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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
HUGH SCOTT
U.S. SENATOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA
AND
ROBERT H. MICHEL
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM ILLINOIS

THE BRIEFING ROOM

9:30 A.M. EST

MR. CARLSON: The President has just completed a 90-minute meeting with the GOP leadership and here to summarize that meeting and take your questions are Senator Scott and Congressman Michel.

Gentlemen.

SENATOR SCOTT: Ladies and gentlemen, Congressman Michel will talk about the first topic, which is the question of the authorization and appropriations on foreign assistance, and I will talk on the Federal Elections Commission Act on which the conferees will be meeting at 3 o'clock again today.

I defer to Bob since that was the first topic.

CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: Thank you, Senator Scott.

The President expressed real concern over the Foreign Aid Authorization Bill and the Appropriations Bill. The discussion really centered around those inhibitions in the Authorization Bill that really tend to limit the President in his authority to deal with many of these problems which he feels are his prerogative rather than the Congress'.

I think our overall judgment after the discussion was that there were good grounds for vetoing the Foreign Aid Authorization Bill and that that step ought to be taken as a preface to any appropriations bill on the same matter.

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Q Why? What was the reason for the judgment, sir?

CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: Well, because of the power in the Congressional concurrent resolution to block commercial sale of defense articles over \$25 million, to block an FMS or commercial sale of major defense equipment over \$7 million and to disapprove transfer to third countries of defense articles provided under this and prior foreign assistance legislation and then to terminate military assistance for a country which the Congress finds has violated any condition of the assistance. There were some others, too.

Q A country which violates what, sir?

CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: Any condition of assistance. And then that \$9 billion arms sales ceiling that the measure has in it. Then, of course, I think one of the most important ones that he underlined was termination of grant military under the military assistance program, and the MAAGs unless specifically authorized by the Congress, which, of course, just puts the Congress in the business of making each one of these determinations.

You would have a quota system like coffee agreements and what not if that kind of condition were to prevail, and I think that is what I am saying.

SENATOR SCOTT: More than that, that would give the Congress, at least in my view, -- some future Congress -- to, in effect, pull us out of South Korea without real consultation with the President on his views; he would have no remedy except to veto any action of the kind, and I doubt if he would even have that remedy in the way in which the legislation is framed, and in view of that it is questionable whether it is constitutional.

Q Excuse me. Could you back up just a minute? Did you say that there were good grounds for vetoing the authorization bill and that the step ought to be taken? Was that the President's feeling?

CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: Well, I think it was a general consensus that those who were there representing the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House and the Senate, that he probably should veto the Foreign Aid Authorization.

Q What was the President's response to that?

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CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: Well, he didn't affirmatively commit himself one way or another other than he had these grave concerns for it and if they were not corrected -- as a matter of fact, wanted to inquire whether or not it was still possible in the conference to make some serious changes, some significant changes.

I think the advice to the President was that it could not be done in the conference, that it would be much better for him to veto the legislation, go back to the full Committee and have it re-worked there, because in the conference there are too many political nuances there that can't be resolved, apparently.

Q What is the total in that Mr. Michel?

CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: The total figure, I am afraid I do not have it.

SENATOR SCOTT: Could I go on with the FEC?

Q I have another question, Senator. I am awfully sorry.

Did aid to Israel come up today and report some compromise on the transition?

CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: Well, only in the sense that earlier we had made a whip count in the House with respect to the transitional quarter and I told the President that insofar as our Members were concerned, there was good support for his position, that the President had really earmarked for Israel in this last two years nearly \$4.7 billion which surely was sufficient, including the transitional quarter.

Q The reason I asked the question is that Senator Case is quoted in the Post today as saying a compromise is being thought of, about \$300 million would be given in loans to the Israelis. Apparently, --

CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: That specifically did not come up except that I raised the point that several Members in the House side had asked me whether or not there was a possibility for some compromise, but that going beyond just making a statement, nothing was said.

Q Well, is there a possibility for some compromise?

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CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: Well, I think first of all we had better address ourselves to the authorization bill and then see what happens there. That is my advice, at least, to the President.

SENATOR SCOTT: Some people thought that there might be some flexibility by way of a supplemental perhaps later but these same people -- I will not quote them by name -- thought that the problem with the Congress was that the Congress wants the right to exercise the veto over foreign policy and that that is less negotiable with the Congress than the actual monies involved since the President has approved more aid to Israel than any previous President and evidently and obviously stands ready to continue that program.

I would like to get on with the FEC because ten o'clock is coming on and we have both got meetings, I guess.

There was a general discussion in the FEC. The only two members of the conference present were Representative Wiggins and myself. The other members of the conference were Representative Dickinson and Senator Hatfield. There was broad general discussion by just about everybody in the room and a difference of opinion as to whether the President should sign or veto the bill. There was discussion of whether or not some last minute suggestions might be brought up from the Majority side, according to rumors we have had, at the three o'clock meeting. We don't know whether they will or not.

There were some of us who recommended that the President sign the bill, there were others who raised the question that that could not be determined until after the three o'clock meeting and still a third group who thought perhaps the President maybe should not sign the bill but there was no consensus on this. There was, however, an extremely thorough exploration of the pros and cons of the bill.

My personal view is that the bill coming from conference is better than the Senate bill and infinitely better than the House bill, that it has some negative factors but I believe them to be outweighed by the positive factors. That does not express the President's opinion because he did not give one. That is my personal opinion.

Q Do you believe the President should sign it? What did Congressman Wiggins and Senator Griffin tell the President?

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SENATOR SCOTT: I cannot quote and should not quote them. They both entered into the discussion very helpfully and ~~ack~~nowledgeably and they both discussed the pros and cons of the bill rather objectively. I am saying that if they don't come up at the last minute today with changes that make the bill worse, it is likely that I can sign the conference report with some reluctance and likewise vote for the bill with some reluctance. If they change it this afternoon, I may have to change my mind.

Q The President didn't voice any opinion yet then?

MR. SCOTT: No, he simply asked for advice and also asked for comment as to when and under what circumstances he ought to make any advance statements and we more or less discussed those things.

Q Senator, was the advice preponderantly pro or preponderantly con?

SENATOR SCOTT: Well, the advice was so scattered in the sense that most of the speakers argued objectively both the pros and the cons, and some came down after arguing the matter that way on one side or another, but it would be hard to say. No count was taken or anything of the sort. I think the conferees with some immodesty felt that they had done a pretty good job in the conference but they were not entirely satisfied with what they had done.

Q Senator Scott, what do you think would be the political repercussions if the President did veto it?

SENATOR SCOTT: I think there are ~~always~~ repercussions to any controversial bill and ~~there~~ would be repercussions if he did veto it or if he didn't veto it and I could almost anticipate what they would be.

For instance, if he vetoed it, one of the Democratic Presidential candidates would say, "That is terrible, that shows a lack of compassion for my troubles." If he signed it, the same candidate would say, "Oh, he signed it because he had to sign it, he was afraid of what I would say." So I can tell you that the answers will be political no matter what he does.

Q Senator Scott, did you discuss at all the Intelligence Committee report?

SENATOR SCOTT: No, it has not yet been given to us. Apparently it has only been given to the papers.
(Laughter)

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Q Just the right priority.

SENATOR SCOTT: Well, I didn't say it wasn't. I'm afraid of you. I didn't say it wasn't. I simply said that that is what happened. I did speak with somewhat the insouciance of servants who have given notice, however.

Q Senator Scott, did the President not evidence any inclination at this point on his reaction to the FEC bill, give no indication which way he was leaning?

SENATOR SCOTT: Well, his indication was that he had preferred all along an extension of -- the simple extension -- of the existing FEC Act with the compliances involved in the Supreme Court decision which would have been the effect of the simple extension. It would simply have been the old law plus the Supreme Court. He was told that it is unlikely that Congress will do that even though his veto is sustained.

I think myself that his veto would be sustained in the Senate -- I cannot speak for the House -- if he were to veto it. Now I am not at all convinced that he will.

Q Senator Scott, to return a moment to the foreign aid authorization, is this drive by the Congress to assume foreign policy powers usually traditionally handled by the President or constitutionally so -- is this on the rise still, on the wane or will it end if there is a Democratic President in the White House?

SENATOR SCOTT: Well, it is on the rise to the extent that this is a campaign year and a political year and that the Congress is controlled by a ~~different~~ party than the Administration. It is representative of a recognition that the action lies in foreign policy as well as the headlines and the Congress is quite anxious to share in that. I think it would all drop if the Congress and the President were of the same party, you would hear little or nothing of this breast beating that is going on.

I asked the late Senator Russell once about this, as to whether he thought foreign policy could be conducted by committees of Congress, and he said: "They tried that in the War Between the States. They had a committee on the conduct of the war and if they had continued in session six months longer, we would have won." (Laughter)

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Q Did the question that has surfaced about the possibility of Soviet entanglements on the Hill come up in any way this morning, sir?

SENATOR SCOTT: The Soviet was not included in any debate.

Q Was there any criticism or any mention of the Vice President in this connection?

MR. SCOTT: No, not at all. Now who would criticize the Vice President?

Q Some Democrats.

Q Were there any other major subjects that you discussed that we have not asked you about?

SENATOR SCOTT: No.

CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: No, those were the main two for which the meeting was called and it stuck right to those two subjects.

Q Was there any discussion of the President's primary battles with Governor Reagan?

CONGRESSMAN MICHEL: No.

SENATOR SCOTT: No, there was no discussion of that. The President received the good wishes of the members there today on Pennsylvania and I told them that he would win the Pennsylvania primary. (Laughter)

Q Mr. Scott, who is going to win the Democratic race in Pennsylvania?

SENATOR SCOTT: Well, it is an awful rough guess and I must say I don't much care because I don't think any of them are as good as some of those who are not running, but that is so often the case, isn't it?

I do think, however, that my sources there -- I have no independent knowledge really. My sources tell me that Carter will probably win the beauty contest by a smile (laughter) and Jackson should have at least a plurality, possibly a majority of the delegates.

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Q Senator Scott, Secretary Kissinger in a major speech today in Africa said, "The U. S. will use unrelenting economic pressure to force Rhodesia to accept black majority rule." Do you have any idea as to what the Congress could do to help along that line?

SENATOR SCOTT: I don't know but I would suppose you would hear from Senator Church within the hour. (Laughter) I don't know.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (9:47 A.M. EDT)