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Chicago Rally Speech: Draft

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS -- SEPTEMBER 19, 1984

REMARKS OF CONGRESSWOMAN GERALDINE A. FERRARO
DALEY CENTER - CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

I want to thank Paul Simon for that great introduction. I know his colleagues in the House of Representatives will miss him next January. But Paul and I will be seeing a lot of each other when he gets to the Senate and I get to the Vice Presidency.

You know, when Fritz Mondale nominated me in July, I was talking to an old friend of mine in Queens, who's not only a Republican, but a Mets fan. We were nearly in the shadow of Shea Stadium, so the talk turned to baseball. Well, not just baseball. What he said was Fritz Mondale and I had as much chance to win the election in November as the Cubs did to be in first place in September. And I've got to tell you, I think he was right.

I may not be old enough to remember the last time the Cubs were in the World Series, but I do remember when Ronald Reagan was spokesman for General Electric. He used to say, "progress is our most important product." Well, he can't say that as President.

Where other Presidents worked to clean the air, help the poor, and pass the E.R.A., Ronald Reagan has fogged the air, helped the rich, and passed the buck.

Ronald Reagan says \$200 billion deficits don't need to be reduced, but I say let's get them down, and let's do it fairly.

Ronald Reagan says we have a glorious recovery, but I say we won't have a complete recovery until all 500,000 Illinois jobless have recovered their jobs.

Ronald Reagan says when it comes to cutting the budget, elderly women and children should be sacrificed first, but I say Social Security is a contract, and the elderly have a right to live in dignity.

Ronald Reagan says we should cut education funds and wants to launch a teacher into space. But I say let's help students and teachers here on earth.

And Ronald Reagan says 115 million women don't need equal rights under the Constitution. But I say let's pass the E.R.A. And let's do it now.

On November 6th, you can choose to sit back with Ronald Reagan, or you can choose to move forward with Walter Mondale and Gerry Ferraro.

In fact, you face the most important election in years because on top of all these choices, there is the most profound choice of all: which leader can build a safer world.

Every generation faces one overriding problem. For ours, it is to freeze the arms race and keep the peace. Next to that, all other goals pale. Next to that common cause, all our separate agendas must give way. Make no mistake about it: the arms race is the paramount issue of this campaign and of our time.

There is only one sane policy in a nuclear age, and that is a policy of negotiated arms control. Fritz Mondale and I are committed to negotiate with the Russians and achieve a verifiable, meaningful arms control agreement.

Ronald Reagan has opposed every arms control treaty ever negotiated. If John Kennedy had listened to Ronald Reagan, we would not have a test ban treaty, and today our atmosphere would be polluted with radiation, raising the risk of bone cancer for our children.

If Lyndon Johnson had listened to Ronald Reagan, the danger would be greater than it already is that a Khomeini, Quadaffi or the PLO might get their hands on the bomb.

If Richard Nixon had listened to Ronald Reagan we would not have an ABM Treaty, and the Soviets would be a bigger threat than they are today.

And if the American people listen to Ronald Reagan right now, we will have an arms race in space. I say, instead of extending the arms race to the heavens, let's stop it here on earth.

Arms control is not a gift to the Russians. It is in our own interest. That's why the Joint Chiefs of Staff have backed every arms control agreement we ever negotiated.

It's time Ronald Reagan understood what the rest of us have known all along. And if this President can't stop exchanging insults and start exchanging sound proposals to control nuclear weapons, then it's time to exchange this President for one who will.

But we need more than a President who wants arms control, we need a President who can manage the weapons we already have. Ronald Reagan says he can call back submarine-launched missiles - when he can't. He thinks our only nuclear missiles are land-based -- when they aren't. And he says the Soviet Union is the superior nuclear force -- when it isn't.

If there's a good argument for his wayward policies, let him give it.

If there's a reason for his radicalism, let him explain it.

But if there's no defense for his record, then let's replace him.

Contrast the Reagan record of misunderstanding and inaction with Walter Mondale. Walter Mondale has been a leader for arms control. He was the first Presidential candidate to support a nuclear freeze. And today, he wants to stop the arms race before it flies into orbit.

I want a President who calls on the Soviet leadership on his first day in office, not on the first day of his re-election campaign.

I want a President who tells us his plan for controlling nuclear weapons today, not after the election.

I want a President who will do everything possible to negotiate a mutual verifiable freeze.

I want a President who will declare a moratorium on underground nuclear testing, and challenge the Soviets to respond in kind.

We stand at a crossroads this year. The arms race is speeding up and becoming less controllable. More than ever we need a President with the will to stand up to the Russians, and the wisdom to sit down with them to negotiate an end to the nuclear arms race. That's the kind of President Fritz Mondale will be.

If we succeed in controlling the arms race, we will take a giant step back from the brink of war. But that will not be enough. We must not only reduce nuclear weapons; we must also reduce tensions.

Today there are civil wars and other conflicts being waged around the world. Two million people are fighting and dying as we meet. But instead of cooling these hot spots, in some cases this Administration is throwing fuel on the fire.

In Central America, we're militarizing a conflict that could be solved by peaceful means, and we are Americanizing a conflict that is primarily local.

I say it's time we stop the covert war in Nicaragua, and start promoting negotiations between the two sides in El Salvador.

We're making a mistake today in Central America, and we made one before in Lebanon. Over 250 young men died on a mission without a purpose and for a policy that has never been explained.

A President must know where to use force and when, but he must also know when it should not be used. Let's understand the world before we arm it. And let's have a President who sends in the diplomats before he sends in the Marines.

War and peace is the issue of our campaign and of our time. You have a choice this year between an amiable President who is making a dangerous world more dangerous, and a leader who will take us towards peace.

You also have a choice on important domestic issues this year. This election is a referendum on many things. It's a referendum on cleaning up toxic waste dumps. Let's elect a President who takes polluters to court, and not to lunch.

It's a referendum on fairness. Let's have a tax policy where average families don't pay more, so the rich can pay less.

It's a referendum on social justice. Let's elect a President who supports our civil rights laws, and not segregated academies.

And it's a referendum on personal freedom. Let's have a Supreme Court that keeps the government out of our homes, churches, and synagogues.

But most important of all, it is a referendum on the fate of the earth.

When you go to the polls in November, I want you to think about Ronald Reagan's record on arms control.

In 1980, he promised immediate arms talks. Four years later, not a single team is negotiating nuclear arms control.

In 1981, he shelved three treaties which had taken years to negotiate.

In 1982, he rejected the walk-in-the-woods proposal of his own negotiator.

In 1983, he declared his intention to launch an arms race in space.

And in 1984, he threw away the opportunity to negotiate on anti-satellite weapons with the Soviets.

The question is: what will he do in 1985? The time to ask that question is not later. It's now. The time to register new voters is not later. It's now.

And the time to elect Fritz Mondale President and Gerry Ferraro Vice President is not later. It's now. So, let's get to work and change this country's direction. Not later, but now.