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JULY 13, 1974

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(San Clemente, California)

THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
VICE PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD
AT THE
WESTERN WHITE HOUSE

11:01 A.M. PDT

MR. MILTICH: Ladies and gentlemen, this is in the nature of a press briefing and not a full-blown press conference, which means that the questions must be confined to the meeting between the President and the Vice President.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Vice President of the United States.

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: Thank you very much, Paul. It is nice to be here. I might make a preliminary statement and then, after that, of course, I will answer questions, but there has been some speculation why the President has seen me six times this week. The answer is very simple. The President is devoting his full attention: to the plan and the program as far as inflation and the economy is concerned and he, over this last week when I have seen him so frequently, and again this morning he indicated very clearly that I was to be a part of the total effort that the Administration is making to do something affirmatively about the major problem we have here at home, inflation, and to bring me in on the discussions as to the plans and programs of the Administration to make certain and to make positive that the economy is going to continue to move in an affirmative way.

Over the last week, we have had some pretty good news. We had the lowest rate of increase in the cost of living announced yesterday, the lowest in eight months.

The President signed yesterday, as many of you know, the budget reform bill, which was a bipartisan effort in cooperation with the Executive, a budget reform procedure which will give to the Congress as well as to the Administration some new tools so that there can be a better handle on expenditures.

This, of course, will require some sound action in the Congress in the appointment of people to the committee and action by the Congress as well as the Budget Committee.

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And this brings up, of course, the announcements that have been made during the week that the Administration is going to have a balanced budget for Fiscal 1976, which will be submitted in January of this year.

In the meantime, the President is going to take a very hard look at any authorization or appropriation bill that would increase the budget recommendations that he made early in this year. There, undoubtedly, will be vetoes of those bills that substantially exceed the President's budget recommendations.

I think this is necessary and essential because of the Government's commitment to do what it can in the field of fiscal responsibility. Nobody can ask labor and management to do their share in trying to hold down the cost of living if the Government, itself, in the one area at the present time where we can do something effectively -- and that is to control Federal spending. What it means is that the Administration in the field of fiscal affairs is going to be responsible now and in the future with a '76 budget that will be balanced and as a result of, I think, this leadership, we can expect labor and management to do its part.

Inflation is not only a problem here; of course, it is a problem worldwide, and if we do our job I think we can expect that other nations will do their best and this problem, hopefully, will be resolved.

With that, I will be glad to answer any questions.

Q Why are you limiting this press conference? Were you asked to by the White House? And why is it you hold a press conference three times a day everywhere else?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: Well, to be honest with you, I didn't know it was going to be limited, and maybe Ron and Paul have decided that, but with their indulgence I will be glad to answer any questions.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you are very familiar with the ways of the House of Representatives. What is the situation? Is the Judiciary Committee going to deliver a bill of impeachment, and what does the House say?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I will repeat for the benefit of those who don't travel with me what I have said repeatedly. In my judgment, there is a possibility that the House Committee will vote a resolution of impeachment, but I feel just as strongly if not more strongly that the House as a whole will not favor a resolution of impeachment. And I will repeat why I believe that.

In the first place, the only area where there is any question at all is in the area of the cover-up and when you look at all the evidence, and I have read most of it and heard most of it in one way or another from various people

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in my judgment there just isn't the evidence to involve the President. The preponderance of the evidence is clearly on the side of the President and, therefore, in my judgment the House of Representatives will not favor a resolution of impeachment.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, along that line, you probably have seen the transcript of the meeting on the 22nd between the President, Dean, Erlichman, Haldeman and Mitchell, in which the President said, "I don't give a shit what happens, I want you all to stonewall it. Let them plead the Fifth Amendment, cover-up, or anything else if it will save the plan." How does that fit in with your judgment that the President didn't know about or take part in the cover-up?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: Again, I will say that when you look at the total of the transcripts and the total of the evidence as a whole, the preponderance of the evidence favors the President. You can extract a sentence or a phrase or a comment and allegedly make a case, but in any instance, in this case particularly, of the seriousness of the charge, the jury in this case, the House of Representatives, has to have the broadest possible view and has to look at all of the evidence.

And when they do, they can't help but come to the conclusion that the President was not involved in any cover-up.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, if the evidence shows that he is innocent, then why shouldn't the House Judiciary Committee turn down a bill of impeachment?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: Well, if you take a look at that committee, I think, and read some of the comments some have made, it is my judgment that some members of that committee had some views even before the evidence was submitted.

On the other hand, I think the chairman has done a fair and fine job.

There are, of course, many members of that committee who are making a very detailed and fair appraisal of the total evidence, but having appeared before that committee for some seven or eight days and answered their interrogations, I think I know them.

I just feel the odds are probably, in some respects, the other way, and I think the President is going to do well before the House but he may have some problems before the committee.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you think the committee is not truly representative of the House as a whole?

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VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I don't think so.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, are you confident that the President would abide by a Supreme Court ruling if it went against him on the tapes?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I have never discussed that with the President. I did say a week or so ago I think all citizens, we have to assume, will abide by any decision of the Supreme Court.

QUESTION: What questions other than the economy came up this morning?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: We spent about ninety-nine and nine-tenths percent of the time on the economy and we didn't get into anything except my travels and the fact that I was spending a lot of time throughout the country, which he wholeheartedly approves of. And, other than those conversations, it was devoted entirely to the matters affecting the economy.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you said that some of the members of the Judiciary Committee went in with preconceived ideas and that others did not. Would you care to say whether the majority of the members of that committee went in with preconceived ideas?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: No, I wouldn't. As you know, some members of that committee, if my recollection is correct, actually introduced resolutions of impeachment some months ago.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, would you say that some members of the Judiciary Committee are motivated by partisan interests, and, if that is true, are you any less motivated by partisan interest on your side than they are?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I never allege anything based on alleged motivations. I don't believe, and I hope not, it is any partisan issue and I never challenge anybody's motives in the Congress.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did the conviction of Mr. Erlichman come up at all?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: Not at all.

QUESTION: What effect would the conviction of Mr. Erlichman have on the impeachment process?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: The only comment I will make on that is that the jury carried out its constitutional responsibilities.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, Mr. Erlichman is

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the latest in a series of Presidential aides to be convicted of felonies, and the highest so far. Can you tell us, sir, how do these convictions reflect on the President of the United States?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I don't think that in light of the fact that the Erlichman matter is still before the courts that I ought to comment even on the question that you asked in this area.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did you discuss with the President the possible appointment of Mr. Alan Greenspan to succeed Herb Stein when he leaves office and do you have any thoughts on this particular appointment or what is supposed to be an appointment?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: That subject didn't come up this morning, but I spent about an hour and a-half with Alan Greenspan either Wednesday or Thursday of last week. I was very impressed with his views, and I hope that he is appointed.

I think he would be a very fine member of the President's Economic Council.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, is the President making any new moves in the field of inflation?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I think in one way or another, including the comments he made at the signing of the bill yesterday, he has pretty well laid out a blueprint. He is going to submit a balanced budget in Fiscal 1976. That will be a tight budget. He is obviously going to examine every appropriation or spending bill that comes before him for signing.

This is going to be a strong, firm, I think affirmative, policy. He has pretty well indicated that through some of his Administration people that a tax cut is the wrong approach and he has likewise indicated, I think through some of the Administration spokesmen, that a tax increase is the wrong thing to do at the time.

This is a broad blueprint, but I think it is an affirmative policy that has, in at least one area, restored whatever lack of confidence there was following the actions in the last several days with the cost of living improvement, with the unemployment figures which for the third month were stabilized at the range of 5.2 percent.

In the stock market yesterday, they had one of the greatest increases in the history of the stock market, I think. This is a reflection of favorable public reaction to the policy of the Administration and the personal attention that the President is giving to our problems in the inflation area at home, and the importance that he believes that world-wide inflation, the importance it has on us, and the fact that Bill Simon is going to 17 countries, I think, in a period of 10 days or more, is likewise an indication of the President's concern of the real problem we have here at home.

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Q Mr. Vice President?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: Mr. Jones.

Q Preponderance is a legal term which you have used constantly --

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I am a lawyer, Mr. Jones.

Q -- which means that there is some evidence that might be construed as an impeachable offense. I have asked you this before and you have had time to think about this. I am wondering if you would give us an example or two of what might be construed as an impeachable offense.

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: Of course, you have to go back to what the Constitution says, Mr. Jones, and indicate for the benefit of those who are listening that the grounds for impeachment are, one, treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors. It is a very serious charge and very specific, and any of the evidence that is presented has to fall within that definition.

Now, I have seen very little, if any, evidence that has been presented thus far, and I see a great deal of evidence, in fact, the preponderance of the evidence which exonerates the President from any implication, so I have to look at it and I hope Members of the committee and the House will look at it from the broad view which is the responsibility of a juror, and if you do it, I think any objective person comes to the conclusion there was no involvement by the President and therefore, he is innocent by any fair standards.

Q Mr. Vice President, the quote Mr. Nessen read to you a few minutes ago, what is your reaction to that?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I have grave doubts that that is a -- just one phrase or sentence is a ground for impeachment because it is only a part of the total evidence and the total evidence, the preponderance of it, clearly, without any question in my mind, exonerates the President.

Q Would a decline on a Supreme Court order, Mr. Vice President, be grounds for impeachment?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I am not sure it would under the careful definition of impeachment in the Constitution, but it could very easily provide an institutional challenge.

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Q Mr. Vice President, business leaders that met with the President last week expressed a desire for special tax concessions, prorated depreciation, some action on credit. In your discussions, did he indicate that he would receive those suggestions favorably?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: We didn't get into the details of the President's conference with the business and economic leaders.

Q Mr. Vice President, why, in your opinion, are the Members of the House most familiar with the evidence who are likely to vote against the President than those who are not as familiar with the evidence?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I don't think the Members as a whole have had the opportunity to --

Q The committee are the ones most familiar.

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: I think, as I said earlier, there are some Members of that committee who had made up their minds ahead of time, some of them actually introduced impeachment resolutions. Therefore, their analysis of the evidence, I think, is not as open-minded as the attitude of Members in the House as a whole.

Miss Thomas?

Q You have met with the President six times?

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: Yes.

Q How many times did you discuss the impeachment process, and how did you find him? What is his attitude? We rarely see him.

VICE PRESIDENT FORD: In the six times that I have met with the President this week, including two meetings with leaders of the House, a Cabinet meeting and two personal meetings, we actually, as a matter of fact, didn't discuss Watergate or the impeachment proceedings at all.

MR. MILTICH: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 11:15 A.M. PDT