

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 14, 1974

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
TOM BRADLEY
MAYOR, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
E. J. GARN
MAYOR, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
BEN BOO
MAYOR, DULUTH, MINNESOTA
AND
JOSEPH ALIOTO
MAYOR, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

THE BRIEFING ROOM

5:30 P.M. EDT

MR. ROBERTS: For purposes of identification, these four mayors all participated in the meeting with the President. On my far left is Mayor Garn of Salt Lake City, Mayor Alioto of San Francisco, Mayor Bradley of Los Angeles; and also on the far right, Mayor Boo of Deluth.

Mayor Bradley will give you a small fill in on what happened at the meeting. Each of the mayors can add his words, if he wishes, and then they will take your questions.

Mayor Bradley?

MR. BRADLEY: Sixteen of us representing cities of every size in this country were delighted with what we thought was a very positive response from the President to this unique opportunity for us to share our views, our concerns about the problems of the cities.

The President expressed not only understanding of these problems, but a desire to work with us. We had asked for an opportunity to have input to someone high in his Administration, and he said, "Start with me." We are delighted with that kind of response because we think that the problems of the cities, really, are paramount in this country, and if we fail to solve them, it won't make much difference what we do in Washington.

We are pleased with the President's reaction to the community development bill. We were especially concerned about the transit bill that is now pending in the Congress, and we have asked for his understanding and support of a reasonable measure of support, not only for operating expenses, but for capital construction as well.

I think I can speak for the mayors of the cities of this country when I say we are very much encouraged by the reaction we got in there, and I come out of it with a strong feeling of a great step forward for all of us.

MORE

14

MR. ALIOTO: Representing the Conference of Mayors, we told the President we were thankful for being able to talk to him. This was a great thing. It had been a long, long time since we had been in the White House.

We also told him we were for him. It didn't make any difference whether we were Republicans, Democrats, non-partisan or otherwise. We think he has given the country a new spirit, a new start, a new beginning, and we were all very happy about that.

He has promised us that we are going to have direct access to the White House, that there would be a mechanism in the White House, that there would be a person who spoke for the cities who would speak to him about the cities and this is very, very important to us.

And finally, we told him that the crisis of the city was not over. We have a long, long way to go. It is not being expressed in forms of riots these days but the cities are the principal victims of the inflationary forces which Mr. Ford has correctly identified as the number one enemy.

So our claims, our needs are all there, and we feel very, very good about the fact that there is a man in the White House who is listening to the cities and it is very important to us.

MR. GARN: I certainly agree with Tom and Joe. I would just add this, that we met prior to coming to the White House and talked about the things we wanted to present to him. In his opening remarks he was able to answer and respond before -- he gave most of our speeches for us -- indicated his total commitment to the concept of decentralization, that we as mayors in our individual cities with the differences between cities all over this country, are far better qualified to make decisions, to promulgate solutions to our individual problems than a distant Federal bureaucracy, and reiterated his commitment to the concept of general revenue sharing, to the special revenue sharing block grants and returning power and authority back to the local level.

MR. BOO: Of significance, I believe, was the meeting before we met the President when we had to face the fact that we were going to come to the President with a suggestion that the inflation be kept under control and yet that we agreed finally that the cities themselves had to make some sacrifices and we had to stop asking for ongoing continuing Federal money.

It was a difficult decision to make philosophically because we in the cities are always out of money. We therefore told the President that if we could provide input to the Federal budget, we would be willing to cut back on some of our own programs that we have worked so long and hard to attain. This was our sacrifice, we believed, so that the country could get back on its feet and correct the inflation.

MORE

Q Did you tell the President by how much collectively the cities would cut back?

MR. BOO: No, we recognized the easy role of a cut-back in the Department of Defense. We thought we could not in good conscience stay with that position, that we believe that this country must have a strong defense posture, that we would support that, and that we had to be part of the cutback, but we did not get to actual dollars.

MORE

MR. ALIOTO: I think the point we made that was important in that respect, though, is that in the last two years, 1973 and 1974, the cities bore a disproportionate burden of the tight budgeting. As a matter of fact, the housing was eliminated entirely.

So, when we talk about equality of sacrifice, we will be doing better than we have been in the last two years, and we just think equitably the cities shouldn't bear the major brunt of the cutbacks.

Q Did the subject of the new Vice President come up at all in your meeting?

MR. BRADLEY: No.

Q Were you told who your liaison would be here? You talked about keeping up the relationship with the White House.

MR. BRADLEY: The President said for the time being we would be working directly through him. Our immediate contact person would be Ken Cole.

Q Are there any plans for future meetings established at this time?

MR. ALIOTO: I think the President said whenever we needed access, there would be a man designated. Right now, it is Ken Cole. Historically, it has been the Vice President, and perhaps it will be worked out in that fashion.

Q Did you recommend that?

MR. ALIOTO: We stated that historically it had been the Vice President and that if it isn't the Vice President, it ought to be somebody designated high in the White House who would have immediate access to the President, and I think he agreed generally with that philosophy. Whether it is the Vice President or not is for his determination.

Q Would you want that person to be a former mayor?

MR. ALIOTO: No, the Vice President should be whomever Mr. Ford wants.

Q I mean, the person high up in the White House, if it isn't the Vice President?

MR. ALIOTO: Not necessarily. Just somebody who has a sensitivity about the problems of the cities and can get to the President.

MORE

MR. GARN: I think the thing we were most pleased with was when we asked him this question, he first of all said that for the time being your access is me. When we asked for the high level, and you can't get any higher than that, but I am sure we all gained the impression that regardless of who the Vice President may become, regardless of who is our contact man, this President is going to stay very close to the cities and we will have access to him through whoever he appoints.

Q Can we get a little more specific? Where would you gentlemen commence to start shoving back or refusing to accept Federal funds to help the Nation's inflation battle?

MR. BRADLEY: We made no such decision. As a matter of fact, we said we would like to be involved in the preparation of the budget so that as cuts are dictated, we have a chance to determine where we ought to make the cuts, because we are the ones who are directly affected in the end, and that in essence is the way we approached it.

Q How is the budget access open to you?

MR. BRADLEY: We have developed a new coalition of the Governors, the county officials and the representatives of the cities, who will in fact be working with the Administration in the budgetary preparation.

MORE

Q Did he give you new commitments that the mayors would have new input into the budget process?

MR. ALIOTO: He certainly did. Yes, this was one of the things we complained about. We pointed out after general revenue sharing in 1972, in 1973 we got a budget presented to us which cuts the heart out of the social programs in the cities and we are confronted with a fait accompli.

Now he promised that we would have the opportunity to make contributions to the budget before it is actually thrust upon us some time next February and we are very, very grateful for that promise.

MR. GARN: One further comment. This new coalition committee does have a meeting scheduled on the tenth of September to discuss this very situation.

Q What are your priorities, Mayor Alioto?

MR. ALIOTO: The things we discussed. The President himself discussed the fact he had a community development bill before him on urban renewal and housing and all of those things.

The second thing prominent in our discussion was mass transit, funding for mass transit. They are very prominently on the minds of big city mayors and little city mayors.

Q How much do you think it would cost in your particular city?

MR. ALIOTO: There is a pending bill for \$20 billion over a period of years and some suggestion that \$9.8 billion might be more acceptable and maybe somewhere in between we will be able to work out a legislative compromise, but that is where it is right now on mass transit.

Q Do all four of you accept the thesis that the Defense budget is absolutely uncuttable down to the mess boys over here, down to the guys who drive cars? I got that notion earlier.

MR. ALIOTO: You certainly ought not to get that notion. As a matter of fact, you remember last February, the Secretary of Defense in a colloquy on the Hill, said that his budget had \$6.3 billion more in it because it was put there to stimulate economic activity. And one of the points we made to the President today was that while we all wanted a strong defense, that we took umbrage at the notion that you should use the Defense budget for the purpose of stimulating the economic activity.

What is wrong about that is it doesn't target in where the need is. It is better if you are going to use money to stimulate economic activity to put it in the cities. That is where the need is, that is where you get down to the point.

MORE

Q What did the President say then?

MR. ALIOTO: The President simply took the suggestions and said, as I said earlier, that we are going to be able to have an opportunity to talk on the budget before it is actually formulated.

MR. BRADLEY: I can tell you that his response to our suggestion about public service employment as a help toward stimulating the economy and providing jobs, he said we need to take a new look at it; we shouldn't just across the board establish an unemployment figure and say that when it reaches six percent everybody in the country is going to get some public service employment jobs.

He said that the jobs should go where the needs are and I think that is a new direction, a new thrust and we are pleased to hear it.

Q Mayor Alioto, to assure equality of sacrifice, will the mayors have to request supplemental budgeting for community development by the end of the year?

MR. ALIOTO: On that equality of sacrifice, the main thing we indicated to him, Grace, was when there was a question of cutting out certain city programs, we wanted to know about the fact that they were going to cut out something and be given an opportunity to say what ought to be cut out.

If it is done in that fashion, I see no reason why we should be asking for supplemental budgets.

Q Did the President say there wouldn't be such action in the future, such as putting an extra \$6.3 billion into the Defense budget to stimulate the economy?

MR. ALIOTO: I don't recall the President responded directly to that discussion. I happened to have made the discussion to him and pointed out the admission made by the Secretary of Defense before the Congress, made in committee in February. I simply pointed out we didn't think that was the way to do it.

The President didn't respond to that directly but indicated as I said, that we could get that idea, we could make that contribution at the time they are talking about the budget and we will certainly press hard for it at that moment.

Q You are talking about the budget now. Is the coalition contributing?

MR. GARN: The coalition is meeting on the 10th or 11th on the 1976 budget. The coalition is going to meet very briefly. Governor Calvin Rampton of Utah, from my State, is the new Chairman of Governors' Conference.

MORE

- (-

May I respond just briefly to this whole budget situation. We talked about equity of financing. We are talking about we don't want the cities just wholesale cuts. We would like to examine those budget cuts and have our input. The same thing with the military.

I personally am opposed to those who advocate blind \$8 or \$10 billion cuts without examining individual programs for their waste and efficiency too. We think the entire Federal budget cut should be approached in that way on the programs that are effective and those that are not prioritized so that we get the best good out of them.

MORE

Q Did you get into the concept of expanding advance funding on existing categorical grants so that you, as a mayor, know when you plan ahead that you will actually be getting funding?

MR. ALIOTO: We didn't at this conference, but we are pushing for that through our legislative representatives to accelerate the receiveance from the Federal Government.

Q Was there an agreement for another earlier meeting or any date set for another conference?

MR. ALIOTO: There was no date set. We were simply told that there would be a system set up within the White House itself that would give us access at such time as we requested it, and we expect to request it from time to time.

We hope to see the President at least a couple of times every year, and we really haven't had a meeting in the White House you know since March of 1971.

Q Earlier today, President Ford relayed word that he was supporting the Harsha amendments to the urban transit bill, which I think cuts the \$20 billion in about half. Is that acceptable to the mayors? Do you think that is showing interest to the problems in the cities?

MR. ALIOTO: The President indicated today that he thought \$20 billion was too much money for the mass transit bill. He mentioned the fact that somebody had proposed a \$9.8 billion figure, which was approximately half, but he didn't indicate that he was frozen on that. He listened to Mayor Beam of New York who made an impassioned plea of the necessity of adequate funding.

He listened to Mayor Bradley, he listened to me and other mayors, the mayors from smaller cities, and we didn't get the impression that the President's feet were set in cement on the question of \$9.8 billion as against any figure that might be a little higher than that.

Q Could you explain a paradox? You have said that you last met with an Administration, the past one, in March of 1971, which collectively you seem to regard as a penny pinching-Administration. You come in and sit down with a man who is reputed to be a conservative and come out here and sound very optimistic. How do you explain that?

MR. ALIOTO: We don't think that is much of a paradox. It has happened before in the history of this country, and I suspect it will happen again, with somebody who represents a narrow constituency as a Congressman, as a Representative or Senator, may vote one way with respect to certain bills, with respect to certain, even, philosophical movements involved in the bills,

MORE

and when he becomes a President of the United States, he takes a broader view of the picture than that view which is limited by his former constituency.

It has happened before in the history of the United States, and we think it is happening right now so far as the problems of the cities are concerned. I think that President Ford acting as the President is going to have a different view from Congressman Ford or from Representative Ford.

MR. GARN: As a matter of fact, that was his own comment. He said that as a Congressman you did represent a constituency, and when you became President, you were President of all the people and there were many issues on which he would have to take a broader national view.

Q Has the coalition developed a methodology to trade off, let's say, a tank for a subway car?

MR. GARN: The reason I respond to that, I am one of the charter members of the new coalition and Joe will be attending his first meeting.

No, as a matter of fact, our initial meetings were just getting -- the budget for 1975 was already set before the new coalition really got underway. So, we are in the process of working on the 1976 proposed budget and the purpose of this first meeting on the 10th and 11th of September is to meet with the budget officials so when it is in the formative stage we can start looking at it. So, we have not yet figured out that methodology.

MR. ALIOTO: You know in the 1973 and 1974 budget as a result of the mayors lobby, we made substantial changes in those budgets when they were presented to us after having been worked out by the Administration. Now we are going to have a voice in them before they are actually thrust upon us in January or February, and we are going to continue to assert the claims of the cities, hoping to get a change in outlook with respect to certain programs and then continue that in the Congress, if we aren't wholly successful.

The important thing is that we are being promised that we are going to have a voice in the budget before it is formally printed and sent out to everybody.

THE PRESS: Thank you, gentlemen.

(END at 5:46 P.M. EDT)