10-13-1984

White Eagle Breakfast Speech

Geraldine Ferraro

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Thank you, Dan, for that terrific introduction. I didn’t know I had really won that debate until I heard that Dan cancelled his golf reservations so he could be here this morning. Chicago’s 32nd ward has a great Committeeman in Dan Rostenkowski.

It’s great to see so many other friends here this morning: Congressman Frank Annunzio, Bill Lipinski, and Sid Yates — three great Italian-American representatives; City Council President Vrdolyak; Alderman Pucinski; Senator Lechowicz, State Party Chair Calvin Sutker, and Niles Mayor Nick Blaze.

I must say I couldn’t ask for a better setting than the White Eagle. But I wish our timing had been better, and we’d come for lunch or dinner. They tell me that a Przybylo (shah-BILL-oh) family pierogi (peer-ROH-gee) is second only to a Ferraro family ravioli.

There’s been a lot of talk about who won the debate. So let me take my own objective survey right here.

Did we win the debate Thursday night?
Did Fritz Mondale beat Ronald Reagan on Sunday?

Are we going to win in November?

You bet we are.

In the last week, four candidates for President and Vice President have debated. And I know two things for sure: I beat George Bush ... and George Bush beat Ronald Reagan. You know, today's paper reported that Senator Laxalt said the President was (quote) "brutalized by a briefing process" which smothered him with facts. Now I ask you -- since when is it considered cruel and unusual punishment to expect a President to learn the facts he needs to govern?

I feel a special kinship with all of the people in this Auditorium this morning because, like many of you, my parents came to this country from another land.
My father came to America thinking the streets would be paved with gold. He found not gold, but golden opportunities. When he died, my mother went to work in New York’s garment district so that I could take advantage of those opportunities and try to get ahead in the world. My parents taught me that there is no greater good, no finer reward, than to build a better future for our children.

They also taught me to be a good citizen, to obey the law, to work hard, to get along with our neighbors, and to love our country. Families teach the bedrock values.

So when government touches family life -- and it does every day -- we need to make sure it supports, not weakens, American families. Before government acts, we need to ask ourselves a simple question: will this action help or hurt our families?

I’m afraid that question isn’t being asked in the White House. Ronald Reagan talks about family, but actions speak louder than words.

When you slash child nutrition, day care funds, and special assistance for handicapped children, that doesn’t help families. It hurts their ability to provide for their children.
When you gut the student loan program, that doesn't help families. It deprives many families of the only way they have to see their sons and daughters go to college and get ahead in life.

When you try to repeal the Child Abuse Act, that's certainly not helping families. That's permitting the cruelest, most shameful, anti-family act of all -- violence toward children.

And when you cut programs for children, youth, and families by 62 billion dollars, that's not good for families. It makes it that much harder for families to stay even.

This Administration may not be anti-family, but it's certainly insensitive to the stress and hardship which many of its policies are causing families.

It's not enough to salute the family. We need leaders who strengthen the family.

Fritz Mondale was the author of the most comprehensive day care legislation in history, a bill that was vetoed by then-President Nixon. He has fought for Head Start and education for handicapped children. He helped create -- and was the first chairman of -- the special Senate Subcommittee on Children and Youth.
Children don’t vote, but Fritz Mondale looked after their needs. Long before it was popular, Fritz Mondale was a leader on family affairs. And today I believe Fritz and I offer a more promising program for American families.

It’s pro-family when you find jobs for the eight-and-a-half million unemployed Americans so they can support their families. It’s pro-family when you get interest rates back down to levels where young couples can buy their own homes. It’s pro-family to protect Social Security and Medicare, and to reform our pension system so that senior citizens can live in dignity. It’s pro-family to clean up toxic dumps and help families pay their fuel bills. And it’s pro-family to support education.

To protect our nation and our families, we must be strong. But there’s one source of strength that is being neglected right now, and that is our faith in human rights. One of the best reasons -- perhaps the best reason -- your parents and mine came here is because of what this country stands for. Religious freedom, freedom of speech, democratic self-rule -- these are the liberties that attracted millions of immigrants to America.
We support the brave and centuries-long struggle of the Polish people to secure these rights. And we honor the courage of Solidarity and Lech Walesa for daring to claim them. They seek what all the people of Eastern Europe desire: the right to freely choose their leaders and their way of life.

And I believe we must make sure that both our friends and our adversaries know that America still stands for these liberties today. In the last few weeks, Mr. Reagan has made a big point about the Yalta Pact. He would like us to think that only he and his Administration care about the gallant people of eastern Europe who live under governments they cannot vote out of office.

This is not the case.

Democrats have never accepted Soviet rule over the peoples of eastern Europe. As President, Walter Mondale will press for vigorous implementation of the Helsinki Final Act promises on human rights and self-determination for the people of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

The difference is that we will make this an issue at the beginning of our term, not in the middle of the re-election campaign.
And our support for human rights won’t be half-hearted. We will object to oppression in the Gulag and in Poland, as well as in the racist apartheid system of South Africa. I want to see human rights more respected not only in Cuba and Afghanistan, but also in El Salvador and the Phillipines.

Mr. Reagan would have us think that he has a moral monopoly on the issue of opposing Communist oppression. But I will not give him that monopoly, not for a minute.

He would have us think that he is the candidate of family values. But a President who has caused so much hardship for families cannot lay claim to that title.

He would have us think that he is the best supporter of neighborhoods. But a President who told the unemployed to vote with their feet during the last recession is not a friend of strong neighborhoods.

He would have us think he is the candidate for the future. But a President who slashes aid for college education cannot claim to understand a parent’s dream for their children’s future.
Make no mistake about it: we're in a fight for the heart and soul of this country. At stake are the values we cherish as Americans and the hopes we have for the future.

This is a brand new race. It's getting hot -- and they're feeling the heat. It's getting close -- and they're getting worried.

For our families, for our country, for our future, for the principles we believe in, Walter Mondale and I have just begun to fight.

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