

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 18, 1976

Office of the Vice President
(Greensboro, North Carolina)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
PECAN ROOM, FOUR SEASONS HOLIDAY INN
GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

AT 4:20 P.M. EDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to say how much I appreciate Bob Shaw's invitation to be down here in North Carolina.

This is an exciting time of year, an exciting year, and those of us who have a privilege of being associated directly or indirectly with politics and the two-party system, I think, are very fortunate. To my way of thinking, the two-party system is the lifeblood of democracy, and that is the basis of our freedom. Therefore, we have got to keep it alive and strong. And whichever party one happens to belong to, the dedication to the efforts for that party are of basic importance.

The Republican Party happens to be a minority party, but there are those who love it, including myself, having been a Republican all my life. I think the important thing now is to unite as a party, present the broad-based approach to the problems of the people of this great Nation and provide the leadership which is so desperately sought by America today at this crucial moment in history.

I am delighted to be here and answer any questions if I can.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, if Mr. Reagan wins the nomination, will you support him?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have to tell you the honest truth. In my opinion there is no chance of his winning the nomination; therefore, I haven't even considered that question.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, aren't you dodging the question?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I don't believe that you waste your time thinking about things that you don't think are going to happen.

QUESTION: So you are not prepared at all for Mr. Reagan's possible nomination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is a chance of his winning the nomination, to be perfectly frank, and I think Mr. Ford is going to win it. I think he is going to win the election. That may sound strange, but that is what I really believe inside.

QUESTION: A year ago in North Carolina a group of Southern Republican Chairmen made a public call for the President to dump you from his ticket. Three months after that, discussions about inviting you to speak at the State

MORE

Convention were rejected. With that as a background, did you have any apprehension about coming to North Carolina to speak?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I like the people of North Carolina. I think they are very attractive people and I believe that this is a great State.

I never take politics that seriously. The only mistake I perhaps made, I should have said to Mr. Callaway, "Whenever you deliver the Southern delegates to Mr. Ford, then I will be off the ticket." That might have been the thing I should have said, which, I think, would have been more appropriate.

QUESTION: Speaking of him, whatever happened to Bo Callaway?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You're asking me? He didn't come from New York.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, how does the Republican Party plan to take on a challenge with Jimmie Carter in the South?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: My personal feeling would be -- and I am an ex-politician, so I have to start off by saying that. My personal feeling as an ex-politician would be he would do very well in the South because of the fact that there hasn't been a candidate for the Presidency from the South in a long time. Therefore, local pride would inure very importantly to his favor. So I think it would be very difficult for the Republican Party to make any major inroads under the circumstances.

Therefore, I would have to assume myself that the Republican Party would have to have a strategy which involved other parts of the country as the major basis of their strength.

QUESTION: Are you writing off the South, sir?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. I said that they wouldn't make major inroads in the South if Mr. Carter were --

QUESTION: What is a major inroad?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: More than 51 percent. That is all you need to get elected, you know, in this business. Fifty percent plus one vote is what I was always after. If I got anything more than that, I was always very grateful.

QUESTION: Could you imagine a scenario in which neither Mr. Ford nor Mr. Reagan were nominated and the Republican Party turned to someone else?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir, I don't really think that is going to happen.

QUESTION: Not John Connally?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir.

QUESTION: Not you?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. That doesn't say what others might like to see, but you asked me whether I could see a scenario of that kind. I don't honestly think there is a chance.

QUESTION: Is there a chance, sir, if asked, you would serve again as Vice President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: My letter is very clear. I withdrew from consideration of the President.

QUESTION: Who do you think, sir, is the top contender for the Vice Presidential slot?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: On which ticket?

QUESTION: On the Republican ticket.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you want my honest opinion, I never heard of anyone being a contender for Vice President. I don't think there ever was a candidate for Vice President. It is what I call standby equipment. I was very fortunate in being offered the job twice before. That was at a different period. This time the Nation was in a very difficult situation, and I had withdrawn as governor after serving 15 years and was concerned about national, international problems, so I accepted.

I don't think that there are contenders for that job. I have always felt that the President, after he is nominated, should then decide who should best serve the country under the circumstances that exist at the time.

QUESTION: Who do you think Mr. Ford will pick, then? When he is nominated, who do you think he will pick?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have no idea. He hasn't said anything to me, and I don't think he has said anything to anybody else. I think he would be crazy if he did. If I were the President, I wouldn't say anything to anybody. I would keep my own counsel on that.

QUESTION: Given the opportunity to recommend, who would you recommend?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I just feel that one doesn't know what the circumstances are going to be. I am a great believer, having been burned a few times, in not crossing bridges until I get to them in politics. You can get in a lot of trouble, and circumstances change very rapidly. Therefore, it is much wiser to wait until the last moment to take a position.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, when was this invitation extended to you?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Which one?

QUESTION: The one to come to this convention.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: George, how long ago did we get the invitation? When was the invitation extended to come to this convention? It has been on my calendar for two weeks.

GOVERNOR SHAFER: It was in December.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: December.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, I would like you to elaborate a minute on what you foresee as the Republicans' election strategy against Governor Carter. Could you explain that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: This is assuming Ford is the candidate?

QUESTION: You can make that assumption.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You know, the strategy has got to be different, depending on who is the candidate. I think Ford is going to be the candidate.

Of course, if President Ford is the candidate, and if I were in President Ford's position -- and I can't speak for him; I can just speak as an ex-politician who has followed this whole picture and who loves this country very much -- first I would run on my record.

Two years ago this country was in a shambles. He has restored the confidence and respect of people in government, and this is a major achievement. Secondly, we were in a tremendously serious period of inflation, depression and high unemployment, and he has turned that around, cut inflation in half. There are 2,600,000 more jobs right now than there were a year ago. Our growth rate is at 8.5 percent, which nobody thought was possible. They never believed that this could be done.

We are at peace in the world. We are moving towards a resumption of our economic strength. The prestige of the United States in the world has been restored, and I think it is a fantastic record.

Now, my own feeling is, when you have got that kind of a record, who wants to change when things are going so well? And nobody thought anybody could do as well as he has done.

QUESTION: But what sorts of States or what parts of the country should he focus on?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, you see, my style of politics is not based on what you are talking about. I believe in running on the issues. I happen to believe that good government is the best politics. Therefore, one analyzes the problems and tries to figure out what is right for America, what are the best things that we can do now to give people opportunities on the basis of equality. How can we meet the problems? How can we create a framework within which the American enterprise system can create the jobs for Americans and meet the needs in terms of goods and

MORE

services? So I would focus on the issues and not play politics by regions.

I have never thought, frankly, very much of this regional politics. I think it is for the birds, myself. We are all Americans, and in the Republican Party we are all Republicans. We ought to stick together. I love the South, I love the West, I love the North. So I don't know why we talk about regions, if we talk about these shrewd little political strategies. That's not what America wants. America wants leadership. America wants people who have faith and confidence in the future and a great vision of the future of America and America's role in the world, not based on some regional strategy, playing one group against the other.

QUESTION: Has the primary between Reagan and Ford caused any divisiveness in the Party because of regional or other factors?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think if you mean is there some feeling, I think there is feeling all right. And I think that whichever is nominated, there will be those who, because of the feelings, the bad feelings during the campaign, will either vote for a Democrat or not vote at all. I think that is a by-product.

QUESTION: Are you saying it has been divisive for the Party?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes. But when you talk about divisive for the Party, that is getting me back to the same thing about regional strategy. What we are talking about, divisive for the Party -- we have only got 18 percent of the voters anyhow in the Republican Party. So how are you going to elect anybody with 18 percent of the vote? This has got to be for the birds. The only way we are going to be elected is get Independents and Democrats. That is the only way a Republican can get elected.

All right. So you lose part of your own party. Maybe you lose 6 percent out of the 18 percent, a third. It could be as much as a third. So you have got to be able to appeal to the rest of the American people based on the merits. So I don't, frankly, worry too much about that.

QUESTION: Do you think Governor Reagan can make that kind of appeal?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, he can appeal to a lot of people. Whether it is enough people or not -- if you take Kevin Phillips, who is sort of the high priest of the conservatives in this country, in his political column -- he puts out a publication; I have a copy of it here -- he has said very frankly that Reagan's nomination would be a disaster for the Republican Party if Governor Reagan were the candidate for the Presidency, and it would be a disaster for the conservatives. That is an analogy made by a man who is a conservative.

QUESTION: Do you agree with it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think it is probably pretty true.

MORE

QUESTION: Isn't it possible that the President has alienated much possibly moderate support by continuing on a right wing course?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think it has helped him.

QUESTION: Why didn't you decide to run? There for a while Ford was faltering. Couldn't somebody of your persuasion come in and pick up a lot of delegates?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I believe in loyalty. The President asked me to be Vice President. I am his man. I think this is a cardinal principle in politics. If you are not loyal to the people who stand with you, then nobody is going to trust you.

QUESTION: Isn't the idea to get the best possible Republican to serve as President? And aren't you possibly a better candidate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I still go right back to what I said. I believe in loyalty. I am President Ford's man. He appointed me. I am there to help him in every way I can and do the best job for this country through helping him.

QUESTION: Are you supporting him through loyalty rather than what you would really rather do?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. I have stated to you when I first started this conference, I am an ex-politician. So I am here before you as a relaxed, concerned citizen with some experience in politics. Some have been good; some have been not so good. But I have no feeling now and no ambition other than to serve this country. I think that President Ford's record and President Ford's integrity and courage are the best for this country. So that is where I am.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, if President Ford, to whom you have this loyalty, came to you in January and said it was necessary to make a change in the Department of State and he felt you were the man he needed to run that department, would you take the job?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. He has got the best man right now.

QUESTION: How would you feel about Governor Carey as a possible running mate for the President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: How would I feel about Governor Carey? For whom?

QUESTION: Excuse me. Would Governor Carey on a Democratic ticket erode much of the President's Northeast support?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not the way things are in New York right now.

QUESTION: Will you be trying to influence this convention this weekend, Mr. Vice President, as far as

preventing more of the at-large delegates from --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. I am down here to speak as a Republican to speak for the Party and winning in November. I have never believed in intervening in the internal affairs of another State. As a governor, I didn't welcome other Governors coming into my State telling me what to do, and I never went into their States trying to tell them what to do, nor their voters. I would like to analyze the problems and just tell it like it is, in my opinion.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what advice would you suggest, then, for electing Republicans this fall in this area? You are going to a meeting after this, I understand, to talk to Republican leadership. What are you going to tell them?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We are being very honest here. You have got to really go to the heart of the question. There are some Republicans who would rather stay in the party in power than they would elect people to office. So if you want to be frank, that is the question. So when we are talking about electing Republicans, if they want to elect people -- your governor has shown how to get elected with a four-to-one majority against him. He has appealed to all the people.

To me this is the strength. This is why I think North Carolina and New York have a great deal in common, because in both States we are minority parties and yet we have been able to elect Republican governors. In our State we have had Republican control of both Houses for 28 years out of 38 years. We have got one House right now.

You have got to go to the people with the programs that are going to reflect their best interests. and that are going to be sound, based on fiscal integrity and deep human concern.

QUESTION: There are reports that Governor Holshouser was elected with the help of Mr. Nixon in 1972, and other Republicans from the South, or Republicans generally, made some gains from 1968 through 1972 with the so-called Southern strategy, the merging Republican majority that you mentioned a minute ago. What about this year? Is that valid anymore?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you will forgive me for saying so, we ran President Nixon's campaign in New York for him, and he got a bigger plurality in New York than he did in any State of the Union. So it wasn't just a Southern strategy.

President Nixon won based, in my opinion, on his foreign policy, the success of his foreign policy. As I say, he carried our State with the biggest plurality of any State in the Nation. So let's not take sort of these cliches for granted, that the Southern strategy is what made Nixon. I think Nixon's handling of international affairs was what gave the American people confidence. Plus he had a candidate on the opposite ticket who was controversial.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, President Ford has said that a Reagan candidacy would be like 1964 all over again. I assume you remember 1964 fairly well.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have a certain memory.

QUESTION: Do you agree with that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I happen to feel that while you can learn a lot from history, it never repeats itself exactly. So I don't think this is an exact duplication of '64. In '64 there were some basic ideological differences between my positions and Senator Goldwater's.

QUESTION: You think there are not basic differences here?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, there are not basic differences between President Ford and Ronnie Reagan. Ronnie is a very good friend of mine. It is simply a case of one man who is the President, who didn't seek the office, who got in by a quirk of fate. He was the first Vice President selected under the 25th Amendment and then found himself President. He never sought the Presidency. I think for this Nation it turned out that this was one of the great things that has happened, and he turned out to be a uniquely able President for the times in which he found himself thrust into this position.

Now, I understand Governor Reagan's position. He would like to be President. Well, that is a very honorable aspiration. Some of us have shared that oftentimes. Even in '68 he had all the Southern delegates. But Mr. Nixon made a little arrangement with Strom Thurmond which sort of took his delegates away from him, which was too bad, from my point of view.

So I just don't really think there is an analogy here to '64. You have two people who have basically middle-of-the-road records. Mr. Reagan has taken some positions because he has got a great capacity for simplifying complicated issues in a way that sounds very patriotic and arouses a great deal of emotion. Sometimes it is a little hard to cut through the slogan to deep understanding of the facts. But basically their thrust is somewhat the same and always has been.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in 1968 and then again in 1972 the Republican Party made significant gains in the South at local and State levels. What happens this year if your party cannot carry the South? What happens to the party's base in the South?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, you lose some, you win some. I am just assuming that you have got a two-party system here not because you are being carried by some President. I am assuming this basic conviction on the part of the people in your State, that they like a two-party system, that they believe in two parties, that they think that is important to the vitality of freedom.

This isn't something where you get something handed to you on a spoon from a national candidate. I am

MORE

assuming that you won elections because you have good candidates and good organization and that they are going to stay there.

QUESTION: Let me ask one question. How do you analyze the President's statement and rather passionate opposition to busing?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: How do I analyze his statement? He has made a lot of them. You would have to tell me which one. He has talked pretty extensively.

QUESTION: From the point of legislation to correct --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The last statement I saw related to a five-year transition period to find a better means of achieving the objective. Of course, busing as I have always said, is part of our educational system, our primary and secondary educational system. That is how we got rid of the little red school house by busing. Most of the children of this country are bused to school.

Now, the only question is the use of busing to achieve integration. There are other ways of achieving it, and I think what he feels is maybe some of the other ways in many areas can be more effective in achieving the objectives.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, one last question, if I could. A minute ago you indicated that you may have acted too quickly after the Southern Chairmen's meeting.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I just said I should have acted by putting it very simply on the line, that when he delivered -- because the argument was that because of my being on the ticket, I prevented the President from getting the conservative delegates.

QUESTION: Would you say, then, that if you had ridden that little storm out, that he wouldn't be holding your letter as he is today concerning your future?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I'm not quite sure I understand.

QUESTION: You wouldn't be off the ticket for 1976 as you are now.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Listen, I have been blamed for a lot of people losing elections or nominations. I don't want to stand in anybody's way. I am very loyal, and therefore, if there was any shadow of a doubt that I would be a disadvantage to his achieving the nomination, I would swear out, which was the situation. I was really partly speaking in jest when I said that.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, who could run better in the South, Reagan or Ford, and could either of them carry Southern States against Governor Carter?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: My answer to that is Carter, very simply.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you talked about similarities between President Ford and Mr. Reagan.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Their basic beliefs, philosophies.

QUESTION: Having said that, I would like to go back to my first question. If lightning strikes and Reagan is the nominee, will you support him?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: See, I have just told you it is not going to strike, so there is no question. I do not want to say anything or do anything that in any way is going to adversely affect President Ford's chances of getting the nomination, if I have to spell it out to you. Therefore, I am not going to say anything except what I have said, that Ford is going to get it. I am his man. I will do anything I can to help him, and I am not speculating about his not getting it, because right away somebody would say, "He is starting to weaken on this." I have been in this business a long time.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I enjoyed this. It is a very sharp group.

END

AT 4:50 P.M. EDT