

~~FILE~~ POOL REPORT PFC RECEPTION WHITE HOUSE APRIL 12, 1976

Texas was very much on the mind of Rogers Morton, the President's new campaign manager. I broke through a circle of admiring EOB females and got from him the following intelligence:

First, I asked him if Ford is really trailing in Texas, or is all this talk just figured to be good propaganda.

"Well," he said, "Some pretty good people say we are behind, and others say we are ahead. I think it averages out about even. I'd say, right now, that it's too close to call. I'll have better information along toward the end of the week. But we're working hard."

Elliott Richardson was likewise surrounded. And when he finally noticed ~~me~~ that I had a pen and a notebook he excused himself and stuck out his hand.

"Are you digging up a lot of good economic statistics for the next primary?" I asked.

"We don't dig up statistics," he protested. "We just report them. And the best thing we have to report now is that President Ford has restored confidence that inflation can be turned back."

He smilingly brushed aside the suggestion that the deadlock between the President and Congress has given the economy a chance to correct itself, without any help. "It was the president's policies that made the difference," Richardson said. "He vetoed the bills that would have made things worse, and gave the people of the country the clear impression that a man with a knowledge of what's best for the country is in charge."

At the beginning of the reception there was a sit-down speech by the President in the East Room. It was a "sit-down" affair for everyone that is, except Mrs. Ford. She accompanied the President to the platform, but nobody had ~~it~~ remembered to provide a chair. So, after the President started talking she just stood there smiling until Rog Morton finally stepped down and took a chair away from somebody in the audience.

Flatly contradicting his own campaign manager, Ford told his staffers: "Let me say we are behind in Texas. But I came away with the distinct feeling that we could surprise them down there. We've got a chance to win. And if we can do well in Texas, we'll have headway going."

His philosophy, he said, was "You prepare for the worst, because the best can take care of itself."

The President added that he thinks he can also score a surprise victory in Alabama and Georgia. And he added that he is still convinced he's going to get the nomination

Betty was the hit of the affair. In a short speech she said she had been telling her husband for years that the shortest speech is the best speech. "Make your point, and then run," she said. And that was the end of her speech. It looked like about 300 to 400 were there. Mostly from the EOB and White House, by all appearances

---Howard Norton---Pooler