

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of the Vice President
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PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
CRYSTAL ROOM OF THE PALMER HOUSE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

(10:30 A.M., CST)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is a great pleasure to be here in Illinois, and Chicago on such an exciting, happy day for President Ford. It was a great victory yesterday, and very significant, I think, for the future of his candidacy and election.

I am delighted to answer any questions that anyone might have.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, Ronald Reagan has been saying that his second place finishes are moral victories, that he has moved the President to the right, to the conservative. What do you think the effect has been on Gerald Ford?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think probably Ronald Reagan, next to the President himself, has done more for the President than any other citizen in this country to give him the kind of competition that was essential to build his own experience in campaigning and as a strong political contender for national office in his own right.

It is a little like what I did for President Nixon in 1968. So, I think that he has played a very important role. I do not agree that he has changed President Ford's ideological position. I think President Ford is in the center. I think that is where he has always been.

I think he is a very strong candidate and a man who is deeply dedicated to the best interests of this country.

QUESTION: Is it conceivable now that President Ford will offer the Vice Presidency on the November ticket to Ronald Reagan in order to keep him from entering further campaigns?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: First, you have to raise the question as to what the purpose is of trying to prevent him from going into other campaigns. I should think myself as a politician -- I am not speaking for anybody but myself -- to have Ronald Reagan stay in this campaign as long as he will, if he has the money, would be in the best interests of President Ford.

I can't conceive of why he would want to make some move to get him out. That is number one. Number two, the Republican Party represents about 18 percent of the people. The conservative element of the Republican Party is a fraction of that. Therefore, if President Ford wants to win the election, it seems hard for me to understand why he would pick someone to the right of him to win the center in the national election.

MORE

QUESTION: Whom do you see as a running mate, if not yourself?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't see. I have no vision or image at all. I think when he gets to the convention, gets the nomination, at that point he should decide who would be in the best interest of the nation and the party. And he will make the decision then.

QUESTION: Who would you like to see?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I want to see President Ford nominated and elected.

QUESTION: Who would you like to see as Vice President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: What I like or don't like is totally irrelevant. I really haven't given it a thought. I think it depends on how the situation shapes up at the time, who the candidate is on the other side, what the team is, what the circumstances are and at that point, he ought to make his decision.

QUESTION: You implied he ought to take a liberal.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't say liberal. I said the big vote in America, in my opinion, is in the center. I think President Ford is there. I can't imagine his wanting to move for the election to somebody on the far right.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you feel that the demise of the Reagan campaign at this point opens the door for another challenger for the President, for instance, Mr. Connally?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not a chance.

QUESTION: Do you think the conservative element having been defeated there might be a chance for another type of candidate, a more liberal candidate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you look at the analysis that was made by CBS and The New York Times, in the Florida election, that is a good cross-section, people from all over the country, you will see that President Ford beat Mr. Reagan in the conservative, the moderate and the liberal elements. He beat him in all three.

I don't think that the President at this point has to consider right or left or anything but the center as far as his future political course is concerned. In other words, I think that this old concept, which to me is no longer meaningful of liberal and conservative, no longer is relevant.

I think the events and the problems of today don't fall into those simplistic categories.

QUESTION: Do you think the result will in any way lessen the criticism of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger which Reagan made a big issue of?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think the criticism was ill-founded, number one. It didn't ring a bell with the

American people. I saw the Harris Poll last Sunday or Monday -- Sunday, which showed that Secretary Kissinger still had the support of 58 percent of the American people. I thought he was doing an outstanding job, which is higher than any other national figure. If you compare it with the ratings of the Congress, it is hard to find Congress on that list.

QUESTION: How do you characterize the Reagan camp's assessment of these 40 percent or 38 percent showings as moral victories?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think it is the best they can possibly do under the circumstances.

QUESTION: You would not use the term, "moral victory"?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If he feels that way, that is great because he needs some consolation. If he can get satisfaction out of that, I think that is great. Having been through this myself on a number of occasions, if you get 50 percent, plus one vote, then you got a moral victory and you have the actual victory, too.

I never got much consolation out of losing a primary -- I never got beyond the primary.

QUESTION: You haven't been heard from in a long time. What exactly have you been doing lately?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I appreciate the way you put that. I trust you are a reporter by the fact that you are here. I have been making speeches.

Obviously, you haven't covered them. I made one last night. I am making one at lunch today. I would be glad to give you copies of the speech so you can see what I am doing. I am talking about the issues which don't seem to interest people as much as the personality.

QUESTION: Senator Percy has said it was a mistake for Mr. Callaway to advise you to withdraw yourself from Mr. Ford's ticket. He says you would be a very strong candidate. In fact, a Ford ticket and a Rockefeller ticket in the fall, he thinks there is a very good chance of it.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Senator Percy is a very good friend of mine. I appreciate those comments. The fact is Mr. Callaway didn't advise me to withdraw. He just said I was the biggest liability the President had for the nomination in the South.

As far as the future is concerned, the President has, as I said, to make that decision when he is at the convention. I said yesterday in response to the same question about Senator Percy's comments, that I have written a letter -- it was reported in the papers that I had written this letter yesterday.

The truth of the matter is I wrote the letter five months ago at the time that Mr. Callaway made his initial statement. Of course, I do not have to mention to all of you, Mr. Callaway has also said the same thing now about

MORE

Secretary Kissinger. He is now on leave of absence. So, that I guess will slow that down.

QUESTION: Do you rule out any possibility of your going back on the ticket?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you read my letter, it is a very simple, clear letter.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, wouldn't it be better for party unity, looking toward November, for Mr. Reagan just to get out of the race and let President Ford consolidate his strength?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. But that is a personal opinion. I read in the paper this morning that some of the President's campaign leaders were urging him to get out. Of course, this is a free country and everybody has their own ideas of how to run political campaigns and political operations.

I always thought that public interest was a very important factor and that the President has gotten a lot of attention in the last months, political attention because he has been winning these primaries.

If he continues to do it that way, fine. If there is no competition on the Republican side in the primaries, then all the attention of the public and media will be on the Democratic Party. I think that is a disadvantage. That is the way I look at it.

This party unity stuff, look at the Democrats. They have, what -- half of a dozen? They had a dozen, dropped off a few, they picked up some more. This is very exciting.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did the President ask you for any help in choosing your successor?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Whose successor?

QUESTION: Your own.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Oh, no. He is not talking to anybody. I think that he would make a tremendous mistake if he now were going to try to make a decision totally unnecessarily, five months, six months ahead of the convention.

This business of politics is very interesting. If a post is open, there are a lot of eager supporters. The minute you make a selection you have made one temporary friend and lost a lot of support. I think, leave it alone.

It is in a perfect position right now, in my opinion.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what are your plans now that you are not going to be Vice President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am relaxed. I never had a problem all my life of figuring out what to do. All I have to do is look at the papers or watch television and see

the problems and I get ideas of what ought to be done. I am constantly getting new ideas about doing things. I never have any problem about that.

QUESTION: When you talked to the Wholesale Grocers last night, you mentioned the need for increasing back-haul to get more productivity. I was wondering, as head of the National Commission on Productivity, are you trying to work on persuading the Federal Trade Commission to make a more favorable ruling to permit this?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We will be taking individual areas in that National Commission on Productivity, and study the relationship of present regulations to productivity and try to involve both Congress, the Executive regulatory bodies, the unions, the companies and representatives of the public in reexamining individual regulatory agency activities, first really, to appraise the objectives.

Some of these are 19th Century regulations that haven't been really reexamined in terms of the 20th Century, to take a fresh look at what our objectives are and then what the regulations are and what are the side effects of these regulations and to try to update them in terms of today's needs in increased productivity, protecting the social objectives which were the basic reasons for the regulations in the beginning.

I think tremendous progress can be made. I think that the Bicentennial year is a good year to do this or start doing this because it is a natural one.

QUESTION: If I might go back to the Vice Presidential question for a moment, should President Ford defeat all of his challengers soundly, as he seems to have done with Ronald Reagan, there are no viable challengers. He has a complete, free hand in getting a running mate.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Exactly.

QUESTION: If that happened and he decides that someone of your philosophy would be the best candidate, would you say absolutely no, if he wanted to put you back on the ticket?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let me tell you what I said even before I wrote the letter. If I take the position of yes or no or maybe or whatever it is, immediately it puts him under certain pressures or restrictions by my statement.

Therefore, I have said from the beginning that I was not a candidate. I finally put it in writing, that he should be totally free -- I really believe this -- at the time of the convention to make that decision.

QUESTION: Totally free also means totally free to put you back on should he choose?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is totally free from his point, if he asks. That is not my point. I have written my letter. I am not going to say anything beyond the letter. Then I get myself back in the picture. I took myself out of the picture. I want to leave it as it is.

MORE

QUESTION: You would not flatly say there is no chance?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I will not say that. I will not say anything because I do not want to be projected into this present situation, which by my statement on my part, other than what I wrote in the letter which speaks for itself, would bring me back into the picture. I don't want to be in the picture.

QUESTION: Since you are so effusive in your comments about Ronald Reagan, do you see any place in the Ford Cabinet for Ronald Reagan in any position?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Sure. That depends on the President. Ronnie Reagan has got some outstanding qualities and is a very able citizen and a man who has devoted a lot of time in recent years to public service.

I applaud that. I think that is great. As the President comes to the shaping up of his Cabinet and so forth, obviously he would be one of the people that would be considered. I served with him on this Commission, investigating the CIA.

The President appointed him to that. I think, if I am correct in my memory, the President had offered him a position in the Cabinet. What you are saying is very logical.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you said that the President is close to locking up the nomination now.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That wasn't exactly my word. I said he is doing awfully well.

QUESTION: A minute ago you said he was pretty close to it. I was wondering what could stand in his way at this point? Is there anything?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I don't see anything.

QUESTION: Or anybody?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I don't see anything. The word "locking up" was the only thing that caused me to hesitate a little bit. He is a very open guy. He is not going to lock anything up. Do you see what I mean?

He would be winning because of public support, not that he was locking it up himself.

QUESTION: Do you see anything standing in his way?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I really don't. But I like the idea of competition. I think that Governor Reagan has made a major contribution to the party and the country by running.

QUESTION: How do you interpret the Democratic results so far in the primaries?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Indecisive.

QUESTION: Do you believe, as George Wallace says,

that he feels that results so far are a victory for him, he has brought the Democratic Party more to the right? Do you believe that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is what everybody is claiming. When they don't win something, they have got to have some moral achievement or other achievement to give them a sense of purposefulness in what they are doing.

You can't blame them. I just think it is totally indecisive as of now. We just have to wait and see if there are more problems. I don't think it is true of the President, but I think it is true of a Democratic candidate.

QUESTION: Who is the toughest opponent, Jimmy Carter or Hubert Humphrey?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I never, when I was running for office, was willing to speculate as to who would be the hardest or easiest to beat. I figured let the opposition pick their own candidate. It is going to be tough, whoever it is, and just go after it that way.

QUESTION: Have you told President Ford that you think Ronald Reagan is making what you call a positive contribution?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Did you tell him that today before you had this press conference? Did you tell him you were going to say that here today?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I never tell him what I am going to say and he never asks me. It is a very interesting relationship and a very unique one. The only thing he asks me is after I made a speech, will I give him a copy of it. He would like to read it.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, does the President's economic policies have anything to do with your deciding not to run?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Absolutely nothing, no. I think that basically what he is doing is very sound. What he has done is to try to control inflation. He feels that is the most serious thing he faces. It is the most vicious and corrosive tax that was ever invented.

It hits those least able to pay, the retired people, those on fixed incomes, the working people. Therefore, his basic objective is to hold down federal expenditures, to slow down inflation as much as possible and let the private economy, the American enterprise system get going again where the best chance of employment for the American people exists.

Only through growth are we going to have jobs. I think that what he is doing is right. He has had a great deal of courage in doing it. The reason I got out was because I did not want to become involved in a dispute of a minority of a minority about politics and be in any way a hindrance to him in getting the nomination -- as simple as that.

QUESTION: Does President Ford have your unqualified support for the nomination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Unqualified, yes, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, at what point do you believe Ronald Reagan's contribution will no longer be positive to the Republican Party and at what point do you think he should consider withdrawing as a candidate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Those two questions are not quite consistent. I think his contribution to the Republican Party will always be positive. I think he is a positive person.

he has an important role in the party. I look at it that way. As far as staying in the race, as long as the media will continue to write about the competition between Mr. Ford and Mr. Reagan in primaries, I think it is positive.

Once you stop writing about it, you might as well drop out.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what are your assessments of the Republican Party, the chances in November?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think they are going to win.

QUESTION: Just the President, or down the line?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I think there will be a very important change in the Congress, as well. I think the American people's rating of Congress, I think it is below 20 percent. But it is an indication that they are fed up with the fact that Congress hasn't come to grips with the tough issues of our time.

Energy independence is a perfect example. Here we are totally vulnerable to another oil boycott, which could have disastrous effects in our country, could paralyze the whole Eastern Seaboard and cause economic-social chaos. We are not doing anything about it.

The President sent up these recommendations. I talked about it last night and I am going to talk about it again at lunch. This has been a Congress which has not come to grips with the tough issues. It is an election year. They have a two-to-one Democratic majority.

I am sure politics is a factor. But there just doesn't seem to be a capacity to deal with the problems. I think there is going to be an important change in the Congress as well.

QUESTION: Do you think the voters will believe that the Republicans can reverse that trend?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: When they are frustrated, the voters usually want to change.

QUESTION: Would you say your relationship with President Ford has been a strange relationship?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't say strange, I don't

think. I said extraordinary relationship, outstanding.

QUESTION: What kind of relationship is that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Totally open and totally one of mutual respect and mutual confidence.

QUESTION: When is the last time you talked to the President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yesterday, at 12:35.

QUESTION: Do you talk to him often?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Every week, two or three times. Excuse me, I talked to him on the phone last night to congratulate him, in addition. I have never any problem, either in getting through to him on the phone or seeing him personally.

I see him regularly, anyhow and go to all the meetings where the major issues are discussed. It is a unique relationship. This is the sixth President I have worked for. I have known all the Vice Presidents since Henry Wallace. They were all frustrated. There has never been such an open relationship of mutual respect and confidence.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in this country children have always been told, if they worked hard they could grow up and be President. Do you feel it is true today that all children have an equal opportunity to become President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, I do. I think that is a very important question to ask. If somebody had said to President Ford when he was your age that he was going to be President, I have a strange feeling he would have said, no, there wasn't a chance, which makes your point.

But, the very fact that he is President shows that a young person growing up under difficult circumstances has a chance and can succeed. To me, this is one of the great strengths of America, that we have that openness of opportunity in public life, in economic life, in science, in the arts, in whatever field you want.

This is the great thing. I think it is wonderful you are here. I have a great respect for the job you are doing. I hope maybe some day you will be President, or your sister, if you have one.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you used a poll to underline your comments about Congress. There is a Gallup Poll out that shows that Jimmy Carter will beat President Ford in the race between them. What do you make of that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: This is the way I used polls, I have done it for a long time. Polls are very interesting and very exciting. But the significant thing about polls are the trends. A single poll is not important. It is important because it gives you an education at the moment. But the really useful thing about polls are the trends which they

indicate and the attitudes which they reflect. Jimmy Carter is right now in the news. He is big. Therefore, you get an immediate reaction on the part of the public when anybody gets a lot of attention, good or bad, in the press.

Let's face it, Ronnie Reagan when he announced his candidacy, he did it in typical Hollywood style, with a lot of color and excitement, and so forth. He was on the covers of Time and Newsweek and so forth, and as I said it at the time, he peaked too soon.

It was obvious to me as a politician. Then he looked great. Right now Jimmy Carter looks that same way. He is on all the media covers and so forth, getting great attention. But it is a little bit early, in my opinion, politically for him, too.

Therefore, I think he just peaked. You asked your question on the basis of the Congress. The Congress has been very consistent in its polling as to the public's regard as to the job it was doing. I think that the President's relation with Jimmy Carter is something new.

Jimmy now, I have known him for a long time. He was Governor at the same time I was Governor. He is a fine person. But how to stand up under the situation in the next months is another question. How the American people will react is another question.

There were a lot of people who were saying on the basis of the polls that the President's chances of winning Illinois were very poor. That happened to change. The really important thing, if you are interested in polls and politics, is the trend during the last month.

That trend in the polls is almost irreversible on the basis of history. If you are coming up in the last month, and you are close enough to the line to cross it, you are in very good shape. If you are coming down in the last month, you are in tough shape. Therefore, you don't want to get too high and then start down.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is a pleasure, Jack.

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(AT 11:00 A.M., CST)