

POOL NUMBER 9

Breakfast at the Convention Center and meetings with labor leaders and party leaders

Cincinnati, Ohio

June 7

Enroute to the breakfast the President shook hands with three burly construction workers who apparently asked him when he got into town. He said, "We got in last night, we'll shove off this morning, gotta keep moving, you know." You presumably heard the breakfast attended by 1,480 diners of overcooked scrambled eggs and the speeches by Rhodes, Ford, et al.

The reception was very enthusiastic -- especially to Ford's theme that with him at the head of the ticket Governor Rhodes could get more help in the state legislature.

At the labor leaders reception Ford sat in the middle of 24 Teamster and Building Trades agents who questioned him on a variety of labor issues. First the President gave his usual economic pitch... more jobs, less inflation. He said in talking about inflation. "This means the wages your people earn." On unemployment he said it was "still too high. It's particularly high in the building trades, I recognize that." But he said that "I'm not going to argue about statistics, I'm talking about jobs. I'm not going to be satisfied until every man who wants a job has a job."

The President said the Highway Bill he just signed will mean more jobs in Ohio, and he said that he had proposed construction of more nuclear plants which creates "a lot of jobs". As he had at the breakfast, he talked about his approval for the Portsmouth Uranium Enrichment Plant. Governor Rhodes jumped in at that point to give a detailed rundown of the 10,000 jobs he said it would create. Rhodes said of Ford, "This man is helping us... I give you my word he's the only President that understands the problems here in Ohio, and he's going to help us."

In reply to questions, Ford said it was a "disgrace" that it takes 10 years to get a new nuclear plant in production and said he was "100% with you" to a man complaining of restrictions on mining of coal. Ford said there were problems "with the so-called Clean Air Act".

He gave his standard positions on national health insurance, the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Bill, and was asked about his Common Situs veto by a building trades leader who called it "a Magna Carta" for the building trades. The questioner suggested Ford had vetoed it "maybe because of the midnight cowboy" -- an apparent illusion to Reagan -- and asked if Ford would sign a similar bill after the election. Ford said he thought he had a labor and management agreement to support the bill and vetoed it after "almost unbelievable" opposition in the mail to the White House. He said if there was a harmonious position by labor and management on another version, "yes, I would consider it."

A plumber union leader asked Ford why minority hiring rules were not enforced against "unorganized labor" as well as unions. Ford said if they were not, they ought to be, adding "I don't think there ought to be any discrimination (in the enforcement). It ought to be across the board." He asked Jim Cannon to make a note of the point and bring it to his attention later. The President said what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

As he has before, the President said he would not sign a bill repealing Taft-Hartley. A Teamster asked why truck drivers could not go 60 mph on interstates when their rigs were more fuel efficient at that speed. Ford ducked the question,

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saying "I'll talk to First Mama about that." He pledged to keep Usery on as Secretary of Labor and pointed out that Usery was a former union official. The last question from a burly Teamster was whether Ford had seen Bold Forbes win the Belmont Stakes on television, Ford said no, but Teamster told him, "You're in a horse race here in Ohio. In my opinion you're not going to be a Bold Forbes, you're going to win in a walk-away."

The political reception was your standard fare except that the President moved around the room shaking hands to the tune of a combo's version of the Marine Corps, Air Force, and Army hymns.

Jim Naughton
John Cochran
Elizabeth Drew

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