

PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 33
of the
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

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Wednesday

In the Presidential Ballroom
East
At the Neil House Hotel
Columbus, Ohio

THE PRESIDENT: Good evening. Won't you please sit down.

Before turning to your questions, I have a brief statement. Early next week the Congress will return from its Memorial Day recess. For many Americans, the summer will have officially begun and time for vacation will be at hand.

However, it is extremely important this not become a vacation for Congress. There is an immense amount of work piling up on the Congressional calendar and the country needs -- and deserves -- prompt legislative action in a number of important areas.

The temporary tax cut enacted last year will expire at the end of June. That tax cut must be extended.

I have recommended that the Congress not only extend the tax cut permanently but increase by some \$10 billion a tax cut in the future. Among the benefits the taxpayers would receive under my proposal is an increase in the personal exemption from \$750 per individual to \$1,000 per person.

This will be enough to permit many people to catch up on their bills and begin saving for the future. When we cut taxes, we must also cut Federal spending.

The Congress has not yet shown discipline enough to hold the line on Federal spending. That is why I vetoed so many big spending bills and my vetoes so far have saved the taxpayers some \$13 billion.

I will continue to use my veto until the Congress gets the message and Federal spending is brought under control.

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Another major legislative action urgently awaiting Congressional action is the re-enactment of Federal revenue sharing. There has already been an inexcusable delay in passing this necessary legislation.

Unless Federal revenue sharing is extended before it expires at the end of this year, communities across Ohio and the rest of the country will be severely penalized. Communities here in Columbus and elsewhere would be forced to raise local property taxes and State taxes in order to continue vital public services which revenue sharing would provide. The Congress must re-enact my revenue sharing proposal without delay.

Two other items must be given Congressional action in the next several weeks. One is the B-1 bomber program. In considering the military procurement bill, the Senate recently voted to delay the B-1 production until February of next year. That vote was both unnecessary and unwise.

Our armed forces are manned by the best trained men and women in the world, but they must have the tools to do the job. We need to get on with the B-1 program this year, not next year.

Finally, I urge the Congress to vote in the next few weeks for a full P. L. 480 program. Over the years the Food for Peace program, in addition to playing an important role in the implementation of our foreign policy, has provided expanded markets for American farm products.

A provision of the security assistance bill presently pending in the Congress would impose a \$175 million ceiling on P. L. 480 assistance to Korea.

This action would severely hurt the American farmer, who depends upon stable markets for his crops, and would severely restrict the economic growth potential of one of our key allies.

We need strong agricultural exports and we need a full Food for Peace program. I strongly urge the Congress to remove this limitation.

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One other item of significant importance. Last June I proposed to the Congress legislation that would establish a major new private industry in America providing the enriched fuel for nuclear power reactors. My proposal, the Nuclear Fuel Assurance Act would make it possible for the United States to maintain its leadership as the world supplier of uranium enrichment services for the peaceful use of nuclear power.

The Joint Committee on Atomic Energy in the Congress has made some modifications on my proposal and approved it. I have reviewed the changes in the bill and concluded that I will support it. The bill meets five fundamental objectives, which I stated a year ago:

First, an act to meet the future needs, domestic as well as international, for this essential energy source;

It would end the governmental monopoly on supplying enriched uranium for nuclear power plants;

Three, establish a procedure whereby private enterprise can bring into commercial use the techniques created by Federal research and development with proper licensing, safeguards and export controls;

With the payment of royalty and taxes by private enterprise to the United States Treasury;

Provided also in the bill is a complimentary back-up system for expanding existing Federal uranium enrichment capacity if private ventures are unable to meet on time the needs of U.S. and foreign customers;

Last, assist in controlling nuclear proliferation by persuading other nations to accept international safeguards and forego development of nuclear weapons.

Finally, the bill and the committee report also authorize and direct the Energy Research and Development Agency to begin planning and designing for the expansion of the existing uranium enrichment plant at Portsmouth, Ohio.

As soon as Congress passes the Nuclear Fuel Assurance Act, I will ask the Congress to appropriate \$170 million for fiscal year 1977 to proceed with the design, planning and the procurement of long lead time construction for the Portsmouth plant. This, I think, is a good program, and I hope the Congress acts so that I can request of the Congress the necessary funding for the complimentary program at Portsmouth, Ohio.

I will be glad to answer the first question.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, Mr. Udall has accused you of playing politics with busing. Some Ohio civil rights leaders have indicated agreement. What is your answer to this criticism and also what is your advice to residents of Ohio cities facing court-ordered desegregation next fall?

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me say that I have vigorously opposed court-ordered forced busing to achieve racial balance as the way to accomplish quality education. I have opposed it from 1954 to the present time.

We all know the tragedy that has occurred in many communities where the court has ordered forced busing on a massive basis. I think that is the wrong way to achieve quality education.

Last November, well, before the Presidential primaries got going, I met with the Secretary of HEW and with the Attorney General and asked them to come up with some better alternatives to the achievement of quality education and court-ordered forced busing. The two Secretaries in my Cabinet have been working on alternative proposals.

The Attorney General is in the process of deciding whether or not, where and when he should appear on behalf of the Federal Government to see if the Court, the Supreme Court, won't review its previous decisions in this regard. And secondly, the Secretary of HEW is submitting to me in a week or so the alternatives that he would propose to achieve quality education without losing the constitutional right of individuals so that we can do away with segregation and, at the same time, achieve quality education.

Now, the various communities in the State of Ohio that are in various stages of action by various parties, as far as busing is concerned, certainly ought to abide by the law. But, we hope that at least possibly the Supreme Court will review its previous decisions and possibly modify or change. We can't tell.

But, in the meantime, local communities, of course, have to obey the law and my obligation is to make certain that they do. But we must come back to the fundamental objective -- one, quality education, I believe there is a better remedy than court-ordered forced busing.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there are many civil rights groups who believe that the word "quality education" is a code word; that is, it is not in conformity with the Supreme Court's 1954 decision that we should have desegregated schools and that separate but equal are not equal. What is your definition of "quality education"?

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THE PRESIDENT: I respectfully disagree with some of the civil rights leaders. I think the best way to outline how we can achieve better or quality education and still insist upon desegregation is set forth in legislation under the title of Equal Educational Opportunities Act, which was passed in 1974.

If the court will follow those guidelines that were included in that legislation, we can protect the constitutional rights of individuals, we can eliminate segregation and, at the same time, we can give to individuals, the students, a better educational opportunity and accomplish quality education.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you feel the Wayne Hays incident and the prospect of a House investigation of Mr. Hays' conduct will fuel what seems to be an anti-Washington establishment tenor to the Carter and Reagan campaigns? If so, how will it affect you and as a long-time member of that establishment, how will you cope with it?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe it is appropriate for me to comment on a housekeeping problem involving the House of Representatives. I am sure the House will take whatever appropriate action should be taken. I can't see, under any circumstances, how it would affect me because at the time I was nominated for the Vice Presidency 400 FBI agents investigated my life from birth up that point and 89 of them spent about a month in my home town, so I think on the basis of their investigation and the fact that a Democratic Congress, House and Senate, overwhelmingly approved the record that was made in the Senate Committee on Procedures and the House Committee on the Judiciary, where they cleared me of any problems whatsoever, I don't see how this incident would have any ramification or application as far as I am concerned.

QUESTION: You don't think it would contribute to that whole anti-Washington mood that Carter and Reagan seem to be exploiting?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't pass judgment on the impact on the anti-Washington feeling, but certainly it has no application as far as I am concerned.

QUESTION: Mr. President, following your victories in Oregon, Tennessee and Kentucky, you declared earlier today that you are the Republican with national potential and you had some reservations about Mr. Reagan. Could you elaborate on your reservations about Mr. Reagan as a Republican candidate?

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THE PRESIDENT: I am not going to pass judgment on his capabilities, but I can look back at the various primaries that I have won and they cover the wide spectrum of the United States not only in the north, the east, the west and the south, but they are broad in their application.

I think it does point out beyond any doubt that I am the most electable Republican candidate. If I am the most electable Republican candidate and can help elect Members of the House and Senate on our side of the aisle, plus State Legislatures, I think I am the candidate that is in the best interest of the philosophy of the Republican Party. I will let Mr. Reagan undertake a defense of his electability.

QUESTION: Throughout the campaign you have chided Mr. Reagan for perhaps moving Social Security funds into the stock market, and you said earlier today you thought perhaps his remarks on the TVA and returning it to private industry have hurt him there and you suggested at times that he would be reckless in his confrontations. Do you have reservations about Mr. Reagan as a man who should sit in the Oval Office?

THE PRESIDENT: I have said, first, that I expect to get the nomination, and I expect to be elected in November. But, I have traditionally -- and I am proud of it -- always supported the Republican nominee.

QUESTION: Was that yes?

THE PRESIDENT: I said I always support the Republican nominee.

QUESTION: Mr. President, gasoline prices are on their way up again. Is the lack of a conservation ethic in the motoring public to blame, and what is your Administration doing to curb U.S. consumption of imported oil?

THE PRESIDENT: In January of 1975, about 15 months ago, I recommended to the Congress a comprehensive energy program. It took the Congress from January of 1975 to mid-December of 1975 -- ten or 11 months -- to come up with a bill that was half a loaf, but it was better than nothing. So, that legislation is what we have to work with.

The net result is we haven't moved as fast as we ought to in producing additional domestic resources for energy in this country. If the Congress had been wise enough to accept the energy bill that I proposed, we would be many, many months ahead of where we are at the present time and we wouldn't have the kind of uncertainty as to our energy independence in the future.

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I am going to continue to do what I can under this restrictive legislation to free the industry so that it can produce more domestic oil. I hope the Congress is wise enough to pass some affirmative legislation so we get more new natural gas available. I hope that we can stimulate more coal production. I hope and trust that we can add to our nuclear power capability and to the necessary research and development on solar energy and geothermal energy.

Now, if the Congress would move, as I urged them to do better than a year ago, about 15 months ago, we would be a lot further ahead. I hope and trust that in the process where we are faced with growing demand and unfortunately growing reliance on foreign sources of oil, that we can get wholehearted public conservation efforts.

I can assure you that this Administration will do all it can under the law to provide for greater conservation.

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QUESTION: Are you pleased with the way the American people are viewing the energy crisis as it is now?

THE PRESIDENT: It could be better but I think the Congress is the greatest culprit.

QUESTION: Mr. President, Secretary of State Kissinger is quoted as saying Cuba has pledged to pull its troops out of Angola, is a positive development and he has expressed pleasure at this.

Do we have any indication other than Castro's message to the Swedish Prime Minister that this is in fact about to happen and has there been any contact, direct or indirect, between Washington and Havana on this subject?

THE PRESIDENT: As I understand the message that was from Mr. Castro to Prime Minister Palme in Sweden, it was that it went from Havana to Moscow to Sweden. I think that is somewhat significant. It does indicate that there is a planned withdrawal of some 200 per week, as I recall the figure. That is progress. We are encouraged but we have had no direct communication, as far as any such movement by Cubans out of Angola.

I hope that that trend will be accelerated. That would be even more encouraging. But, as far as any direct communication, we have had none.

QUESTION: Does the Cuban withdrawal carry with it any implied intent on the part of the U.S. to recognize the PMLA?

THE PRESIDENT: No. At this stage, certainly not.

QUESTION: Mr. President, this morning you said it would still be politically possible to win the nomination on the first ballot if you lost in California. Could you explain how that is realistic?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if we look at the number of delegates we have at the present time and the number that we would expect to get from the remaining primaries plus the progress that we anticipate in the various States where they pick their delegates by State conventions, it is our belief that the momentum that started with Maryland and Michigan and kept through Pennsylvania and Ohio and certainly was good for us yesterday, we think with that momentum we can add up to about 1,130 or more.

QUESTION: But, wouldn't the California win by Governor Reagan still give him the momentum?

THE PRESIDENT: I would doubt it because we expect to do well in the great State of Ohio and we certainly expect to do well in New Jersey, and those two primaries come the same day that the vote comes in California.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, in view of the fact that Mr. Reagan will come to the Convention in August with a delegate total very close to your own, do you feel that if you receive the nomination there may be very grave and perhaps irresistible pressure on you to accept Governor Reagan as your running mate?

THE PRESIDENT: I have personally never excluded any Republican for consideration as a Vice Presidential candidate. But, as I am sure you recognize, Mr. Reagan has indicated publicly on a number of occasions he did not want to be considered for that opportunity to serve as a Vice Presidential candidate.

But, as far as I am concerned, I have excluded no Republican from consideration as a Vice Presidential nominee.

QUESTION: In view of the fact that each of you has demonstrated great appeal in the primaries, do you feel that there would be a tremendous unity factor in combining the two of you on a single ticket?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I should make any commitment at this time. It is premature because we have to wait and see how the primaries come up and how the State conventions work out. It is just too early for us to make any commitment of the kind that you are suggesting.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the Congress passed the supplementary appropriation bill waiting your signature. Included in it is \$1.6 million for Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge to rebuild some badly eroded dikes. The people in Northwest Ohio want to know if you are going to sign that and, if you are, how soon?

THE PRESIDENT: I certainly am strongly in favor of the project that you indicate. As a matter of fact, we have been pushing in trying to get that \$1.6 million for that project. We think it is good and I am personally in support of it, but I want to wait and personally analyze the overall supplemental appropriation bill before I make a commitment. I will do it the first thing tomorrow morning. And we have time before the 10 days expires.

But, as far as that project is concerned, I fully support it and, if that was a single item, not a part of a total supplemental appropriation bill, I would sign it tomorrow morning. But I have an obligation to take a look at all of the other items that are in the supplemental appropriation bill. I will do it tomorrow and hopefully I will be able to sign it because I am strongly in favor of that project.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, to follow up on the sex scandal that was discussed just a few minutes ago, you said that it was a housekeeping measure for the Congress. Yet, we hear that the Justice Department is looking into this for the possible misuse of Federal monies. I am wondering if you have asked the Justice Department to look into this at this point?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not asked the Justice Department to look into it. The Justice Department is headed by a very able Attorney General, and I am sure if he or his associates feel there has been any violation of law under his oath of office, he will undertake that responsibility.

QUESTION: My next question is, you indicated that you didn't see how this could hurt you in any way. My question is, do you think this will hurt the Congress in campaign 1976, those incumbents who are running for re-election?

THE PRESIDENT: Those who are not involved I don't think will be adversely affected. I think that, as far as I know, one individual is involved. I can't see how it would be detrimental to those who have no part or have had no connection with it.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you think some of Ronald Reagan's popularity in the primaries is due to his attitude the United States should conduct foreign policy from a strong posture rather than the conciliatory position evident in the last few months, and what would be your reaction to a charge that the program is conciliatory?

THE PRESIDENT: First, I want to deny most emphatically that this Administration has been less than forthright and strong in the conduct of its foreign policy. We have been very strong, and let me cite you an illustration.

Back in December, when we knew that the Cubans were getting involved in Angola and we knew the Soviet Union wanted to be very helpful with some \$200 million of military equipment, the President Ford Administration took a strong position.

Regrettably, the Congress didn't stand up and support us. So, the Ford Administration was in the forefront and any charge or allegation to the effect that this Administration is anything but forthright and strong in the conduct of foreign policy hasn't studied the record.

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So, I can assure you, because we have been strong, because we have been forthright, we have been able to convince our allies that we were reliable and we have been able to convince our adversaries that we mean business.

Now, the Ford Administration has repeatedly believed that if we can negotiate it is better than going to war, and I can assure you that we will negotiate, but negotiate from a position of strength rather than a position of weakness.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I was wondering if you could give us some hints about these alternatives that you are considering to forced busing. I just wonder what, beyond the Esch amendment, and what is spelled out in the law, and what the courts have already examined, what possibly could be an alternative that would hold up in the courts? What are the sorts of things that you are looking at?

THE PRESIDENT: When the proper time comes, Mr. Schieffer, we will reveal what Secretary Mathews has recommended to me and the options I have selected. I think there are some possibilities, but I think it is premature until I have made the final decision to indicate what he has thought might be an improvement over the way we have been handling the situation in the past.

QUESTION: Is it fair to say, though, Mr. President, that this is going to require some major legislative work, some major changes in the law?

THE PRESIDENT: Not necessarily, not major legislative changes. It can have some legislative impact, but it is also what we can do administratively.

QUESTION: Why not just go for a constitutional amendment against forced busing?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is too inflexible and the facts of life are that that constitutional amendment has not gotten, or it can't possibly get a two-thirds vote in either the House or the Senate, and it certainly can't be approved by 75 percent of the States.

So, anybody who talks about a constitutional amendment is not being fair and square with the American people because no Congress that I have seen -- and this one is a very liberal one -- has done anything to get it to the floor of the House or even to the floor of the Senate.

So, when you talk about a constitutional amendment, you are kidding the American people and anybody who has been in Congress knows that.

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QUESTION: I have some more questions.

THE PRESIDENT: Go ahead.

QUESTION: At least that is saying what you are for. What I am wondering is, why you can't give us a few hints about what the alternatives are that you think will solve the problems?

THE PRESIDENT: At the proper time, Mr. Schieffer, Secretary Mathews will have the option paper before me, and I will be glad to review it and make it public at that time.

QUESTION: Mr. President, since Governors Reagan, Carter and Wallace have all conducted, to some degree, an anti-Washington campaign, should you be the nominee and Governor Carter be the Democratic nominee, how do you propose to attract the votes of the Reagan supporters, particularly the Wallace crossovers to Reagan?

THE PRESIDENT: I want to appeal to as many Democrats as I possibly can and that is what I did in Michigan in the recent primary. My opponent very obviously wanted the Wallace element and only the Wallace element. I appealed in Michigan to all Democrats and all independents who wanted to cross over and vote for me if they believed in my record and believed in what I was trying to do, and we got a tremendous number of Democrats in Michigan to cross over and I am very proud of it.

Now, after we get the nomination in Kansas City, we will naturally want to get as many Democrats as we can because the Republican Party, according to statistics, has only about 19 percent of the public and the Democratic Party has 35 to 40 percent, as I recall. The rest of the people are independents.

So, a Republican candidate for the Presidency has to have a lot of support from independents and a significant support from Democrats. And the experience in Michigan, where I got a broad spectrum of independents as well as Democrats certainly is conclusive that I have a very good appeal to independent voters as well as broad-minded and I think very wise Democrats.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I think any number of people are a little confused about the status of the so-called alternatives to court-ordered busing. Just last week, you told a group of Kentucky editors just before the Kentucky primary that you had three alternatives that you were studying and that you would be making a judgment on them within a few weeks.

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At that same meeting, you said the Justice Department may choose Louisville when, in fact, the Justice Department was not at that time considering Louisville. Do you now have those alternatives before you or, as you have indicated tonight, will they come from David Mathews? Finally, as a result of all this confusion, don't you see how the impression is left strongly that you may be doing this for political reasons?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have confused it by not relating the whole sequence of events. I have repeatedly said that last November I called in the Attorney General and the Secretary of HEW and said I wanted a better answer so we could achieve quality education and not tear up society in a City such as Boston.

A month or two later they came back with a number of options. I said they ought to winnow them down. This was well before any Presidential primaries were on the agenda.

We have been seriously and constructively working together and the Attorney General, in due time, as he finds the right case, will go to the Supreme Court if he thinks the record justifies it. And Secretary Mathews will come to me with a more limited number of options at the proper time, and I expect some time within the next several weeks I will get those recommendations.

QUESTION: But did you not tell the Kentucky editors, as I recall it quite vividly, that you had three alternatives already that you were studying and that you would make a judgment on those shortly?

THE PRESIDENT: I had three and I have asked Secretary Mathews to review them and to make sure that they might be alternatives that would really be helpful. And he has gone back to review those three alternatives and I expect shortly he will come up with a more complete recommendation.

QUESTION: Mr. President, 200 persons, or interested groups, are suing the Government to block the 1-1/2 million persons who might be dropped from the welfare rolls. What is the Ford Administration going to do to change that proposal to be sure that persons on welfare can have the adequate sustenance they need?

THE PRESIDENT: Which part of the welfare program are you talking about?

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QUESTION: I am speaking of the part where the proposal states that many of the persons would either receive limited amounts or some would be dropped totally. I know it is a complete package, but how will you deal with that total situation?

THE PRESIDENT: There are a number of areas of welfare where we have sought to take corrective action. One of them is the food stamp program. I have made recommendations in the food stamp program to give more food stamps to the really needy and eliminate from the food stamp program people who are well above the poverty line and in the process save about \$1 billion 600 million. Now, that is one part of the welfare program.

There are other areas, and I cannot detect from the way you have described it which one you are talking about other than the food stamp program because that was \$1 billion 600 million, too.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you have reiterated tonight that you are against court ordered busing to achieve school desegregation, a remedy that is the law of the land. You have also said that you told your Attorney General to get the Supreme Court to reconsider its busing decisions.

Just this week you also indicated that you would get your Administration to try and reverse a court order protecting porpoises against being killed by tuna fishing.

My question is this, sir. If the President of the United States does not accept court decisions, doesn't that encourage the people of the United States to defy court decisions and isn't there a danger the law of the land will be eroded?

THE PRESIDENT: Not at all because whether I agree with decisions or not, this Administration, through the Attorney General, has insisted that the court decisions, whether they are in Boston or Detroit or anyplace else be upheld. I have repeatedly said that the Administration will uphold the law.

Now, in the case of court ordered forced busing, which I fundamentally disagree with as the proper way to get quality education, the Attorney General is looking himself to see whether there is a proper record in a case that would justify the Department of Justice entering as amicus curiae a proceeding before the Supreme Court to see if the court would review its decision in the Brown case and the several that followed thereafter.

I think that is a very proper responsibility for the Department of Justice and the Attorney General to take. They need clarification because all of those busing cases are not identical and if the Department of Justice thinks that they can't administer the law properly under the decisions because of the uncertainties I think the Department of Justice has an obligation to go to the court and ask for clarification and that is precisely what the Attorney General may do.

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Now, in the case of the decision by Judge Ritchie involving the tuna industry, that was a decision made by him under the Mammals Protection Act, but the net result is he has literally interpreted the law so that in effect it will ruin the tuna industry in this country and, at the same time, preclude the tuna industry from doing the things that they are doing to cut down the loss of life as far as porpoises are concerned. And the tuna industry, from my own personal examination -- and I think you were there -- they have considerably changed the kind of nets that they are using so the loss of porpoises has been cut significantly. And apparently Judge Ritchie, in interpreting the law, didn't take into consideration the tremendous improvements of the tuna industry in trying to save the lives of porpoises.

Now, in the meantime, one of the Members of the House of Representatives from California has introduced legislation to clarify the Mammal Protection Act and that legislation would give more flexibility so that the tuna industry can be saved on the one hand and the new procedures of the tuna fishermen, which protects the lives of porpoises, can be carried out.

I think that is a responsible position for an Administration to take.

QUESTION: Just to follow up my original question, sir, you said in reply to a question on busing on the West Coast, and I think I am quoting you correctly, that "maybe we need some new judges."

Mr. President, are you suggesting if elected, you might try to pack the Federal courts with judges favorable to your position on busing?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say that the one opportunity I have had to appoint a judge to the United States Supreme Court, he was almost unanimously approved because of his high quality. He wasn't selected because he had any prejudgments or conclusions concerning anything. He was a man of great intellect, great experience and good judgment. And I would expect in the next four years to appoint people of the same quality and caliber and I would expect the United States Senate to overwhelmingly approve them as they did Justice Stevens.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

END (AT 7:37 P.M. EDT)