

PART II

HARRY REASONER:

Mr. President, you're not wearing your WIN button. Is that something you leave in Washington?

PRESIDENT FORD:

Well I keep having people take it off of me, Harry. They're a little scarce and every time I go someplace and somebody doesn't have one, they grab it. I hope they wear it and use it.

HARRY REASONER:

You outlined this program against inflation, and except for an insufficient number of WIN buttons, there isn't anything that can be done about it immediately. Congress went away. Do you...do you have any serious expectation that you will get most of what needs Congressional action before the end of the post-election session?

PRESIDENT FORD:

I certainly hope so, and some elements of it are more important than the others. What we tried to do is to get the Congress to act, to provide more revenue, to put a greater burden on those best able to pay and at the same time, relieve some of the problems of inflation off the shoulders or the backs of people who are inequitably affected by the problems of higher costs.

PRESIDENT FORD: (cont'd)

Now if the Congress passes my tax program which is, in my judgment, an equitable approach because it doesn't affect anybody until after they have an income of \$15,000 or more a year, and even when you go up to \$20,000 a year of taxable income, I think it's only \$42 a year, as I recollect, \$.12 a day. I really don't think that's a terrible burden for people in that income bracket, but the income we get from that extra tax plus the tax of 5% on corporate profits provides the compassion that we can give to people at the lower spectrum of our economic society.

HARRY REASONER:

Would you accept a modification or a change in the 5%?

PRESIDENT FORD:

I would, as long as they don't abandon the concept. In other words...

HARRY REASONER:

The concept is revenue.

PRESIDENT FORD:

The revenue. Where they put the cut-off is a matter of judgment. I thought one figure was right. If the Congress decides differently, I certainly will accept it. But the concept of

PRESIDENT FORD: (cont'd)

putting a burden on those better able to pay is important in order to relieve the inequities for those less able to pay.

HARRY REASONER:

I'd like to just tick off some of the chief criticisms of you, President Ford, including some from people who respond to you normally. I suppose the basic one is that your administration so far seems rudderless, without direction, the feeling that you do not have the grip on it. Is there something in that?

PRESIDENT FORD:

Harry, I, of course, disagree with that. I don't know of a President in recent times who was faced with high inflation on the one hand and some adverse economic conditions developing on the other, who went to the people as we did, with our economic summit programs that included 12 mini-summits around the country, who came up with a comprehensive economic plan to meet the problems of inflation on the one hand and economic disturbances or adversity on the other. I think that was a major accomplishment in a very significant area affecting all of our people.

So when individuals say that we were rudderless, I think this was a case of grabbing the wheel and

PRESIDENT FORD: (cont'd)

moving the ship of state right down the middle, aimed at meeting the challenges on one side or another.

HARRY REASONER:

Well, the second major criticism is somewhat allied to that which is that you are a nice guy from Michigan, that people respond to your warmth and your friendliness, but that you would have a narrow view formed by 25 years representing a homogeneous district. Can you grow into this job, sir?

HARRY REASONER:

Well, I honestly believe, Harry, that I grew into it in the 25 years I served in the Congress. When I came from Michigan in 1949 I concede I was provincial. Except I'd had probably more educational breadth having gone to the University of Michigan and Yale Law School which was a great experience for me. But when I came to Congress, after serving four years in the Navy where I travelled pretty extensively, I did have the focus on the problems of western Michigan and the State of Michigan. But the committee assignments that I had during that quarter of a century were the most broadening ones that any member of the Congress ever had. I served on the Committee on Appropriations.

PRESIDENT FORD: (cont'd)

In the first place, that committee handled all of the problems of the government, domestic as well as foreign. And then I had the blessing of an experience of serving on the Foreign Aid Sub-Committee, the CIA Sub-Committee, and the Department of Defense Sub-Committee.

So, when I came to the Vice-Presidency, here I was with 25 years of the best experience in Congress, placed in a position where I might have some opportunities to make decisions. So I think education in the Congress was a blessing and I think it's been very, very helpful.

HARRY REASONER:

Do you feel that you've, at this point, succeeded in making it the Ford White House instead of the Nixon White House even if you have some hold-over staff members?

PRESIDENT FORD:

We haven't done as well as we intend to. But I think the American people have to understand that almost literally I became President overnight, and to move from the Executive Office Building as Vice President into the White House under those circumstances was unique. And I'm not the kind of person who likes to cut somebody off, cut their throat, so to speak, overnight. I think you've got to give some reasonable period of

PRESIDENT FORD: (cont'd)

transition. We've just about achieved that in the White House staff. And from now on, I think you in the news media can hold me and my people accountable because we're primarily today a Ford administration with no mixture between the previous and the present.

HARRY REASONER:

There's now litigation and possible legislation about the tapes and other records which you made an agreement. Have you changed your mind any on the wisdom of that agreement?

PRESIDENT FORD:

I think we've recognized that it probably had to be modified and on the objection of Mr. Jaworski and his staff and now Mr. Ruth, we have agreed that we won't implement it until there is a reasonable satisfaction from the Special Prosecutor's point of view.

What I'm fundamentally interested in is that that material be made available for any criminal prosecutions, for any legitimate utilization historically. On the other hand, a lot of people, and this is, I think, quite important, were taped without their knowledge, including myself. I have no objection to whatever I said in the Oval Office or elsewhere, but there are some people,

PRESIDENT FORD: (cont'd)

including high-ranking government officials from other governments who were in the Oval Office, whose conversations were taped, which is vitally important in their own home or own country, or in world diplomacy. I'm not sure that all of that material ought to be made public. It could be very harmful.

HARRY REASONER:

Sir, in a final personal area. Have you or Mrs. Ford regretted your instinctive decision to be completely open about her health and her surgery?

PRESIDENT FORD:

None whatsoever, Harry. It was a big shock first to know of the problem. The first 12 hours we didn't tell the American people because we thought that that was better for her and for her schedule and overall. But once the operation was known and what has happened since, we think was good for America, good in that I'm told that literally thousands and thousands of women have now gone and had the same examination. I know it gives Betty the feeling that she may have saved some lives, and we think it's good and I think we would do it precisely the way we did in the past.

HARRY REASONER:

Assuming her excellent apparent recovery continues, how does she feel about 1976? We know how you feel, sir.

PRESIDENT FORD:

She hasn't told me anything different following the operation. I think she relies on whatever decision I make, which I hope, in my case, will be predicated on what I think's good for the country. So the net result is certainly there's no change in what I said shortly after I was sworn in that...

HARRY REASONER:

Almost immediately, as I remember it...

PRESIDENT FORD:

...that I would probably be a candidate in 1976 and I haven't changed one bit.

HARRY REASONER:

Can you win?

PRESIDENT FORD:

I always enter a contest, whether it's in athletics or politics, on the assumption that I'm probably not going to win because I work a little harder and try a little better. So I think it's a horse race. The Democrats will undoubtedly have a good candidate. I don't know who it'll be and

PRESIDENT FORD: (cont'd)

I'm not sure they know, but I always assume I'm going to lose and then I'm happier. There's an old saying, Harry, prepare for the worst and the best will take care of itself. And that's the way I feel about day to day as well as '76.

HARRY REASONER:

That you very much, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT FORD:

Thank you, Harry.