

Ford blasts Carter's programs in Lincoln speech

By Randy Essex

Gerald Ford might not be candidate for president, but, last week he did his best to show that his plans to deal with energy problems and inflation worked better than President Carter's policies.

The ex-president declared at the outset of his afternoon press conference that he is not — and has no intention of becoming — a candidate.

But, "I learned a long time ago never to say never," he added.

Ford also said his administration left the country in better shape than it was found in, and charged the Carter administration with "blowing" the nation's economic pro-

grams, not having a strong enough energy program, and not supporting the shah of Iran as had been promised.

In his speech to a sparse crowd at the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting, Ford elaborated on his themes.

He said economic prospects are dismal for the housewife and the working man alike because the annual inflation rate has more than doubled since he left office.

Wrong villain

"The Carter administration is pointing its finger at the wrong villain," Ford said.

Federal spending, not organized labor and private management, is the real culprit, he explained to the businessmen who paid him to speak.

He said a consistent, firm economic policy resistant to special interest groups is needed. A balanced federal budget must be the goal of any anti-inflation plan, and anything less would be an economic disaster, Ford said.

He said that 66 bills he vetoed saved the country \$30 billion, and were part of the reason his administration reduced inflation from more than 12 percent to 4.8 percent.

He said Carter's voluntary economic guidelines would have been more effective two years ago, and that the present administration "let the horse out of the barn."

Energy problems

Similarly, Ford said the president's energy policies are "misdirected and insufficient." He said a better program is needed to avoid gasoline rationing, a program he described as very harmful to farmers.

Ford pointed out that he fired James Schlesinger as secretary of defense, but said he would pass no judgment on Schlesinger's ability to be secretary of energy, his post in the Carter administration.

Conservation, increased production spurred by deregulation of the oil industry, better use of coal, and increased, safe use of nuclear power were described by Ford as part of a correct program.

Deregulation of the industry, Ford said, would provide an incentive for oil companies to find new sources of energy.

"The energy problem must be licked, or industrial nations will continue to face economic uncertainty," he said.

At the press conference, Ford criticized Carter for his "up and down" policy toward the shah before the shah stepped down.

Promises undercut

Ford read a toast Carter gave the shah on New Year's Eve, 1977, praising the shah and promising consistent support. But after that Carter kept "undercutting the shah in

one way or another," Ford said.

"If our support had been as consistent as President Carter said it would be, we could have avoided the chaos and confusion in Iran," Ford said.

In his evening speech, he said the United States now must support the government of Oman because Iran is no longer pro-American. Ford explained that 60 percent of the world's oil is transported through a strait between Iran and Oman.

"We didn't worry about the flow of oil as long as Iran was stable on the one side," he said, but now the possibility of "road-block" forces the United States to support Oman.

Saying a revolution is seldom finished by those who start it, Ford warned that Iran is "falling apart" and is "just right for Soviet pickings."

Treaty cost okay

On other subjects, Ford said the \$5 billion the American taxpayers will pay for Egyptian-Israeli peace is not too high if the treaty is really a step toward a comprehensive Middle East peace.

He said the United States should not minimize conflict between China and Vietnam, but should "keep its cool and keep at arms length."

With "problems at home matched by global concerns," Ford said it would be easy to be pessimistic about America. But he said he is optimistic because the nation was in adversity.

"I believe the things that unite us as Americans are greater than the things that divide us," he added.

He also said he believes the nation should have a Republican president, and he vowed his support to the candidate selected at the 1980 convention. Although Ford was firm in stating his non-candidacy, he said that he did not think he had to conduct a campaign to prove his ability to do the job.

Kelly opposes lower jury age, says it hurts drinking age bill

By Randy Essex

Grand Island Sen. Ralph Kelly is worried that legislative approval of a bill lowering the age of those eligible to serve on a jury will have an adverse effect on his effort to raise the drinking age.

LB234, which is a comprehensive revision of jury regulations, originally lowered the jury age from 21 to 18. But the Judiciary Committee amended the bill so the age would be 21. Tuesday Neligh Sen. John DeCamp moved to change the age to 19.

Kelly rose in opposition to the amendment, saying that if the age for jury were set at 19, arguments favoring a uniform age of majority should include the drinking age.

"On that basis, and that basis alone, I oppose this amendment," Kelly said. "It shouldn't be part of the (drinking age) discussion, but it will be."

Kelly argued that those opposing his drinking age bills will point to the jury age and say, "We're giving 19-year-olds the responsibility to vote on a murder case, but not the responsibility to drink."

Issues separate

But DeCamp urged passage of his amendment, reassuring Kelly that the issues would be separate.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, who supports raising the drinking age, told Kelly his statement lacked merit.

"You're willing, because of your drinking age bills, to deny 19 and 20-year-olds a trial before a jury of their peers," Chambers told Kelly.

Chambers argued that any person who could be brought before a jury should be able to have a trial before his peers. Since 19-year-olds can face jury trials, Chambers said, that should be the age for jury duty.

Lincoln Sen. Steve Fowler said it was ironic that the Legislature was considering keeping a legal age at 21 when the body lowered the age of majority during turbulent times on campuses.

"Now campuses are quiet, protest is frowned on, the accepted way of going about things is to work through the system, and now the Legislature is telling them they are not mature," Fowler said.

"The message we are sending to young people is 'Don't be quiet, don't be content, don't work through the system; raise a little hell,'" Fowler said.

Fowler, DeCamp and Chambers won their battle on a 25-20 vote, with 24-year-old Sam Cullan of Hemingford casting the deciding vote.

Barry Reutz of Fremont, who opposes raising the drinking age, criticized Kelly for "confusing this issue with LB221."

Omaha Sen. Larry Stoney, who has voted to advance LB350 (a constitutional drinking age bill) from committee, said a great deal of maturation occurs between 19 and 21.

Amendment failed

Dave Newell of Omaha suggested that the age of majority should be the legal age for all subjects, including the drinking age and jury age. An amendment offered by Newell to change "19" in the bill to "age of majority," failed by a substantial margin.


Rex Haberman of Imperial argued in favor of keeping the jury age at 21, saying jury duty should not be a learning process.

Lincoln Sen. Dave Landis, an attorney, argued that in addition to fulfilling an obligation to society, jury duty teaches citizens about the legal process.

Patrick Venditte of Omaha favored the higher age, saying many 19-year-olds have never held a full-time job, and some have no idea of what money is, and would be unqualified to determine settlements in civil suits. Venditte has voted to advance LB221 from committee.

Bellevue Sen. Frank Lewis said the jury age could be set as high as 40. Lewis has voted to kill LB221.

"Then you could make it between 40 and 45, because we all know people might begin to diminish after 45," Lewis said.



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