

August 16, 1976

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
JAMES A. BAKER, III
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN/DELEGATES

THE CROWN CENTER HOTEL

4:46 P.M. CDT

MR. BAKER: Ladies and gentlemen, we have an update for you on our delegate count. There should be some sheets of paper at the back of the room with names and addresses of new delegates who have committed to the President. A couple of these have been on the wire. I think that three or four of them have not been.

We are announcing five new delegates. One that I know has been on the wire is an alternate from the State of New York named Odin Carlson, who is taking the place of a delegate who will not attend from New York.

We have an uncommitted delegate from South Carolina, Sherry Martschink, who has committed to the President; an uncommitted delegate from the State of Virginia, Lois Kindt; an uncommitted delegate from the State of Pennsylvania -- I believe this has been on the wire -- Ed Byrne; and an uncommitted delegate from the State of Missouri, Bill Skaggs.

With those additions to our count, we now show the President with 1139, Governor Reagan with 1033 delegates, and with 87 delegates remaining uncommitted, including the full 30 in the Mississippi delegation.

I will be delighted to take your questions.

Q What effect has the withdrawal of delegate Buckley had on your account?

MR. BAKER: It has had no effect.

Q How many delegates has the President met with today?

MR. BAKER: I don't know how many he has met with today. He is still meeting with them, but my recollection is he had some 35 to 40 on the schedule.

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Q What States, and also, is Mrs. Ford meeting delegates?

MR. BAKER: The First Lady has met some delegates. I don't have the totals on that for you.

Q Did the President meet with Mississippi delegates?

MR. BAKER: The President was scheduled to meet with some Mississippi delegates at 1:30. His schedule was running about an hour and a half late, but he did meet with some Mississippi delegates.

Q If the Convention forced the President to name his Vice President before his nomination, what effect could that have on his nomination?

MR. BAKER: I can't say that, Tom. I don't think that is going to happen. It is hypothetical, and I can't give you an answer.

Q Could we go back to a previous question? The 35 or so delegates he met with, could you cover the States they came from and also what was the burden of his message to them?

MR. BAKER: He met this morning with the Hawaii delegation and the Guam delegation. He met with some delegates from Mississippi this afternoon. He met with some delegates from Minnesota; some delegates from Wyoming. He is presently meeting with some delegates from Kansas, Arizona, Missouri, and he will meet with a few delegates from Virginia later this evening.

Q Are all those uncommitted?

MR. BAKER: No, they are not all uncommitted. Many of them, as in the case of Hawaii, are committed to the President. The Guam delegation is committed to the President. A number of them are delegates that have not had an opportunity to meet with the President, who have never been uncommitted, never been in the soft category. They are Ford delegates.

Q Was there any discussion with them of his possible running mate, and if so, could you tell us about it?

MR. BAKER: I didn't sit in on all the meetings, and I would rather imagine if there was any, he simply told them the same thing he has been telling you; that is, he is going through an orderly process, considering a large number of people. He will pick someone with whom he is philosophically compatible, and someone in the mainstream of the party.

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Q One of the Mississippi delegates is quoted as having said he told the President he was for him in the hopes it would produce a Ford-Reagan ticket. What statement did he reply?

MR. BAKER: I don't know. I was not in that meeting. Many delegates have expressed, as you know, over the past two months in their meetings with the President, their preference for the Vice Presidency. That would not be an unusual expression.

Q What do you think about a floor test on 16-C?

MR. BAKER: We feel any floor test on 16-C we would win.

Q What is your nose count on that?

MR. BAKER: We think we have a satisfactory margin without getting into the actual numbers on that count, but we have done a lot of counting over the course of the last 24 hours.

Q What are you going to do on the foreign policy plank?

MR. BAKER: We heard about that, or saw that, I guess, for the first time at 1:30 or 2:00 this afternoon. I personally have not seen it. I think our people are still studying it.

Q Do they favor it?

MR. BAKER: We are still looking at it. I don't believe we have taken a position on it.

Q Is there any common denominator on those five new delegates that you are announcing that caused them to announce for Ford?

MR. BAKER: I don't think so. A couple of them were people who had leaned -- they were in the uncommitted category, but we felt they were leaning pretty heavily our way. They indicated they would make their decision shortly after they got to Kansas City.

Q Would you tell us what the division of labor is among the people around the Strategy Committee? In advance of the voting on the floor, you have a number of people on the Strategy Committee. We all know what you do, but what does Bryce Harlow do? What do the others on the Strategy Committee actually do? What has been their responsibility?

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MR. BAKER: Many of them, as you know, like Bill Timmons, Dean Burch and Dick Herman, have been out here in the pre-Convention week, working the Rules Committee, working the Platform Committee, working the Credentials Committee. We have been meeting late every evening and we will now meet every evening after the Convention sessions, as a committee, to discuss the strategy meetings for the next day.

Q With the President?

MR. BAKER: We meet with the President normally around 8:00 or 8:30 in the evening.

Q Can you hazard any guess as to how many --

MR. BAKER: Excuse me. We won't, of course, be doing that during the sessions.

Q Have you any idea of how many of those remaining 87 uncommitted delegates you expect to be committed by the time the nomination vote comes?

MR. BAKER: I said two days ago I thought we would get roughly half of the then uncommitted and it seems to me it has broken out pretty much that way. I still think we will get roughly half of those uncommitted. I don't think we have to get half of them to win on the first ballot.

Q Mr. Baker, do you think that Reagan has lost any delegate votes because of picking Schweiker?

MR. BAKER: Yes, we do believe he has. We have picked up some votes in Virginia; we have picked up some votes in Louisiana; we have picked up votes in Mississippi that, of course, are not now counted as committed delegate votes, but we do believe he has lost some strength in the South and in the West as a result of that selection.

Q Do you still count 20 in West Virginia?

MR. BAKER: We still count 20 in West Virginia and we will stand by that until it is proven erroneous, Rudy.

I might say that after our statement of two days ago, I noted a report in The New York Times by one of those delegates who calls himself uncommitted, Robert Harmon, in West Virginia, saying he was still uncommitted. We didn't mention any names and I don't plan to mention any names here today, but I might suggest that you might want to recheck with Robert Harmon to see where he stands in West Virginia.

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Q What discussions have you had with the President about how 16-C would affect you if it were passed. How have you begun to approach it?

MR. BAKER: We oppose 16-C, without getting into the question of how it might affect the nomination.

Q If it did get approved, you would have overnight, according to the way it is written, just overnight in order to disclose a choice and you would have to handle the delegates in that eventuality. Have you done no planning on that at all?

MR. BAKER: He has done a great deal of planning on the selection of his running mate and I think we have a pretty good feel on who the delegates prefer. I think we would be in a position to make a choice were that required, but we don't think that will be required.

Q The five delegates, or six if we add Robert Harmon, is not a very big flood given the fact many of those delegates were simply paid to be waiting until they got here. Why are you not producing more?

MR. BAKER: We are producing more than they are and we are 80 to 90 delegates ahead of them. I think we are doing pretty good with the hard-core uncommitted. We may have a few more for you here, shortly.

Q Jim, what is the strategy behind not telling us who will nominate the President?

MR. BAKER: I didn't realize there was a strategy there, Bob. Has that announcement not been made?

Q No. Maybe you could make it for us.

MR. BAKER: It is not mine to make.

Q Do you know who it is?

MR. BAKER: Yes.

Q Who?

MR. BAKER: It is not my announcement to make.

Q Who will make the announcement?

MR. BAKER: Either the chairman of the campaign or the President will make it.

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Q Why not give us a count on 16-C? What is your reason for not giving us a hard count on your assessment of the way the votes will go on 16-C?

MR. BAKER: We just prefer not to get into giving you as hard figures as we are giving you here on procedural counts. In the first place, they are not as exact. In giving you our counts and in doing it on a State-by-State basis, we have given you names and addresses of delegates when we bring them in and ask that you go check with them.

It is a little bit different when you are counting or polling on a procedural issue.

Q Who will announce who the nominator will be?

MR. BAKER: I said I thought it would be either the Campaign Chairman's announcement to make or perhaps the President's announcement to make.

Q Did the President see today any delegates that are committed and, in addition, if he did, were any of the five delegates brought on board today among those he saw committed to Reagan?

MR. BAKER: The President didn't see any of these delegates today. He did see delegates today that were committed to Governor Reagan and, by the way, our announcement -- the paper you can pick up in the back of the room -- also includes two Reagan delegates in Arizona that have switched to the uncommitted status.

Q Without mentioning the names of the person who will nominate the President, do you know how many seconders there are?

MR. BAKER: Yes, I do, but that is not my announcement to make.

Q Besides 16-C, does your organization anticipate any other tests of strength with Reagan before the balloting begins?

MR. BAKER: That is the one I think, Tom, that everyone is talking about, and that is the one we most anticipate. I like to think we are going to be prepared for wherever the test comes. If it is platform, it could be.

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Q You said the President saw some Reagan delegates today. Does that mean two or 35?

MR. BAKER: He saw roughly 35 to 43, and I would have to go through a name list to tell you exactly.

Q Just running down yourself, could you, at a glance, tell who the Reagan delegates were?

MR. BAKER: No, because I don't have a list of the delegates he saw. All I have is the States and numbers. The majority of the delegates he saw today, as I indicated earlier, were Ford delegates or uncommitted delegates.

Q Are you concerned about the black delegates who have suggested they might abstain unless they get to see the President? Will they see the President?

MR. BAKER: I thought they were going to see the President. I thought that announcement had already been made.

Q Have you just made it?

MR. BAKER: I have just made it.

Q When are they going to see him?

MR. BAKER: I would have to check the schedule. I don't have it with me.

Q They are going to see him?

MR. BAKER: He has promised to see those black delegates to this Convention who support his candidacy.

Q How many is that?

MR. BAKER: I think there are 76 delegates to the Convention, and I think 74 of them support the President.

Q Is there an oversight in the lateness of that invitation?

MR. BAKER: No, that was one of the first things on the schedule.

Q When will it take place? You say it is on the schedule. Presumably you know when he will meet with them?

MR. BAKER: My recollection is it will be Tuesday afternoon, but I wouldn't want you to hold me to that until I get a copy of his schedule and look at it.

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Q Is he going to address the Illinois delegates tomorrow morning at a breakfast?

MR. BAKER: I think so. Again, I will have to check the schedule. I will do it right after we are through here. I am pretty sure he is.

Q On this foreign policy plank the Reagan people are going to try to push through, you say you are studying it now, but you don't seem to have any immediate reaction of opposition to it?

MR. BAKER: That is because I personally haven't seen it. It was only announced, as I understand it, at 2:00 this afternoon.

Q You seem to be toying around again today with figures on delegates. What is your strength in Mississippi?

MR. BAKER: I think our strength in Mississippi is substantial. I think it has been building over the last five or six weeks, and without presuming to tell Mississippi how to cast their vote, I think we have an excellent chance to carry the State under the unit rule. If they choose not to vote, as a unit, I think we will get a substantial proportion of the vote.

Q Why was the President an hour and a half late?

MR. BAKER: I don't know, Margaret. I don't know what happened that bogged the schedule down.

Q How do you figure out which delegates he should meet with? I am not talking about the small group of delegates like Hawaii and Guam, but the ones from Illinois and the ones from Virginia. How do you select them?

MR. BAKER: These decisions were made a week or ten days ago, John, in the light of the importance which we put upon those delegates at that time, and I believe that is holding up pretty well. Some of them he is seeing frankly because he hasn't had an opportunity to see them. Some of them, as in the case of Hawaii and Guam, are loyal supporters he has had and has had no opportunity to see.

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Q Mr. Baker, how many delegates has John Connally met with on your behalf in the last 24 hours?

MR. BAKER: Do you want an exact number? Can I give a ball park figure?

Q If you include today.

MR. BAKER: Sure. Louisiana, North Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Virginia. There are probably at the outside 16 to a dozen.

Q Jim, you may have been asked this earlier, but did Buckley's withdrawal produce any delegate votes for you?

MR. BAKER: It didn't produce any delegate votes, but we hadn't lost any to his entry.

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Q When Buckley announced, or when the announcement was made on Buckley's behalf, the PFC said, this really clinches it for the President. Now that Buckley has pulled out, is it unclinched or clinched tighter?

MR. BAKER: It certainly isn't unclinched. I think, at the time he entered, or said he might let his name go in, was absolutely correct, that is that it hurt the Reagan campaign or would tend to hurt it far more than it would hurt ours.

Q Will the nominator be from your home State?

MR. BAKER: That is not my announcement to make.

I might say, I have been passed a note here that Roger Campbell, an uncommitted delegate in Pennsylvania, has just re-announced his support for the President.

Q Re-announced?

MR. BAKER: Yes, he was in our column at one time and moved to uncommitted and we reduced our count. I am told that he is now back with us. I don't have that on personal knowledge.

Q Just as a matter of simple arithmetic, I thought you said before you had 1135.

MR. BAKER: That is right.

Q Then, I think you said you had 1139.

MR. BAKER: That is right.

Q Then, you picked up five today. That should be 1140.

MR. BAKER: That is right.

I moved one in North Dakota out of our column today.

Q Who was that?

MR. BAKER: John Skelley.

Q Is it 1139 or 1140?

MR. BAKER: 1139 is what we are claiming.

Q How about Inez Eddings of South Carolina?

MR. BAKER: Dr. Inez Eddings is a Ford delegate who may not attend the Convention. Until we resolve the question of the seating of her alternate, we count that vote.

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Q What about this Campbell? Doesn't that bring it to 1140?

MR. BAKER: This would. This would bring it to 1140.

Q Where did the other delegate go, to uncommitted or Reagan?

MR. BAKER: Uncommitted. He had been carried in some of the public counts in uncommitted for a period of time and we had not confirmed that and had not moved him out of our count. We are doing it now. We talked to him last night.

Q What about the three men who formed the Buckley Steering Committee? It was a New York delegate for Reagan who said, if Buckley didn't go he would vote for the President.

MR. BAKER: I am not aware of who you are talking about.

Q He was a former Reagan delegate from New York.

MR. BAKER: He said he was a Ford Delegate who --

Q He was a Buckley delegate but said if Buckley didn't run, he would vote for the President.

MR. BAKER: It sounds good to me. I wasn't aware of that.

Q A moment ago, you held up that piece of paper. I take it that is the Roger Campbell vote?

MR. BAKER: That is the Roger Campbell note.

Q With that, you are making it a tentative 1140?

MR. BAKER: I am not really. I am just saying I was passed a note that says Roger Campbell is back on board. Until I talk to Roger Campbell, we won't put him in our count.

Q Could you tell us something about the narrowing down of the Vice President popularity contest, the five or six candidates?

MR. BAKER: As I indicated two days ago, that is a matter, really, for the President. He is the person that is really involved in that.

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Q What about what the surveyors are showing?

MR. BAKER: I am not sure I understand your question.

Q This morning, we were told that the survey of the Vice Presidential popularity contest had shown that five or six persons out of what, 20, 22, 18, however many were named, were in the lead, bunched together. I am asking you to tell us about those five or six.

MR. BAKER: I am not the person that ought to comment on the Vice Presidential selection. That is the President's responsibility and he would be the guy to ask that question.

I might say one other thing. There has been some question of our Wyoming count and I think John Oslen today made an announcement on the Convention floor that he does indeed support the President, as we have claimed all along.

Q Will this alternate delegate replace a Reagan delegate? Was the New York delegate that was replaced on your list, was the original delegate a Reagan delegate?

MR. BAKER: Yes, the original delegate was a delegate named Muldoon.

Q Was Howard Baker asked to delete a line on Watergate from his keynote speech?

MR. BAKER: I have no knowledge of that. I don't know anything about the keynote speech.

Q How do you explain the difference between your count and the count given by the AP and the major magazines?

MR. BAKER: Our count doesn't differ significantly from the major magazines, both of which, or at least Time and Newsweek, have right up there at 1130. I am claiming only 1139. That is not a whole lot of difference. As I pointed out, two days ago, maybe six of the difference is West Virginia. We are standing by our count in West Virginia and you might want to check with those West Virginia delegates.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 5:10 P.M. CDT)