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Office of the Vice President
(Little Rock, Arkansas)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AIRPORT SHERATON MOTOR INN
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

(AT 4:30 P.M. CDT)

Win Paul, and ladies and gentlemen, I would just like to say first what a pleasure it is to be back in Little Rock, and to say how much this community and this State meant to my brother, how deeply grateful he was to the people of Arkansas, and the affection he felt for the people and for the State, and the privilege of serving you; and to be here especially with his son, Win Paul, who meant so much to Win.

I would just like to say to all of you in Arkansas how much Win meant to us, the family. We loved him, respected him and admired what he did here. I would just say that by way of background.

I am delighted to have a chance to participate in the few gatherings here, but before doing so, I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

QUESTION: Sir?

Since, Mr. Rockefeller, it is kind of obvious that you could potentially become President at any moment; that is, as Vice President, it is as you know fairly important for the people, the public at large, to know how well you can handle the crisis situation.

Do you, Mr. Rockefeller, concede any error in judgment in the way that you handled the Attica Prison development while Governor of New York State?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is a fair question to ask and I think one that we ought to examine. As you probably don't know, I had just appointed about four months before a new Commissioner to take charge. He would have been in charge of parole in our State and had a reputation, came from Boston, was appointed by Governor Averill Harriman, previous Governor.

He had a reputation for reform as a prison leader. I appointed him to this job. He was concerned about the political penetration of the prisons and concerned that there would be some uprisings and wanted a doubling of the guards in the prison.

We didn't have the money. We had just gone through a very difficult period and had to let about 8,000 of the employees of the State go. The uprising took place. They took about 54 prison guards as hostage, and as is the plan in our State, the State Police, when they arrived in sufficient number, went in to retake the prison.

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They went in without guns, which was their training for riot. They had retaken half the prison when the new Superintendent arrived on the scene. He said stop, because he said there might be -- I should add that when they got to one of the crossings between the compound, the prisoners had welded the gate together so that they had stopped there.

Then they said if they came in further, the State Police, that they would kill the guards, nearly 54 of them.

So he said stop the retake and "I will go in and negotiate because I can get them released without any bloodshed." That was the start of four days of negotiation, during which we agreed to about 28 so-called prison reforms.

I will tell you that each of those -- and by the time he had come he didn't dare go into the prison because he was afraid of his life in New York. They demanded total amnesty and free passage to a non-Imperialist country, which gives a little indication of the politization, politicizing of the whole thing.

He said, "I think we have done everything we can and we have got to now move, retake the prison." By this time they had made weapons and made defense preparations, and so forth, in the prison.

I concurred in his decision and supported him. The State Police went in with instructions not to shoot unless either a State trooper or a prison guard was held captive and life was threatened.

They did the best they could and the result is still being investigated now in the courts. That was a tragic situation.

I think if you asked me as to the decisions, I think at the time one would say the decisions made were right. In light of the outcome, one could well say that we should not have stopped the initial retaking of the prison which was being done without weapons.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, President Ford said in St. Louis today that if the National Convention selects a vice presidential candidate on the job that he has done, that you will get the nomination. He said that he thought you had done a much better job than he had expected. What is your reaction?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am very grateful for the appraisal of my work. I have done what he has asked me. I came down to Washington, having retired as Governor after 15 years and, on his invitation, went through some interesting experiences getting confirmed with the Congress.

Then, having been confirmed, I was there to help him in any way I could. I am totally aware of the fact there was no function for a Vice President other than presiding over the Senate, which is a great honor and a great privilege.

However, other than that, there isn't a function, except acting as a Staff Assistant to the President, which I have done.

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QUESTION: At this point in time, do you personally feel that you have enough delegates to beat Ronald Reagan to win the vice presidential nomination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not a candidate. I am not seeking the office, nor did I before. I have said for the last nine months that I thought the President should not make a decision about who should run with him until after he was nominated by the Convention, which is the tradition of this country and that at that time he should make the decision, announce who he wanted, and that I have refused to say even whether I was available simply because I didn't want in any way to put pressure on him.

He is totally free, as far as I am concerned, and I feel that is the right posture for him to be in, at the time he is nominated, then make the decision on the basis of who he feels would best serve the country and the Party.

QUESTION: I am here representing the State organization of Common Cause and I would like to add first that we are very happy to have you back in Arkansas.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am thrilled to be here.

QUESTION: You headed the Commission investigating the activities of the CIA. The Common Cause is in support of your recommendation that certain major portions of the CIA budget be made public.

Thus far we have had very little cooperation from the Senate and House Budget Committees and also from Director Colby concerning this matter. Do you plan to take any steps to insure that these budgets be made public?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The President gave our report to the Departments that were involved, asked them to study them and give him their analysis of the recommendations being made. Those have been put together. I would hope that shortly he will be in a position to make his judgment on which recommendations he wants to accept, and then to take the steps to put them into effect.

So that is something that you know the speed with which sometimes bureaucracies work. It has been a little slower than perhaps I had hoped it might have been. This material has been pulled together and should be available to him in the form of options with recommendations, hopefully, next week.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, to get back to the subject of Convention, do you feel, in picking a Vice President, the delegates should follow the choice of the President, or should they be free to make up their own mind, which might be different?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course, they are free because they are elected to go there to represent their constituents in the Party. I think that one would say that by tradition, both in the Democratic and Republican Parties, that the recommendation of a President who has just been nominated by the

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delegates, seems to have been honored by the delegates themselves. So if you go by tradition, I would assume that his recommendation would be followed.

QUESTION: Do you think that is a good tradition to follow?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course, if he nominated a crook or somebody who was obviously not qualified, but then the delegates would have to think maybe they had picked the wrong person to be President. That one would have to question very seriously whether that would be the case.

I think that in this case, particularly, here is a man of tremendous integrity, openness, dedicated to the basic beliefs and concepts of this country with unusual courage. I think he will do what he thinks is right at the time.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, Mr. Callaway has stated that you ought to go out and win support for yourself for the vice presidential nomination, and also suggested that this is what the President wants.

Are you going to go out and seek support for yourself or are we to understand from your statements about non-candidacy that you are not going to do what the President wants?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not campaigning. I am not a candidate, nor am I campaigning for the President. I was asked that question by one of the distinguished representatives of the media here before, and I referred that representative to the election laws which really would preclude the possibility. There are very strict election laws. I am abiding by the laws as written.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you think the primaries will show that your trip to the South has been successful for the Republican Party?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not sure which primaries you have in mind. Each State has got different laws and different primaries, so I am not aware of whether there are primaries coming up this year. There are?

QUESTION: Yes, there are some this year.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let's put it this way: I hope it won't hurt me.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did you have any input into President Ford's decision concerning the veto of the extension of oil price controls?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, on the Harris poll which said 57 percent of the American public did not believe you are doing a good job as Vice President, or something to that effect, what is your assessment of that poll and how do you feel about that statement?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't know what the question asked was, but this last few weeks is really about the first time I have been out around the country. I have kept a very low profile.

I don't think anybody knows what I am doing. So how they estimate the value of what I have done when they don't know what I have done, would be hard for me to tell. That is just a personal thing.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, why do you think you have been so unpopular in the South?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I really don't think I am unpopular in the South.

QUESTION: The Harris poll says your ratings were the lowest in the South.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: By the Republican voters?

QUESTION: Among all voters, Republicans and Democrats.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Maybe they think coming from New York, you know, they are not so enthusiastic about me. New York hasn't been the most popular area. I was just down in South Carolina and the Governor there, the Republican Governor, Edwards, is supporting Mr. Reagan.

He is very gracious and arranged for a series of functions, ending up in a fund raising cocktail party. Their estimate was it would be hopefully 250 people. About 700 came, including quite a few Democrats.

That, I think, is just a small indication that maybe things aren't as bad as some people hope.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, after the trouble we had up North in the northern schools on busing, do you still feel that busing is the answer to an equal education, and if so, why?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We have this problem in New York State and both the black community in various areas, and the white community, were opposed to busing as a means of achieving quality education as well as integrated education.

The legislature passed a bill which gave to the local school boards the right to determine how they wanted to achieve the objectives. I signed that bill. The bill was declared unconstitutional after a legal fight.

I think the law of the land states that, according to the courts, they should make decisions as to how best to achieve the integration of the schools. The Supreme Court has interpreted that law to give the authority to the judges to make the decision and then they can require the local school boards to work out a plan.

As long as that interpretation and that law is on the books, all of us who are elected officials have the responsibility of carrying it out.

If they want to change the law or change the Supreme Court interpretation, I think there are three courses. One would be to have a suit that would go through the Supreme Court and result in a different interpretation than the President or legislation could be passed, or by the Congress, which might be within the Constitution or, failing that, the constitutional amendment would be the only course.

Those three courses, I think, are the only way that local option in some form could be achieved.

It is a pleasure to be here. Thank you all.

END (AT 4:45 P.M. CDT)