



Department of Justice

REMARKS

BY

THE HONORABLE GRIFFIN B. BELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE

THE GRIDIRON CLUB

7 O'Clock P.M.

SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 1979

CAPITAL HILTON HOTEL
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mrs. Carter, President Boyd, Ladies and Gentlemen:

In the play, "Teahouse of the August Moon," the history of Okinawa was described as being distinguished by its list of invaders and conquerors. The Okinawans had survived warlords, pirates, American Marines and even missionaries.

Perhaps many of you have looked upon the recent mass migration of Georgians to Washington as an invasion. You should not be disturbed. We Southerners do not dislike the North, we just want to annex it. Annexation will be our way of settling the score on what we call the War of Northern Aggression.

In any case, you've been invaded before . . . by people from Massachusetts in 1961, and most of them were professors, at that. Then later in the Sixties, I understand, the Town was full of Texans. Then there were all those Californians, and they were Republicans as well, so that must have been pretty bad. Well, the President has authorized me to announce tonight that he has decided to defend Washington against any more invasions. He's not about to let the Californians back in, no matter what Governor Brown thinks; he will fight off John Connally and his Texans. And, with all due respect to the Bay State and

the Distinguished Chairman of the Judiciary Committee . . . well as Attorney General, I had best stay out of that. I have ample trouble already.

President Carter wanted me to tell you how much he regrets having to miss this show. He said it would be a pleasure to see people poking fun at his Administration and not meaning it . . .

He also wanted me to say that he is looking into a conflict of interest on the part of the Attorney General. The Attorney General's lawyers got him out of contempt this week but in the same week, the Attorney General as the President's lawyer, put him under a "special counsel."

Actually, I've grown to understand the press a lot more since I came to Washington. For example -- I used to think that freedom of the press was just a part of the Constitution, but now I know it's the other way around . . .

I want to thank you for the performances tonight. I've known for a long time how entertaining Rosalynn can be, but I never thought of Henry Kissinger in just that light. It just goes to show the lengths a man will go to in seeking public office . . . As Henry once said, he was not born in the United States but the constitutional disqualification will not prevent him from becoming President. He will have the Constitution amended, or simply be born again. Besides, Henry said at the Alfalfa dinner last year, at least the Constitution does not bar us from having an emperor.

We have learned a lot in the 26 months we have been in Washington. One is really unable to appreciate Washington without having lived here and having been a part of the Washington experience. I am reminded of what the territorial governor of Nevada is said to have written in a report back to Washington: "This is no place for a Christian -- and I did not remain one long."

I have made some mistakes since arriving in Washington. I have lost one case in court -- the snail darter. I have made one speech that I regret having made. I spoke on self denial -- in Palm Beach, Florida.

Seriously, we thank you for your kindness to us and for your hospitality.

History will judge whether we've done well and it's too early to tell. I just want to say that we have given it our very best show, and we'll keep on doing that right up to our very last day in office. That is our perception of duty.

As many of you know, I am a great admirer of President Lincoln, both as a man and as President.

It is possible to draw some parallels now between President Lincoln and President Carter. One parallel is that each sought to be a peacemaker.

Accordingly, I am moved to quote to you tonight a part of President Lincoln's second annual message to Congress, delivered in 1862: "If there ever could be a

proper time for mere catch arguments, that time is surely not now. In times like the present, men should utter nothing for which they would not willingly be responsible through time and in eternity."

Both The President and I respect the media for its vigorous defense of the First Amendment. Each day you convey to the American public and the world the seriousness of the issues that confront us, and you help the public make informed judgments on those issues. And, each day, you are separating the "mere catch arguments" cited by President Lincoln from the truth. We all know that it is no easy task. We thank you for doing so and I thank you for your toast to the President.

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