

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
CALVIN RAMPTON
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF UTAH
AND CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE
AND
DANIEL J. EVANS
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

THE BRIEFING ROOM

4:20 P.M. EDT

MR. ROBERTS: As you know, the members of the Executive Committee of the Governors' Conference have been meeting with the President, and we have two members of the committee here to brief you, the Chairman of the Conference, Governor Calvin Rampton of Utah, and Governor Daniel Evans of Washington.

I believe they are prepared to take your questions but would like to make a brief statement about the meeting first.

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: Ladies and gentlemen, the Governors here, as has been indicated, are the members of the Executive Committee of the Governors' Conference, plus the Chairman of the Democratic Caucus, the Republican Caucus and the Chairman of the Regional Democratic Organizations.

Every one of the invited Governors was here. Our discussion with the President covered a variety of matters, many of them general, but some quite specific.

We had arrangements made prior to the time that President assumed office to review with the Bureau of the Budget all Executive budgetary items having impact on States and local communities. That was set for the 9th, 10th and 11th of September. They confirmed that that schedule will still be met.

We discussed further with the President the matter of continuing relationships between the Governors and the White House, and we were assured that the present meeting will be the beginning of a number of meetings that will be held.

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Those who remember, if you attended the Governors' Conference at Seattle this year, the suggestion was made by former Governor Sanford that a series of meetings be arranged between the Governors and the President to discuss joint State-Federal matters.

We had not approached President Nixon on this because of obvious reasons, because of matters that existed between then and now. President Ford indicated that those meetings would be held. One of the most significant things that occurred from the standpoint of the Governors here was that the President assured us of his continued enthusiastic support for general revenue sharing; not only during the balance of the period for which provision is now made, by law, but for an extension of the general revenue sharing, and new legislation when the bill expires.

My predecessor, as Chairman of the Governors' Conference, is Governor Dan Evans of Washington. I would like him to give his impressions and we will respond to any questions you have.

GOVERNOR EVANS: I join with Governor Rampton in the enthusiasm of all Governors over the President's expressed enthusiasm for general revenue sharing and the basic concept of giving to the State and local governments greater flexibility with which to deal with their problems.

In return, Governor Dunn of Tennessee expressed a thought I know on all of our minds, that if we were given that kind of flexibility, we are all sure that both at the Federal level and at the State level budgets, at least the job could be done with less money than under our present cumbersome and rather archaic system of categorical grants.

But I think to me the most important part of the meeting was the extension of the President's two speeches, one after inauguration and one before Congress, in the sense of candor, openness, of continued working relationships, which I am confident will occur with the Governors of the States of the Nation. I think that bodes well for the country.

He expressed a very strong feeling, as he has publicly before, that inflation and the domestic economy represent our toughest and most urgent problems. We shared with him our belief that a cooperative effort, not only at the Federal level but at the State and local levels, as well, can best help resolve the problems of inflation, of excessive spending, if indeed there is excessive spending, and of setting the priorities of the Nation so that whatever limited monies we have can be placed where they are most needed.

It was a gratifying meeting to have, and I have had the privilege of sitting in on meetings like this for the past one and one-half years, and this one was a real hallmark.

Q Governor Evans, could you discuss maybe the difference in mood, feeling between this meeting and the last one similar to it you had?

GOVERNOR EVANS: I think obviously each Administration, each President has a different style and the style of President Ford is to be casual, informal, candid, and he was all of those things in a meeting that was not established as a highly structured meeting but which turned, in an hour, to a very efficient use of time, I think, in covering a number of subjects and covering them rather well.

Q Would you like to be Vice President?

GOVERNOR EVANS: That obviously is not my decision. I have not even faced up to that. I think there is only a remote possibility the question will ever be asked and for a long time in my political career I have decided that there are plenty of real questions on which to make decisions and I don't intend to make them on theoretical questions.

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: Let me say about Governor Evans, if I were asked, which I will not be as a Democratic Governor, he would be my nominee.

Q Did the Governors make it clear to President Ford how much trouble you had getting through to President Nixon because of the people around him?

GOVERNOR EVANS: Perhaps Governor Rampton can express that best because he expressed it very well to the President at the initiation of the meeting.

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: During the Johnson Administration, there were representatives here in the White House, beginning with Buford Ellington, you remember, succeeded by Farris Bryant, and then by Bruce Daniels, to whom the Governors could go and we knew they had access to the President almost immediately -- if not that day, the next day. That has not been true under President Nixon. I think it is not because of the individuals concerned, because certainly we have close contact with Jim Falk and Ken Cole, but it was our feeling that they did not have the access to the President that was needed. This was expressed to President Ford today and he assured us that when we took up a problem with either Mr. Falk or Mr. Cole that they would have access to him at the earliest time; if not that day, certainly in the day or two following.

Q Have you given the President any suggestion from the Governors as to the man who might be Vice President or has the President asked the Governors for their suggestions?

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: He has not asked me. I can't say as to the other Governors.

Q I mean the Executive Committee?

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GOVERNOR RAMPTON: No; to act concertedly, no.

Q Governor Evans, were any recommendations sought from you or other Republican Governors that you are aware of?

GOVERNOR EVANS: I think all Republican Governors have been asked for their recommendations and, like the Members of Congress and other Republican leaders, have submitted those recommendations or at least I presume most have.

Q What was yours?

GOVERNOR EVANS: I would be happy to tell you that. I presented the names with the feeling -- and it is a strong feeling, and one I have had for a long time -- that the Governors ought to be represented and that particularly the President in his impeccable relationships with Congress and the deep affection in which he is held, shown by his remarks to Congress just recently, that the Administration could be strengthened by fully recognizing the shared responsibility of a Federal system of State and local governments on the one hand and the Federal Government on the other. After having said that I indicated I thought there were many Governors, or former Governors who could fulfill that responsibility and I picked 3 of the more senior colleagues of mine who I thought were particularly well qualified -- Governor Rockefeller of New York, Governor Milliken of Michigan, and Governor Ray of Iowa.

I hasten to add I think there are at least a half dozen others who would do an exceptional job in that position.

Q Milliken is ineligible, isn't he?

GOVERNOR EVANS: Well, he is not ineligible. It is more difficult if you lost votes of Michigan in an election.

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: I think he is ineligible, because they can't be from the same State.

GOVERNOR EVANS: Well, the electors can't cast their votes for --

Q Governor Evans, can you share with us whatever comments were made by the President or your colleagues or yourself about the events of last week?

GOVERNOR EVANS: There really essentially were no comments about those events. There was an agenda focused on the problems of the future, of the relationships of the Governors to the White House and the priorities which were in front of us. Governor Rampton mentioned revenue sharing, the economy, and inflation, the energy problems were mentioned, and several other similar type issues, but essentially nothing about the events of the last week or so.

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Q No one remarked about the fact that you had a new President in the room?

GOVERNOR EVANS: I think when the President came in there was an enthusiastic greeting of the new President, but there was no special mention of that fact. I think it was rather obvious.

Q Governor, what do you think is the biggest problem facing State government today in general and your State in particular? Could both of you comment on that?

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: Inflation without question in my State.

GOVERNOR EVANS: I think the same is unquestionably true in our State. We have a lingering problem of high unemployment. Several years ago we had an exceptional problem of unemployment. But I would have to rank inflation as unquestionably the number one concern and number one issue.

Q What did you say to the President about that and what did he say to you?

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: He brought the subject up first and identified that as the most important problem facing the Nation now.

Q Did he say specifically how he was going to attack it?

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: He pointed out that he had no magic formula by which he could turn off a spigot and prevent double digit inflation, but that he was going to work on it. He spoke again of the economic summit, and promised that the States would have involvement in that although he didn't spell out the details of just how it would be structured except that he himself would preside.

Q Did he say that his door was always open to any Governor who wants to see him?

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: I think he gave us the same message he gave the Congressmen: You can get in but don't overdo it. He didn't use those words, but I am sure we Governors have enough troubles with our own schedules so we are not going to overdo it.

Q Governor Evans, what was his reaction to your suggestion that the Vice President come from one of the Governors or former Governors?

GOVERNOR EVANS: That was a suggestion made in a letter to him submitted with all of the other letters and there has been no direct response to that.

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Q What hope do you have as a Governor?

GOVERNOR EVANS: I made the suggestion because I believe in it very strongly, and I would hope that it would receive some consideration. There are obviously many other factors for the President to consider, and I think he is in particularly good position where he can look at all those factors with very little binding him or hedging him in and make whatever decisions he thinks are best for the country, and I think that is the way it should be.

Q Did the subject of impoundment come up? Did he make any pledges on that?

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: There was no mention of impoundment here at the meeting today. That is one matter, however, that the Governor's Conference will raise with the President.

Q In regard to inflation, was there any delineation at all between the role the State might play and the role the Federal Government might play in terms of avoiding duplication of effort and not just have everybody talking about inflation but coming up with a game plan?

GOVERNOR RAMPTON: The only time we touched on that was when we discussed the matter of block grants versus categorical grants -- I guess Governor Dunn discussed this mostly -- where he felt that approximately \$50 million in his State alone could be saved if he had the block grant rather than the categorical grant.

This has to do with the cutting back of expenditures because we are well aware in the States that if the President is going to balance the budget, some of that balance has got to come out of joint State-Federal programs.

It was Governor Dunn's point that if we could get the money in a block grant form, we could do as much with much less money than if it comes in in categorical form.

THE PRESS: Thank you, gentlemen.

END (AT 4:35 P.M. EDT)