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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
(INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA)

PRESS CONFERENCE
AT THE
INDIANAPOLIS CONVENTION CENTER
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

(AT 11:05 A.M. EST)

Thank you very much, Governor, for your invitation and for the pleasure of being here. I would like to say how much I respect what Governor Bowen has been doing. Having been in this business myself for a number of years, I know the problems and the tremendous opportunities. I have great admiration for his leadership and his skill in dealing with the difficult problems of this period of change.

Also, I would like to say how much this country admires Dick Lugar, your Mayor. He is well-known and highly regarded in all parts of the country for his achievements and for the quality of life that exists in this great city.

There is one other thing I would like to say. That is, I happen to believe in the party organization very strongly, the party of your choice. It is a two-party system in this country. Tom Milligan, your State Chairman, and Betty Randel, your State Vice Chairman have a reputation for being two of the ablest, dedicated party leaders.

I think in this time in our country we need strong, positive, creative leaders in our party system who have a deep understanding of the problems of people and a dedication to a free society.

With that as a backdrop, I am delighted to be here. I will be delighted to answer any questions.

QUESTION: Governor Rockefeller -- or Vice President Rockefeller --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Governor, I like that better. It is my security blanket.

QUESTION: You were quoted in McCall's magazine that it would not really upset you very much to be dropped in next year's Presidential ticket. Have you not placed yourself at the mercy of those who would like to see you off the ticket?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I will tell you, when I was finally confirmed by the Congress of the United States by the 25th Amendment, having the honor to be nominated by the President, I made it very clear I thought he should be unencumbered for any commitments for 1976. After he is nominated only then he should decide who, in his opinion, should best serve this country in the years ahead as Vice President.

I was not a candidate. I was not going to campaign for the office. I didn't even state whether I would be available. I sincerely believe that he should not have to make that decision at that time. I didn't want to put any pressure on him.

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By tradition in this country, the President, when nominated by his party or the Presidential candidate, when nominated by his party, picks who he thinks he would like to have as his Vice President. Also by tradition, the party in question has at the convention, almost without exception, confirmed that choice.

In fact, it is hard to believe of a convention selecting a President and then turning down his first action. I think really, this matter lies within the hands of the President of the United States rather than any faction of the party. I think that these stories that you read or hear are frankly somewhat exaggerated.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, sir, would you tell us what lessons might be learned for Federal officials, State officials and city officials from the current financial dilemma of New York City?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think it is a very fundamental question you ask. And it is a very fundamental lesson that can be learned. It is an age old lesson. You can't spend any more money than you have in income for very long without getting into financial trouble. That is pretty basic for a family, for a city, for a State and for the nation.

Tough as this is, it is just possible that this comes at a very important time for our country, so that we do learn this lesson over again and that, hopefully, New York City is going to take the steps to put its house in order and to balance its budget, which we need for the restoration of confidence by investors in their securities. That is the basic situation.

QUESTION: Rumors persist that you are at odds with the President on the question of aid to New York City. He says there can be no such aid for New York City from the Federal Government.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have shared totally with the President that the United States Government cannot bail out New York City. New York City has to face this situation and achieve a balanced budget. Cities are creatures of the States, not of the Federal Government. Therefore, the State has the first responsibility.

So, I have shared this feeling with the President. The thing that has led to the confusion, as the President said and I have said -- the difference between us is minimal -- the thing that led us to the confusion is that I have talked about what would happen after New York City and New York State took the actions to restore fiscal integrity and bring about a balanced budget.

It will take them about three years. As and when they have done that, it is still going to be a difficult problem because investor confidence is going to take some time to get back. My point was, when that was done, there might well be need for some assistance to bridge over these three years. The Congress of the United States should be focusing on this because the President has no power to act. The only people who can do anything is the Congress of the United States. They ought to be closely in touch with the problem, following it very carefully and considering if, in their opinion, action is necessary.

QUESTION: You don't think credit guarantees should be given then?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, you see, this depends on what the city does. I don't think that credit guarantee should be given unless they have restored fiscal integrity for the very reason that was asked by the gentleman who spoke first.

Otherwise, if you can spend unlimited amounts of money, let's say for laudable purposes, but it is way beyond your capacity and the Federal Government picks up the check, this could encourage a great many other cities in the United States to do it.

Let's face it, what is going on in the United States Government today, and this is why the President is vetoing many of these measures, the Federal Government has a deficit that is going to run between \$60 and \$70 billion. One could say there is very little difference between what New York City has done and what the Congress of the United States has done in spending this money. The only difference is the United States Government can print the money and New York City can't.

But when you print money, you are debasing the currency. You are lowering the value of the money, and you are causing inflation. Inflation is the most insidious force, that is, the most corrosive force for all the people in the United States, their pensions, their savings and their salaries.

So, the President sees this in that perspective. I share that feeling with him. If the city takes the steps in that period to provide the necessary aid, it will prevent bankruptcy.

QUESTION: There have been reports that the President might find some kind of legislation to help New York City. Is that true?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The President of the United States can't sign any legislation that isn't passed. He can't commit himself to sign any legislation unless he sees it. I can't imagine a President doing it.

I am sure that Governor Bowen doesn't say what he is going to do with some legislation being discussed before he has his lawyers go over it very carefully and he reads it very carefully. So, the President is in the same position.

The President has to know two things: one, what the city has done and what the State has done; and two, what form of action Congress may take. At that time he has to formulate a judgment.

QUESTION: It is related to New York, in that New York State's Select Committee on Crime released a report citing alleged massive fraud in regard to New York City's bookkeeping. Do you have any comments on that or do you know anything about it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't know about the report. But I do know in 1971, I recommended to the Legislature, over

the objections of New York City that the Comptroller of the State be given the power to audit the books of the city. They have been excluded from that by tradition. Also, they should have appropriated \$1 million so that the Comptroller can get the necessary personnel to try to audit the books and understand what was going on.

I don't know about this report that he made or that was made by somebody else, but I know from the work of our Inspector General in the field of Welfare, that there was a great deal of fraud in that area. I think this is part of this whole picture that has to be dealt with decisively, in order to restore confidence.

QUESTION: Does it surprise you that there have been allegations of fraud in the bookkeeping end of it by New York City?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have to say that over a period of years one by one, there have been exposures and indictments of commissioners in New York City heading various departments for the fraud in those departments. So, this doesn't come exactly as a surprise, unfortunately.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, there has been some criticism in the Republican quarters about the way the Presidential campaign is being run. One of the major people resigned. How do you see this particular campaign going and how would you judge Mr. Callaway's performance?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not involved in this pre-convention campaign. This campaign is related primarily to the nomination. So, I am not privileged to the details of how it is being carried out. I think that this is a difficult period. I think the proof of the cake is going to be in the eating.

We are going to really know about the campaign when the nomination takes place and we go to the elections.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what role, if any, do you see former President Nixon playing in the coming National Convention in the GOP?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I hadn't thought much about that, to tell you the truth. I wouldn't have thought that he would plan to play a role.

QUESTION: The East German President, and Brezhnev, recently met in Moscow. It was called one of the most important meetings in Europe in the last decade. It has also been called a slap at detente. Where does detente stand now?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I happen to feel that detente is one of the most important undertakings by the last two Presidents, between the United States and the Soviet Union, for the simple reason that we must avoid direct confrontation if possible, between these two nations of a military character or even of diplomatic, if possible.

However, I think one has to point out very strongly, and follow the word detente with the thought and the concept of the fact that detente is only meaningful if we preserve

our military, economic and moral strength as a free society. Otherwise, detente would rapidly turn into a form of dictation by a super power and therefore, be meaningless. Detente, to me, is only good if we preserve our strength and power.

QUESTION: How about NATO? We have lost Greece, and Turkey is kind of wavering. Where is detente if we have a very weak NATO?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course, I think the final vote of the Congress, after having gone off on this tangent in relation to the Cyprus situation where they cut off the military assistance -- or not assistance -- they cut off the delivery of the arms the Turks have paid for. I think that now that the Congress has removed that restriction that it is going to be possible to go forward with solving the refugee problem and the disputes on the Island of Cyprus. That will then make possible the revitalization of our relation with both Greece and Turkey, and the revitalization of NATO.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, because of the liberal tag and the liberalism you are associated with, your nomination of Vice President didn't generate a great deal of wild applause in Indiana. Do you intend to do anything to make yourself more popular?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I will tell you, I have been in public life now for about 35 years. I have always tried to do in relation to solving any problem, what the facts indicated was the sound and constructive solution that best reflected the interests of the American people or the people of whatever entity of government I was working for.

I am not enamored with these ideological slogans of conservative and liberal. I think they are meaningless. I think they are confusing. I think they are deadening to intelligent thought. I think it gets into the category of, "Don't confuse me with the facts. My mind is already made up."

I don't have any great use for the whole concept. We are all divided into segments. Therefore, we don't have to think, just react. That is not the strength and vitality of America. This country lives on and has always grown from the freedom of discussion, the right of individuals to hold different points of view, and then to reconcile those differences. That is our strength. That will always be our strength.

I don't consider that I am either a liberal or a conservative. I think I am a reasonably intelligent, dedicated citizen, who loves his country and wants to serve the country and help solve problems. I get attacked from both sides.

If you want to take the list of the people who opposed me in the Congress of the United States for confirmation, there were 120 conservatives and liberals so identified in the House. I got the opposition of both. All of the conservatives and all of the liberals were against me. Those in the middle all voted for me. That is about where I stand. I think that was a very good illustration. That has got to say something.

QUESTION: Do you expect Governor Reagan to make the campaign for the Presidency, and if so, how do you feel about that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not convinced that he is going to. He is a good friend of mine. He is an experienced Governor. He has got a good thing going. He is now a columnist. He has a TV program and a radio program.

On the other hand, he has got a lot of supporters who work very hard and are pushing very hard to get him into the race. I personally cannot believe that an incumbent President is going to be unseated under these circumstances. So, it is a decision for him to make. At some point, we will find out.

QUESTION: At this point, do you think he will run?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not really a clairvoyant, nor do I have a crystal ball. I have never tried to anticipate what somebody else was going to do. I have enough trouble trying to figure out what is the right thing to do myself.

QUESTION: What is the message that you are conveying today in your contacts with Republican leaders here in Indiana, the Mayor of Indianapolis, Richard Lugar and the State Governor, Otis Bowen? What is your pitch?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Very simple. It is that we have a great President of the United States. We are fortunate in critical moments in our history in that somehow people have always seemed to have arisen who are the right person at the right time. We have a man of great integrity, a man of tremendous belief in the great heritage of this country, in the values that made us great, who has the patience to study the problems with great care, then to make the decision on the basis of what he thinks is in the best long-term interest of America, not the short-term, political expediency for himself.

I think that is what America needs today. And we have got it. I am honored to work for him. I will discuss today various programs he is working on. One of which, of course, is primarily to stop inflation, then to get jobs through stimulation of the economy, and to get energy independence so that we are not subject to political blackmail or boycott by the OPEC countries or the Arab countries, in the event of another confrontation in the Middle East.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you think it is in the best, long-term interests of the country to have the President going around meeting public crowds in relation to the events that have occurred in California, recently?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is a tradition in this country. I can hardly visualize America with a President in the test tube. It just seems to me that those of us who are in public life, whether it is a mayor or a governor or a Federal official, we are here to serve the people or try to serve the people. We have got to go to the people and be in touch with the people.

There are risks. But when you think of all of the

Americans who have given their lives in the Armed Forces to preserve freedom in this country under the risks which they take, it seems to me that this is a small risk for those of us who are politicians, or those who think of ourselves as statesmen, for us to take.

QUESTION: Do you think it is necessary for him to plunge into crowds as he has in the past?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think that is fair. I know the gentleman very well. He loves people. He likes to go to the people. I think that this is part of our tradition, that we don't have royalty in this country. We have a democracy where people move out with the people, and they are not off and apart from.

I think it is a good tradition and a very important tradition. Now, there are risks with it. But let's face it, you might slip in your bathtub in the morning, or you might get hit crossing the street. And of course, tragically, there are some 50,000 people who get killed on the highways every year. There are risks in this life.

QUESTION: In relation to that, would you support a ban on handguns, nationwide?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: When you say, would I support a ban, how would you visualize the achievement of that ban?

QUESTION: The restriction on manufacture; perhaps a minimum amount of time in prison for people committing a crime with a handgun?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Now you are getting into a subject I feel very strongly about in mass legislation-- most laws, both in relation to hard drugs and to the use of guns in relation to crimes.

QUESTION: You wouldn't necessarily ban handguns?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think you use the word in a way that to me makes it sound awfully good. I have studied this question for 20 years. I don't really think there is such a thing in terms of the reality as banning guns. I just think that is not a realistic situation.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you said that you are trying to help people solve problems. One of the problems of our society is feeding poor people. Do you think the President's plan to improve food stamps is the best way to help feed poor people?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: What the President did is try to cut the cheats off the roll, the top 13 percent and give it to those in the lower economic spectrum where they need the food. I feel pretty strongly about this subject. I think there are a lot of things to be done. This is one of the unfortunate things in our country. It is smart to beat the system in America. This is a tragedy because the system is our country. I will give an illustration which I used yesterday. But it is the perfect one.

I was sitting next to the President of a bank at a college in New York, three years ago. It was a meeting of the Board of Directors of the State university trustees.

During the course of the evening he said, "You wouldn't believe it. My son came home. He is a graduate student of NYU in New York. He said, 'Gee, Dad, I just got on Welfare.' He was absolutely excited."

The father was crestfallen. He thought he had accomplished something. He said, "Dad, but everybody is doing it." The father said, "How did you do it?" "Well," he said, "we all get on food stamps."

I have nothing against bankers. I don't think the son of a President of a bank needs to get on food stamps. I don't think the men and women in this country, who are working, paying taxes to help those in need, want to pay the taxes for somebody that doesn't need it. The President wants to cut them off. Those at the bottom who need it, ought to have more.

QUESTION: Doesn't the President's plan also eliminate many of the working poor by setting the income at the poverty line?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The income level has been about \$9,000.

QUESTION: The President's plans see it at about \$5,050.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You have to remember, this is one of the things I am now working on. We have a whole series of programs, Welfare, Medicaid, Medicare. We have Food Stamps. Then we have 1,006 categorical grants to help special groups in this country, special programs passed by the Congress, which the Governor and the Mayor have to enrich to get the money.

Then they have to live within the regulations. The legislative life has gotten so complicated in this country with bureaucracy and red tape that no individual, in my opinion, at any level of Government can be responsible alone to his constituents for the management of a program, because all three levels of Government are in it. It has gotten so complicated.

I hate to say this, but I feel it very deeply. The President has asked the Domestic Council -- we are going to be back here later for a hearing here -- on the subject of federal programs and policies relating to the domestic scene, how can they be changed and modified to be more effective in achieving their objectives and to get rid of this complexity of bureaucracy and red tape. Let the States and the local governments exercise the kind of leadership and control which I think is the basic strength of America.

Excuse me for speaking so strongly on this. But the same thing is happening to free enterprise. They are all tied up in these regulations. The result is they don't take the initiative.

QUESTION: What do you think about Presidential candidate, Fred Harris' proposal for massive free distribution of wealth in this country?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is an exciting proposal. I

didn't get the details of how he is going to accomplish it, through inflation. I don't know how he is going to achieve it. Maybe it is closer to socialism which was probably in Great Britain at one period.

In a very interesting article, Pat Moynihan, Ambassador to the United Nations wrote about the Third World, two-thirds of them during the period of Socialism in England, which was a period of high industrialism in England, with the concept of dividing up the wealth which was very popular.

They all took to it very well. The only trouble is you have to have a base for that concept. In productivity someone has got to produce something so you can provide it. The Third World countries don't have a great deal to divide among themselves. They want to divide it with the industrial worker.

This is the origin of this concept. He is now undertaking some very interesting debates at the United Nations with, I think, productivity.

On the other hand, there are important steps we can take to help them to help themselves develop their nations which have great resources in terms of people and in raw materials. The technology is being developed here and in other industrial nations. I think with our technology and management experience we can help them to help themselves develop their own nations in production.

But you can't share something that hasn't been produced. This is something that has to be understood. The dignity of work is something and the satisfaction of work is something that I think a lot of people need to get back to.

QUESTION: Do you think your presence on the ticket will help draw some labor support that might otherwise go to the Democrats?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think that is a fair statement.

QUESTION: The Teamsters for one?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have to say that the last time I ran for Governor, I had the endorsement of the AFL-CIO in New York. That doesn't mean anything about the future. But you asked me and I am trying to give an illustration.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, is your visiting Indianapolis, the beginning of an active campaign on President Ford's behalf?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I have been going around the country for the last few months to talk about the programs and policies of the Administration. It is not a political campaign. But I have either on the President's behalf or my own -- which I said, I am not a candidate. But I am trying to help the party raise money.

One of the factors in the democratic society and the two-party system is they have to have money to support

the party's activities. That is not easy to come by.

QUESTION: Has the Ford Administration made any plans to involve political processes?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is a very good question. I would have to say that the programs that you refer to are not adequately developed. He has been dealing with so many crises. This is one of the problems of a President. I guess it is true for a governor and a mayor, that there are so many crises that come up that force attention on the Chief Executive, that often the longer range fundamentally important issues don't get the kind of attention they should.

But I know that he enjoys tremendously the opportunity of speaking on campuses. I agree with you that one of the most important things we can do for the future of this country is to get young people to have faith in our system and having faith, a desire to become involved in the system.

I think the tragedy of cynicism has blown up in recent years out of both Vietnam and Watergate. That is behind us. Now we have to and I think we want to get back. The excitement and the importance of involvement by the oncoming citizens of this country in our two-party system, I think is essential.

I am very glad you mentioned it. I am going to say to the President when I get back that you raised this question. I think we have to do a lot more about it.

QUESTION: What is your opinion of the Congress' efforts to reform the Hatch Act, and federal employees campaigning and running for office?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think Congress has been trying to deal with this old question of elections. There is a tendency in this country to want to legislate morality honesty, decency, integrity. I have a strange feeling that really this is something that has to come from within. It is hard to legislate these things.

The best way to have these values in public office is to elect people who have morality, honesty, integrity and decency. Congress, I think feels that it went too far in this reorganization. Now they are starting to move away from it a little bit.

I think they are in a tough spot. It is going to be very difficult. But there is no question, the law is extremely complicated. The ramifications of that law only now are being understood. But this is true of so many laws that maybe we ought to do pilot planned operations as private enterprise does before we go into full production of some of these programs.

Thank you very much for your patience. It is a pleasure to be here.

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(AT 11:29 A.M. EST)