

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 14, 1976

Office of the Vice President
(Des Moines, Iowa)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE DES MOINES MUNICIPAL AIRPORT
DES MOINES, IOWA

(AT 3:15 P.M. CST)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I like to be identified with your great Governor who has had a new honor listed to his services in the party and the country. He is Chairman of the Republican Platform Committee.

We are very proud of him. I am delighted to be in your State with him. He is an old friend.

I think, frankly, that his dedication to service will symbolize -- some of you can't remember, but when he first ran for Governor and had an airplane accident, he had a broken leg and he kept right on the campaign run. I remember it because I had the privilege of campaigning with him and for him.

GOVERNOR RAY: You have a good memory.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: So I am delighted to be here. And I would be delighted to answer any questions anyone has.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, Senator Clark of Iowa of the Foreign Relations Committee has introduced a bill in the Congress today prohibiting the President from making international commitments, treaties, and the like, without two-thirds vote of the Senate. What is your reaction to that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, if it would cripple the United States' ability to deal in this rapidly changing world -- I don't think it is contemplated in the Constitution of the United States. Frankly, I think it would be a very inhibiting factor in trying to preserve freedom and respect for human dignity in the world.

You asked me; that is what I think.

QUESTION: For whom are you campaigning today?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am campaigning for funds for the Republican Party in the State of Iowa.

QUESTION: Governor, do you have any reaction to the President's statement the other day that he would veto a grain inspection bill -- the Senate Bill that is -- by Hubert Humphrey and Dick Clark?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: To tell you the honest truth, I am not aware of the statement he made, nor am I aware of

MORE

the substance of the bill. So my reaction is not very well informed; because I just hear what you say but I don't know what is in the bill, so I don't know exactly what he is vetoing.

QUESTION: Do you think the grain inspection should be taken away from the companies? Apparently they do it at the present time.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, let's face it. If you go back to the founding fathers, they recognized that human weakness was a characteristic of the human race. We had great qualities, but we had a great weakness.

They set up our government system with the Executive and Legislative and Judiciary Branches in order to have a balance and to recognize that weakness and protect the people of the country.

I think mistakes are made by inspectors and all people in all walks of life. They are human weaknesses. We want to as much as possible correct and prevent them.

I don't think you can legislate integrity and I don't think you can legislate morality. I think that is something we each have to develop in and of ourselves, based on our own sense of meaning and worth of the individual. That is what sets our society off from others.

Now on this bill, I just honestly don't know what the substance of the bill is.

GOVERNOR RAY: They have already asked me. They have already got the answer. He wanted to see if you were going to say something different. I knew exactly what you were going to say.

I like also how you addressed the Vice President. I think once a Governor, always a Governor.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Listen, that is my security blanket.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, another question from the rear here. What is your reaction to the situation in Lebanon? Would you foresee any instance where the U.S. would intervene with troops or with the Mediterranean fleet?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Number one, I think it is a tragic situation that really we are witnessing partial destruction of a great nation with a 3,000 year history of civilization and great contributions to mankind.

Number two, I cannot conceive that under the circumstances that exist today, as they are evolving, any circumstances which would call for intervention by the U.S. with military force.

The United States has had representation over there.

MORE

All of the parties of interest, both internally and externally, are now working with the U.S. representative, and I think the United States made a major contribution in the last couple of months in reconciling these almost irreconcilable differences. And, hopefully, something constructive is going to come out of this that will result in preservation of the country and the avoidance of a war in the Middle East which, of course, would be the most tragic possible thing coming at this time.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, are you comfortable with your earlier decision not to be eligible for the Vice Presidency?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Totally; totally comfortable.

QUESTION: No second thoughts at all?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No; never more relaxed in my life.

QUESTION: How do you assess the Republicans' chances against whomever the Democrat candidate might be?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think the President is going to be nominated, and I think what Mr. Reagan has done has been very useful. It has kept the Republican Party alive and vital; and had it not been for that competition, I think there wouldn't have been the kind of balanced public attention to the two parties which I think is important in the democratic society.

Therefore, I think things are going well. When you get to the elections, if the economic situation continues to improve the way it has, and this is directly the result of the President's courage in vetoing some \$13 billion of increased expenditures which have been voted by the Congress, holding down inflation, reducing it down below 6 percent, so that the economy itself has started to move forward.

There are two million more people working now than there were a year ago. We have still got the need, because of the growth of the population, for another two million jobs. Each year we are going to have to have a million and a half new job opportunities to provide work for young people coming out of school and college.

But I think that the President has had the courage to do what he felt was right in the long-term best interest of our country, and that this is going to be recognized and appreciated by the people. I think he is in tune to the American people. If things continue as they are, which every indication would point to, then I think that he will be reelected.

QUESTION: Would you say Reagan is not in tune with the people?

MORE

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have to say that some of the statements that he has made did not seem to me to be in tune, first, with the facts and, then, number two, with the best interest of the country, and, number three, I don't think they are in tune with the people.

I think the people are in the middle in this country. I think that the movement in both parties has been to the center. That is where the people are. That is where the strength of this country always has been. Extremists of either the left or right have never succeeded. That was proven in the last 10 years, twice.

I think that the President is more reflective of that center position, that traditional position, based on traditional values, that are cherished by the American people and that are responsible for the strength of America.

QUESTION: What statements has Mr. Reagan made that are not in tune with the facts?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think some of the statements he has made about farm policy; I think some of the statements he has made about what happened in the State of California under his administration; and, well, I would concentrate on those two.

QUESTION: Could you elaborate more, sir?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I wouldn't care to at this point.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, a few months ago Howard Callaway was the focal point of a school of thought who thought half of the Rockefeller-Ford ticket might be a detriment to Republicans this year.

Do you have any thoughts in retrospect to Mr. Callaway stepping down as Chairman of the President's Committee?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Now, the retrospect applies to me or to Callaway?

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: His action is more recent than mine.

Listen, this is a free country. I think we are so fortunate, and everybody expresses themselves as they see it. I am sure he expressed himself as he saw it. I acted as I saw it. I think one just has to take these things as they come. This is the strength of America.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, President Ford is the last appointee of former President Richard Nixon. Do you think Watergate will be a factor in the election and people will remember that and the fact he was a Nixon

MORE

appointee and the pardon and everything else connected with Mr. Nixon?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I tell you, under the Constitution, the 25th Amendment, the President of the United States, in the event of a vacancy in the Vice Presidency, has to nominate someone; so he nominated -- he didn't appoint him -- he nominated him for the Vice Presidency. Then the Congress of the United States under the 25th Amendment has to scrutinize the nomination and vote.

Now had it been an appointment by the President period, then I think what you are indicating would be true. But President Ford was then scrutinized by a Democratic Congress, two-to-one Democratic control, and approved by that Congress.

So he is one of the few Presidents who has been nominated by one party and confirmed by another party. I think that that totally disassociates him from the Watergate situation.

QUESTION: How about the pardon? Do you think that will come back to haunt him?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think the pardon was an act of great courage and great faith in our country and our system, and a deep concern to keep this situation alive prevented the United States from focusing on the many current problems which we had before us, and that the past was the past. The hearings by the House Judiciary Committee, which I think will go down in history, have been monumental and I think proved the case; and that the President resigned; and to me that closed the book.

Now, you could have gone on. We could have dragged it out for months and months. But I am not sure it would have served a useful purpose other than to distract us from the many new problems which we had to concentrate on and which we had not been focusing on because of, first, the tragedy of the impact of Vietnam on our internal situation and on Watergate.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, during the 18 months prior to President Nixon's resignation, did Henry Kissinger either in formal or informal discussions with you indicate concern as to Mr. Nixon's mental or physical health or well-being?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not in the language that you are using.

QUESTION: What language did he use, then?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You have got a very comprehensive statement there and there is no question that during the Vietnam discussions the President of the United States, with the country feeling as it was and with a previous President having withdrawn from office because of

this pressure, was under tremendous pressure himself to try to do the right thing for the American people.

That was pressure. It was long hours and he worked long hours. Those are situations which the Secretary discussed. So that I have to say that he was under great physical strain due to the pressures of events -- but not in the terms in which you put it.

QUESTION: Did Mr. Kissinger ever mention anything about Mr. Nixon drinking heavily during the last few months of his Administration?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't even know he drank.

QUESTION: What do you think about the Woodward and Bernstein book?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I haven't read it.

QUESTION: Do you think there was any fact to it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I haven't read it. How can I have any judgment?

QUESTION: Did you read the Newsweek excerpts?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I have trouble keeping up with my own problems.

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: You said a while ago you think Mr. Ford will get the nomination.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Are you saying that your chances of getting the nomination are slim to nil?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I am supporting Mr. Ford, and the other is not even a consideration as far as I am concerned.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford is making predictions on the Democratic possible. Are you making predictions?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir; I never have. I never predicted or speculated on who would be my opponent when I was running or who would be the easiest or the most difficult to beat.

I just always felt that whoever the Democrats nominate would be difficult and that I would do my best to win, and that one vote over 40 percent would do the trick. Anything beyond that I would be grateful for. So I take that same attitude about the President.

QUESTION: What would be your opinion of a

MORE

Gerald Ford - Bob Ray ticket in the fall?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I can't imagine anything nicer. I am for Bob Ray for anything.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, some people campaigning for Congress in the Midwest have said that Secretary Kissinger is making the country's foreign policy rather than the Administration. What is your reaction to that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think that is correct. I think the President of the United States, under the Constitution, has the responsibility.

I know the procedures that are always followed. The Secretary of State puts up the options. He talks with the President almost daily; tells him the problems they face; these are the possible ways it can be approached, either in writing or conversation.

The President makes the decision. The Secretary carries it out. I think we are very fortunate to have a Secretary with the brilliance and the knowledge of history, with the ability to think conceptually, the ability to relate what is happening here with what is happening in other parts of the world, which is one of the most important things in this world in which we are becoming increasingly interdependent and in which there is an accelerating rate of change.

I think the President feels the same way about it.

QUESTION: If the President is reelected, do you think Secretary Kissinger will be interested in staying on?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You would have to ask him.

QUESTION: Has he indicated it to you?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: This is a very personal question you are asking me, and these are very personal questions between the President and the Secretary. I don't feel it would be up to me or appropriate, were I in a position, to anticipate what might be the situation six months or is it seven months from now. This is one of these things that even if you were asking me a question, I would say well, that is a bridge that we haven't come to yet, how can we cross it?

Thank you.

END (AT 3:30 P.M. CST)