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PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM
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AT 11:30 A.M. CDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Kansas City.

I have just had the honor of testifying before the Platform Committee, or talking before the Platform Committee, on the subject of the national defense, foreign policy and national defense, and would be glad to answer any questions that you would care to ask.

QUESTION: Governor, what points would you say you differ specifically with Governor Reagan on national defense and foreign policy?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Only on facts.

QUESTION: What kind of facts?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Such as whether we have sovereign rights over Panama which we don't. It is largely factual.

QUESTION: How about philosophical?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I believe if we are talking national defense, foreign policy, I believe that if we are going to preserve democracy it depends on the American people understanding the facts and the hard realities of the world in which we live.

It depends upon a strong America at home, both materially and morally and spiritually. It depends on the sustained will on the part of the Americans to preserve those values on which our country was founded; namely, the concept of individual freedom, economic freedom, religious freedom; the respect for human dignity, equality of opportunity.

So, first, that to me is the base; these strengths at home. We then, in my opinion, have to identify these with other countries and peoples who aspire to the same in other parts of the world. This lays the foundation then for a resistance to totally alien ideologies in which the individual does not count and human dignity is not respected, and freedom is meaningless. Added to that, of course, is finally the point of our military capability which we must have sufficient military capability to meet whatever challenge is presented to us and in whatever form, in whatever place that will affect our freedom and security.

When you go down to the details, I think he is for a strong national defense. I perhaps give larger dimensions

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to what is the basis for a strong national defense that we must be strong at home, both in terms of the well-being and opportunity of our people and in terms of our belief in these basic values and our adherence to them.

QUESTION: Do you think that Reagan has distorted the facts with respect to military strength?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I think in the case of the facts relating to military weapons that he has used the facts correctly, but then has distorted the significance of the facts and that is why I used the concept of sufficient and balanced forces and emphasized research and development.

I mean, the Soviets may have more tanks than we did but we have more helicopters than they do. Okay, but it depends upon what are the strategic concepts of the moment.

What are the new developments in terms of weapons and I think that the last war in the Middle East showed that many even in the short time since the Six Day War, that many concepts even of the sophisticated Israeli military establishment had been overrun by the development of new technology and new weapons. So their planes were shot down and tanks didn't prove to have the massive power which people thought they did because they could be knocked out by a bazooka.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, would you give your opinion in answering political questions?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I will try.

QUESTION: Have you sent your list of recommendations for the vice presidential nominations to President Ford?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir.

QUESTION: Do you have any recommendations that you would like to tell us?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have discussed the subject with him, but I have not been asked to give a list.

QUESTION: Has he said that you are on his list? He says he has a list of a dozen or so people.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I haven't discussed who is on his list and who isn't on his list. Whatever discussions I have with him are on a totally personal, confidential basis which is the way they should be.

As Vice President, he has been very generous in giving me the opportunity at all times and on all subjects to express totally freely and openly my views and then I have not sought at any time to get an answer or to argue with him. I just want the opportunity to express it.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, would you liked to be named on another four years?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I stand on what I said earlier. I asked my name be withdrawn.

QUESTION: There was a report you commissioned or otherwise caused to be taken a Gallup poll on potential Vice Presidential candidates for President Ford. Is that so?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: 'No, sir.

QUESTION: Did you have anything to do with such a poll?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have read all the polls that I can get my hands on just to see what the trends are so I can try to answer your questions better. I read a great many in the papers.

QUESTION: There was a report of one poll.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I knew there was a report.

QUESTION: In which some 35 candidates had a lower preference rating than Governor Connally. Do you know anything about that one?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No.

QUESTION: Can you say what sort of things you believe ought to go into the making of the decision on the Vice President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes. Number one, having the preparation, should under some unforeseen circumstance, God forbid, a President being unable to carry on. Therefore, number one has got to be that the individual has the capacity to be President by experience, by the ability to make decisions, to act, to carry on the unbelievably complex and demanding responsibilities.

I would think that that includes a good deal of physical energy because of the time-consuming pressures that we live under. That to me is number one.

Number two, would be compatible to the President. To the extent the President wants to work with him and use his time, he is a staff assistant is the way I view myself. I have followed that course. But the individual is a member of the National Security Council, Domestic Council, has various other responsibilities and, therefore, it needs to be someone with a breadth of vision and a depth of mind.

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QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what specific activities will you undertake in the next 10 days or so, to secure the nomination for President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is getting down to a rather limited field. I have been supporting in every way that I could appropriately, and I think that perhaps one of the most important developments was the fact that the New York State delegation gave 119 votes to President Ford the same weekend that Pennsylvania did, and put President Ford in the lead and kept him in the lead ever since.

So that that, not that I was responsible, but I did talk to the delegation, along with others. And I think probably that was the most significant. Then there have been obvious contacts with delegations, with individuals.

QUESTION: Will that continue, particularly in the Northeast?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: As I said, the field is narrowing as to those that are left. If I can be helpful, it is a pleasure.

QUESTION: How many votes will New York State deliver to the President, on the first ballot?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We still have some uncommitted. There are not very many. I would think maybe around 135.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, have you been asked to supply to the President, or to the other people in the White House, an update of your financial situation and your health records?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not that I am aware of. I thought that the Congress had done a reasonably thorough job with the aid of 500 FBI agents.

QUESTION: Do you know President Ford's Vice Presidential candidates are being asked for such information? I wonder if you have been asked for an update.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: How are they asked? Are they getting a memo to fill out, or form?

QUESTION: Supposedly they were called over the weekend, by people in the White House, and asked, "Are you interested in being Vice President?" and if they answered affirmatively, they were asked to supply the information to the White House.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Is this your list or is this the President's list?

QUESTION: I have no list; this is the President's list.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I haven't seen any list. I am trying to identify a list. So I don't know.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, yesterday the President's forces lost some procedural votes on the platform. How do you view that? Was it a setback in any way?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Totally unimportant.

QUESTION: Unimportant?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Unimportant.

QUESTION: Have you seen any change in the leanings of the New York delegation since the Ronald Reagan selection of Senator Schweiker for his Vice Presidential running mate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I don't think it affected anybody.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, can I follow up on a previous question, please?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: How can you say it is totally unimportant when actually the potential for kicking out your good friend, Robert Ray, as appointed chairman exists now, to be filled by, possibly filled by a chairman of Reaganite following and that, in turn, would have a conceivable influence on the platform writing? Why do you say it is totally unimportant?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. Reagan has a majority of the members of the committee or you wouldn't have made the statement. I am not sure you are right. You have assumed.

QUESTION: Can we say why you feel it is totally unimportant?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Because I don't think it is going to have any affect on changing the chairman. That would be my guess. I don't know. I wasn't here. You asked me what I thought. I just expressed my own feeling.

QUESTION: I wonder, Governor, if you have any thoughts about the irony that seems to be involved in the choice of Mr. Schweiker, after your decision some months ago concerning the Vice Presidency? If you have any thoughts?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is a fair question. But what I do think is interesting, is that a man who has had the support of what I referred to as the minority of the minority, and who has had the support of the delegations from the areas of the country where the conservative positions take by this group are predominant, that this person in the form of Mr. Reagan, Governor Reagan, should come to recognize that the North and Northeast are essential to winning a Presidential nomination. I think it is important because what it said to me was that they really are interested in winning and not just holding on to certain ideological concepts and controlling small organizations but not winning elections.

So that I think there is a fundamental interesting, fundamental and interesting shift, there, in concept from what has been the position of a good many of his followers.

How his followers are taking this, I don't know.

QUESTION: Do you think it will be a plus for President Ford when the first ballot is taken?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think President Ford is going to get the nomination on the first ballot, and I have felt that right along. I don't really think that this has too much affect because the person he selected was, in my opinion, rather unusual in terms of, if you were trying to get for instance in New York or the Eastern Seaboard area, or the Western States, I think that a person with a record more of the moderate progressive Republican position, rather than the extreme liberal Republican position, would have been more effective. But that is just a personal, political judgment.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in view of your comments on Governor Reagan's choice of Schweiker, do you think your withdrawal from active competition has made it easier for President Ford to get the nomination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course, that has got to be a judgmental thing.

QUESTION: Yes, that is what I am asking, for your judgment.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You see, I have a very strong feeling, and have always held this, that the President is the man; that he is the important one and that whatever a Vice President can do for a citizen to support a President, particularly in this case where I was working for him, I did not want to be in the position where his campaign manager felt that I would be detracting from his chances.

QUESTION: Could you comment on, if as you say, a Vice President should be compatible with the President, can you comment on the compatibility factor of Mr. Reagan with President Ford, or Senator Baker with President Ford?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: After a campaign, it takes a little while for the wounds to heal from a campaign, from campaign rhetoric; therefore, if you are referring to Mr. Reagan, I would think that that compatibility would take a little while to develop.

QUESTION: But do you consider it possible? Is it possible that that could be a winning ticket for the Republicans?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is a difficult question. You started out on compatibility, which has very little to do with winning.

QUESTION: How about Senator Baker?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I mean, or it may be causal or it may be just coincidental. How about Senator Baker? Outstanding man.

QUESTION: Would he be compatible?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Surely.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, I will insert from that last answer, are you saying that you would not be in favor of a Ford-Reagan ticket?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I wasn't commenting on that subject at all. We were talking about compatibility. I should have spoken louder.

QUESTION: You said that the wounds would take some time to heal.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is right. That is the wounds that would affect the compatibility.

QUESTION: You said compatibility was important to the Vice President. That sounds like you say the two men would not be able to get along initially.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: A factor, I said.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what are the odds that you will end up on this ticket?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't take a bet on it.

QUESTION: You are not making any Shermanlike statement, either, are you?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I wrote my letter. I stand on the letter. I thought it was a very good one.

QUESTION: Is Mr. Connally compatible with the President, and how would that affect Mr. Ford's chances of winning?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think he is compatible. I think he is compatible. I think he has pluses, very real pluses and he has got some minuses.

QUESTION: Which are most important and what are they?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Those are the questions that the President and only the President can decide. This is to me the whole heart of this thing. The President of the United States has got to pick his own running mate. I can discuss with him what I see here on this side or what I see on that side. Then he does agree with other people and he has got to weigh all of those factors and make his final decision.

QUESTION: Do the pluses of Mr. Connally outweigh his minuses?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is a question the President will have to decide.

QUESTION: What is your view?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not in a position to have a view on this because I have no decision to make.

QUESTION: Governor, you mentioned a few moments ago --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It would be presumptuous on my part as Vice President.

QUESTION: You mentioned a few moments ago, sir, that Mr. Schweiker does not represent the moderate part of the Party. There have been some Congressmen who presumably do represent that moderate section of the Party, who have

been actively campaigning against Mr. Conally. I am wondering if you see their position has any great validity in terms of a national ticket aimed at winning in November?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is one of the minuses.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you got some experience in coming from behind the polls but no President has ever come or no candidate has ever come from as far behind as Mr. Ford is now apparently.

Do you think that should be some cause for concern on his part?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't personally be too worried about it under the circumstances because so much of Mr. Carter's record and so many of his positions really are unknown. Therefore, not that he hasn't taken positions, but it is a question of which position. So that we have to wait until that is developed in the campaign and then as it is developed.

I started out once at 24 percent, which I guess is a record and I was advised by all of the pros, that they might be able to rehabilitate me, but forget running for governor again. But I was interested in running again because I hadn't finished the things I was trying to do.

So I ran. I won -- well, I have forgotten what that was, three, four, five hundred thousand votes. So the people of this country are very sophisticated and if you take strong action on the subject, you are bound to -- or take actions, plural -- you are bound to irritate people who were affected even though you may represent the majority's best interest, and others who are affected.

Those cumulatively result in a great many negatives. Then until you can put forward the positives and they are fully perceived, you don't overweigh and then one is hopeful that one's opponent looks better in the polls than he does on the podium.

QUESTION: Why do you think it is that President Ford has had such problems selling his positives?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: He has been so busy making decisions and carrying them out he hasn't had time.

QUESTION: Shouldn't he be worrying about them more than he does?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: He has got a full campaign ahead of him.

QUESTION: Sir, you said in a recent interview that you thought that the President may have to write off the South. Is that the way you feel about the South in the coming campaign?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think I said it quite that way. I said I thought that Mr. Carter was going to have, whether I said solid support or very strong support, for

patriotic reasons, for regional reasons from the South. He is the first candidate for the President to have been selected from the South -- what? -- 100 years, something like that, 80 years.

In my visits there I have found even Republicans feeling that this is something that is so significant that he is going to get very, very heavy support.

QUESTION: Do you think that means that he will have to choose a Vice President from that region?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think that it is interesting that Mr. Reagan's reaction was just the opposite. He made his decision to go the other way.

I think that if you look at the chart or the map that was published in I think Time magazine, showing where President Ford's strength was, then if you multiply those -- there are some very interesting facts. I think one delegate in Wyoming represents 6,000 voters. One delegate from Massachusetts represents 36,000 voters.

So that when you translate delegate strength into voting strength, and your strength is all from the South or the smaller States, as Mr. Reagan's is, you begin to worry about election rather than nomination or in addition to the nomination. Excuse me.

QUESTION: Sir, as a political practitioner of some years standing, would you recommend to President Ford that he go out and campaign or that he retain his Presidential image during the fall period and send his Vice President out as the campaign -- make the campaign effort?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I would think that would be a decision for the President and his campaign manager for the campaign itself.

QUESTION: You would have no recommendation?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If I do, I will give it to the President.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you were a Republican House candidate from upstate New York and how would you feel running --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If I were?

QUESTION: If you were, and how would you feel running on a ticket headed by Ford and Connally involved?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It depends upon which District.

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You have to know your State.

QUESTION: What about the District that was lost, say, by Mr. King, a fairly staunch Republican District, but

it was picked up by a Democrat in '74?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have got to tell you a secret. New York State has 1 million, the Republican Party, 1 million registered plurality against. Therefore, the candidate to win has to get Independent and Democratic votes except in a very few, in a very small number of Districts where the Republicans have a majority.

So I would not judge by who is on the ticket in relation to the candidate. In fact, if I could recall, when I was running for Governor against Averell Harriman, in the Democratic year, in fact that was the way it was described, I asked President Eisenhower, whom I admired and whom I had worked for, please to stay out of the State because I wanted to run on State issues and not get it confused in national issues.

If I were a local candidate, I would try and concentrate on the problems of my District and stay away from these worldwide controversial issues which are pretty far away from the local constituents who are actually going to vote.

So I don't think the candidacy on the national ticket is that important if you are a good candidate for local office.

QUESTION: Do you think the issue of public trust and association, whether valid or not in the public mind with Watergate, is an issue to consider in the case of John Connally, because I think it came up a moment ago about the Congressman's complaints and that is what they were speaking of?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course, any issue is one that has to be considered. I am sure the President will weigh all of those issues in relation to each candidate, including whatever information he gets as a result of the inquiry that he has made or is making; that he will have to weigh all of those.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, this is the first time in a long time that you have come here not as a potential nominee. How does that feel?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Pretty good, no tensions, just relaxation.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, are you afraid that the President may ignore the Northeast which has supported him --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Which what?

QUESTION: May ignore the Northeast which has supported him and where he can get votes in November, to support the Southwest or West in the selection of a Vice Presidential running mate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am sure he is not going to ignore them. If I were the President, and I am sure that he will look for votes and support in every corner of this country -- that, in my opinion, is always the best way to run.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for letting me have this pleasure. I am delighted for this visit. Thank you.