

PRESS CONFERENCE  
of the  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

10:00 A. M. EST  
November 6, 1975  
Thursday

In the Auditorium  
Old Executive Office Building  
Washington, D. C.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to make a brief statement and then be delighted to answer any questions. Let me say that I came down to Washington at the nomination of the President to serve the country I love and to help in solving the problems which we face, and which I am optimistic can be solved.

I didn't come down to get caught up in party squabbles which only make it more difficult for the President in a very difficult time when the problems of the country require his fullest possible attention. Therefore, with his complete understanding and concurrence I wrote him a letter. Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, can you tell us a little more of the evolution of your decision, when it first began and how much you talked it over with President Ford, and was it encouraged by President Ford?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is a subject that has been on my mind for some time as events, political events, have developed. I talked with him about a week ago. He understood completely the point that I have just made to you and my feelings and the reasons I came down here, and concurred, and then I wrote the letter.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, as a lame duck Vice President you are in the novel position of being able to speak your mind now. Will you?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: First, let me say that I am not sure there is such a thing as a lame duck Vice President. The Vice President has no responsibility, as you know, except to preside over the Senate of the United States. He is available, God forbid, should anything happen to the President. Otherwise, he has no responsibilities. I have felt that my responsibility was to act as a staff assistant to the President, in the interim. Wait a minute. I haven't finished.

When I first came here I agreed that with him I would give him my best judgment on any subject, that I would do anything to help him and would support whatever positions he decided unless I had a very strong feeling in which case I would speak out. That stands.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, may I follow that? You are known on the record to have strong feelings that differ from his particularly about New York City.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: And I would assume others. Will you speak out on those issues?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I not only will, I have.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, to what extent do those differences play a part in your decision?

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. They were not the basic element. The basic element is exactly what I said. I have differences and if I feel strongly about them, as I did in the case of New York, I speak out on them.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what are the political squabbles you referred to?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Within the Republican Party.

QUESTION: Would you elaborate a little bit?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think I need to. I think they are very obvious to everybody. I didn't want them to be a subject of distraction for the President in his getting the nomination for the Presidency of the Party.

QUESTION: What is your role in the next year's Republican ticket?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have no role. I am not a candidate. I have said right along that I felt the President after he is nominated should then select his running mate. Until then, there should be no commitment of any kind. That is where I stand. People didn't seem to believe that. I took care of it by writing the letter.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, was it clear to you that the conservative opposition to you was so great that you would be a liability to the President and was it clear to you that you would probably be dropped from the ticket if you did not withdraw?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I don't agree. Let me explain. It is a minority of a minority. I don't think the "opposition," if I use your word, is basic. But it is an issue. And it is a subject of concern to those who are responsible for the President's campaign and nomination. It is just not worth it.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in your letter you said the choice of a Vice Presidential running mate is and must be up to the Presidential candidate to recommend to the national party convention.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Exactly.

QUESTION: Why did you take it out of the President's hands and make that decision yourself?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Because people didn't believe what I was saying and the only way I could convince them and take the issue out which was me was to write the letter, take it out. So there was no question.

QUESTION: I don't think it is really clear, though, with respect to my first question as to whether or not you thought that conservative opposition, the party squabbles you were talking about, were the reasons why you withdrew yourself.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is exactly the reason and that is why I said that and that is what I put in the letter.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, are any Presidential advisers still striking at your energy proposal or did they get your message that they should either support it or step down?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Our message.

QUESTION: The message; our message; what is the difference?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think they are. I think there is very important support now and the bill is before the Congress. I will be speaking at the Chamber of Commerce this afternoon. I have met with the leaders of the labor organizations, the business organizations, and I think that myself ultimately the Congress will pass this because I think it is the right way to solve our problems and get this country rolling, get our economy rolling, get jobs, get energy independence, and I think it is one of the most effective programs of the President.

QUESTION: That doesn't answer the overall question; that is, was the President happy with your comments on what you felt he should do?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: He never said anything about it.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you spent an hour and five minutes with the President the other day and according to Mr. Nessen your resignation or withdrawal consideration was then discussed. Can you give me a few more details on what you and the President discussed and the back and forth discussion?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: At that point he informed me of his plans which he announced, what was it; Monday night, Sunday night? Monday night, whatever it was.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you think that the President has written off New York State in the 1976 election?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I don't.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you think that his position on financing of New York City's problems will cost him heavily in the State?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes. I do.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what do you see now as the consequences of a New York City default?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That depends entirely on whether the Congress passes legislation which the Governor, the Mayor, the President and everybody who is knowledgeable on the subject feels is absolutely essential because there is no effective legislation relating to a default by a city and therefore there is need immediately for such legislation.

QUESTION: What will be the political fallout if you are right and the President is wrong about New York City?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I frankly have to say to you that the political aspects of this are far less important to me than the effects on the well being of this country and the people of the country. I think that has got to be our primary and only consideration.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, if President Ford should be defeated in the early Presidential primaries next year and should be forced to withdraw from the campaign for nomination, might you, sir, consider running for the Republican Presidential nomination again?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is a speculation that I have not made. I think he will be nominated. History has clearly indicated that the incumbent President is nominated by his party and I have no speculations on the subject.

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QUESTION: You won't rule out doing that under some circumstances?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Absolutely no speculations on this subject.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, are you prepared at this point to recommend to the President on the basis of anything that has happened since you last considered the situation that he reconsider his decision not to aid New York City to avoid its default

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The President knows my position very well; fully familiar with it. I have expressed it frankly and openly in the meetings as have others expressed opposition points of view. He is the President of the United States. He has the responsibility for the decisions. He has no power of action because Congress has not passed any legislation. He has expressed his position. I admire his courage. I have a different point of view, but that is democracy.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, sir, tell us what Nelson Rockefeller is going to do next to serve the Nation?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Try to help the President in dealing with the problems which we face and a perfect example of this is the assignment he has given to the Domestic Council to come up with a review of both policies and programs relating to all aspects of our domestic relations and the Federal role in them and that is why we are having these conferences around the country because all of the wisdom isn't in Washington. You can't solve problems in a vacuum. Therefore, it is important to get out and exchange views with the people of the country and then come to him with suggestions.

QUESTION: After you leave the office what will you do?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Leave what office?

QUESTION: After you leave the office of Vice President.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I never worry about what I am going to do next. I have always found some occupation.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you intend to campaign actively for President Ford and do you intend to campaign in these early primaries for him next year?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you read the election law you will find that I cannot campaign. The law says you can only spend \$1,000. That includes all expenses of travel, et cetera, et cetera.

The law says that the National Committee cannot finance campaigns for individual candidates until after the nomination. Therefore, there is no way for me to campaign and I have not been campaigning. I have been discussing the problems and the programs of the President with the people of this country and I have been supporting Republican fund raising dinners around the country. But I have not been campaigning.

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QUESTION: Do you expect to continue to do what you are now doing through next year in behalf of the President and other Republicans?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Immediately you put me in conflict with the law. That I am not going to be under any circumstances. I am a law-abiding citizen.

QUESTION: Governor Rockefeller, sir, could you tell us how you feel your withdrawal will diminish the party squabbles that you talked about in your opening remarks?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Because I was the basis of a lot of the squabble. If I am not involved, then there is nothing to squabble about.

QUESTION: Do you think that former Governor Ronald Reagan is a major factor in the party squabbles that you referred to?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I believe in the advice that Barry Goldwater gave him.

QUESTION: What was that, sir?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You know it better than I.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did you believe that if you had remained available as the President's presumed choice for Vice President it would have made it more difficult for him to be nominated?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It was taking more of his time away from important subjects which need to be dealt with which relate to the well-being of the people of this country and the problems of the world.

I came down here to help him in connection with solving problems, not dealing with party squabbles. Therefore, I eliminated myself and, therefore, I eliminated the issue which was the basis of a lot of the squabble.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, does that mean your answer is mostly yes to the question?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think so.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, Senator Mathias said recently that under pressure from Ronald Reagan that President Ford is pulling his Administration to the right.

Do you think, sir, that the Administration, as Senator Mathias says, needs a moderate counterpart and the party does as well?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I go back to the problems of the country. I think the American people, and this goes for Democrats, Republicans, Independents, they are looking for the solution of their problems or a framework within which they can be solved. They are not interested in politics.

I have said this consistently for a long time: They are more interested in their own well-being, their own future. That is what I am interested in. I think that is going to be the basis for the President's strength and his reelection.

I don't think that the politics are the important factors. I think these are exciting times, they are

difficult times, but they are tremendous opportunities. We must grasp those opportunities and we must go forward. That is why I accepted this great honor of being Vice President of the United States.

The lady behind you. Excuse me.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, if I may say so, you seem just a bit discouraged. Do you think it was worthwhile coming down here, and do you feel that these party squabbles have kind of pushed you out?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. That is your interpretation I am discouraged. I am not discouraged at all; never felt better. I don't think there is any Vice President in the history of the United States who has been given as many responsibilities and great latitude as I have.

I am delighted. I am very grateful to the President. I am grateful to the Congress, after four months of an interesting dialogue, for the opportunity of being here.

I couldn't be more pleased, but I do not want to be diverted from the reasons I came down here. That is all. I couldn't be happier. I am even more happy today.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in view of the very basic and fundamental differences you had with the Administration, how can you fully support Mr. Ford's bid for the presidency next year?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think that democracy, if you will forgive me, is based on the freedom of individual citizens to express themselves -- and that the person who is responsible makes the ultimate decision.

If I disagree fundamentally with the decision as Vice President, and with his concurrence, I will express it. That is very simple. I think that he will be nominated, and he is my candidate.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the President says that he is not worried about a challenge or a prospective challenge from Ronald Reagan. You have had some experience with the conservative wing of the Republican Party in seeking the nomination of that Party for the presidency.

Do you think he ought to be worried about Ronald Reagan?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No.

QUESTION: Do you think that as the result of your withdrawal he could be less worried about it and that you have removed Reagan as his principal issue in the campaign?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: To be perfectly frank, I am not involved in the political considerations or management in the White House, or in the campaign. So that I am not in the position to appraise what you are saying.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, if I may follow up, you said at first that you are removing yourself to eliminate party squabbles.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is right -- and myself from the squabbles.

QUESTION: And you think that you have successfully, then, neutralized the Ronald Reagan challenge?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't say that. I said I have successfully removed myself from the squabbles and removed myself as a complicating factor for the President in relation to them.

QUESTION: You think the President has nothing to worry about in terms of a Ronald Reagan challenge?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I personally don't.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did President Ford ever discuss with you his concern about these party squabbles as you are calling them, and the fact that you were the center or at least a center of controversy?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, he really didn't. He was, as you know, very supportive -- and after certain statements made by his campaign manager, and back some ways -- but you know, this isn't the focus of the issue and attention of the American people.

These are not -- this is not where our future lies right now in these squabbles. Our future lies in solving our problems and restoring the strength and vitality of America.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did he at no time indicate to you his concerns that you are still being available for the ticket would in fact hurt him in getting the nomination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. I have a great sense of responsibility. I came here to help him, not complicate his life.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you said before that it bothered you that people didn't believe you, that you --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is right.

QUESTION: People, I am afraid, are not going to believe now that you are not running for President. You have been running for President since 1958. You were asked before what you were going to do in this election. You have been asked before what you were going to do in the subsequent election.

I wonder if you would explain to people how you see yourself with respect to your long-time quest for the presidency?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have to say I am closer to it right now than I ever have been.

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: Do you think you are going to stop here? Can you tell us that you are not seeking the presidency?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Listen, I wouldn't have accepted the vice presidency if I hadn't been willing to take the presidency should, God forbid, something happen to the President. So I am not going to kid you that I came down here with no thought of the presidency in mind. But I have no plans beyond what I have said.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, bring us back into the real world. The New York banks that were identified with your family have undergone a great liquidity crisis which has been building for some time and recently received some added blows.

On top of that, the people who are politically identified with you have received very great blows the past week.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Who are they?

QUESTION: Mr. Kissinger, Mr. Schlesinger and yourself, of course.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't receive a blow. I told you, I was released.

QUESTION: In a different fashion.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is your opinion.

QUESTION: New solidarity has been documented for some time, the way in which you use your political empire to support your economic empire.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Could you tell me what the question is?

QUESTION: Do you plan to use the people you still have in power which is still Mr. Kissinger and also Mr. Levi to sabotage the implementation of new thrusts towards new economic policy -- just a minute. I am getting the question -- which is the faction of bankers and industrialists who were mainly behind the Cabinet shifts.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have to tell you, I do not think the bankers or the industrialists were behind the Cabinet shifts.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did President Ford in your conversation with him make any attempt to dissuade you from your course?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I analyzed the situation and accepted the analysis.

QUESTION: Do you feel that the President definitely wanted you to step aside?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I think the President recognizes the amount of energy that is being spent in what I call party squabbles; that it is not productive in terms of national interests, in my opinion, and I think he understood what I was saying. He agreed to the course completely and I wrote the letter.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, a follow-up on the earlier question of New York, President Ford suggested in his news conference Monday night that the differences between you and the President over the subject of aid to New York were minimal.

We know what his position includes and we know the positions that you have expressed in the past.

Do you consider your differences with the President on this issue minimal and can you clarify again for us whether or not you favor aid for New York City to avoid default; that is to say, aid before it goes to default?



THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes. My position is clearly set forth in my statement at the American Columbian Society which I agree on. I feel very strongly.

If the city takes the steps that are essential to bring their budget in balance in three years, which is the best they can do, then there is going to have to be a period during that three years to help some -- somebody has to help them bridge over their financing. I said I thought the Congress ought to focus on it and act so that that could be done.

He feels they won't take the steps and that, therefore, the only course will be to go into bankruptcy and that, therefore, they are going to need legislation. They need legislation in either case and more or less the same actions will be taken.

I think the trustee and bankruptcy, the Federal judge when he issues certificates which the President said he will do, those certificates will have to be guaranteed by the Federal Government. So it is going to come out more or less the same. It is just a different course of action.

QUESTION: Some of the supporters of Federal aid for New York have suggested that some of the bills currently before the Congress could be signed by the President without his having to leave his position -- without his having to change his mind about what he said earlier.

Do you see anything in any of the bills that are in the Congress that do include any kind of pre-default which, according to what the President said, would allow him to sign it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: There has been so much discussion on the subject and so many bills that I really am not up to date on those bills.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, to what extent did you and the President a year ago anticipate or appraise the likelihood of these squabbles? You have both been party leaders for some time. Did you not see this coming down the road at that time?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If he did it he didn't talk to me. I have to say I really have not been focused on that subject until it came up.

QUESTION: Was it the Reagan, apparent candidacy, that put this into action?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I wouldn't say that was a big deal. But I think it really came into focus in that meeting you all had with Mr. Callaway. That is where it first started to come up into sharp focus.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, on another question, do you think it is a good idea to have the former Republican National Chairman head the CIA?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think it is up to the President to select whomever he feels is best qualified and in whom he will have the most confidence to carry out a very difficult assignment. Then it is up to the Congress to investigate it and the Senate, and to decide whether to ratify it.

QUESTION: Will you support this appointment?

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: This is not my responsibility. I was not in on the discussions that led up to it. So I don't know the circumstances which resulted in the decision.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, when you said it first became clear in our meeting with Mr. Callaway, were you saying that --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not our meeting with Mr. Callaway. Oh, the press. Okay.

QUESTION: When you said that, did you mean that when Mr. Callaway said that you would be a liability to the President's election that you would be a problem and the problem of your age was a problem to the President, does that mean that it became --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: This was his opinion.

QUESTION: Does that mean it became clear to you at that time that it was an Administration opinion?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I never said it was an Administration. I said party squabbling. That brought it into focus.

QUESTION: You keep talking about party squabbling. But it seems hard to believe that you would be so concerned when your political past shows that when you ran for the President several times you were in the middle of the party squabbling?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes. But you are assuming something that you know is not correct. I am not a candidate for the vice presidency. I said so to you for nine months and I am not going to be, and now I have pulled myself out so there can be no question -- so that the issue is over, once and for all.

Next question.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, would you assess for us the risks and consequences of a New York State default as a fallout from the problems of New York City?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: As I said, I thought default would be disastrous.

QUESTION: No. For the State. Do you think the State is now imperiled because of the city's problems?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't know, really, what the course of events is going to take. Therefore, it is a total speculation on the basis of which I don't have enough information to make an intelligent answer.

QUESTION: In view of your long-time interest in Latin American affairs, what do you see in the future down the road a bit on U. S. relations with Cuba?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I really don't see anything very clearly as I look into the future.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you expect to see any further changes in the status of your close friend, Henry Kissinger?

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have no idea.

QUESTION: Do you fully accept the President's public explanation for the dismissal of Secretary Schlesinger?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Again, as I say, I was not involved in the discussions. Therefore, I don't know the basis. Therefore, I have no basis for judgment as to the reasons and the wisdom. I listened to the press conference as you did. He said he wanted his own people.

Believe me, that is a tradition in this country, the President wants his own people.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, does your departure suggest that no one is going to do battle with the Republican Party's right wing, that it is better to talk and run?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. That is a totally different question. Now you are talking about substance I assume in relation to the position the Party takes.

I think the Republican Party only is going to be an effective Party if it reflects the best interests of the American people and traditionally that is in the center. That is where our country has always been. That is where the Republican Party has won. It is when it reflects the interests of the people and when it solves their problems. That is where I think it is going to be.

QUESTION: Can you get it there without a few squabbles and who is to lead the effort to pull it in that direction?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not over who is going to be the Vice President.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, are you satisfied now, sir, that President Ford's election campaign is going effectively and well?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not familiar with his election campaign. I have nothing to do with it.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you have categorically and unequivocally taken yourself out of consideration for the vice presidency to avoid

these squabbles. Why, sir, do you not give us the same categorical answer about the presidency?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Then what would I do if anything happened to the President? Resign?

QUESTION: So that is a possibility if something should happen to the President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: How can I avoid it? When you accept the vice presidency -- that is the whole point of having a Vice President, should anything happen to the President.

QUESTION: I am talking politically, not in that sense, but if he should be defeated in primaries, withdrawal or for some other reason would take himself out of it, are you then going to evaluate --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I haven't given any consideration to it.

QUESTION: Would you do so?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No.

QUESTION: Going beyond 1976, do you see this as your last public office? Are you going to run again or do you have anything in mind after 1976 since you are taking yourself out of the 1976 --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have no plan beyond this press conference.

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, are you satisfied, sir, with the amount of policy input you have had during your tenure as Vice President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have to say in all modesty that I think I have had more than any Vice President in the history of the United States.

QUESTION: Can you cite anything other than the \$100 billion energy funding proposal to which you have had a major input?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The review of the domestic policy which is now going under way and programs and the recommendations which I will be discussing preliminarily with the President this afternoon and finally within a month; recommendations across the board.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, on your fund raising events outside of Washington, what are the people advising you to do, and what are they telling you?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I will say this: They are very enthusiastic, and just for those who are interested in the South, I was in South Carolina and as you know, the Governor there is supporting Governor Reagan and they had a little fund raising cocktail party, of which I am always delighted to attend.

I said, "How many people do you expect?" He said, "We are hoping maybe to get 250." Seven hundred people came -- Republicans they had never seen before, and a lot of Democrats, to tell you the truth. They just couldn't believe it.

I have to say that is the kind of reaction I am getting on these trips. I just don't think that the people in the South are any different than anywhere else. People in this country are wonderful.

I think we are so fortunate to live in this great democracy and I enjoy meeting and working with people. And I enjoy working on the solution of problems, and I am optimistic about the future.

QUESTION: Don't they have some energy and farm problems?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Sure, they have problems.

QUESTION: Do they ask you to help them to solve them or use your influence with the President or the Congress?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes. I discussed with them the Energy Finance -- the Energy Independence Authority and how it would work and what it would do.

I have to say to you they were rather enthusiastic about it.

THE PRESS: Thank you very much.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is a pleasure. Thank you all.

END

(AT 10:30 A.M. EST)