

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY  
(Kansas City, Missouri)

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
PRESS CONFERENCE  
OF  
RICHARD CHENEY  
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
EDWARD SCHMULTS  
DEPUTY COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT

THE CROWN CENTER HOTEL

3:30 P.M. CDT

MR. NESSEN: We have brought Dick Cheney and Ed Schmults to give you an idea and answer your questions about how this process took place.

Before we start, let me say that we are working on the advance text of the acceptance speech. We expect to have it to you between 4:30 and 5:00, embargoed for release upon delivery.

Secondly, Larry Speakes is going to be helping out Senator Dole for a while with his press relations, so if you have questions and interview requests, picture requests and so forth, you can get in touch with Larry.

Q Can you say anything about tomorrow, about what time we leave, baggage check-in, that sort of thing?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly by the end of the day we will, Walt.

Dick and Ed?

MR. CHENEY: Let me begin by apologizing for the delay in coming down. It has obviously been hectic and busy upstairs. We have had a lot of things we are working on today, but we did definitely want to come down and try to give you a traditional fill-in, if you will, an on-the-record briefing to the extent we can on the process we went through in selecting Senator Dole.

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What I would like to do at the outset is walk back through the process. Much of it has been described previously, and then I will try to walk through a brief chronology of last night in terms of what happened when, leading up to this morning when the announcement finally was made.

You will remember that on about July 31 we announced that we were going to send letters out to delegates and alternates around the country, contact Republican Members of the Congress, Republican Governors and other party leaders, to seek their views and their advice and recommendations as to who they thought could best serve as the President's running mate.

That was followed up approximately a week later, on August 6, when we began to initiate contacts with specific individuals that had either been recommended to the President for consideration or whom he wanted to have placed on the list for consideration.

That list contained approximately two dozen names. Most of those names have become public in the course of speculation over the course of the last two weeks. I think most of you can identify those individuals under consideration. I would prefer not to list the actual names today for the simple reason that there were a few individuals who were approached.

Our guarantee at the outset was that the approach would be in confidence, that those individuals indicated they did not wish to be considered, and we do feel it would not be proper to highlight that at this time.

In terms, though, of you having the information, obviously most of you have the vast number of names that were on that list.

Q How many were on the list?

MR. CHENEY: I said approximately two dozen.

Q How many of those contacted did not want to be considered?

MR. CHENEY: It was only a very few, very few.

Q Who made the contacts?

MR. CHENEY: The contacts were made by myself, by Phil Buchen, the President's Counsel, and by Ed Schmults.

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Q By telephone?

MR. CHENEY: Basically by telephone, yes, in all instances.

At the time those individuals were contacted, they were told that they had been recommended for consideration as Vice President. They were asked if they wished to be considered. If they indicated they did in fact so wish, they were told we would send them a packet of material and that packet included two basic things.

One was a draft letter which we wanted them to sign and return to us which committed each of them in the event they became the nominee authorizing us to run reference checks to third parties with respect to their qualifications, and secondly committed them to -- in the event they became the nominee -- making public the same basic material the President has made public over the course of the primary campaign; specifically, a complete physical report on their health, a balance sheet of their assets and liabilities and summary information parallel to that released by the President of the income taxes over the last several years.

I want to be precise here. We didn't ask for the exact release of the specific tax purposes per se, but a release similar to what the President put out earlier this year, which most of you are familiar with. If you don't have copies of it, we can obtain it for you.

Q Will you take questions on that now?

MR. CHENEY: I will be happy to go back and take your questions after I run through it all.

That process, obviously, continued up through last night. That is in virtually every case -- and Ed Schmults can address it more directly than I can -- we received from those individuals who wished to be considered the letter requested, plus the submission on the attached materials.

I should back up here a minute because I left out one step. In addition to the letter they were asked to send in, the packet also included a very lengthy questionnaire that dealt with such things as conflict of interest, et cetera. It is a questionnaire that is administered to everyone that the President selects to be nominated to a Senate confirmed post.

It goes into great detail about the person's background, financial records, et cetera. The candidates submitted to us material that answered or referenced those particular questions that were attached.

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Now, at the outset, our assumption had been that that questionnaire would be used as guidance and those individuals who did want to be considered would merely compile the information and then hold it and at the appropriate point we would be able to sit down and go over it with the individual potential candidate or his representative.

In fact, what happened during the process is that virtually everyone was eager to comply and submitted the materials to us rather than simply holding it and waiting for us to come to them.

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Q How many submitted the material?

MR. CHENEY: As I said previously, there were approximately two dozen people on the list. A very few indicated they did not wish to be considered. The rest all submitted the materials. I would like to come back to your questions after I finish the process.

In addition to that, while Phil Buchen and Ed Schmults were reviewing the materials that were submitted that related to those specific questions, we obviously also were compiling -- and continued to compile -- the results of our request for advice from Senators and Congressmen and Governors and delegates. That process was actually managed out of my office by two of my secretaries and an assistant who works for me. We set up a special address at the White House so the mail all came in was centralized and treated on a confidential basis. It didn't go through the regular mail system.

Those results were tabulated. Again, you will remember when we asked those people, requested their advice, to submit five names in priority order. That was the basic format everyone followed when they came back to us, although there were some exceptions. We got some advice as to who people were against. We got other comments of various kinds. Some people suggested we should pursue certain criteria in selecting a running mate and so forth.

But for the most part, the advice we got in through the mail did come in requested form; that is, five names ranked in priority order. We tabulated those and kept a running count for the President which was then made available to him in his information in terms of his having the benefit of the thinking of those people whose views were solicited.

In addition to that, over the course of that two-week period of time, the President held a great many meetings. Oftentimes, the meetings were on other subjects unrelated to the Vice Presidency, but frequently, the question came up from Members of Congress, delegates when he met with groups of delegates, delegates when he talked with many of them independently on the telephone, and other's advice on the Vice Presidency throughout the week. I don't have any count on the total number of people who, in a face-to-face situation or on the telephone, gave advice to the President on the subject. It was very extensive.

The process then came to a head, obviously, this past week; that is to say, the week of the Convention. Ed Schmults accompanied the President to Kansas City to be available because he had been actively working on the records and the qualifications and the credentials of those people under consideration.

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That process continued right up through this week with Phil Buchen pursuing certain matters in Washington and Ed Schmults pursuing certain matters here.

Last night, after the President was nominated, as you all know, the President went to the Alameda Plaza, met with Governor Reagan. They held a press briefing afterwards at which they commented on that meeting.

After that, we returned to the Crown Center and met with the -- first of all, he went to the rally downstairs and then he met upstairs with the Notification Committee. It is a formal panel established by the Convention that formally notified the President of his nomination.

That group basically included regional whips, party leaders, people who have been helpful in his nomination process.

He also solicited from them their views on the Vice Presidency, and they offered them.

At the end of that meeting, the President began a session at approximately 3:15 with a group of advisers to discuss where he felt he was at that point in terms of making a decision. The individuals who actually participated in that meeting on a continuous basis included, in addition to the President, Vice President Rockefeller, Senator Griffin, Senator Tower of Texas, Stu Spencer, Bob Teeter, Counsellor Jack Marsh, Bryce Harlow, Mel Laird and myself.

I want to make, as strongly as I can, one important point here and that is that that meeting was in fact the culmination of a great many meetings that went before. Obviously, we would have liked to have been able to include large numbers of other people, we simply didn't have time or the space to accommodate them. But based on the prior consultations the President had, we did feel we had touched on a lot of bases and this was the group the President chose to sit down with, weigh the pros and cons and discuss the various options and alternatives before him.

That meeting ran until approximately 5:00 a.m. We adjourned at that point and agreed that we would reconvene this morning at 9:30. A final decision was not made last night. Rather, we weighed the options and alternatives, argued and debated the merits of various potential candidates and then basically slept on it without having made a final decision.

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We reconvened again this morning at approximately 9:35. Within the course of the next hour, after again renewing the debate and the discussion, I would say approximately after 10 a.m. this morning, the President made a decision and announced to the group that he had decided that he wished to nominate Senator Dole.

He then called at approximately 10:30 a.m. Senator Dole, informed him of his decision, asked him to accept his post as running mate and asked him to come to the hotel.

At approximately 10:40, he called Governor Reagan and informed Governor Reagan of his decision. Governor Reagan indicated, as the President said earlier this morning when he was down to introduce Senator Dole, that he thought it was a good selection and that he would support it.

At approximately 10:55, he called John Connally to inform him of his decision. At approximately 10:55 -- these are approximate times and they are fairly close, I believe and if I am off a minute or two, don't hold me to them -- at approximately 11 a.m., he called Senator Howard Baker, also.

Sometime, I believe, around 11:20 or 11:25 a.m., Senator Dole arrived in the Hotel with his wife. He met alone with the President in the office upstairs, briefly, then met with others who had been involved in the group in the decision last night, including Vice President Rockefeller, and so forth. Senator Laxalt also came to the office this morning around 11:30 a.m. and met with the group assembled upstairs and then we proceeded downstairs where the President announced his decision.

That is a fairly detailed outline of the process we went through. I am sure you have some questions. I will try to answer them. Let's take them one at a time.

Q Can you tell us how much the alcoholic problem, the former problem of Senator Baker's wife, figured in his not being selected?

MR. CHENEY: No, I will not.

Let me explain something for a minute, please, so we get the ground rules established at the outset. The process we went through to review the credentials and qualifications of every candidate was as I have described them. With respect to the specific questions involving a particular individual who was or was not a candidate, obviously, I don't think it is proper to get into that. We did check, make reference checks, with a number of people on several different candidates. We did pursue individually with them in some cases specific questions we had, but I will not, because, again, I don't feel it is appropriate for me to comment on why any one particular individual out of those some two dozen ultimately was eliminated and Senator Dole was selected.

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Q Can you describe this generally as a debate or was it a process of gradual elimination? In other words, did you eliminate certain candidates as you went along and narrow the list down to a few?

MR. CHENEY: I think, to be precise and accurate about it, the President did not communicate to anyone until after he had been to the Alameda Plaza last night, a sense of a reduced list from the original two dozen we started with.

He obviously had thought about the subject a great deal as he received advice both verbally and in writing from people over the last two weeks. I think it would be fair to say that through that process he mentally went through the exercise of reducing down the list and eliminating some people, but he did not convey or communicate that reduction to anyone. By the time we got down to the meeting this morning, it was quite clear, from the names that were discussed in a serious manner, that the President had in his own mind significantly reduced the list before the debate started.

Q To how many?

MR. CHENEY: I would say there were a few discussed this morning.

Q When, when you say "this morning"?

MR. CHENEY: I am saying early this morning, approximately 3:15.

Q A few, like five?

MR. CHENEY: That is a fairly accurate statement. Again, from time to time, a particular individual would suggest someone whose name would crop up. That would be discussed and debated, then dropped, and we would move on to someone else. Don't hold me to the total number of names, but it was roughly on that order they were given very serious consideration.

One at a time.

Yes. Phil.

Q On that survey that the President took from approximately 5,000 different individuals, where did Senator Dole rank?

Q Question?

MR. CHENEY: The specific question was, where did Senator Dole rank in this survey we made of delegates, alternates and others.

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I think it would be an accurate statement to say he had more support than some and less than others. (Laughter)

I don't have the exact numbers. We indicated at the time we started that the process that that material was being submitted in confidence and we did not anticipate we would make public hard numbers.

Yes, Helen?

Q How much impact did it have?

MR. CHENEY: I think it was an important consideration because it did in fact give us a sense of the mood and the attitude of the Republican Party, of the delegates to the Convention and a feeling that not only were they part of the process but that it was a very useful and healthy exercise for us to be able to thumb through by various categories and be able to identify supporters of potential candidates.

It was a factor but clearly not the only factor.

Yes, Jim.

Q You don't want to talk about people who were not chosen, but will you discuss with us some of the grounds on which Senator Dole was chosen?

MR. CHENEY: I certainly will.

Q For instance, the fact it is generally conceded he is considered to be a very hard campaigner, a very good speaker, a very hard-driving campaigner, was that a factor? If so, how heavy was it and what were the other factors?

MR. CHENEY: It certainly was a factor in the consideration. Again, in terms of weighing these things and quantifying them, this factor is worth two points, that one is worth ten, it is not that kind of a process. Those attributes of Senator Dole that figured prominently in the discussion -- and I think in the President's final conclusion -- were, one, a feeling that he was a very experienced man, a man who had served some 15 years in the House and the United States Senate, and that he had served his party as National Chairman, that he was a man who is a good speaker, who is a very effective campaigner, that he is a tough-minded man and that he is bright, able and fully qualified to be President of the United States.

Obviously, there were other considerations. I think I have touched on most of them.

Yes, Marty.

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Q I take it then from what you have said that the President never did offer the Vice Presidency to Ronald Reagan? Is that accurate, and can you tell me if there was discussion and if you now think it is at all possible that there will be a draft Reagan movement?

MR. CHENEY: Marty, with respect to the first part of your question, which was whether or not the President offered the Vice Presidency to Governor Reagan, I can't add anything beyond what was stated last night at the conclusion of their meeting when they met with the press at the Alameda Plaza. They said at that time that they had agreed that the contents of that discussion would be treated as a private matter and I am simply unable to add beyond that.

Q Would you like to deal with the second part of the question, the possibility that there might be a draft Reagan movement?

MR. CHENEY: It is my understanding that Governor Reggan has indicated that he supports the Dole selection, that he does not wish to be a candidate, and I have every reason to expect that tonight the Convention will in fact nominate Senator Dole as the President's running mate.

Q Was there discussion at the later stages of the open Convention giving the delegates the choice? Was that course recommended to the President, and was that discussed at any length?

MR. CHENEY: That recommendation was made, but not in that small group I have named. It was a recommendation we received from time to time, including ones as late as yesterday. It was an idea that surfaced periodically.

Q Question?

MR. CHENEY: The question specifically was, was there ever a recommendation to the President to throw the nomination open to the Convention? I indicated there was such a recommendation, that it came in on more than one occasion from various people over the course of the last several weeks.

Most recently it was a recommendation that was received from at least one individual late yesterday but not within the context of the 3:15 meeting I described previously.

Q When will you get the medical and financial records?

MR. CHENEY: We haven't set a date, but I am sure it will be in the near future.

Yes, Dick?

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Q Can you be a little more specific and give us some reconstruction of the moment in the meeting this morning -- the second meeting -- when the President came to his decision? Did it come in the middle of a conversation? Did he pause? Did he go out of the room? What did he specifically say at the time? How did he reach the decision?

Q Question?

MR. CHENEY: The question was if I could provide a little bit more detail regarding the specific point at which the President reached the decision this morning that he wanted to name Senator Dole.

My recollection of it, Dick, is that it seemed clear to me when the President opened the meeting this morning -- and again I would be hard put to specify why; it was a sense or feeling as much as anything -- that he had pretty well moved in his own mind in the direction of picking Senator Dole, primarily because he began to ask the group what they thought.

Again, his name obviously had been discussed previously, and he, in effect, solicited the views of those people around the table with respect to the Senator.

Q I mean, the Senator alone, he didn't mention any other names, just Dole's?

MR. CHENEY: No, there were other names discussed this morning, but I think it would be fair to characterize this morning's meeting as zeroing in on Senator Dole.

Q That was at the 9:30 meeting?

MR. CHENEY: Yes.

Q Let him finish.

MR. CHENEY: I think that is about it, Dick. There was a sense, a mood, in the meeting. The focus of the meeting this morning clearly predominated. Senator Dole was the predominant figure discussed, if you will. I believe there were some other names discussed but there was a sense in the room that that was the direction in which the President was moving and also that the bulk of those people there agreed with that selection.

Yes, Walt?

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Q Often when you were discussing the Vice Presidential choices, it was often thought the President would have to have some with geographical balance, like someone from the West Coast, someone from the Northeast, perhaps someone from the South. Does the fact that the President, who is a midwesterner, chose someone who is also a midwesterner mean that you don't think geographic balance is all that important on the ticket?

Will you give us some idea of what the discussions were by having a Michigander and a Kansan on there, and why you didn't go Northeast or South, something like that?

MR. CHENEY: The point was raised, Walt, not only with respect to Senator Dole but to others. I think it would be fair to say there was a general feeling clearly that it was not a factor that outweighed others under consideration; that is to say, there were other characteristics or qualities that were far more important in the decision than the question of geography.

Q Can you tell us why the President called John Connally and as a follow up, how were the other finalists notified they were no longer under consideration?

Q Question?

MR. CHENEY: The question is, why did the President call John Connally --

Q And Senator Baker.

MR. CHENEY: -- and Senator Baker and how were the other potential candidates notified?

I think he felt specifically that he wanted to call John Connally and Senator Baker. I am not certain why specifically he singled them out. We obviously were working on a short time frame by the time we made the decision. We did want to hold the press conference by noon, if we could do so. By this time it was approximately 10:30 when Senator Dole was contacted and we simply didn't have time, if we were to keep our public schedule, to contact all the people we would have like to.

A number of other people were called, as I mentioned earlier, by those individuals who were in the group who had been consulted so that meant like Senator Tower, Mel Laird and others did fan out to the telephones and call a number of people to notify them of the decision.

Yes, Rudy?

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Q Two unrelated questions. One, why wasn't the President's campaign chairman involved in these two meetings, and the other is on the recommendations to leave the nomination to the Convention, did the President ever really seriously consider that or was it dismissed out of hand?

MR. CHENEY: The first question is with respect to Rog Morton's participation in the process. Rog was in the first meeting held when we returned from the Alameda Plaza with the regional whips and the notification committee that I mentioned earlier.

Secondly, I believe, if I am correct, Rudy, you asked how seriously we considered the suggestion of leaving it up to the Convention to select and not make a recommendation.

It was considered courteously, I think I would say. The President has felt all along and has stated, I think fairly consistently, that he feels an obligation and has felt an obligation to the Convention with respect to his nominee. I would characterize his feeling in that area very much the way I would his feeling that he should never let a piece of legislation become law without his signature.

If you will check back, the President has never let a bill become law without signing it. He feels very strongly that he has an obligation to address the issues in the bill, and either sign it or veto it, but not to take a pass. I think he felt he would have been to some extent abdicating his responsibilities as the President and as the nominee of the party had he failed to make a recommendation to the Convention.

Yes, Aldo?

Q Did Governor Reagan have veto power over any candidate, over the Vice Presidential nominee?

Q Question.

MR. CHENEY: The question by Mr. Beckman of the Tribune is whether or not Governor Reagan had veto power over the selection.

Again, I don't want to be misleading here at all, obviously. What transpired last night in the meeting has been determined by Governor Reagan and the President to be basically a private matter which they have not discussed.

To say that anyone, however, in a general sense had a veto power over the President's selection I think would be inaccurate. We did consult with Governor Reagan.

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Q You didn't?

MR. CHENEY: I say the President did consult with Governor Reagan. Obviously that was the purpose of the trip last night. The nature of what transpired in that meeting is something that either one of them will have to talk about because no one else was present.

The Governor did indicate, as I said earlier, that he thought the selection was a good one and that he would support Senator Dole.

Yes?

Q On the question of ideology, President Ford is perceived as a Conservative; Senator Dole is a Conservative. How are you going to square this appointment, this selection, with the moderate wing of the party? Would you say ideology, like geography, was not a factor?

Q Question?

MR. CHENEY: The question went to the issue -- correct me if I mistake your question, but I would like to shorten it a little bit -- to the issue of philosophical balance, if you will, that the President is a Conservative or perceived as a Conservative, Senator Dole is perceived as a Conservative, and why was that done. Was that treated in effect a little bit like geography going with Michigan and Kansas?

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Q Was that a concession to the Reagan forces?

MR. CHENEY: No, I don't think it is a concession at all. I think it is the selection of the man best qualified to serve as President of the United States and, therefore, as the President's Vice President in the case.

The President has said all along that he anticipated that he would select someone who was philosophically compatible with his own views, both with respect to domestic and foreign policy and I believe Senator Dole perfectly fits that criteria.

Q You said that Senator Dole was outranked in the survey by some but ranked ahead of others.

MR. CHENEY: Correct.

Q Also, we were told a couple of days ago that in the tabulation it narrowed down to some five or six persons in terms of popularity -- not popularity -- but it had been narrowed down to five or six. Was he within that group of five or so?

MR. CHENEY: Bob, to my knowledge, no one has seen that chart except myself and the President and a few people who prepared it, who worked for me. I don't think there has ever been, to my knowledge, a report to the effect that it narrowed down to five or six. What it was was a long list of people with the names down the side and numbers horizontally across. We had columns across the top labeled one, two, three, four, five, that represented first, second and through fifth choices. Then, in the box for Bob Dole, for example, under one would be the total number of first-place votes he received, and then number two, the total number of second place, and so forth. But I don't believe we have ever put out any statement which could be accurately characterized as indicating that the list narrowed down to five or six based on the survey.

Q Was there any opposition to the Senator in that meeting early this morning and, if so, by whom and what was the focus of it?

MR. CHENEY: Again, I think I have described, in general, the tenor and tone of the meeting and the nature of the discussions that took place. However, I would refrain from commenting upon specific advice given to the President. That kind of meeting, it seems to me, he benefits from having a wide range of viewpoints presented to him and for me to discuss that would, in effect, be to violate a confidence.

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I would state it would be very accurate to characterize the decision to name Senator Dole as having very wide support in that group.

Q Mr. Cheney, wasn't it a consideration with picking a vigorous campaigner such as Senator Dole that the President could go more into fulfilling his duties as President rather than campaigning?

MR. CHENEY: I wouldn't state it quite in those terms. It was obviously a consideration in the course of the dialogue and the discussion of the merits of the relative candidates, their overall ability as a candidate, their ability to speak, their ability to articulate issues, to advocate effectively our cause and our philosophy and our beliefs.

Certainly, Senator Dole has those qualities in abundance and, I think, it would be accurate to say that that is one of the reasons why he had extensive support in the course of the discussion.

Q Will Mrs. Dole resign from the FTC?

MR. CHENEY: That issue has come up and not yet been resolved. Obviously, we will do whatever is appropriate.

Q There was some talk last fall the farmers were mad at the President because of the grain embargo. How much consideration was given to the fact Dole is a farmbelt Senator and has some support from the farmers in his selection as Vice President?

MR. CHENEY: Again, so I can be very precise, the relative weight of the various factors and qualifications discussed was something the President had to determine and I don't know any way to quantify that process in terms of how much various attributes counted.

I think it would be accurate to say that there were those who argued that the Senator's strong background in, and knowledge of, agricultural policy matters was an asset which should be considered in the course of evaluating his qualifications.

I would like to take about two more questions and then I have to go back to work.

Yes, Bob.

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Q Could you clear up for us once and for all during this consulting process, was Leon Jaworski ever contacted by anyone in the White House and, if so, in reference to what candidate?

MR. CHENEY: No, Bob, and I am afraid I can't clarify that for you. As I said previously, what we did, we contacted each of the people on the list. We asked them, in addition to committing to make public certain information, to authorize us to contact third parties, which we felt was only proper, with respect to checking out their credentials and qualifications.

We also believe that that process should have taken place in confidence, and has, and I don't think it would be appropriate for me to get into the business of characterizing who we contacted or about which individuals they were contacted.

One more question.

Q To clarify the early morning chronology, how long were Chairman Morton, the whips and the notification committee present in this meeting? I assume they didn't stay until 5:00 a.m.

MR. CHENEY: That is correct. They were in the hotel upstairs when we returned from the Alameda Plaza. They were brought into the President's office upstairs on the 18th floor. The President met them, thanked them for their work and among other things autographed their caps. This group included those people who worked the floor for us with the red and yellow baseball caps.

Most of them asked him to autograph those caps. Then they sat down around the room. It was a fairly large group, and the President sat on the desk facing the group in a half-circle around him and told them in effect that he had a very important decision, obviously, to make last night and he would like their views and advice on the Vice Presidency.

Rog Morton and a great many other people were part of that group. I don't want to leave anybody out, but examples of people in the group included such people as Paul Haerle from California, Bob Michel from Illinois, Harry Dent from South Carolina, Tom Milligan of Indiana, Edward Weldon of Alabama, and others.

If you look at the notification committee list of the people who notified the President last night, which I am sure we can produce for you and add into it others who were a part of that operation on the floor, that is the group that was in there. I would say they were in there for 30 to 45 minutes for the course of this discussion.

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One more, and then I have to depart.

Q Was Watergate and the milk scandal considered at all in ruling people out in the selection process?

MR. CHENEY: As I said previously, I mean specifically, I will not get into the business of commenting upon what specific reasons led to the exclusion of any one individual.

Thank you all very much.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 4:15 P.M. CDT)