

August 17, 1976

PRESS CONFERENCE  
OF  
ROBERT GRIFFIN  
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

THE CROWN CENTER HOTEL

2:08 P.M. CDT

MR. GREENER: A number of you have asked if we would have someone down to discuss the floor situation and, as you know, Senator Griffin is the Floor Manager and floor leader and so he has made himself available for some questions now.

Q Senator, are you expecting a battle on the floor over the foreign policy issue in the platform?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We are expecting there will be an amendment offered along the lines of the one, exactly the same as was brought up in the Platform Committee, as far as we know. I think some have referred to it as an international morality plank, and to the extent that we can determine that will be brought up, and apparently there is some controversy about it.

Q Are you against it or for it, this international morality?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I am for international morality and otherwise. Our druthers, of course, would be to change the language in it. We may have some efforts on our side to do that. What we will do from there on, I really don't know. The decision hasn't been made.

Q What about the defente issue?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: Beyond saying that we would rather not have this language, there are only a few changes that would have to be made in it to make it acceptable.

Q Are you going to offer changes?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We are giving that consideration.

Q Senator, there was a tally made today apparently of the vote counts on 16-C as the whips were leaving the meeting that the President addressed. How did that tally come out? How would you do on 16-C?

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SENATOR GRIFFIN: We did get a fairly good report, but there were unfortunately some States whose whips could not get their for one reason or another, and there were some who did attend who were not in a position to give us their tally because of later State caucuses in the day.

We are generally pleased with the results. They are not complete. In general, they are running State-by-State pretty close to the figures that we have for the balloting for President, and we expect to win on 16-C tonight.

Q How much of a fall off is there between you on your estimates State-by-State on the nomination. and what you have so far on reports on 16-C?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: Not very much, if any.

Q Question?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: Whether there was a fall off and how much, and I said very little.

Q Isn't the foreign policy amendment as it is presently drafted totally unacceptable to the Ford people inasmuch as it is a total repudiation of the Ford-Kissinger diplomacy for the past two years?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: As I said, if we had our druthers, we would just as soon it would go away. There were some changes in language that could be acceptable. There are some efforts to do that underway, and the decision as to what we will do about it later tonight has just not been made yet.

Q Do you see the submission of the minority plank as related in any way to a fight over the Presidential nominee?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I can only speculate and assume it probably does have some relation to it.

Q If I could follow up, do you see this as a means of the Reagan side seeking to embarrass the President with a supposed repudiation of his foreign policy and using that as a means to gather delegates?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I can't evaluate the motivation of the people involved. I really don't know.

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Q Speaking of the 16-C count, you said there is very little fall off in your vote for --

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We are picking up in some States. We are getting more in some States than we had been counting for the nomination. In other words, there are significant numbers of Reagan supporters who really aren't for 16-C and are going to vote that way, and there is some slippage as far as our Ford delegates are concerned, but in general it is running pretty close.

Q Will a victory by the Reagan forces on 16-C effectively eliminate Ronald Reagan as a possible running mate since the running mate would have to be named in advance of the nomination?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: If 16-C is rejected -- or are you saying if 16-C is adopted?

Q Adopted. Would that eliminate Ronald Reagan as a possible running mate?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: It seems to me it would. One of the problems with 16-C, as I see it, is it locks Schweiker in and locks Reagan out. I believe Governor Reagan when he says he doesn't want to go on the ticket.

As I said earlier, I think he will still believe that at 9:00 on Wednesday morning. He won't want to go on the ticket. But, I think it would be a disservice to adopt a rule such as this, which would make it impossible, in effect, for him to change his mind Thursday morning. It might be a disservice to the party and the country for him to do so.

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Q What do you mean, lock Schweiker in? Isn't he already locked in?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: If you adopt this rule, I suppose it would be the Convention locking him in rather than Governor Reagan.

Q Are you suggesting Mr. Reagan might change his mind on the question?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: No, but I think there are a lot of Reagan delegates who are not very satisfied with that choice of Governor Reagan.

Q Senator, there is still the possibility the Convention would reject whoever the nominee of the Presidential candidate is and elect someone else. If they really want Ronald Reagan, regardless of 16-C, the Convention could have him as Vice President.

SENATOR GRIFFIN: That is true, theoretically, although obviously, if the Convention would take that position and actually adopt 16-C, it seems to me that they have gone a way down the road toward locking Schweiker in if Mr. Reagan should happen to get the nomination, which he won't.

Q You are using locking Reagan out as an argument to win Reagan votes, then?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: It happens to be the situation and we want to be sure the Reagan people understand that as they consider the merits of this proposal.

Q Senator, is there any chance you all will name a running mate for the President this afternoon to head off this whole 16-C battle?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: No, I see no possibility of that.

Q No possibility at all?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I would be very surprised if that happened.

Q Can you give us a scenario whereby it might be in the interests of the Republican Party or the country for Reagan to change his mind about the Vice Presidency?

Q Question?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: He asked me to give a scenario. I don't know if I can give a scenario. All I know is President Ford has said over and over, despite Governor Reagan's statements, he is one of those that would be under consideration by President Ford. Beyond that -- this point, I think, is very important -- whether or not President Ford asked Governor Reagan to go on the ticket and whether or not Governor Reagan would be willing to go on the ticket --

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In any event, President Ford, after his nomination, would want to consult with Governor Reagan before he made his decision. That would be the appropriate thing to do in the interest of trying to get as much party unity as possible and 16-C, if it were adopted, would, in effect, preclude that.

Q Do you think Ronald Reagan would make a good Vice Presidential running mate for President Ford?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I am not going to indicate my preference. I am out to get delegates for President Ford and I don't think that would be very wise.

Q I am not asking your preference. I am saying, do you think he would be a good Vice Presidential candidate?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I think he should be considered.

Q Senator, in that event of a floor fight on 16-C, do you see any possibility of a compromise of averting such a division?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: At the moment, I don't see any possibility of a compromise.

Q Senator, can you tell us what is going on with the Mississippi delegation, perhaps a vote for 16-C in return for a 15/16 split?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: The situation changes hour by hour and I am not at all sure I am up to it.

Q What about the last hour you were there?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: The negotiations continue and there is a caucus at 3 o'clock.

Q Is there any possibility the President will say, "I will pick one of these two or three people," this afternoon?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I have no indication whatsoever that the President would do that.

Q You have not discussed that? It has never been discussed?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: That is right. Not in any discussion I have been involved in.

Q Will you identify the States where you say there is some slippage among Ford delegates on 16-C?

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SENATOR GRIFFIN: No, I don't frankly have anything with me that I can refer to and I don't really know of any. There may be a little, but it is a matter of very small numbers.

Q Can you give us an idea where you are picking up some Reagan people? What States are those?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: There are some.

Q Will you indicate the position of Ford forces on the foreign policy amendment?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I think our position is they were taking a good look at it.

Q We have had that for 24 hours. What is this position going to be? You mean you haven't made up your minds yet?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We are taking a good look at it and we haven't made up our mind.

Q Are you trying to make any changes before you make the decision on the platform?

Q Question?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We are also in the process of trying to negotiate some changes in the language.

Q With the Reagan people you are trying to negotiate changes?

Q Who is handling the negotiations?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I am not at liberty to say, at the moment.

Q We couldn't hear the question, so the answer didn't have relevance.

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I have forgotten the question.

Q You are negotiating with the Reagan forces for changes in language on what?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: On the foreign policy plank. There has been some discussion and there probably will be some more to see whether or not we can modify the language.

Q There have been some changes in the platform that was adopted in the past in the Platform Committee last week. There is not so much difference, as I see it. What are you trying to negotiate, the Solzhenitsyn thing, the detente thing, the Helsinki agreement phrase? Those are the three things and only one appears to me to be a sticking point. What are the things you are trying to negotiate?

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SENATOR GRIFFIN: You have touched some areas that, if we had our druthers, we would change the language a little bit.

Q Which one, sir, Helsinki?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: Several.

Q If you can't negotiate language changes, are you going to come in tonight with another foreign policy plank of your own?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We haven't decided yet.

Q John Sears, at a briefing, gave a lot of vague references to moves or things that might happen tonight. Are you expecting any surprises other than 16-C and the foreign policy?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I think we have to always be ready and expect surprises.

Q What do you anticipate?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: It is hard to say. There are, obviously, all kinds of possibilities as far as other rules changes are concerned. We don't think there will be any effort made, but we have to be ready for the possibility.

Q Like which ones?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I don't know. I really don't.

Q Senator Griffin, this morning you referred to 16-C as a ploy by John Sears. Is this foreign policy amendment also a ploy by the Reagan forces?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I don't really know. It may be very sincerely put forth by some people, it could be.

Q You have no doubt about 16-C, but there is a possibility on the foreign policy?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I think 16-C deserves that kind of characterization as far as I am concerned. It is obviously something designed for this particular Convention, not really, I think, put forward as a reform in the selection of Vice Presidents, which many people are for. If this were a good procedure, I suppose it would have been a better procedure if Governor Reagan had indicated his choice of Senator Schweiker months ago when he was running in the campaigns in Texas and in other States, and I wonder how he would have done.

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Q Could you lose on both of these and still get the nomination tomorrow night?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I think it is possible, but we don't expect to lose on 16-C. We expect to win it.

Q Do you think it is possible that either the Ford people or the Reagan people will come forward on the 16-C question with a substitute that would indeed have a prospective impact for 1980?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: It is a possibility, but at this moment I know of no particular move in that direction.

Q You are not preparing some kind of fallback position that would agree to a reform in 1980. You just said you thought many people are interested in that.

SENATOR GRIFFIN: At this point we don't have such an amendment to offer.

Q You spoke of some slippage on both sides concerning 16-C. How about the delegate count itself? What is your count now, and are you absolutely sure of nomination?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I understand that Jim Baker indicated this morning we have picked up several and the count was 1142 or 1143, something in that order.

Q Senator, John Sears said at least twice in his briefing today beginning at 1:10 p.m. that the Reagan people had heard nothing from the Ford people in connection with the foreign policy question. How does one resolve that with what you are saying?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We are still considering it.

Q You said you were negotiating.

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I see. There are those in the Platform Committee, I think, who are individually perhaps having --

Q Is Roman Hruska working for the Ford forces with the Reagan people in an effort to get some language in the foreign policy plank? Is he your representative in that area?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I am not sure what it is that Roman Hruska has done. I think there is an interest in trying to revise the language. How much has been done, I really can't say. I just know that that is a possibility and we are working in that direction.

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Q Is another possibility, if you don't succeed in compromising on the language, to come in with your own foreign policy that almost goes as far as the Reagan plank?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: That is a real possibility, yes, that we would do that.

Q Who will speak on the foreign policy plank for the President and on this amendment?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We are in the process of developing our speakers' list and we are having a meeting in another hour to finalize it, but for the most part they would be people who have participated with the platform hearings and deliberations, but there might be others.

Q Do you expect protracted debate on each of these issues?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We will be interested and try to get a limitation of debate, and I think that is a possible, if not a probable, development. I think both sides genuinely -- the leadership on both sides, at least -- genuinely want to have this Convention appear as it should and not get out of hand and they want the nomination to be worth as much as possible to the nominee.

So, you know we are hopeful that some reasonable period of time can be established and that we would get to a vote within a reasonable time.

Q Have the Reagan people already agreed to a limitation of debate and, if so, what time?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I am not in a position to announce anything yet. That may develop, but it hasn't yet.

Q In the voting this evening on 16-C, do you think you will have 1130 votes?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: That is right.

Q On 16-C, do you need a majority vote?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: A majority of those present voting, as I understand it.

Q Senator, do you see the intensity of the debate on 16-C tonight making a difference in whether or not Ronald Reagan is considered, assuming that Mr. Ford wins on this and doesn't have to disclose just the intensity of the debate? Do you think that could make a difference on whether or not Ronald Reagan is seriously considered for the Vice Presidency?

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SENATOR GRIFFIN: I don't know. I have no way of looking in a crystal ball and telling you what is going to happen or anything. I think it will be a good debate on the merits and we have been pretty proud of what has happened here at this Convention so far. I think we have good reason to believe we will be proud of the debate and what happens tonight.

Q The same subject with Governor Connally, who is going to speak tonight, do you think his performance tonight will make a difference on whether or not he is seriously considered?

Q Question?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: Whether or not Governor Connally's performance would have something to do with the consideration of Governor Connally for Vice President. I don't know. That is something that would be within the mind of President Ford, and I really don't know.

Q Senator, can you confirm that list of five names for the Vice Presidency that was in the Washington Post?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: No, I can't. I am not privy to any list at all.

Q You said Ronald Reagan should be considered for the Vice Presidency. Who else should be considered?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: A number of my Senate colleagues and several Governors, the present Vice President and Governor Reagan and so on.

Q Senator, John Sears has said that they probably have more procedural votes on things like 16-C than they have right now locked up for the nomination. If they lose tonight, will Ronald Reagan's chances be through?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I would think if they lost tonight, that ought to be a clear indication not only here in the Convention but across the country that President Ford will be nominated tomorrow night, and it probably would increase the margin by which he would be nominated.

Q Did you say it only takes a majority of those present voting on 16-C?

SENATOR GR FFIN: I haven't looked that up but that would be my impression and I have an expert shaking his head yes that is the case.

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Q Do you have a vote count on the abortion plank and are the President's forces trying to avoid a fight on that?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We would like to avoid a fight, but there is an indication that the requisite number of signers having indicated their support for a minority plank that there probably will be a debate on that subject.

I would be supporting the committee's report.

Q Will the Ford position be in support of the committee?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: Yes.

Q You talked about a limitation debate. Are you likely to push for a roll call vote on something like limitation of debate unless you are certain you can win that first or would that be a test vote for the rest of the evening?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: Maybe I am indicating a hope here when I say that. I am not so sure it is just a hope. I found the leadership on the other side in many instances has been very reasonable to deal with, and I think it is in the interest of both sides to agree on a time limit.

Q Agree on rather than --

SENATOR GRIFFIN: We would agree on an hour. We would agree on 45 minutes. We agree on something. I don't think it is in the interest of either side to have this go on into the late hours of the night. We would like to get to a vote. I don't think a long, protracted debate would change many minds.

Q Would it be in their interest for it to go over tomorrow? I mean, to go into the early morning hours, recess until tomorrow and then have an emotional floor fight on a procedural matter just before the vote, for the nomination? Is that a likely possibility?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I suppose we have to be ready for that. Maybe that is the kind of a game they are going to play. I hope not, and I don't think so.

Q Could you tell us, one more question, the President has gone through this long selection process for his Vice Presidential running mate, and he has polled, I think, 5,000 people -- delegates, the Republican leaders such as yourself. He has also had his aides telephone any number -- I guess 15 to 20, just by the Republican ball park figures I have seen -- and now we are within a day or so of the decision and perhaps it could be pushed by the Convention decision to sooner than that. Have you any idea if he has narrowed this down to five or six, or one, in terms of the Vice Presidential selection?

SENATOR GRIFFIN: I can say truthfully, looking you in the eye, I haven't talked to him at all about that subject in quite a long time. I have come here early, worked continuously on the job of making sure the votes are going to be there to get the nomination. I want to be able to tell delegates that I don't know who he is leaning toward, who is on the list, and that is a pretty good position for me to be in.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Senator.

END (AT 2:31 P.M. CDT)