

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEBRUARY 28, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Boca Raton, Florida)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

SPANISH RIVER PARK

5:20 P.M.. EST

THE PRESIDENT: As I said, it is delightful to be here in the Spanish Gardens at Boca Raton with my good friend Herb Burke. I think we have had a very, very successful day. It exceeds our expectations despite the slight inclement weather. The crowds have been tremendous. The reception has been warm, and I think we have momentum that is just going to move and move and move and all to the good.

Now, I will be glad to answer any questions.

QUESTION: Mr. President, looking ahead to the March 9 primary here in Florida, who do you see as the Democratic to watch? Who do you feel is going to be the one? Who is the most serious threat in the Democratic Party?

THE PRESIDENT: I really haven't paid much attention to it. I have said repeatedly, and I see no reason to change, that my good friend, Hubert Humphrey, will probably be the nominee. Everybody else is in a horse race, and he will come from behind and take over and they are just wasting a lot of time.

QUESTION: To follow that up, sir, you said that the other day as well and that seems to suggest, since he wasn't in New Hampshire, and an unauthorized write-in campaign for many sort fizzled up there, that the New Hampshire Democratic primary didn't amount to much. Are you satisfied with your victory in the Republican primary there?

THE PRESIDENT: As I recall, Hubert got 6 percent of the vote, and I got 51 percent. There is quite a difference.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you have any reason to believe that Castro is going to intervene anywhere as a result of what you have said?

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: No, but I think it is very appropriate for me to have said what I said, and I meant it very literally.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am sorry, I didn't hear Helen's question, but if it had to do with Cuba, I wanted to ask you about Cuba also, and that is, down the road, if Fidel Castro does pull his troupes out of Africa, isn't it going to be necessary for us to try to get along with Cuba as we try to get along with China and the Soviet Union?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think we ought to speculate. Naturally, I think it would be very wise for them to withdraw their troops from Angola, and any other parts of Africa, but what happens after that, I won't speculate at this time.

QUESTION: Mr. President, what are the measures that you said -- the appropriate measures that you viewed as taking against Cuba? After all, measures didn't stop Cuba in Angola.

THE PRESIDENT: It could have if the Congress had been willing to appropriate the necessary money and give us the necessary authority.

QUESTION: Do you think Congress is any more likely to go along with any further measures you recommended?

THE PRESIDENT: I would hope so because, you know, once they make a mistake, they won't repeat it.

QUESTION: Mr. President, where did you get the 12 percentage margin that you had gained?

THE PRESIDENT: Helen asked me where this increase in our percentage vote came to the extent of 12 percent.

As I understand my opponent's campaign manager a few weeks ago was saying that they were going to win two to one, which is 66 to 67 percent. I understand he has now adjusted it downward to 55 percent, so if my mathematics are good, old or new, I think it's 12 percent. (Laughter) So we have picked up that many percentage points in a pretty quick hurry.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the party for Reagan has said that if it goes for Mr. Reagan here in Florida, it might be the end of you. How do you feel about this?

THE PRESIDENT: That is a very ridiculous and certainly not an accurate statement. I have said repeatedly I am entering every one of the primaries. I regret that others have not done so. They pick and choose the ones they want to participate in.

MORE

We are going to win, and I think we will not only win with 31, we have a good start. I haven't lost an election out of Michigan, and I have won some in Michigan, so I just think we are going to keep the momentum going, and I see nothing that would change under any circumstances the prospects of our winning in Kansas City and being successful in November.

QUESTION: Mr. President, if Governor Wallace does not get the Democratic nomination, do you expect him to run on a third-party ticket against you?

THE PRESIDENT: I would have no way of knowing.

QUESTION: If he does, do you think that would hurt you?

THE PRESIDENT: Since I don't think it is going to happen, from what I read, not what I know, I don't think it will have any impact whatsoever.

QUESTION: Mr. President, if Governor Reagan is so unqualified for the Presidency, why would you accept him as a Vice President? Doesn't this kind of downgrade the Vice Presidency? So many Vice Presidents have become Presidents, as you know.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't said anything other than that it was conceivable that he might be on the ticket. I haven't made that decision.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you talked a lot about momentum. Can you tell us exactly what it is, where you find the momentum, where you see it?

THE PRESIDENT: We got quite a bit of momentum, and, up in New Hampshire, because they expected to win, I read in some columns, and I read elsewhere a week or two before the campaign in New Hampshire they expected to win by 8 percent of the vote. They lost 10 percent almost overnight. I think that is an indication of momentum, and anybody who was down here on the trip in Florida two weeks ago and anybody who has been here today, I can't believe doesn't see good crowds and intense feelings, strong indications of support. And we get the same result in polls that are taken elsewhere. We have the momentum going by any standard that you use and when you have it, the opposition just can't stop you.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you consider yourself the underdog in the Florida primary right now?

THE PRESIDENT: I think we are going to win, so I am not the underdog.

QUESTION: As of now you are ahead?

THE PRESIDENT: In my opinion.

QUESTION: Mr. President, how crucial is Florida for you?

THE PRESIDENT: Every State is important.

QUESTION: Have you considered the possibility of Reagan meeting you in the Florida primary, and what would you do?

THE PRESIDENT: Since I expect to win, we only look for what we can do to make certain that that takes place. I haven't considered any other option.

QUESTION: Mr. President, to go back to the African situation for a minute, Secretary Kissinger says we must take every necessary measure to prevent the same kind of thing happening in Rhodesia -- civil war, guerilla warfare, intervention -- that happened in Angola.

Will you ask Congress for money or any other measures in Rhodesia?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not familiar with any statement that Secretary Kissinger made as precise as you have indicated, so since I don't know of such a statement being made, I don't think I should comment on it.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there has been a lot of the Presidential candidates, particularly in the Democratic ranks, who showed up on lists as getting illegal contributions from oil companies. I know your name showed up, I think it was on the Ashland list, for \$1,000 or more.

Could you tell us what you did with that money? Did you know it was an illegal campaign contribution?

THE PRESIDENT: All of that was reported to the Senate committee that investigated my qualifications for the Vice Presidency. It was answered fully on the record. I suggest you go back and look at the record.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, Govenor Reagan described his showing in New Hampshire as a victory. What would your definition for defeat be for you in Florida, less than 50 percent?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think any particular race where you finish second does much good for you. And since I don't expect to finish second, I don't consider any other options.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you have suggested that Hubert Humphrey would probably be the nominee of the Democratic Party. I am wondering -- two questions -- first, why do you think he will be the nominee, and secondly, every time you get a chance to mention that name, you seem to suggest you would kind of like to run against Hubert. Do you think he would be easy to beat?

THE PRESIDENT: I think we are going to win in November, and it's just a matter of judgment on my part, Wally, that I think when you look at the 11 Democratic candidates and Hubert, who makes the 12th unannounced candidate, I just think he is going to end up getting the nomination.

QUESTION: Why?

THE PRESIDENT: I will sit down and take a little time with you some time, Wally.

QUESTION: Mr. President, for the last two weekends, we have heard you attack Ronald Reagan, and rather harshly, today --

THE PRESIDENT: I have not attacked him today at all.

QUESTION: That is right. That's my question. Why not this weekend, sir? Your pace seems to be a little different.

MORE

QUESTION: Question?

THE PRESIDENT: In the first place, I think your basic premise is not entirely correct. As I recall last weekend, the last time I was campaigning, I didn't mention my individual's name, but if you wanted to construe that without the name being mentioned, of course that is literary sense. (Laughter)

Now, what we are trying to do is to point out to all these fine people in Florida that we have a good program both at home and abroad, We have the momentum going. It is the kind of a program that we think is good for America in the next term, and we aren't really concerned about what other candidates are doing or saying at the present time. We will sell our program affirmatively, and I think we have done quite well.

QUESTION: Mr. President, if you win here and you win in Illinois, do you think Governor Reagan should withdraw rather than carrying it on because he can't stay in contention, seeing it is three in a row?

THE PRESIDENT: I really don't think I should give any advice. That is a matter of judgment for himself, and I think it would be presumptuous for me to involve myself.

QUESTION: Would you consider him less of a threat if that were to happen?

THE PRESIDENT: It would mean we would have, what, three more States, and those delicate numbers add up pretty fast, Ann.

QUESTION: Mr. President, could you announce the qualities that you would like to see in the man you choose as Vice President?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think at this point I am ready to sit down and define with definiteness the qualifications. I made one selection. I think he has been a first-class Vice President, and he has been a loyal and dedicated partner as far as I am concerned.

But, I think we have to analyze the situation as we get closer to the convention in Kansas City and, at that time, we will be prepared to make a specific recommendation.

Thank you all very much, and have a good day and a good night.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 5:35 P.M. EST)