

POOL REPORT

President Ford's reception for Republican National Committee Thursday, February 26, 1976 at 6:10 P.M. (State Rooms)

The White House reception for the Republican National Committee was attended by 250 guests including the Republican State Chairman, Republican State Committeewoman, and Republican State Committeeman (many accompanied by their spouses) from every State and Puerto Rico, Guam, and Virgin Islands. (They are attending 4-day working executive committee meetings (Wednesday through Saturday) at the Sheraton Motor Hotel in Arlington, Va.

Guests gathered in the State Dining Room (all furniture except side tables had been removed...a small platform with standing mike was visible).

President Ford and Mary Louise Smith (Republican National Committee Chairman) arrived in the State Dining Room at 6:18 P.M....long, loud applause...President gave short welcoming speech. In it he said:

"It is wonderful to see nothing but good Republicans in the White House." (laughter and applause)

"Betty and I are very grateful that you all came and we are most anxious that you relax and enjoy yourselves. We welcome you to this really wonderful place. Unfortunately Betty is traveling...she likes to travel and she just happened to pick a place at random called Florida (laughter) She asked me to express to all of you her very warm welcome. Let me take just a minute or two before we all go into the East Room for a reception and a few refreshments."

"There are three things that I think are vitally important that we all have to look at:

"1. What are we doing to convince a substantial majority of 215 million Americans that they ought to vote for a Republican candidate and a Republican policy? I think we have a policy that we are working on both at home and abroad to convince the majority of the American people that they ought to vote for our policies and our candidate."

"2. I think our policies ought to reflect what will make you enthusiastic to go out and support them in every State in the Union. I think that what we are trying to do both at home and abroad should give you that kind of enthusiasm."

"3. The things we're seeking to do here in the White House ought to help you recruit the best candidates at the local and at the State levels. The kind of candidates that will be proud to support us and we will be proud to support them...because the party must have the broad, elected bases of people at the local and the State as well as the Federal level."

"Let me just take a minute or two to tell you what we are doing. You are familiar with circumstances better than a year ago. This country was facing some very difficult problems :-inflation--much too high--12 to 14 percent; unemployment--about to burgeon--employment about to go down."

"If we look at what's transpired in the last 12 months we can be very optimistic that we have overcome the worst ravages of the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930's."

"We've cut inflation in half; employment is going up; unemployment is going down; capital goods expenditures are going up; real personal earnings are increasing...there isn't a single indicator that isn't improving. The trends are all good...and let me assure you we're going to continue to get good economic news. And the American people believe, I think, that the government that does this...not through quick fixes but

through solid policies...those are the policies that are in the best interest of the United States...and to protect our national interests.."

"The facts are that in the last two years I've submitted to the Congress and to the American people the two largest defense budget requests in the history of the United States in peacetime."

"Those requested appropriations--for the best military personnel, the strongest weapons, the best planning body--Army, Navy, Airforce, and Marines--will give us the capability to deter war and to preserve our National security." (long, loud applause)

"This kind of a program should reassure our allies on a worldwide basis. And this kind of a program should invite cooperation from any party that we negotiate with. Let me assure you that this Administration will stand tall and strong in seeking peace through strength." (loud applause)

"Let me just close with a final comment--in the State of the Union Message, the Budget Message, and the Economic Report we laid out some basic criteria--what we are trying to do. We are seeking to get an appropriate balance in the following areas: We want a balance between those who pay the taxes and those who are the beneficiaries. We want a proper balance between the Federal government and State and Local units of government. We want a proper balance in the distribution of the necessary funding for the security of the country and for the necessary domestic program. We want a proper balance for the freedom of 215 million Americans as they face the problems of government. Freedom... ~~peace~~ peace... strength--they're all in our program both at home and abroad."

"And with that kind of a program we will be able to convince a majority of Americans on November 2nd that our policy ought to continue. We'll be able to get all of you enthusiastic as you go out and sell what's been done. We will recruit candidates...we'll elect candidates... so they can help us in the years ahead." (loud applause)

Following conclusion of speech, President Ford and Mary Louise Smith shook hands and greeted everyone just outside East Room. In the East Room three huge tables along North, East, and South walls, were set up buffet style. Two (bars); One (food)--large bowls fresh shrimp, dozens of varieties of snacks; deviled eggs; bite-size, open-face meat-rolls, crab meat, etc.

From the White House the guests were taken in buses to Louise Gore's home in Potomac, Maryland, where she and Bob Carter hosted a buffet-dinner honoring all past Republican National Committee Chairmen (they go back to the 1940's).

On Friday night they are all invited to Vice-President Rockefeller's residence from 6 to 7:30 P.M.

Some comments:

Mrs. Rosemary Ginn, Columbia, Missouri (she is Republican National Committee-woman): "We have not elected any delegates yet."

Mrs. Thelma Rogers, Charlotte, N.C. (Rep. Natl. Committeewoman): "It's pretty evenly balanced 'tween Ford and Reagan. You can't tell at this point. Governor James Holshouser is backing Ford. Senator Helms is backing Reagan. We all thought New Hampshire would be close--just like it was."

Mrs. Sarita Gonzalez, (Rep. Natl. Committeewoman), San Juan, Puerto Rico: "I'm sure it will be all Ford.. We have eight delegates. Our State convention is this Sunday."

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Mrs. Frances Shipman, Santa Fe, N.M. (Rep. Natl. Committeewoman): "I think Ford will be heavier with the delegates than Reagan but I don't know. We have meetings going on in New Mexico now to elect delegates to the N.M. State convention. There is the primary convention, election of delegates to the National convention, platform convention, and the National convention. I thought the New Hampshire vote would be close but it might have been the reverse in New Hampshire."

Eldon Ulmer, Anchorage, Alaska (Rep. Natl. Committeeman): "At this point it is uncertain. In Anchorage it may be a shade towards Reagan. The State (Alaska) is a Democratic State ~~if~~ you look at the State legislature. but we have a Republican Governor. 2 of the 3 U.S. Representatives in Congress are Republicans (one U.S. Senator and one House of Representatives). Scoop Jackson is strong in Alaska because Washington (State)'s closeness to Alaska .. but not as strong as Republican candidates."

Mrs. Elsa Sandstrom, Stonyford, California (Rep. Natl. Committeewoman): "I feel the same way as a radio announcement--'Reagan Republicans were two-to-one over Ford Republicans in California.' I feel it may be a horse-race across the country--like in New Hampshire--close. I'm a Reagan supporter. Of 50,000 members of the Federation of California Republican Women, 95 percent are estimated for Reagan (no poll was taken). They tear the roof off for Reagan. We need Independents and a good share of Democrats to win any election. Governor Reagan won in California by one million votes where Republicans are outnumbered 3½ to 2. The second time he ran (for Governor) he won by more than 600,000 votes. Charles Reed (he is Rep. National Committeeman) and Paul Haerle (he is Rep. State Chairman) are both for Ford."

Bob Gosman (Rep. Natl. Committeeman), Casper, Wyoming: "It's too early.. but now a little more Reagan than Ford."

Mrs. Estelle Stacey Carrier (she is Secretary of Republican National Committee), Douglas Wyoming: "We will send an uncommitted delegation to Kansas City. We always traditionally send an uncommitted delegation."

Mrs. Nelda Barton, Corbin, Kentucky (Rep. Natl. Committeewoman): "I would say a couple of months ago it would have gone for Reagan.. right now it is a toss up. Reagan has the organization in Kentucky. Former Governor Louie Nunn heads the campaign for Reagan. He has every county organized with a chairman in every county. There are 120 counties in Kentucky. Ford does not have the organization in Kentucky at this time. He might catch up. Ford needs organization. He needs a State chairman. His "Campaign for Ford" has not gotten off the ground. I wasn't surprised about New Hampshire being so close. We have 37 delegates. The first presidential preference ~~primary~~ primary is May 25."

Mrs. Priscilla Humphreys, Huntington, West Virginia: "At this point it is difficult to say... primary is in May. At this point it looks like Ford might win. We have 28 delegates. Ford will carry majority of delegates."

Rogers Morton: "I believe the score at the end will be worth the effort."

Tom Evans, Wilmington Delaware (Rep. Natl. Committeeman): "President Ford has a very good momentum due to his victory in New Hampshire. Delaware has 17 delegates. It's too early to tell. I think that the race in New Hampshire certainly gave a great start. There is no Ford State Chairman. I think the President has done a fine job in the area of domestic affairs. I'm very pleased with the inflation rate." (Evans plans to run for House seat in Congress)

Jack Stiles, (President Ford Committee): "If you take the Key states.. and after all it's delegates that count... we are very strong in all the Key states... Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, .. these are Key states because they represent a large number of delegates and they are in effect in the center of the nominating process.. timewise and according to how you call the roll. They are good solid middle of the issue states.. middle of the roll-call.. In these pivotal states we are in good ~~shape~~ shape."