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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH JERRY TER HORST

AT 1:20 P.M. EDT

AUGUST 10, 1974

SATURDAY

MR. TER HORST: I was going to start out my baptism of fire yesterday by saying a funny thing happened to me on the way to a typewriter, but I guess it was pretty obvious to you, so I didn't think it was necessary.

I do just want to say personally how much I appreciate your cooperation with the, I hope, understandable difficulties in trying to organize an ongoing press operation. I may have to lean on your patience even longer, but I can assure you the goal is not to try your patience, but to provide answers.

We are going to supply you first with three memoranda containing information, which I believe I referred to yesterday.

One is a letter from President Ford to members of the White House staff. Another is a similar letter from President Ford to members of the Vice Presidential staff that has been with him since December, and a third one is a letter from President Ford to members of the Cabinet and the heads of agencies.

I don't think there is any need for me to elaborate on them. They are self-explanatory, but I did think it would be useful for you to have them.

You probably know the schedule for today, since you have observed it for the most part.

The Cabinet meeting lasted for about 45 minutes. The President spent some time this morning in his Executive Office Building suite before the Cabinet meeting, and in case you are wondering which Executive office he is using, he is using his old Vice Presidential office. Then he came over for the Cabinet meeting at 10 o'clock.

The Cabinet meeting lasted about 45 minutes. During the Cabinet meeting, the President expressed his admiration for the way the members of the Cabinet had been carrying on under what he called trying circumstances of the last several months and said that he hoped all of them would stay aboard with him, that he did not want any resignations from any of them on a pro forma basis, and that he felt this was not the way he thought he would like to proceed.

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He told the members of the Cabinet that as time went on, he would be meeting with them individually, that he preferred to talk to them individually rather than deal with them by memo or paper regarding their departmental problems, that he expected them to come in for business and not for chit-chatting, however, and that whatever problems might exist in the various Cabinet departments and agencies he would deal with on a one-to-one basis with the appropriate and individual Secretaries.

The President also told the Cabinet that he wished again to underscore and re-emphasize his belief in the importance of continuity and stability at this particular point in the transition from the Nixon Administration to the Ford Administration, and said, "I believe that is what the country wants." He said, "I think we have a fine team here, and I am looking forward to working with each and all of you."

The President also reiterated to them the importance he thought each Cabinet officer should attach to the necessity of demonstrating that each agency of Government, with its respective responsibilities, has an ongoing responsibility to the public and the country and the Congress, and that he hoped, among other things, that each member of the Cabinet would attempt, if they have not already done so, to be affirmative in their press relations.

He said that he felt that the Nation had extended to the new Administration an opportunity to demonstrate a drawing together of the country, and that he wanted not only the White House, but also each member of the Cabinet, each department and each agency, to carry forward with that, as he hoped to do personally at the White House.

Then Dr. Kissinger responded on behalf of the Cabinet. He is the senior Cabinet officer, and speaking for his colleagues, he said -- and I am paraphrasing here, this is not a direct quote -- that they welcomed the opportunity to perform in a national service and also they wished to stress to the President that they believed what they had done in the past months was also of great importance to the country and something in which each took pride.

"Now," he said, "we wish to express our unflagging support and total loyalty to you."

That is the essence of the Cabinet meeting. As you know from the photo opportunity, the Cabinet meeting was followed by an NSC meeting with the usual required participants, and that meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes, after which time the President met again in the Oval Office with General Haig and Robert Hartmann for about 30 minutes as part of that group with NATO Ambassador Donald Rumsfeld, who is functioning as coordinator of the transitional team which was announced yesterday.

They will be meeting again later today with the President. As a matter of fact, the meeting should have started by now.

Q Jerry, were there any other people who have been added to that team or other people who sat in at the meeting yesterday at 5:30?

MR. TER HORST: There are some people who have sat in on those meetings. I can't give you a full list, but for instance, Phillip Buchen, who you know is the President's first law partner and Executive Director of the Committee for Privacy, which President Nixon assigned to then Vice President Ford; William Seidman, and Mr. Hartmann. I have sat in on those meetings. I guess that would give you an idea.

Q Jerry, what does the coordinator do?

MR. TER HORST: I can describe it perhaps this way a little better: As you know, there are four members of the team. There is no particular rank to this order that I will give you, but Mr. Rumsfeld is serving as coordinator, Interior Secretary Morton is serving as coordinator for the transition team, dealing with agencies and members of the Cabinet.

Former Governor Scranton of Pennsylvania has taken on the chore of looking at the personnel requirements of a White House structure and to see what recommendations should be forthcoming there for the President.

The mission of the transition team, I might just mention, by direction of the President, if I didn't do this yesterday -- I think I did, but it would bear repeating, perhaps -- is to provide him with a review of the existing relationships between the Cabinet agencies and the independent agencies and the White House structure and its variety of agencies, and to see whether those procedures and processes can be streamlined or improved or altered with the goal of coming up with an operational structure that fits President Ford's personal and peculiar working habits. By peculiar, I mean they are individually his.

As you all know, every President has his own style, and President Ford wants to make sure that the Government machinery, particularly at the White House level, responds in a fashion that he is comfortable in dealing with.

Q What does the fourth member do?

MR. TER HORST: The fourth member is John Marsh, who, as you know, was with the President when he was Vice President, former Congressman from Virginia, and served on the same defense appropriations subcommittee when Mr. Ford was in the House.

In that connection, the President announced yesterday that he was going to, and told the members of the Cabinet and the senior staff, that Mr. Marsh would also become a Counsellor to him, with Cabinet rank, and this is the same category, of course, that Mr. Robert Hartmann is serving in as Counsellor with Cabinet rank.

Their portfolios are general. Essentially, they are undertaking whatever assignments the President cares to give them.

Q What is John Byrnes doing?

MR. TER HORST: John Byrnes, as you know, is a long-time friend of President Ford. They were well acquainted and knew each other back in the days when Mr. Byrnes was on the Ways and Means Committee, and he has served, as he down through many years, with Mr. Ford since he left Congress, as sort of an adviser, a friend, a man who Mr. Ford feels free to call upon when he wants to try out an idea or get an idea. There is no formal relationship there. It is strictly an advisory role.

Q Is he working in the White House?

MR. TER HORST: No, he is not working in the White House.

Q Do you have a tentative schedule for tomorrow?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, before we take questions, why don't I continue with the schedule and see if we can get that out of the way.

Q May I ask one question on the transition team?

MR. TER HORST: Yes.

Q Will the team have any role in the selection of a Vice Presidential nominee?

MR. TER HORST: No, that process is a separate one. The transition team has nothing to do with the selection of the Vice President, and since that subject has come up, why don't I bring it up here now in the process of the briefing.

The President has decided that he is going to use essentially the same procedure that President Nixon did in selecting Mr. Ford to become his Vice President. He is asking John Rhodes in the House, Senator Scott in the Senate and George Bush, the Chairman of the National Committee, to contact, in the case of the Hill leadership, the members of the party, and in the case of Mr. Bush, the members of the Republican National Committee and the Governors, for suggestions of men whom they think President Ford should consider as potential Vice Presidential nominees.

The President said he would like to have these names submitted to him by next Wednesday. He would like them listed in one, two, three order. Someone who doesn't care to send in three may send in one or none, but he would prefer to have three names from each, with a ranking, in sealed envelopes, to him personally, and he alone will handle this. They will be for President Ford's eyes only, for obvious reasons.

Q You mean to say three from each of the three or three from the people they speak to? How many ballots is he going to have?

MR. TER HORST: I guess it will depend on how many Members of the Congress and the National Committee want to respond to the idea, and they may offer suggestions to the President.

Q But each of them would be invited to submit three?

MR. TER HORST: Each one who is asked to make a suggestion is asked to make three suggestions.

Q What is he looking for? What is the criteria?

MR. TER HORST: He has not specified. He would like them in their own mind to think of the men they would like to see as Vice President in the Ford Administration, and he wants their candid opinions, and that is why he has asked for them.

Q Doesn't he have in mind something? I mean, what type of --

MR. TER HORST: I am sure he does. You see, he has also asked members of the Cabinet to go through the same process. He anticipates getting names also submitted to him in the same manner from members of the White House staff and his own friends and advisers, and I also should add that he plans to ask House Speaker Carl Albert and Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield--in other words, the Democratic leadership of the Congress--to also suggest names to him, if they wish.

Q In the same way?

MR. TER HORST: Yes.

Q There could be a couple of hundred ballots containing three names?

MR. TER HORST: That is very possible.

Q Are you saying he would consider a Democrat?

MR. TER HORST: He has not specified one way or the other. He is just asking for the names.

Q Do you have any guidance to give us on that, Jerry?

MR. TER HORST: No, I think I can let you handle your own guidance there.

Q Jerry, if you can believe what you read, though, when Nixon filled that vacancy, he ultimately turned to Mel Laird and was talked into it by Mel Laird. Is that likely to happen here, would you say?

MR. TER HORST: I am sure the President is not going to run a beauty contest and do it on the basis of who had the most votes, but on the other hand, he is genuinely interested, particularly since he is fully aware of the fact that his nominee for Vice President will not have been passed upon by the voters, that the suggestions come in from as broad a spectrum as he can possible arrange in a convenient and orderly manner, and he has decided to use this frame.

Q Will the Governors of the States be included in the process?

MR. TER HORST: The Republican Governors will, yes.

Q Just a technical point. They will send their suggestions to --

MR. TER HORST: To the Office of the President.

Q You get a lot of mail over here. How are you going to know what it is?

MR. TER HORST: I think the President has a secretary or two he could turn to. I don't imagine he would have to personally open each envelope. But they are for his eyes.

Q Is he inviting suggestions from the general public?

MR. TER HORST: I am sure if members of the general public wish to send suggestions to the President, the White House mail office will accept the mail.

Q Is he going to know who the suggestion is coming from, or is it going to be secret on both ends?

MR. TER HORST: No, he will know who is submitting the names.

Q Does he want merely a list of names or does he want them to say why they picked them?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, exactly. He would like, along with the names -- I thought that was understood -- besides the listing of one, two, three names, he would like some input from the proposer as to why he feels this way about the names he has submitted.

Q Is the function of Rhodes, Scott and Bush simply that of communicators-out?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, so they can gather the suggestions from the Members of the respective chambers in which they are in, and get them to the President.

Q They will collect the boxes of envelopes?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, they will collect them from the Hill, and Mr. Bush will worry about getting input from those in his particular political area.

Q By next Wednesday, you mean this coming Wednesday?

MR. TER HORST: Yes.

Q Has he set a target date for picking the eventual winner?

MR. TER HORST: No, but as he said yesterday to the leaders of Congress, he hopes to complete this process within a week or ten days.

Q Jerry, is geographical location important? I mean, would Mel Laird from Wisconsin, or Bill Milliken from Michigan be out because they are from --

MR. TER HORST: I have not heard any limits specified as to geographical, political or ideological coloration.

Q Can you answer a question on John Marsh. I forget what his transitional role is. Is he dealing with Defense or something?

MR. TER HORST: As you may know, before he joined the Vice President's staff, he was Congressional liaison for the Defense Department.

Q I know. That is why I ask. Is that his role in the transition?

MR. TER HORST: No, he is going to serve as a Counsellor on a permanent basis, in addition to his role as a transition man; Counsellor to the President with whatever assignment the President gives him.

Q But he has no specific role as part of the transition team, to coordinate any particular area as the other three people do?

MR. TER HORST: Not in that sense, no. He is a free agent in that sense.

Q Jerry, can I ask another question on the same subject? You said that Governor Scranton's role was to deal with the personnel structure?

MR. TER HORST: Yes.

Q Is he just dealing with organizational charts or putting people in the boxes?

MR. TER HORST: No, he is not putting people in the boxes. If you recall what I said was at this point of the game, they are trying to devise some options for the President to consider on methods by which he would feel most comfortable in trying to run the Executive branch, and that mainly deals with structure.

I am sure that Governor Scranton -- and any of them will, but particularly Governor Scranton -- will also be thinking of names. Whether they will get around to thinking of names for specific slots, I am not aware, but in any event, this is an ongoing, a very fluid thing, because at this point they are still obviously trying to determine President Ford's specific working habits and how this would fit in best with him.

He is still commuting. He is not even living here, yet, you know.

If I may finish the announcements and go to the rest of your questions, as I know it is getting late, this would be a good point, since we are talking about transition, to mention the fact that it was probably through an inadvertent answer on my part yesterday, due to my newness in this role, that the transitional nature of my own position may have escaped your attention.

Just so the record is clear and not frozen in ice forever, I am actually on leave of absence from the Detroit News at President Ford's request, to assist him in trying to provide some guidance and help in a reorganization of the press and public affairs structure of the White House.

I just wanted to add that as a footnote. It does not change my status. I am not Acting Press Secretary. I am Press Secretary. I speak with the full authority of the President, but I am still on leave of absence from the Detroit News, and I have not cut that cord. That decision still has to be made.

As to tomorrow and the rest of today's schedule, the President anticipates meeting with members of his staff, as I mentioned earlier, some of the transitional people, the rest of the afternoon. It is a very fluid and informal situation. He expects to go home this evening and spend a private evening at home.

Tomorrow morning he will go to church with Mrs. Ford and Susan, at least, and whatever number of boys will still be home tomorrow. As you know, they have school responsibilities, and other things on their mind, but at least the three, and maybe four or five members of the Ford family will be attending Immanuel on the Hill, the Episcopalian Church on the grounds of the Seminary in Alexandria, which, as you know, is close to the Ford home and where the Ford's have attended for many years and where Mrs. Ford formerly taught Sunday School. That will be at 10 o'clock.

We will provide probably a writing pool and photo coverage coming and going into the Church, but no photo coverage inside the Church.

Q Will the pool start here?

MR. TER HORST: We will work that out, Helen. We will have to get to you on that.

After Church services tomorrow, the President will come to the White House and he anticipates working privately in the Oval Office for a good part of the day. It is his hope now that Sunday evening will again be a private evening and he will be returning to the home in Alexandria Sunday evening.

I think I have covered everything. I will probably remember something I should have thought about. If I do, excuse me if I bring it up out of order.

Q The most definitive contemplative discussion the President has had on the Cabinet was described in an article by John Osborne in the New Republic. Have you any reason to believe that his thinking has changed any since that discussion?

MR. TER HORST: All I can say is at the Cabinet meeting today, President Ford -- it was a full Cabinet meeting, everybody was there -- President Ford expressed the desire that everybody remain in their present position and each of them assured him that they intended to do so.

Q Is that a transition Cabinet or is he asking them to remain for the full term?

MR. TER HORST: Well, as I mentioned, the President said he did not believe in the business of pro forma resignations, and then you start the process of picking up each man's option after they, in effect, quit. He intends to deal with them on a one-to-one basis, and if there are changes, they will occur in that fashion.

Adam?

Q Jerry, what does the President think of General Motors announcing a 10 percent price increase yesterday?

MR. TER HORST: I don't know. I had not taken it up with him. If it is important to you, I will get an answer.

Q Jerry, can you say what President Ford's position is on the disposition of the tape recordings of President Nixon?

MR. TER HORST: I tried to do that yesterday, Gene, and that is still the latest information I have; that is, the tapes of President Nixon are in the custody of the Legal Office of the White House.

Q But there is nobody there now?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, there is an ongoing Legal Office.

Q I called it, and there is nobody there.  
(Laughter)

Q When will the family move into the White House, and is there some resistance on the part of the family to move?

MR. TER HORST: No, there is no resistance. I am sure there is some reluctance in leaving a home in which everybody grew up and was very comfortable in. And I am sure the President is going to miss that swimming pool more than anything else there perhaps for a time. But there is no reluctance, and the plan is now, assuming that the schedule can be kept to, for the Ford family to move into the White House the latter part of next week.

I don't have a specific date, but we will obviously give that to you as soon as it is nailed down.

Q What will they do with the House in Alexandria when they move here?

MR. TER HORST: The family intends to retain the home.

Q Could you explain why it will be the latter part of next week before they can get into the White House?

MR. TER HORST: I guess if any of us have moved at all, that shouldn't be too hard to fathom. A family moves out, there has to be a certain amount of consideration as to painting, minor repairs, whatever, draperies have to be cleaned. That is what we do in our house when we move.

It just takes a day or two and the Fords are comfortable where they are, and they are not pushing to get in, but obviously they must move and will move, and it will happen the latter part of next week.

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Q Jerry, for over six months now we have been trying to get a staff list. Any chance of getting one?

MR. TER HORST: I am inclined to say when I find out who the staff is, I will take a look at the list. (Laughter)

We are working on that. I am aware of that problem, because it wasn't so many days ago I was out here asking for the same thing. So we have not forgotten the concern, but you are really going to have to bear with us. I am sure what has happened hasn't speeded up the process of getting a list out.

Q A few minutes ago you mentioned that the President intends to meet individually with the members of the Cabinet to discuss business. Does this mean that President Ford will continue the practice of President Nixon of not consulting with the Cabinet as a whole on important issues?

MR. TER HORST: I don't think that has been decided. I think this is part of the thing that he wants to figure out in his own mind and with his transitional team, precisely what is the best way to work in the interest of conserving both his time and the Cabinet officers' time.

Q At the Cabinet meeting did he stress any priorities, any things that have to be done first?

MR. TER HORST: Not to the collective body, except the priority of making sure that the work in each department goes forward and that there is a long agenda of unmet needs, legislatively and administratively, that must be taken care of and he is very determined -- when he emphasized the words continuity and stability, that is the kind of thing he is talking about, getting on with the business of Government.

Q Jerry, did this GM price increase not come up at the Cabinet and if not, did any other matters of substance come up at the Cabinet, beyond personnel and future relationships?

MR. TER HORST: Not essentially. You see, this was the first meeting with the full Cabinet and it was mainly a case of going around the table and each may saying what he wished. There was no agenda per se. It was a relatively brief meeting, 45 minutes.

Q So if it didn't come up, that, at least, was one of the reasons?

MR. TER HORST: It did not come up at the Cabinet meeting. No specific subjects were taken up, per se.

Q Did he amplify his policy of openness and candor governmentwide during that meeting?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, I think you could read that safely into his suggestion to the members of the Cabinet that they should be as affirmative as possible in all their press relations. He did not say that any had not been, but he wanted to call it to their attention. He thought this was a very important and vital thing that needed to be done.

Q It has been reported that he sent a letter to Brezhnev and another to the Prime Minister of Greece. Can you say anything about messages?

MR. TER HORST: Beginning yesterday afternoon, President Ford began the process of sending letters to many heads of government around the world, assuring them of the continuity of American foreign policy and America's desire for continued good and strong relations.

Q Has a letter gone to the People's Republic of China?

MR. TER HORST: Such a letter was sent to the PRC and to the Soviet Union.

Q To whom exactly?

MR. TER HORST: Well, to the heads of government.

Q Jerry, the Monday night speech to Congress, is that going to be a laundry list of legislation, or is it going to be general and how long and so forth?

MR. TER HORST: The only guidance, Marty, I can give you now, is that the President hopes to keep it within 15 or 20 minutes. As to content, the speech is in the process, obviously, of being prepared.

I probably should have mentioned earlier that he did ask the members of the Cabinet to give him whatever suggestions they might have in connection with things they would like him to stress in his address to Congress and to the country.

But I have nothing specific in terms of an overriding theme to the message. I am sure the overriding theme will be unity and the time for a drawing together and healing.

Q You said heads of government with respect to China and the Soviet union. Do you mean the letter in the case of the Soviet Union was sent to Premier Kosygin or General Secretary Brezhnev?

MR. TER HORST: I am sorry, I undoubtedly misspoke myself there. I am talking about the heads of government in the sense one thinks of somebody running the country's government, rather than --

Q So the General Secretary then?

MR. TER HORST: Yes.

Q Chou En-lai or Mao?

MR. TER HORST: I can't be specific.

Q When we went into the NSC photo opportunity, the conversation was about a budget for Vietnam. Was Vietnam taken up as an issue by the NSC today? Can you tell us that?

MR. TER HORST: As you know, we traditionally do not go into the agenda of the NSC and that policy will continue.

Q It would be a nice tradition to break, Jerry.

MR. TER HORST: But generally, as always at NSC meetings -- this is the first one with President Ford -- they reviewed the world situation. It was an opportunity for the President to hear personally from all the stated members of the NSC and as you know, it was a very brief meeting.

Q On that, Jerry, were you at the NSC meeting?

MR. TER HORST: I was not at the NSC meeting.

Q Will that be standard procedure, that you will not sit in on the meetings?

MR. TER HORST: It is not customary for the Press Secretary to sit in on the NSC meetings.

Q Who do you rely upon for your information?

MR. TER HORST: Participants in the meeting.

Q Jerry, did the request that the Cabinet members stay on extend to people like Colby of the CIA, who are not members of the Cabinet?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, Frank, I hope I said heads of the independent agencies, as well.

Q Did the President cancel his plans to go to the ABA convention in Hawaii?

MR. TER HORST: The President, as of now, has no plans for trips any place, at home or abroad. At the present time he feels the most pressing problems that need to be solved are those right here in the White House and in Washington. Obviously a time will come when the President will travel and when it does happen, we will give you as much warning as we possible can.

Q You talked about heads of agencies, how about Special Prosecutor Jaworski?

MR. TER HORST: As I mentioned yesterday, Special Prosecutor Jaworski is staying on.

Q Does the President intend to see him?

MR. TER HORST: I have not through there would be any need for that, but I am sure if they wish to get together and the President wishes to see him, that will happen.

Q Would you call the Monday night address a State of the Union?

MR. TER HORST: No, I don't think you could technically call it that. Formally, what it is, is an address to the Joint Session of Congress, the first made by President Ford, and I think we can all describe it in our own ways with great liberty.

Q Does the President expect to see King Hussein at the end of the week?

MR. TER HORST: I am not aware of any present plans to do that, but I will have to check that for you.

Q Can you give us any information regarding congratulatory cables or messages received from foreign heads of government and in particular the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union?

MR. TER HORST: There have been letters that have come in but I am not able to tell you who from. But there has been correspondence received from the foreign countries, as you might expect.

Q Would it be possible later in the day to get that information?

MR. TER HORST: I would not think so, because it is something normally that remains in an area of private communication. However, I would suggest that you contact the State Department if you need more specifics than I can give you here.

Q Can you be more specific on what the President had in mind when he told the Cabinet officers to be more positive in their approach to the press?

MR. TER HORST: No, he didn't say be more positive. He said he hoped they would be affirmative and he carefully refrained from saying that anyone had not been. He just wanted to underscore the necessity, because, as he has said in the past, he wants this to be an open and candid Administration.

He is trying to set an example of the same in his own personal conduct and he wanted to make certain that members of the Cabinet were not unaware of his personal feelings, and wanted them to carry through on that.

Q Does this mean he will have regular press conferences, and if so, how often?

MR. TER HORST: As you know, President Ford likes to hold press conferences. There will be many press conferences. I cannot give you any guidance as to when the first one will be. I would think it would not be reasonable to expect it to happen for a week or two, until he gets a chance to get his feet on the ground and complete more of the transition process that necessarily has to precede even a press conference.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Press Secretary.

END

(AT 2:00 P.M. EDT)