

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE

OF

HUGH SCOTT

SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

JOHN RHODES

REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

AND

HERMAN T. SCHNEEBELI

REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

THE BRIEFING ROOM

7:00 P.M. EST

MR. SPEAKES: As you know, the Republican leadership of the House and Senate have just concluded a meeting with the President in the Cabinet Room. The meeting lasted about an hour and 20 minutes.

We have with us Senator Hugh Scott and Representative John Rhodes, the Republican leaders of the House and Senate, and we have also with us Representative Herman Schneebeli of Pennsylvania, who is the ranking Republican member of the House Ways and Means Committee. They would like to limit it to a few minutes because they do have to get back to the Hill.

SENATOR SCOTT: I think we ought to do away with any preliminary statement. There was a general discussion of the President's message tomorrow.

Q Is there anything left to be said tomorrow by the President that we haven't heard?

SENATOR SCOTT: Quite a lot. The President went into a good many details. Most of us have been briefed before by Secretary Simon or Secretary Morton and Mr. Zarb and others. We aren't free to discuss these details, but there will be many in the energy field having to do with conservation, obviously, and there will be a number of tax recommendations made. There will be more than was covered by the President in his brief television talk.

MORE

(OVER)

Q . . . Senator, after hearing all of the proposals and knowing what the Democrats have in mind, what is your view of how much chance there is for quick unanimity of the two sides in getting some action to the American people?

SENATOR SCOTT: Well, I would rather have Congressman Schneebeli and Congressman Rhodes handle that, except to say that the Democrats have spoken of 90-day action and the President has spoken of 90-day action. Ninety days brings us to April 12th, the birthday of Mr. Thomas Jefferson, the patron saint of the Democratic Party. I will have more to say on the 12th.

We will see, meanwhile, whether they really are as good as they say they are. It is important that this Congress and the President cooperate and get an energy and economy program. As to details, I will defer to the House members, where it originates.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHNEEBELI: I will say there isn't much difference in the principle of what the Democrats and Republicans want in this area. I think we are both going in the same direction. I think it is just a matter of detail and a matter of percentage points. I think both of us want to have a quick tax rebate. It is just a matter of how much it will be.

I think the general direction is the same with both groups.

Q Isn't it also a matter of whether it covers all across the income spectrum as opposed to being limited to lower and middle by the Democrats?

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REPRESENTATIVE SCHNEEBELL: As you probably are aware, or will be made aware, even nontaxpayers will participate in this rebate. You will learn more about that tomorrow, and I think there will be a ceiling that will be recommended.

Whether the Ways and Means does this, we believe in progressive taxation, that it might be progressively phased out to 10, 5 and 2 as we go higher.

REPRESENTATIVE RHODES: I think it is important, too, in contrasting the Administration's program with the Democrats to bear in mind that many of the people who will receive a rebate will receive a rebate because they had a job in 1974 and paid taxes.

A lot of the people who have recently become unemployed in 1975 might not receive any such rebate because of the fact that there is no income and, therefore, no withholding which can be treated.

For that reason, as well as many others, we feel that the Administration's program, as far as the rebate is concerned, is much superior to the program of the Democrats.

Q Senator Scott, why would the Democrats want to cooperate with the President's tax and energy saving problems when, with their numbers, they can write their own?

SENATOR SCOTT: I think it would be wise for them to cooperate. The public is certainly gradually becoming aware after 38 years that not a cent is authorized or appropriated in this country that isn't so spent under the authority of Democratic Congressional majorities. It is up to them to do their part in setting the economy straight, in helping us to meet our energy crises.

They recognize that. Senator Mansfield said so today. I think they should enact the President's program. If they don't, they certainly should come up with one equally good on their own part and ask us to help them. I think a mix of the two is in the national interest.

REPRESENTATIVE RHODES: I would like to comment very briefly on that, if I may, because I think it is important that we realize that the Democrats are feeling that time is of the essence. I think that is good.

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If they feel that time is of the essence then they will know that it isn't in the interest of the American people to govern by veto and override by veto. The thing which cooperation in advance gains for the Democrats and the country actually is a program which can become law without the time element, which is involved in trying to override vetoes, perhaps succeeding and perhaps not.

Q Do you think the President was right to go on the air with his program before going to Congress, and are you saying there are going to be some surprises tomorrow? We did get a pretty big replay on the tax situation for 1975, and is there something else?

REPRESENTATIVE RHODES: Of course, we aren't privy to the information you have received, so it would be hard to say. But we did receive some information today which I think none of us had received before. So, I would imagine that there will be something in the message that you haven't seen beforehand.

SENATOR SCOTT: I wouldn't expect any stupendous variations from the programs. There will be more details, and I think you will be impressed with the President's specific recommendations and his determination to get action and his leadership of the Nation.

Q Do you have any idea of what will be the stickiest area between resolving Republican and Democrat plans?

SENATOR SCOTT: The stickiest area will be to get the Congressmen who are willing to vote untold sums of money to also vote for the means of paying for it.

THE PRESS: Thank you, gentlemen.

END (AT 7:06 P.M. EST)