

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
HUGH SCOTT
SENATOR FROM THE
STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA
AND
JOHN RHODES
REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE
STATE OF ARIZONA

THE BRIEFING ROOM

9:21 A.M. EDT

MR. NESSEN: We have Congressman Rhodes, the Republican leader in the House, and Senator Scott, the Republican leader in the Senate, to tell you about the meeting the President had this morning with the Republican Congressional leaders.

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: Ladies and gentlemen, we met for about an hour and 15 minutes with the President today. The main topics of conversation, of course, were the energy program and economic program.

The blueprint which the Democratic leadership submitted to the President on Friday was, of course, discussed, as was the Ullman program or Ullman proposal, which was included in the newspapers of today. No decisions were made at the meeting.

The President will have an announcement to make later in the day concerning any reaction which he might make concerning these necessary proposals or blueprints or whatever characterization you might desire to give them.

As far as I can tell, I am still yet confused as to just what the Democratic program is. They seem to be speaking with so many more voices than one that it is almost impossible to tell with whom you should negotiate if you desire to negotiate.

I would hope, of course, that the majority party in the Congress would begin to act like a majority instead of a splintered group of legislators looking for some peg upon which to hang their hats.

Senator Scott?

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SENATOR SCOTT: The President is expected to have an announcement later this afternoon, having to do with the veto, which will occur -- the veto will occur sometime tomorrow -- as to whether there are any postponements of any features of the President's plan. That will be for him to say.

The President opened the meeting by saying we have two more blueprints from our Democratic friends and then brought us up to date on what they were. The white paper before him I designated as a proposal to conserve energy without really trying.

They aren't biting the bullet, they are biting a marshmallow here, and their idea apparently is to save energy on the cheap. It can't be done that way, and I am reasonably confident that a veto can be sustained; perhaps in the House; if not, quite likely in the Senate.

I think that covers it.

Q You are saying we are going to get the veto message this afternoon?

SENATOR SCOTT: Tomorrow. The statement will be on whether or not any of the regulations proposed will be postponed meanwhile.

Q The decision obviously has been made, but you are not allowed to announce it?

SENATOR SCOTT: The President did not spell out precisely what his decision will be. He indicated he was seriously considering certain possibilities, including postponements of some features of his program, but not an abandonment of the concept and not by any means of an abandonment of the program.

Q Aren't you a little upset that he brings you down here and doesn't tell you what he is going to do?

SENATOR SCOTT: He helped us a lot, and what he told us -- I think some of it -- has to be confidential. We are satisfied with the way in which the alternatives were discussed. I think we have a reasonably good idea of what may occur. He did not say I am going this afternoon to say thus and so.

Q Senator, did you get the impression from the President that he was kind of happy with the Ullman plan by comparison with the other one, happy that the Democrats appeared to be coming closer toward his own?

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SENATOR SCOTT: The President was soliciting comments, and I would say that the sum total of the comments indicated that the area of negotiability with the Ullman proposal was more realistic since the Democratic proposal is really to do as little as possible in order to alienate as few people as possible, to postpone the moment of truth and to escape the onus of courageous decision.

The Ullman proposal, on the other hand, is a respectable and expert approach to a problem where there are still variances, but still certainly bites more than a marshmallow.

Q The Ullman plan, in effect, just simply delays much of what the President would start off with right at the top. Do you think the President might be amenable to compromise on the timing?

SENATOR SCOTT: The President has always said that he is willing to cooperate, that he is open to developing a mix of programs with the Congress and with himself, that he is looking for prompt and effective action--and he is not getting prompt action--and he is continuing to urge that.

He spoke very forcefully of the need for prompt action, of the need to hold down these deficits, of the fact that the white paper will add far more deficits than the white paper admits.

I may add that Wednesday at 10 o'clock p.m. on CBS, I think Messrs. Wright, Pastore, Rhodes and Scott will appear for an hour, and there will be some elaboration.

Q Gentlemen, I realize you can't talk about what the President is going to announce this afternoon, but I would like to know your own opinions about the idea of delaying the second dollar, which is to go into effect in March.

Do you feel that that is an equitable compromise? Would you recommend that, or do you think it indicates weakness on the President's part?

SENATOR SCOTT: I have always felt that the third dollar was open to negotiation because the time is not necessarily here yet, and the President had indicated that Congress might come along with a broader \$2 imposition.

As to the \$2, I think that is for the President to say. It is certainly a possibility that given a spirit of compromise, that something may happen there, but we were not assured that it would.

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Q You don't feel it would indicate weakness on his part to delay that second dollar?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: Of course not. The President has always indicated that he is in a posture of negotiation on reasonable matters, and I don't feel that indicates any weakness. I should imagine that unwillingness to negotiate would indicate less of a feeling of confidence in one's own position.

Q Is it conceivable that the President might say that he was willing to defer the second and third dollar and specify on the basis of the Ullman plan, rather than this leadership plan?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: Of course, I wouldn't imagine that the President would be put in a position of arbitrating between 20 Democratic plans. I do feel that, as the Senator indicates, the Ullman plan is much better considered and much better prepared and offers, therefore, a better basis for negotiation than the other one does.

As an example of some of the inexactitudes of the so-called Democratic white paper, it has been estimated that as far as the economic parts of it are concerned, that the only way they could keep their promises concerning the economy would be to have the Gross National Product show a 10 percent real gain in the last half of 1975, and that hardly seems within the realm of possibility.

Q Since both of you speak as advocates, are you both strong supporters of the President's plan?

SENATOR SCOTT: I have supported the President's plan from the beginning, cautionary at all times that the \$3 matter was open to negotiation. Don't think that is necessarily a fixed star. I would like to say that I wonder what happened to all the undertakings of the Democrats with regard to gas rationing, wage and price controls and price control only. They seem to have been taken by the undertakers to some sort of a Democratic boneyard.

Q Isn't that where you wanted it to be taken? (Laughter)

SENATOR SCOTT: Yes, it is where I wanted it to be taken, but the Democrats are compliant for reasons of a lack of consistency rather than out of a desire to please me.

Q The President, I believe, told us on Friday that he thought the Democratic plan, as presented to him, was well thought out, comprehensive.

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SENATOR SCOTT: It is comprehensive in that it comprehensively avoids taking any tough steps. It is well thought out in that it seeks to avoid losing any votes. It is simply one more manifesto, which was evolved with a great deal of shouting, and a wide variation of difference in the Democratic caucus session and was accompanied by disagreements as soon as some of the Senators could find their way to a microphone.

Q Did you seek this meeting to tell him not to cave in?

SENATOR SCOTT: No, we didn't first seek the meeting. This is the regular weekly meeting, and there need be no concern about the President caving in. The President's backbone seems to be the strongest one in town.

Q Did you give the President any advice on whether or not to suspend the second and third dollar?

SENATOR SCOTT: Not so much advice, no. We were told of all these possibilities, and considerations, and we reacted variously and various suggestions were made to him.

Q But if he didn't call you in to tell you what his decision was, or to get your views on what his decision should be, then what did he call you in for?

SENATOR SCOTT: The second happened. He called us in to get our views on what he might do. He didn't call us in as Presidents might have done, to tell us what was going to happen. This is not LBJ time. (Laughter)

Q But like the Democrats, then, did you lack a consensus in what you told him?

SENATOR SCOTT: We had plenty of emphasis. With this President, the interchange is freer than I have ever seen it, and there is an absence of penalties implied in candor. (Laughter)

THE PRESS: Thank you, gentlemen.

END (AT 9:37 A.M. EDT)