

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 20, 1975

Office of the Vice President
(Wichita, Kansas)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE MCCONNELL AIR FORCE BASE
WICHITA, KANSAS

(AT 6:25 P.M. CST)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is a pleasure to be here with you. I want to apologize for being late. I am just glad to be back in Kansas two times within a week and to have the opportunity of being with you on this significant historic moment with 14 Republican Governors as we celebrate our 200th anniversary of the 13 founding States.

QUESTION: What do you think of the entry of Ronald Reagan into the race?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is not exactly a surprise. But I am sure he is taking this thing very seriously.

QUESTION: Do you take it seriously?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, of course, I am supporting President Ford, and I have every confidence he is going to be the nominee of the party.

QUESTION: Do you think Ronald Reagan has a chance of winning the nomination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Personally I don't.

QUESTION: If he should win the nomination, would you support him?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, that is the kind of speculation I am not going to make because I am supporting President Ford; and if I answered your question, it would give credence to the concept that he might win, which I don't think is a possibility.

QUESTION: If you don't answer the question, you will leave open the possibility you might not support him.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, because I want to support Ford.

QUESTION: Will it hurt the party?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't really think so.

QUESTION: Will you support the nominee of the ticket, whoever it is?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is going to be Mr. Ford. It is going to be him. That is my candidate.

QUESTION: But if it is not Mr. Ford. Will it be

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bad for the country if Mr. Ford is not reelected?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir. I think so. I think he is great.

QUESTION: Would it be bad for the party if anybody but Mr. Ford becomes a nominee?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I will tell you. I think that the two-party -- I believe very deeply in the two-party system. I think the great strength -- and I am going to talk about this tomorrow here with the Republican Governors -- the great strength of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party is the fact that we have been representative of a broad spectrum of political thought, of social problems, economic problems; and I think the Republican Party, to be effective and to win in elections, has got to be in the middle.

Therefore, you can't get caught up with a minority of a minority. You can't get into cults of personalities.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford is in the middle?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think so.

QUESTION: Do you think that Ronald Reagan will at least cause the President problems?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I think now that I am out, I don't believe it will cause him any problems.

QUESTION: You don't think that he has anything to worry about as far as the nomination is concerned?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, if you are running, you are always worried. That is a healthy thing. You don't want to take life for granted. If you do, that is a bad sign. Let's say he has a healthy tension. Let's put it that way.

QUESTION: You have talked about the restriction the new campaign law puts on your campaign.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is the truth.

QUESTION: Is that going to keep you from putting in a good word for the President out here?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have not answered any question you might ask. But I am not campaigning. I can't campaign because I can only spend a thousand dollars.

QUESTION: Bo Callaway is here and others are here.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is wonderful.

QUESTION: Is that going to bar you from participating in any subtle politicking out here?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I want to tell you, I am very careful to live within the law. So when you say

subtle, I don't know whether you are trying to imply that I evade the law, which I wouldn't.

QUESTION: I withdraw that; bar you from participating in any politicking.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It will not bar me from supporting Republicans and raising funds for Republicans. But I cannot spend both in time and money more than a thousand dollars' worth in terms of expenses for the President until he is nominated, unless it is paid for by the Ford Campaign Committee.

QUESTION: What does that mean out here? Does that literally mean you can't go up to somebody and say, "I would like to have you stay with the President"?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Absolutely not. I cannot say that.

QUESTION: Do you think the President is going to help bail out New York at the last moment?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Nobody is going to bail out New York. Just forget that word bail out. If New York City balances its budget and restores fiscal integrity, then they have got a three-year -- but they can't do it until 1978 -- then they have that bridge period of three years to pay off those short-term notes, translate them into long-term notes.

They are going to need some kind of Federal help, in my opinion, to form a guarantee or whatever it is, if you do that. Now the President has not been sure they are going to do that. Therefore, he said you had better change the bankruptcy laws.

He is the only one that has had the guts to say that. Everybody else has been coming down with bills, the Mayor, the Governor, to Washington and passing out bills to the Congressmen saying, "We have to change the bankruptcy laws because they only apply to corporations and not to municipalities."

The President came out openly and said it. I think it was healthy. We just cannot have the Federal Government step in and take over the responsibilities of municipalities where they spend more money than they have. Otherwise, every municipality in the country would say, "Why should we worry? The Federal Government just takes up our check."

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the Election Committee said today until January 1, the Republican National Committee could pick up President Ford's travel bills for party building.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Great.

QUESTION: Does that give you a license to speak out for him?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It has nothing to do with me. Unfortunately for me, the Vice President being less important was not included in the legislation. They seem to have overlooked him. So that the legislation is rather silent on the subject of the Vice President.

But it does say that as a citizen -- as a citizen -- no citizen can spend more than a thousand dollars in support of a candidate for the President during the nomination period.

QUESTION: Does it frustrate you?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, not in the slightest. No, sir. I can say that in talking about the issues and his position on the issues, as I have, that I am delighted to do it. This is substantive discussion.

I have been going around the country on these Domestic Council hearings and we have been discussing issues.

QUESTION: Is that it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Listen, I read the law and I stick within the law. You have got no problem.

QUESTION: Would you, in your First Amendment rights, express your opinion?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Listen, after I have been through what I did in getting confirmed, I don't feel I have any rights left. Five hundred FBI agents investigating me for six months, forget it.

QUESTION: Just let me ask you, is the Republican Party going to be hurting if anybody but Gerald Ford is the nominee?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think he is the best nominee for the Republican Party, and he has got the best chance of being elected, and I think it is important he should be.

QUESTION: What if he doesn't make it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think the others are going to be elected.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, if President Ford should falter --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Falter, what does that mean? What do you mean by falter?

QUESTION: If he is beaten by Ronald Reagan.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is a possibility. Idle speculation.

QUESTION: Would you oppose Ronald Reagan as Mr. Ford's running mate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't oppose anybody as his running mate. That is his privilege. I have said for nine months, ten months, however long I have been there, that I was not a candidate. The President should have the right, when he is nominated by the party, as I expect he will be, then he should say whom he would like to have as his running mate, because he would then select him on the basis of who he felt could be most helpful, most useful to the country and him. Whoever that is, that is his choice.

QUESTION: You have always said that the party should broaden its base.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I still mean that.

QUESTION: But Ronald Reagan as President Ford's running mate would not be doing that.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You know it. It has a big impact in Hollywood, or the late night shows.

QUESTION: But wouldn't you say that having a conservative as Ford's running mate would not be especially good for the President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, in terms of broadening the base, I think you have got something.

QUESTION: Do you think Senator Percy was correct when he said Governor Reagan just wasn't competent to be President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I think that is going a little far. I mean, who knows? Who knows? We have selected a lot of interesting people to be President of the United States. One really didn't know about their background. They have risen to the opportunity and the responsibility, so one could not judge ahead of time. That is the democratic system.

QUESTION: Kansas operates on a cash flow basis. Do you think that will get closer for the 1976 --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Who knows? Take it as it comes.

QUESTION: One other thing, Mr. Vice President. You saw an opening statement about the decriminalization of marijuana.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes.

QUESTION: How do you feel about that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: As I said, I think that if the founding fathers had been on marijuana, this country would never have been founded. I think it is debilitating. It takes the drive, the creativity, the enthusiasm out of people who use it, and it doesn't affect other people, but --

END (AT 6:40 P.M. CST)