

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 25, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Vail, Colorado)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

THE BASS RESIDENCE

10:50 A.M. MDT

THE PRESIDENT: I have several very important announcements this morning.

First, I have coming in on Thursday afternoon for a working dinner and a working session on Friday, Vice President Rockefeller, Senator Dole and John Connally. As I said, we will have a working dinner on Thursday night. We will have a working session on Friday morning and there will be an announcement following their appearance here at Vail on that occasion.

Number two, I am announcing that Dean Burch and Bill Ruckelshaus will represent me as my negotiators for these debates. As I said yesterday, I think time is of the essence. We feel very, very strongly that there should be a debate as early as possible -- the 8th, 9th or 10th of September -- and the subject matters, of course, were the ones I announced yesterday. But Dean Burch and Bill Ruckelshaus will represent me in the negotiations with the Carter people, or any of the others.

The final announcement this morning involves some changes in the President Ford Committee. First, I would like to thank Rog Morton for doing a superb job under very difficult circumstances. He has been loyal, he has been dedicated, he has been effective and I can't thank him enough for the fine job that he has done.

I am announcing this morning that Rog will take over the chairmanship of a very important steering committee. The membership of that steering committee will be announced within the next few days, but Rog will be chairman of it.

The head of the PFC will be Jim Baker. Jim, as you know, was a very accurate counter in the pre-Convention process. Jim demonstrated to me a very outstanding organizational capability and he will be the Chairman of the President Ford Committee.

MORE

Arrayed behind me you see the people that will be the heads of various parts of the President Ford Committee under Jim Baker. We have Stu Spencer, who will handle the politics. We have Bob Teeter, who will be in charge of the research. We have Bill Greener, who will head the communications operations. We have John Deardourff and Doug Bailey, who will be in charge of the advertising. I will have Dick Cheney representing the White House in that group. I think that takes care of everybody, doesn't it?

I think it is a great team. They are all experts in their respective fields. They all work together well and they are all ready and anxious to go.

We have had two strategy sessions -- yesterday morning for about two hours and again for two hours this morning. So, we have the team, we have the operation, we are ready to go with the other things that we will be announcing from Vail between now and Saturday.

QUESTION: Mr. President; why isn't Governor Reagan coming in?

THE PRESIDENT: Governor Reagan and myself had one very in-depth discussion at Kansas City. He certainly was very strong in his support, as he so indicated at the Convention. He, like myself, has had a pretty rugged campaign for the last eight months, so his not being here, I think, reflects, one, his indication of support and, number two, his desire to get some rest and relaxation.

QUESTION: Mr. President, have you written off the South, including Texas? Some of your insiders are saying you have written off the South.

THE PRESIDENT: I am the only one that makes that decision, Helen, and we are not writing off the South. We expect to make an active campaign in the South, as I said, along with the rest of the United States.

QUESTION: What about Texas?

THE PRESIDENT: Texas is a vitally important State and we will be working with the Texas organization and we will have an active campaign there.

QUESTION: Mr. President, when will Dean Burch and Ruckelshaus get together with the Carter people?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Dean Burch and Bill Ruckelshaus will be getting together in Washington, I think, today or tomorrow and they will be available to negotiate with the Carter people and any of the other parties involved.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, what is Mr. Connally going to do in the campaign?

THE PRESIDENT: We will discuss that when he, along with Vice President Rockefeller and Bob Dole, are here on Thursday and Friday.

QUESTION: Mr. President, did you invite Ronald Reagan here for this Thursday meeting?

THE PRESIDENT: No, we have not for the reasons I indicated. I had a very in-depth meeting with him and I know, from my own experiences, that he felt that he did want some rest and relaxation, but we certainly want him on the team and I have every indication, from my previous discussions and his public demonstration, that he will be actively helping in the Republican cause in this campaign.

QUESTION: Mr. President, will you ask Senator Baker to also be involved actively in your campaign?

THE PRESIDENT: Rog Morton will have a very broad-based steering committee and I don't want to preempt any announcement that will be coming later in that regard.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you have any preference for a type of format for the debates?

THE PRESIDENT: We have some preferences that I indicated yesterday. I think each one should be no less than 90 minutes. There should be for as a minimum. There should be the subjects I indicated and they ought to start as quickly as possible. Anything beyond that, my negotiators will take care of.

Wally?

QUESTION: Mr. President, will you please tell me what percentage of your time campaigning you expect to spend in the South and what time you would hope Senator Dole would spend in the South just to corroborate what you say about not writing it off?

THE PRESIDENT: Those details will be revealed as we move ahead, Wally.

QUESTION: Mr. President, can you tell us whether you have been in contact with Governor Connally this week and when he was invited to come here?

THE PRESIDENT: I talked to Governor Connally the day before yesterday.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you plan to do a lot of active campaigning in the South when you are out of Washington?

THE PRESIDENT: I will be doing a fairly full schedule, but the details of how it will be done and where it will be done will be announced later.

QUESTION: Are you planning to do a lot of traveling?

THE PRESIDENT: The details will be announced a little later, Helen.

QUESTION: Mr. President, how is this steering committee going to relate to the PFC? What will be the duties and how will they work in tandem?

THE PRESIDENT: Rog Morton will have an announcement in that regard as soon as the committee is put together. We don't want to announce everything this morning.

QUESTION: Will that be what Vice President Rockefeller and John Connally will be involved in?

THE PRESIDENT: They will not be a part of the steering committee, but they will certainly have an active role in the campaign, very active.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you plan to bring some of the Reagan campaign staff into the Ford Committee?

THE PRESIDENT: We haven't yet, but we certainly want their advice and counsel and the possibility exists some of their people will be with us.

Thank you all very much.

END

(AT 11:00 A.M. MDT)