applause.)

-- not only was the city beautiful, but the people were very good to her. She -- this is an exact quote -- she said, "I have never found the people so enthusiastic in their friendship as the ones who welcomed me and helped me while I visited South Dakota". She was here weekend before last and the week before that. And she wanted me to express my personal thanks to you. I thank you also.

My family and I, and many hundred thousands of Americans like you, want to see our country change. We want to see people treated fairly. We want to see a Sunshine Law passed in Washington to force open the secret deliberations of Executive and Legislative Branches of government. We want to see the Sweetheart arrangement broken down between regulatory agencies and industries being regulated. We want to see a long range policy evolve on

agriculture, energy, environmental quality, transportation, education, welfare, health. We want to see the basic needs met in the field of unemployment, with the number one emphasis on the next administration's responsibility being jobs. Also repair the divisions that exist between black people and white people, between rural and urban, and young and old, in our country and other countries.

And, I want to see above all the same thing that you want, and this is something I say often, I mean it, I want to see us have a nation once again with a government that is good and honest and decent and truthful and fair and competent and idealistic, that is compassionate and is filled with love, as are the American people.

If we could just have a government as good as our people are, that will be a tremendous achievement. And, I believe that 1976 is the time when we might do it, and prove to the rest of the world, that is very important, but more importantly, prove to our own people who have been disappointed, disillusioned, sometimes embarrassed, that we still live in the greatest nation on earth.

Thank you very much. God bless all of you.
Help me do well.

Thank you. God bless you.

(Applause.)

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