

My Fellow Americans

'The Press Office said the President had asked for radio and TV time to speak. . . Here, now, is the President.'



BY JEFF GREENFIELD

"In just a moment, the President of the United States will be speaking to the American people from the Oval Office of the White House. The Press Office said the President had asked for radio and television time to speak to the nation on a subject as yet unidentified. No advance text of the President's remarks has been supplied. Here, now, is the President of the United States."

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My fellow Americans:

Hi.

Some weather, huh? Cold enough for you? Feels like snow, doesn't it? Funny thing though—seems like when it gets this cold, you always think it's gonna snow, then it turns right around and stays clear. You know, the kids get the sleds out, junior starts greasing up the skis, but it just never seems to snow until you least expect it.

Oh, boy, the day I've had, it seems like as though I should have just pulled the covers back over me and gone right back to sleep. First, I got up 15 minutes late; well that's *just* the thing to throw my whole day off right there. Then, of course, the hot water went off right smack in the middle of my shower. I mean, I'm standing there just covered with soap and *whoosh!* this blast of cold water darn near knocks me right off my feet. Well, of course, you *know* what happened next. Right, right, cut myself shaving, and so here I am walking into some big meeting with Congress or the Cabinet or whoever with three wet pieces of toilet paper stuck to my chin.

Plus, the coffee was burned, the toast was burned, the eggs were runny, and somebody had already gone through the paper and clipped every one of the food coupons, so I never *did* find out who won the Detroit game.

Of course, that meant I had to sit there and read the supermarket ads. Can you *believe* those prices? I can remember when we paid 79 cents for a pound of prime sirloin—and we *complained!* And *sugar!* I'll be switched if I don't think a loaf of bread's going to be costing us a dollar pretty soon. You'd think somebody could do something about it, you know? But that just seems to be the way it goes, another day older and deeper in debt.

I don't know, days like this . . . ♣ you pick up the paper and what do you read? Some lawyer in New York drops dead at the age of 48. You know what he was doing? Jogging, that's what. Another guy, some professor, 46 years old and "bloolie!" goes the old ticker. What was he doing? Catching some sun in the Caribbean. Yeah, I don't know, sometimes it can really get to you. I can tell you this, I'm not putting a lot of chips on my three score and 10; but I do try to watch it. You couldn't put a French fry in me for \$300 and all the Big Macs in Iowa. No, sir, that's poison.

All the same, I've been getting these. . . I don't know, *pains* I guess you'd call them, all along here in my upper back, shoulders, down into the chest, too. I don't mind telling you, they've got me scared plenty. Went to the doc, he hooked me up to the EKG whatchamacallit, said I was fit as a horse. I told him most horses die before they hit 20, and we both got a good laugh

most horses die before they hit 20, and we both got a good laugh out of that one.

As if that wasn't enough, I've got a tooth that's just *killing* me; somewhere way back there. Can you see anything there? I tell you, it's so darn hard to concentrate, the State Department called about Kuwait, and that damn tooth was so painful I couldn't catch whether I was supposed to *invite* Kuwait someplace, or *invade* Kuwait. (What I did, I sent over 4000 Marines with engraved invitations and as soon as I can reach Henry, I'm going to find out what the devil it's all about.)

Well, I guess I'd best be moving along. Sure was nice just to get a few things off my chest. If you're ever by my way just feel free to drop on in. Don't mind the guards and the guns. They look tough, but their bark's worse than their bite.

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"With me in our CBS studios now are Marvin Kalb, diplomatic correspondent, Daniel Schorr, Dan Rather, and Roger Mudd. Marvin, I wonder if you'd begin by assessing the reaction to the President's remarks among the diplomatic community."

"Well, Walter. . . ."

