

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 30, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Jackson, Mississippi)

THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
DOUG SHANKS
AND
GILMAN CARMICHAEL
CO-CHAIRMEN OF THE PRESIDENT FORD COMMITTEE
FOR THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

THE RAMADA INN

4:10 P.M. CDT

MR. NESSEN: As we indicated, we have Doug Shanks and Gil Carmichael down to try to answer some of your questions. I don't have anything further to say, so we will bring them up. I think most of you know Doug and most of you know Gil.

MR. SHANKS: Basically, I think most of you know the format that took place this afternoon as far as the President's meeting with the delegation. You probably have some specific questions, but I will go over the format briefly.

The President talked for about 20 minutes, talking about the positive things in this Administration, the things he was planning on campaigning for in November--before the election--and then he opened it up for questions, which lasted an hour and a half. At that time, he handled questions of every sort from the delegation. After that, we had a brief picture-taking session with him, and then the President left the room.

Mr. Carmichael will be glad to answer any questions you might have.

Q How much support does the President have in the Mississippi delegation?

MR. SHANKS: He has over a majority.

Q How much over?

MR. SHANKS: I am not able to give you an accurate count, simply because we have not had time to make one, but the President has over a majority of the Mississippi delegation.

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Q Do you think there is any chance that will evaporate before Kansas City?

MR. SHANKS: Personally, no, sir, I don't.

Q The Reagan people say it is not true that the President took a few more delegate votes from this delegation.

MR. SHANKS: The statement you are making is that the Reagan delegates say that is not true?

Q Right.

MR. SHANKS: You want me to comment on that?

Q Yes.

MR. SHANKS: You can be assured that if the Reagan forces could deliver this delegation, they would have done it as early as three, four, five, six weeks ago, and if they could do it, they would do it right now, and they can't do it.

Q What will be the effect of Reagan's visit with Schweiker next Wednesday?

MR. SHANKS: I really don't know. It would be hard for me to say. I think it is going to be -- personally my feeling is it is going to be the death knell for hard Reagan supporters.

Q Why?

MR. SHANKS: Because there are questions they cannot answer.

Q What kind of questions?

MR. SHANKS: For example, the number one thing is that Governor Reagan has said repeatedly that he would pick somebody that was philosophically in tune with him. Senator Schweiker's voting record is something else again on right to work laws, Taft-Hartley, repealing 14-B. It goes on and on and on and I don't think they are going to be able to answer those questions because we will get to this question:

What do you believe in? What do you stand for? If you have just been doing these other things to get elected -- what will you do to get elected? Where are your principles? I think that is the question that ultimately has to be answered. There is a possibility that he can sell that. I think it is a very, very small possibility.

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Q You said that the Reagan people, if they had a majority, could deliver the delegation two or three or four weeks ago, whatever. If you now have a majority, why don't you now deliver it to Ford?

MR. SHANKS: Because we have been -- and I mean this very respectfully -- the Ford campaign has simply been very honest and above board in their dealing with the Mississippi delegation. We have not tried pressure tactics. We have not swamped people with telegrams or threats to get on the boat, and we are letting the course be run by the convention system we have here.

Q Have the Reagan people used threats to get on board?

MR. SHANKS: There have been just massive pressure tactics to move these delegates.

Q Could you give some examples?

MR. SHANKS: I don't think there was a Mississippi delegate, including myself -- which by the way for me was unique -- that did not get a telegram from Ronald Reagan yesterday two pages long.

Q What did it say?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't read it. That is the first time I have gotten anything from their camp -- I saved it to put in my scrap book -- but basically it said, "Hold on. We will be up to explain this. This is part of the grand design." That is the essence of it.

Q What other tactics did they use? What other kinds of things did they do?

MR. SHANKS: Things that relate to State politics.

Q Such as?

MR. SHANKS: Such as support in campaigns in the future, financing for campaigns in the future, things like that.

Q Did it work?

MR. SHANKS: Not on our folks.

Q If you haven't polled this delegation, how can you confirm you have over a majority?

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MR. CARMICHAEL: This last week -- last Saturday a week ago -- we prepared a letter to all members of the delegation and the letter said, as a Ford supporter that we thought it was time for the Mississippi delegation to realize that if they were going to help put President Ford over the top, this is when they should probably move and should do it. We are very much worried about the Hawaii vote that was coming in and the other signals that I saw coming in in support of the President. So, I mailed the letter on Saturday, the 17th, I think it was, and in the letter I asked them to call Doug Shanks or myself and let us know if they could support the President, what their commitment was. Would they vote for him, in a sense, in a straw vote.

The State headquarters, Republican Party, knew we were doing it, so on Monday and Tuesday, Doug and I both began to get calls that said, "Yes, I am with the President."

We already knew -- going back to when we were elected at the State Convention -- we already knew many Ford people had gotten elected to the delegation. I personally ran as a Ford delegate over in Lauderdale County and got elected to the Convention on that basis. Many of us did. So, we knew we had a decent percentage.

I get a kick out of Johnny Apple. He came down from the New York Times and did a story down here and said we had three votes, three delegates, in the thing. So, we have been trying to tell the press, no, sir, that is not true. There is a good strong support for President Ford in the Mississippi delegation.

So, when we moved and sent out the letter and on Monday and Tuesday, we began to receive calls, Doug and I said, "Okay, let's go down the list and call them and ask them if they can support the President."

By Tuesday night, my tally showed I had 26 committed for the President. And I did not even talk to but about, I would say, 45 or so, of the delegation. I did not even get to talk to all of the delegation. Doug was talking to some and I talked to some. Tuesday night, I had 26 for him, eight leaning, eight that felt very sympathetic toward the President. That gave us a majority. That indicated a majority and the President had not even come down yet.

On Wednesday morning, Doug and I -- having told the Ford Committee what we had -- they asked us, "Can you get some telegrams to support that." So, we went back on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and we began to make phone calls back to those people and said, "Can you send telegrams?" So, we had commitments for specific numbers, now, of support for the President. This is what those people said. "We look forward to your visit to Mississippi. You can count me as one of your supporters."

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It was that simple a telegram and we asked them to do it. No pressure. I ran in to some that had questions and I said, "Let me see if I can get the White House, or somebody, to call you and give you some of the answers, and then would you mind sending a telegram?"

"No, I wouldn't." It was that type of thing. So, our figures were very real in that week, last week, and we were dealing with a very popular position for the President down here. He began to get the telegrams up there to reinforce what we had been saying. That is when everything happened. That is when the opposition began to work hard. And by Thursday, Doug and myself were catching the devil from the opposition, which is what they are supposed to do. By Friday, it had turned in to a battle royal.

About that time, we also saw Governor Reagan announce the Schweiker thing. It was a little after that. It was Monday. We had the meeting on Sunday and we voted for rededication of our position at that point. A lot of you were here for that. So, that is a long answer to your question, but there is some newsmen that verified those numbers.

One newsman called me and read his list of the people pro-Ford and he had one more than I had, so it was that well-de signed. So, President Ford's support in this delegation is very strong, very tough.

Now, since Schweiker has been announced, I have had several of them come to me--and I am not, at this point playing my cards--and working in this political battle -- I think that he has in the neighborhood of 40 people out of the delegation for him. But we, again, are political down here. There is no push for a vote, to date. That is the way we play our politics.

Now, there is a tremendous pressure in Mississippi right now by an awful lot of the public wanting us to go ahead and vote and put the President over the top. That is going on. There is tremendous pressure to wait and a tremendous one to go.

Q Will this delegation go to Kansas City formally committed to President Ford?

MR. CARMICHAEL: This delegation is made up of a lot of new Republicans and they are very independent. It is very possible they can call for another meeting themselves, and another vote.

MR. SHANKS: If there had been a move for a vote today by the other forces -- we were prepared, we knew what our count was -- and that is where we could safely say that --

Q You said you didn't have a count yet.

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MR. SHANKS: No. What I said, Tim, she asked me for a count and I said we have not had the opportunity.

Now, as late as last night, we had a count, to be prepared if the forces pushed for a vote and we were well satisfied that we were well protected.

Q How many?

MR. SHANKS: Over 31.

Q Doug, would you agree with what Gil said about 40 delegates?

Q MR. SHANKS: Roughly that. I personally would say 37. There are several people we have not -- I just don't know. I don't know what the effect was of the meeting this afternoon, but it is right around 40. I would say it is probably a fair figure, but it is certainly more than 31, I assure you.

Q Is that committed? Are you counting committed and leaning just a little bit, or what?

MR. SHANKS: In committed votes, we have over 31.

Q Could we have a list of names?

MR. SHANKS: I don't have it on me.

Q I would be delighted to call out the members of the delegation.

Q How can this nice agreement remain so important? If you have it, why don't you give the President the nomination? Why is that little agreement so important?

MR. SHANKS: There are some people who are very much for President Ford that feel like they are committed to go to Kansas City before they vote and there is enough number of Ford delegates who feel that way. That situation may change between now and Kansas City and I would not be surprised if it did, but there are enough delegates that feel that way, that they don't want to take a vote until Kansas City because they have voted twice to wait to get to Kansas City before they cast their vote.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 4:25 P.M. CDT)