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Office of the Vice President
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PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
STADIUM RECEPTION AREA
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

(AT 12:02 MDT)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I would like to say on behalf of Mrs. Rockefeller and myself how grateful we are to General Allen and Mrs. Allen and all of those who are responsible for giving us the privilege and the pleasure and the thrill of being here today at this graduation exercise.

I have got to say that as one who has been deeply interested in and dedicated to the well-being of our country, I never felt a moment of greater pride in America or a greater confidence in the future of America than having the opportunity of shaking the hands of those wonderful members of the graduating class, looking at their faces and seeing the total dedication to the security and well-being not only of our country but of freedom.

This I would like to say, ladies and gentlemen, is a great thrill for both of us, and it is an honor to be here. I am very proud of not only the academy but of our country.

If anyone has any questions, I would be delighted to answer them.

QUESTION: Is this your first visit to the academy?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, it is. I am just speechless in seeing such a beautiful setting, such a wonderful group of men and women. And also I have to say I was a little bit shaken by watching the Thunderbirds. But they seem to have everything in hand. It makes me a little nervous.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, why do you choose to use the word detente in your speeches when the President no longer does?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, because the President has not abandoned the concept of detente. Some people in this country have misunderstood detente and thought it meant a relaxation of tensions in all areas and, therefore, the struggle was over between the different ideologies of Marxism and those of us who believe in freedom.

It seemed to me that it is important that the American people understand the subject, that they understand its real meaning, its value as well as what is essential if it is going to work -- namely, the preservation of our strength, both materially and spiritually or morally.

Therefore, I felt and have felt before that it is an important thing to discuss simply to help people understand a very important innovation in international relations

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which I think has gone a long way to precluding the dangers of a nuclear confrontation or a direct confrontation with the Soviet on some other area.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you seem to take a fairly hard line today on national defense, security measures. Is this a conscious effort on yours or the President's part to counter the effect that Ronald Reagan is having adopting this line?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. It is my feeling, and as I expressed it today, I don't think a democracy can function effectively unless the people who make up the democracy understand the realities of what they are up against.

Now, if you remember, my four brothers' fund set up a commission to study the future of America at the mid-century 20-some years ago. We took exactly the same position then. We are doing the same in the Commission on Critical Choices.

This is not a new position for me. I have great respect for achievements of the Soviet Union. I have affection for the people of the Soviet Union. But I think we have to recognize realistically what their basic objectives are, what methods they use to achieve them, and that we have a responsibility as the greatest free nation in the world to take those steps that are essential to preserve freedom and respect for human dignity.

QUESTION: How would you assess the President's chances against Ronald Reagan at this point in the campaign?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Just as I did last Sunday. He will get to the convention, in my opinion, with 1,102 delegates. That is 28 short of the nomination. And New York State and Pennsylvania alone have a combination of 30 uncommitted delegates. And I think he will have no trouble getting the nomination on the first ballot.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what is your reaction to a possible Ford-Reagan ticket?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, of course, that is a question the President would have to decide himself after he is nominated. As an ex-politician, I would hardly believe that someone who is to the right of the President, who himself is in the center, would be the person that would give the broadest appeal, seeing there are only 18 percent Republicans and we have got to get the Democrats and Independents, and they are not to the right of Mr. Ford. They are where he is and to the left.

QUESTION: Would you accept such a combination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You have asked me what I thought the President was going to do. I have told you as an ex-politician. What he does, of course, is only his responsibility. Whatever choice he makes, I am sure the convention -- and I am a delegate to the convention -- will adopt.

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QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, on the subject of solar energy, can you tell us, since you think energy development is so crucial, why the Federal Government in this year's budget has budgeted so low for the development of solar energy?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Solar energy is a subject that is already very familiar in this country. I don't think anyone thinks that during the next 10 or 15 years solar energy is going to be more than a fraction or will provide more than a fraction of the power that is needed.

Solar energy on a large scale requires acres and acres of land with reflectors to absorb all of the metal -- coverage to absorb the heat and the energy. Except on a small scale in individual houses it has not yet been developed on a practical large scale low cost.

QUESTION: A follow-up question, if I could. Could you tell me why the announcement of where the solar energy institute will be was delayed until after the election?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I suppose the decision hasn't been made.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, where do you see the development of Colorado's oil shale in your call for the development of new energy resources?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course, I happen to think that this is one of the most fantastic resources we have in America. In the Colorado shale, there is at least four times as much oil as all of the Middle East reserves, known reserves. The problem is how to get it out.

If you mine the shale and cook it, you get the oil, but you end up with what I describe as talcum powder. There is a little problem as to what you do with mountains of talcum powder in Colorado and not run into some ecological problems.

Therefore, I happen to be one, certainly not a majority, who feels that the in situ process -- that is, drilling down into the shale, setting off an explosion, fractionating the shale, setting it on fire, then drawing off the gasified oil to the surface and condensing it -- that this is a project that should be undertaken on a commercial scale.

Nobody knows what the costs will be. But if the costs were within reason, then you have a means of getting the oil out of the shale without any ecological problems.

This has got to be to me one of the most exciting and important things. That is why I have supported the President's program. I have been urging the Congress to act on his program for energy independence which would have the money to finance that kind of risk venture capital undertaking; and, if successful, then sell it and you would have a new industry.

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QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, your position is winding down now. Is it better than you expected it to be before you set out?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It has been more than I expected it to be.

QUESTION: Is there anything you haven't been able to do or permitted to do that you would have liked to accomplish?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. The President has given me a freedom of expression and action totally unprecedented in Presidential-Vice Presidential relations. There is only one job.

I made a study of this for President Eisenhower when I was Chairman of his Committee on Government Organization, and he was looking for a job for then Vice President Nixon. We came up with the conclusion that there was no job that a President could give to a Vice President, other than the constitutional responsibility of presiding over the Senate; that were he to create some position, it would only be from delegated powers of the President because there are no constitutional powers; that this could create a separate political center and there could be serious confusion within the Administration.

So I took the job with total expectation that I would be presiding officer of the Senate and a staff assistant to the President, and that I would do anything I could to help him and through him the Nation. That is what I have done.

And I have done more than I had expected. He has given me total freedom to speak on any subject and express my own thoughts, even though they might differ on occasion from his. He said he thought it was healthy for the country and the party.

The only thing he asks is I give him copies of the speeches after I have made them. That has to be unusual.

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Having known six previous Vice Presidents, all of them were frustrated and were handed speeches to deliver rather than giving them to the President after they had made them.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you spoke to the employment situation this morning, and the government is continuing to wind down and close down on military operations. That puts people out of jobs. Do you have any comments regarding that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I do. New York State, of course, has been one of those deeply concerned in that. The Brooklyn Navy Yard was closed some years ago and there were 4,700 some people employed there.

But I think that we cannot use the military -- their purpose is to defend our country, not to give employment.

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It is not a make work operation. So that when, and this is where science and technology come in, when the evolution and military technology and strategic thinking and conceptual planning change, then the facilities that are needed change with them.

I think our country has got to have the courage and flexibility to wind down operations which are no longer needed from the point of view of the military; and I think then the government has a responsibility, as well as the Defense Department, to help those individuals to find opportunity in other areas.

We have seen the greatest period of growth in the last year. Two million six hundred thousand new jobs have been created. The economy is now growing at a rate of 8.6 percent of the GNP, real dollar basis, which can't keep up at this speed.

If we had one more year at anywhere near approximating the present rate of growth, we would get back to what is commonly known as full employment, namely four or five percent, in which case there will be needed one million five hundred thousand new jobs a year for the young people coming out of schools and colleges.

I am very optimistic about the future. I think the President has done an extraordinary job. I think in the process he has also cut the rate of inflation more than half, which nobody thought could be done -- that you could cut inflation and get employment both together.

QUESTION: Sir, do you have a comment on Congressman Hays?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, one other question.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am in the Senate, not in the House.

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: There are referendum issues on the Colorado ballot and I believe on the California ballot concerning the nuclear energy and the right for the State and people to decide the location of sites. What is your attitude towards this type of legislation?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: As a former Governor of one of the 50 States, I never cherished the advice of people coming from out of State when they came to New York. So that frankly I feel that it is not up to me as an out-of-Stater to try and advise the extremely wise and sophisticated residents of both Colorado and California on what they should do in the way that would best reflect their own interest.

I have to feel that both States are populated by extremely intelligent people and they recognize the crisis we face, that they recognize the tremendous vulnerability which this Nation is facing today.

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Of course, you out here are in better shape than we out in the East. We import 85 percent of our oil. Oil is the principal source of electricity and power and transportation for people. Another boycott would create absolute economic and social chaos. And that is not something that we can rule out.

Therefore, I think we have to think twice when we talk about eliminating a source of domestic supply. And I remember speaking to the American Academy of Science in Boston, Massachusetts, about three or four months ago where there had been considerable opposition to nuclear energy as a source of power.

I pointed out that since the first nuclear power plant was built, which is 18 years ago, there had been 874,000 people killed on the highways; there had been 74 million people injured on the highways; and there has been no movement to ban the auto.

During the same period, there have been no deaths and no accidents from nuclear power plants.

So that I think that does give a little background.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you made it very clear that you anticipate that Mr. Ford will get the nomination on the first ballot.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Should something occur between now and the convention and should there be a deadlock between the President and Mr. Reagan, would you stand ready to accept the nomination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I can't foresee any scenario of any kind that describes the situation or which would carry out the situation which you raise. I mean, I just can't conceive of it.

The final primaries will be the major ones on June 8. That is what, hardly a week away; California and New Jersey and Ohio. That is next week. I can't see really anything that would happen that would create the situation of the kind you portray.

QUESTION: But should it happen, sir.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I am one of those people who frankly doesn't spend too much time speculating about things that I don't think are going to happen. I concentrate on the problems I think we are going to have to face, and there are a lot of real problems; although I feel a lot better about my problems after seeing this graduating class and the character and dedication of those young men to their country.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you have any plans for when your term ends?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I really don't. But I have got no concern about it, either, because I have a very

fertile mind. All I have to do is read the newspaper and look at television or listen to the radio and I will see or hear what is going on, and out of that I will get some ideas, and that will give me a thought of something that ought to be done. As Happy said, there are many ways you can serve your country. That is my principal interest.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, how do you feel about the military academy future with the situation at West Point at this time and looking at our young men today and the young people of today, sir?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The founding fathers were very wise people. If you read the Federalist Papers, you will see they spoke of the weaknesses of human nature, and they didn't think we were super people; that they thought we had tremendous capabilities, that we were spiritual human beings, but we had weaknesses.

So they set up three branches of government to protect us against the weakness of human nature. I have to say as tragic as it is, I think it is an evidence of human weakness.

QUESTION: Mrs. Rockefeller, what do you hope your husband's future will hold after November?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: To see her at home more, and the two boys. That has been our problem.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you spoke of economic chaos in the event of another oil embargo.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I mean it, too.

QUESTION: There are advocates of American armed intervention in the Mideast in such an event. Can you foresee the day that embargo is prolonged to the point that the United States was strangled where we would actually intervene?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have to tell you very frankly that I do not see that, because I really feel that under those circumstances the Soviets would enter on the other side, because they have been very interested in the Middle East and they have been very active in supporting certain Middle East countries. And I think the situation would be such that we would be inviting nuclear confrontation between the Soviets and the United States.

This is something the American people don't think through. They have a happy thought that we just walk in -- just a few Arabs there in the desert -- just walk in and take the wells.

That is for the birds, if you will forgive me. I just think that there is no chance of that being effectuated and that, therefore, we have to face the reality that we can be confronted with a cutoff of oil supplies, and not only by a boycott by the Arab countries, if the Middle East blew up, but there is also the possibility of an interdiction of our ceilings.

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The Soviets have done a fantastic job in developing their naval capabilities, tied in with the Air Force and satellites. I think we have got to recognize that reality.

This is all part of the reason I spoke as frankly as I did today. So that both, as to the source of supply and as to the means of transportation, people in this country take the freedom of the seas for granted, and they are wrong.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

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(AT 12:22 P.M. MDT)