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Office of the Vice President
(Kansas City, Missouri)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE KANSAS CITY MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

(AT 11:58 A.M. CST)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here again in Kansas City. I would like to say I don't think ever in my life have I had a more thrilling experience than meeting with the Future Farmers of America.

I can't imagine a more wonderful group with more enthusiasm, and I just have to think that what they are doing, their sense of purpose in life, and their enthusiasm about this country can and must be an inspiration to the country as a whole and give us the tone which we need at this particular moment in history to meet the problems which exist, which we have no trouble meeting if we really go after them.

This country can do anything it wants, and these young people have shown exactly that spirit. So to me it was an inspiration. I am honored to be an honorary member, and this I will treasure. And as a little aside, I am happy to see they used the New York State colors on their ribbon.

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If I may make a brief statement, I have repeatedly made clear I support the President. There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that he will be nominated.

For anyone to even speculate that I might challenge him at the convention is pure fantasy. Thus, I will not waste your time or mine in further discussion of that subject.

The American people are deeply concerned. They want solutions to their problems. They are not interested in personal ambitions, animosities, or squabbles of politicians. As you know, that is why I asked the President to eliminate me from his consideration for the Vice Presidential nomination in 1976.

If I may make a local comment, a word about New York State's situation. The President's statements on New York City have confronted the New York Republican organization with a difficult problem.

I am informed that because of the reaction of people in New York, the New York State County Chairman at a meeting last weekend decided to support an uncommitted delegation to the Republican National Convention to preserve unity in the party. This does not change my own position in respect to supporting the President's candidacy, as I

MORE

have already stated. However, I do hope that all candidates will respect the decision of the New York County Chairman.

I believe it will serve their own interest to do so. No one will gain by a confrontation with the New York organization on this issue. The organization is determined to remain united. Any attempts by anyone to fractionate it will be resisted vigorously by all of us.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, has anyone threatened a confrontation? Why did you choose to use that word? Have you gotten any feelers that somebody might raid the delegation?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am reflecting the position by the County Chairman as expressed.

QUESTION: Have they gotten any feelers that somebody might raid the delegation?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You are fully familiar with the whole group, and my suggestion is you talk to them.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, what is the purpose of an uncommitted New York delegation?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The purpose of the New York delegation is to be united and effective at the Republican National Convention.

QUESTION: Were they not previously committed to Mr. Ford?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have just explained in the statement the situation which caused them to shift the position.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, did you encourage or discourage the New York delegation to take the action that they took?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I was not aware of the decisions which they made or the statement which the Chairman made in Washington.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, after they made the decision, though, you were informed; isn't that correct?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is correct.

QUESTION: Did you try to encourage them to change their minds?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. For the reasons which I have outlined in that statement, I think it is a wise decision.

QUESTION: You mentioned in your statement the great responsibility of America, the problem of shouldering the problems of the world in food production. Now the farmers are reined in with governmental regulations on fertilizers and pesticides, energy, and now a market embargo. What is going to be done about that nationally so

that these farmers can be free to produce?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let's take them one by one. As far as increased production, if I am correct, 60 million acres have been brought into production in the last three years. So that it is quite obvious that whatever reining in you referred to is maybe an annoyance in areas, but it certainly hasn't impeded the farmers from meeting this tremendous challenge. That is number one.

Number two, energy is the key and is essential because fertilizer is made with energy. Pesticides are all involved with petrochemicals, and so forth, that we have got to have an adequate supply of energy.

The cost of energy has increased the cost of production on the farm. Because we have had inflation due to the increased cost of energy, we have had also increased cost to the farmer for his machinery, his equipment, and everything else. So that he has suffered a very high increase in his operating cost.

Now as far as markets are concerned, what I think the Administration has wanted to avoid is what happened two years ago when the Soviet Union -- or was it three -- found themselves with a very serious crop failure and then moved in in an extremely ingenious way by sending a delegation to Washington to talk about buying \$300 million worth of grain, to talk to each one of the three big grain companies, each of which thought they were going to handle the deal they were talking about in Washington; and they all ended up by each signing up for \$300 million and we sold about \$1 billion, and the prices of grain doubled and the prices of feed more than doubled and food prices went up.

They want to avoid a centrally controlled economy from another part of the world from moving into our free markets here and taking advantage of them.

The demand is there, and we are in this very interesting and difficult period of change when our free market system is confronted by centrally controlled economies. We have got to work with them. This is not easy. We are trying to learn. The government is trying to learn. Private enterprise is trying to learn. Everybody is trying to learn how do we keep free and keep our markets free and yet not be taken to the cleaners, to put it very simply.

I think it is going to take us a little while. But I know the President's commitment and objective is to encourage the export of a maximum amount of farm products and to encourage the farmers to produce a maximum amount, but to do it in a way that does not distort the market process unduly or unfairly to anybody. I think that is the real reason.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you served many years as Governor of New York. What do you consider your most significant contribution towards the betterment of agriculture within New York State?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: New York State agriculture,

MORE

which by the way is a very important industry in New York; we have over a billion dollars a year of sales of agricultural products.

I think perhaps the most important step that I was able to take was through the Department of Agriculture working with the research laboratories in developing various processes to mechanically harvest, whether it was grapes, apples, pears, all of the vegetables, and so forth, because we have a very severe shortage of labor in our agricultural areas; and then the processing.

One of the things which we were able to do was develop a method of holding the fruit so that it could be sold fresh at any time of the year; not frozen, but held in the right temperature so that we could compete with foreign markets. We were limited to a short seasonal market, and thereby we were able to compete year-round by selling our fruits which are held in these processes which the State financed as far as the development is concerned.

Also, we worked with the Extension Service on the development of new techniques, new technologies. And we have worked very closely with the milk producers who are one of our major industries in the State.

So the State tried to help, and I think successfully helped, the farmers of New York move to industrialization without disruption.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in your opening statement, if the New York State Republican delegates comes to the convention here uncommitted, would you be willing to head it as a favorite son candidate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That thought has never entered my mind, nor has it been discussed with the delegation.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, there are farmers and certain politicians calling for Earl Butz's resignation through the years. If you became President, would you ask for his resignation or would you keep him on?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I have had the pleasure and the privilege of knowing Mr. Earl Butz since he was Assistant Secretary of Agriculture under President Eisenhower's Administration. I was Under Secretary of HEW.

We had a very interesting conversation on the delicate subject of the effect of rats and mice in grain and the residue and what the measure could be, and we solved that problem together. So that I am very familiar with this gentleman's imaginative approach to agricultural problems. We worked out a formula.

He is a controversial personality. I have to say that anybody who has strong views and is willing to stand up for those views is bound to be controversial.

I am sure that you can find as many people who think he is a wonderful Secretary as there are those who

are critical of him. In fact, there may be more. So as far as I am concerned, I am happy to be associated with him in this Administration; and I have not given any consideration to anything else because I am there to help President Ford as his staff assistant.

QUESTION: Do you like Secretary Butz?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I do. He is a very attractive, very amusing person.

QUESTION: Going back to your statement on country-to-country trade on grain, do you see an extension of this to, say, market-oriented countries like Japan?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: What I was saying was that we have a problem with the free market, with those countries who have centrally controlled economies and their economies are used for political purposes at times as well as for economic. Therefore, this puts us in a very new and interesting and delicate position.

Japan has a more centralized operation than we do. They have closer relations between government, agriculture, industry, finance, and labor. But we have got some interesting and difficult problems. They were very dramatically and, from the point of view of the farmers, tragically illustrated when the unions refused to load the ships.

These are the things the Japanese have been trying to avoid by having policy decisions made in advance. I think we are going through an evolutionary period where we have to learn how to work in this interdependent world with new circumstances, because we are in a period of very rapid change.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you were saying in your statement it would be pure fantasy for anyone to speculate you might challenge Mr. Ford in the convention.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Right.

QUESTION: How would you characterize any speculation that you might challenge him before the convention?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The same way.

QUESTION: Does that mean you would not allow your name to be entered in any primary?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Absolutely. I have faced that already today once.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, could a Republican ticket headed by Ronald Reagan win the 1976 election?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You would have to ask the American people. This is a great free country and nobody can predict, and anybody who thinks he can is foolish. That is the strength of America. It is a free country and everybody has got a secret ballot.

When I ran for office, I never would speculate as to whether I was going to win or not, because I thought it was presumptuous as far as the American people are concerned. I still feel that way.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, in your statement you say for anyone to have speculated that you might challenge the President at the convention is pure fantasy.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We just covered that, but that is what I said. This gentleman just asked a question on it, but that is what I said.

QUESTION: In saying that, sir, it is you who refuse to rule out the possibility that you would run in '76.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Pardon me?

I made the statement. This is my statement, nobody else's.

QUESTION: I understand that. But you are saying that for anyone to speculate is pure fantasy, and yet it is you who refuse to rule out the possibility that you would run in '76?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We have discussed this question before. You know exactly what the answer is and the reasons for it. There is nothing that I can add.

QUESTION: What I don't understand, sir --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you didn't understand it before, there is no way I can help you now because we have covered it once before.

Thank you. The next question.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what do you think is the biggest problem that is facing American agriculture today?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Energy.

QUESTION: What can we do about this?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let's put it this way: There is a shortage of gas. If there is a cold winter, a very cold winter, and industry will find itself regulated so that gas will be allocated to homes -- this is what always happens -- then industry, because they don't use a large amount of gas, most of them, but it is essential, they will undoubtedly then move in and buy up propane gas.

Propane gas is what you use in the farm country to dry your crops. You also use it to heat your homes. So that if industry bought up large quantities of propane gas, you could find yourself in a very serious situation. That is why I think energy; plus the energy cost for your tractors and for the whole operation.

I mean, some people don't realize that farms today run on energy just the way industry does and homes do. I think it is the key and that it is essential that this country develop as rapidly as possible self-sufficiency.

We have the resources. We have got to unleash the creative force of private enterprise to produce this.

Again going back to the question that this gentleman asked before, we are also in a new situation here. Energy has been a free market operation on an international basis.

When the President said that our goal as a Nation was to develop self-sufficiency, he was really limiting the free market operation as far as production of energy is concerned to the United States. This cuts across a long history of tradition.

Therefore, there is again a new problem of relationships between government and private enterprise, and this is part of the confusion that has caused the delay in the passage of effective action requested by the President by the Congress.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, you are leaving the farms partly because of the cost of land and inheritance taxes.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is right.

QUESTION: Do you have some ideas about how we are going to keep them on the farm?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. But I think you are touching on one of the most important problems with the tremendous investment now that is required to operate a farm; and, with the inheritance tax figures what they are, the problem of how do sons inherit a farm, or daughters, members of the family, inherit from their parents and pay the income tax is an extremely serious one for the future stability of agriculture in this country.

I don't have an answer, but the start of any solution to any problem is understanding the problem. I understand the problem. We have got to find an answer or we are not going to have the continuity, because I have to believe that the majority of these wonderful young men and women who are out here in this convention hall are young people who have grown up on farms and who would like to stay on those farms with their families. So you put your finger on an extremely sensitive, delicate problem that must be solved.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, looking beyond 1976, can we assume that Nelson Rockefeller would no longer want to be the President of the United States?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Don't assume anything in life. I have learned that. Don't make any flat commitments.

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: All I can say is my one interest is serving this country and that there are many ways you can serve your country. I will continue to serve my country in whatever way seems to be available and can be useful.

QUESTION: You sought the Presidency for so long. Would you still, if the conditions were right, like to be President? Do you feel you could be most effective there?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have no comment because I think you are getting so far out in the future that it is just impossible to make any intelligent speculation. Therefore, I will just leave it that my interest is in continuing to serve the country in whatever capacity.

There are lots of capacities. This wonderful group of young people here are serving their country in a tremendously important capacity, the Future Farmers of America. The farms are the heart and strength of this country.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you said in your speech that we live in the greatest country in the world and one of the big reasons for this is we are also the greatest agricultural nation in the world.

In the Office of Education we have only two people working in agriculture education. How in the world can you justify that considering what dependence we will have on the American farmer in the future?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think a very simple answer, as far as I am concerned, is the Department of Education obviously hasn't had much to do with the development of agriculture in America. If you have gotten this far on your own with all of the other support, why do you need some bureaucrats in the Department of Education?

QUESTION: Are you saying, Mr. Vice President, that the agricultural education in high schools of this country aren't having any effect on American agriculture?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You said the Department of Education and not high schools. I assume you meant Washington.

QUESTION: There are only two people working on agricultural education for the Office of Education.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is what I thought you said.

QUESTION: That seems a bit unrealistic considering we should be receiving more guidance from the Federal Government in what we should be doing in our local high schools.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I will tell you, you have done awful well, and the Extension Service I thought was one of the major areas by which new developments were transmitted and made available in terms of education to farmers.

In my State, that is New York, the Board of Regents determined what the schools were going to do. We didn't ask Washington what we should teach in our schools. We believed that education should be controlled locally. We would have resented interference by the Federal Government in our educational system.

I don't know how you feel. I don't know what State you come from. But I would assume that your State wants to control its own educational system.

All I can say is what I see here today at this convention says to me, and what I see in the way of any country that can increase by 60 million acres -- did I say 60 or 40?

QUESTION: Sixty.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: -- 60 million acres in three years has got to have something going for it. So if it is two people who did it in the Department of Education, we ought to give them credit. But I have a feeling it has come from somewhere else.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you say that you support President Ford.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: You see no doubt he will be nominated.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Will you be actively campaigning for him in the next year?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: What is the future of agriculture right now?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Better than it has ever been. The real problem I think is not this country. This country can produce the food and they can sell all the food they can produce, and the only problem is two things.

One is that there are going to be many countries who are not going to have the exchange to buy the food, and that their populations are growing faster than they are producing food themselves. That is why I mentioned in my speech the fact that one of the great challenges to the young people in agriculture, the scientists, our whole system is how can we work with other countries in helping them to irrigate their deserts and to develop their agricultural production so that they can get their own food.

I think any nation today has got to give very serious consideration, if they have got a big population growth, are they matching it with major agricultural production.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, in your statement you mention all candidates. Are you including President Ford in

there as well?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

I am not including President Ford; his campaign organization.

QUESTION: Did you discuss this advice with the President before you issued this statement?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. But I discussed the situation in New York with the President.

QUESTION: I am still unclear. Has there been some indication to the New York delegation that somebody would try to confront it or fractionate it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I know, Mr. Quinn, that you are in television and, therefore, I don't know whether you read the papers.

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: But if you read the papers, you would have seen a story in a prominent New York paper which said that, I shall leave nameless, an unnamed County Chairman in New York City of the Republican Party said as a result of the speeches that have been made about New York City, he was about to shift his support to another candidate.

Now, you being a very sophisticated political reporter who has spent many years in Albany, New York, a center of enlightenment and public life --

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am sure you will understand the significance of that as a straw in the wind.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, when you discussed this with the President, did you pass on any words of warning that he just might lose New York State in the primaries?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir.

QUESTION: Do you think he could win New York State?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I told you, I think he is going to be the next nominee of the party, so I have already expressed my opinion.

QUESTION: Sir, will you rule yourself out as a possible candidate in 1976?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Connie, I don't believe it. Back on the same question.

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: What if the unbelievable

happened, a tragedy, during the next 14 months? Would you want me to rule myself out?

QUESTION: We are talking about the possibility --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, you are not. You are talking about a flat statement, and I have already given you my answer.

QUESTION: What about this situation --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Next question. I am sorry. I have covered this with you day after day.

QUESTION: There is a report that the Ford Administration is softening its attitude of aid to New York. Does the fact New York is going uncommitted and the fact you are ruling yourself out as Vice President have anything to do with the change in the Ford Administration's attitude?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. My position on the President's, what you say, reported softening in attitude could be very simply explained this way: His concern was that the Federal Government cannot bail out New York City or any other city because if you start "bailing out" a city, then any city would say, "If you bail this city out, why don't we spend more money and they will bail us out."

That is an impossible situation that would be disastrous for the country. He has been dubious as to whether there was sufficient political muscle or discipline to be able to take the tough steps voluntarily by the city and the State to restore fiscal integrity in New York and a balanced budget.

As a New Yorker, I have felt that they could do that and they would do it. His position was that if they didn't do it, then there had to be a change in the bankruptcy laws because they do not apply to cities. They are mostly for corporations.

It would be a very serious situation. That is why he recommended a change in the bankruptcy laws. Everybody has agreed on the need for that, but he was the only one who had the courage to go out and say so.

All I said was that if the city took the steps and did restore its fiscal integrity and produced a balanced budget by 1978, it would have this difficult situation to bridge over these short-term notes for three years; and that I thought if they did take it, that he then might reconsider his position. That is the big if and that is the situation that exists.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford has said he would veto any legislation to bail out New York. William Simon is talking about as much as \$2 billion in assisting New York.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Just take what I said, which is that if they take the steps which are necessary to restore fiscal integrity -- Mr. Simon is not going to make these decisions. It is President Ford that has the authority.

But President Ford does not have the capacity unless Congress passes legislation. So that it is all very well to speculate about President Ford. The Congress of the United States has to act.

I have got to say to you in this intimate gathering here that there is a great similarity between what the Congress of the United States has been doing about spending and what New York City has been doing. The only difference is that Congress can print money and New York City can't.

Congress is running a deficit of \$60 billion to \$70 billion. This is why the President has been vetoing these measures. He has had the courage to do it. So those in Congress who point a finger at New York in scorn should take a look at themselves.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

(Applause.)

END (AT 12:25 P.M. CST)