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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS  
AND  
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
THE VICE PRESIDENT  
ROBERT DOLE  
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF KANSAS  
JOHN CONNALLY  
FORMER SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY  
AND  
ROGERS C. B. MORTON  
CHAIRMAN OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE  
OF THE PRESIDENT FORD COMMITTEE

THE BASS RESIDENCE

10:03 A.M. MDT

THE PRESIDENT: I am sure you all know that we have had some extensive meetings since the Vice President, Governor Connally, Senator Dole and Rog Morton have been out here. Let me give you some idea of the schedule. We had a working dinner. We had a meeting that lasted until about 11:30 last night. We have met for some two hours this morning.

I would like to make two points. First, under no circumstances is it accurate to say that the Ford-Dole campaign is going to be regional. The Ford-Dole campaign is going to be national. I want to be very categorical in saying we are not writing off New York State, and we will have a spokesman in a minute who will re-emphasize it, and we are not writing off Texas and the South and have another emphatic spokesman who I think will likewise reiterate that.

Our campaign is national, and we believe -- as I said in the acceptance speech -- we concede no State, we concede no vote.

Secondly, we have refined the areas that we think important for this campaign to emphasize:

Number one, jobs, meaningful jobs with an opportunity for advancement.

Number two, an accelerated home ownership program. That is something more Americans are more interested in today than almost anything as we look at the polls that have been taken and the surveys that have been made.

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Number three, quality health care that is affordable to the American people. We have to keep pressure on the costs of health care and make sure the quality of health care they are getting today will be continued and expanded.

Number four, crime. As I said in the acceptance speech, we will not tolerate the kind of crime rate increases that have taken place over the last three or four years, and we have not only a reiteration of what I have said in three or four speeches on the crime issue, but also some new thoughts and ideas that will be announced in the campaign.

The last, in the domestic area, recreation. Some-- or, I hope, all--of you are going with us to Yellowstone Park on Sunday. We will have some announcements at that time that I think will show we are interested in the increased quality of life.

They really incorporate five points: Jobs, home ownership, quality health care, a reduction in crime and better recreation facilities. One other falls under that category, and that is in the field of education.

But, there is one other point that has to be made because it is sort of all-encompassing -- peace throughout the world. As I said in the acceptance speech, we want peace at home and peace throughout the world.

Those will be the thrust, those will be the emphasis, those will be the objectives we will try to convey to the American people that the Ford-Dole Administration of the next four years will emphasize.

I have with me here today four very close and very good friends of mine. I would like each of them to make a comment or two and then we will try to answer your questions.

Mr. Vice President?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen:

I think that John and I have come out here -- we haven't been in touch in the last few days. We have been tremendously impressed with the speed with which the organization of this campaign has crystallized, the clarity and the character of the objectives, of the organization itself and the issues.

This is terribly important. It has been done and now the campaign has to roll. I am particularly pleased with what the President said. He is going to every voter in every State throughout the country.

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I would just like to say that those rumors about New York -- forget them. He said what he feels about New York and I just want you to remember that New York is a place where people care -- they care about people, they care about the future of this country, and they care about President Ford, because that is what he cares about, people and the future of this great country -- future freedom and future peace.

He has a record of two years that nobody thought was possible, and with the vision he has for the four years that lie ahead, when he spells it out, I think you are going to see a surge that is going to take that trend that we have watched in the polls and just see that moving up right to the line.

Some of us have had a little experience with that -- being an underdog -- and then just last week -- you know -- and that is what is going to happen. He is going to win this in November and this country is going to continue on the road toward the kind of security, stability and peace which we have enjoyed in this country and which we look forward to on the basis of the world as a whole.

So, I am thrilled to be here, and delighted. As the President knows -- he has said that he wants ideas relating to the implementation of the areas of his concern -- and we are all going to work through Rog Morton, who will be right next to him, who has this committee. We will feed our thoughts in through Rog and I don't know anyone who has a greater sensitivity to human values, to the political process, and to a faith and belief in America and what it stands for.

So, I am delighted to work with him for the President, both of which are for our country and the peace in the world.

Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Nelson.

I think most of you know Bob Dole, who I am confident is going to be the next Vice President, for many good reasons -- his fine record in the Senate and the job he will do, not only on the campaign trail but as the next Vice President -- a man of compassion, a man of intelligence, a man of the kind of ideals I think are important.

Bob?

SENATOR DOLE: Thank you, Mr. President.

I think the general overview has been outlined. This certainly is a working group. I arrived at 6:20, had my first meeting at 6:25, and got to bed after midnight, so we have had a good start.

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Following this press conference, I will be meeting with Stu Spencer, and others, on really, the Vice Presidential -- not the role -- but budget matters and staff matters, and for the rest of the day, we will be working on that.

Then, this evening, I will be meeting again with the President, talking again in general thoughts about the campaign. I brought back to the President what I felt was an accurate view of the States of Washington and Iowa, those two events, and what I feel is a very upbeat feeling around this country -- reactions from people.

Needless to say, the change in the polls was very helpful. But I am encouraged -- I have been in some political campaigns where I have been behind as much as 12 points with four weeks to go -- and it is going to be done. It is going to be done because the American people believe in President Ford's leadership. So, I am excited about the future and ready to get going.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: One of my long-standing political friends and a person whose record in public service is outstanding -- he came here to meet with us, he made very significant contributions during our five or six hours of discussion -- and I would like to reemphasize, at this point, a point he has made, and made repeatedly, that unemployment is a serious matter that we are making headway on.

But we have to concentrate on making certain that we win the battle against inflation. We are making headway there, very significant headway. We are going to continue to do so. I would like to express my gratitude to Governor Connally for coming and joining us.

I would like John to say a word or two.

GOVERNOR CONNALLY. Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, ladies and gentlemen:

I am delighted to say a few words because I think I came here to say to you that I want to contribute everything I possibly can to see your election, and the election of Senator Dole, as President and Vice President of the United States.

I think it is critical, it is imperative, that you be elected. I don't know of anyone who has a deep concern for this country who is not going to give their all-out effort to see that you are all elected in November and in the conversations we had, you started talking, first, about defense and foreign policy.

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There is no question but what you and this Republican Administration has made an enormous contribution to peace in the world. That peace we have to continue and those policies we have to continue. We have to initiate new policies, which you certainly are going to do.

You reiterated, again, your dedication to fight inflation in the interest of everybody in this country and I think there is not a more important issue in this country.

I won't go over all the things we tried to talk about, but I will say to you members of the press I think the thing that impressed me the most was the President's and Senator Dole's fierce determination to wage an extremely aggressive, fighting campaign. I must say that not a one of us was concerned by the present gap in the polls between Governor Carter and President Ford. I personally reported to the President I felt, in my travels around the country, that we could close this gap even more. I think the next poll will show a greater closure.

Part of it stems from the fact that people, frankly, know this President. They know what he is. They know his concern for the people of this country. They know what his policies are. They know his commitment to peace. They know his commitment to bettering the quality of life in this country.

Then, on the other side, frankly, everywhere I have gone throughout the country, in every strata of society, I have detected a note of fear about Governor Carter and an uncertainty about Governor Carter. I think we have a campaign that we can win. I think it is in the interests of the country that we win it. I think if you consider what this President has done and how he has been thwarted by a Democratic Congress, that it ought to be clear to the American people that probably the worst thing that could happen would be to have a Democrat, and a Democrat-controlled Congress.

I, for one, am going to do everything I can to see that, hopefully, we don't have either. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: That is a great speech, John. I am all for that.

I asked Rog Morton to join us here because Rog is going to have a very important role. I want to make it very categorical that Rog's responsibility, as Chairman of our Steering Committee, is vital. He will announce the membership of that group early next week, but he will be the funnel for the ideas that come from the Vice President, from Governor Connally, and from others, so that we get a political impact with specific recommendations that are important as we not only move into the campaign but we move and prepare for the next Administration.

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Rog, would you like to say a word?

MR. MORTON: I think you said it all, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Rog is going to play a vital role in this campaign. He will work not in the administrative side but in the policy and the promotion side.

Jim Baker, of course, will be handling the administrative side as actual chairman of the operations of the President Ford Committee.

We have agreed, after making a few comments, to respond to some of your questions.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to address this to --

THE PRESIDENT: Could you speak a little louder, Aldo? I didn't recognize you in that gear there. (Laughter)

QUESTION: I would like to address this to Governor Connally.

Governor Connally, you said you would be willing to do anything you could for the President. Would you tell us why you didn't accept the chairmanship of the National Committee?

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: Because I think I can do more effective work, frankly, campaigning across the country. I think the Republican National Committee is going to be extremely important and extremely critical. They have their jobs to do, but their course is fairly well set, it seems to me.

Mary Louise Smith is a superb chairman. I thought it was not in the interest of the party or in the President's interest or even that we talk about such a change, and I have made it abundantly clear that I didn't want anything except to try to help. I love campaigning. I am going to campaign all across this country, and I didn't want any -- and still don't want any -- administrative duties or responsibilities that will preclude this.

QUESTION: Mr. President, what role will Senator Dole play in your campaign?

THE PRESIDENT: I think Senator Dole has gotten off to a great beginning. His fantastic speech in Seattle and his excellent speech in Des Moines, Iowa I think gives a very good indication of the kind of a role that Senator Dole will perform. While he is here between now and Saturday, we will put together the final touches on what his role will be in addition to what he has already undertaken.

QUESTION: Is he going to be your hatchet man?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, we aren't going to have any hatchet man. We are just going to lay the record out, the record of what we have done, the indecision and the flip-flops that my opponent and his running mate have performed.

There is no hatchet man involved here. The record is clear what we have done, and what they have promised to do. We can't really find out what they have promised to do.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, since this is a meeting of the Republican leaders who had a great deal of influence over the Republican Convention, why isn't Governor Reagan here?

THE PRESIDENT: As I said yesterday, Ann, Governor Reagan and I had an in-depth meeting the day that I accepted, the night after the nomination, and we saw, as you all saw, his very, very warm participation at the night of the acceptance speech. We certainly expect that he will be helpful. He gave me every indication that he would.

QUESTION: Do you expect to be talking with Governor Reagan?

THE PRESIDENT: I am sure I will.

QUESTION: Mr. President, on your issues that you mentioned for the coming campaign, your predecessor, Mr. Nixon, also promised that he was going to reduce crime, yet, as you just pointed out, he didn't do so. What specifically can you do or what kind of things can you do to reduce the increase in crime rates?

THE PRESIDENT: About nine months ago I sent to the Congress a very specific plan that called for stiffer penalties, mandatory penalties in the area of individuals who commit major crimes using a gun, specific recommendations to do something affirmatively about the illegal drug traffic, et cetera.

If the Congress would help us with that instead of doing nothing--I pointed it out very emphatically in the acceptance speech--we would have many more tools to do something to reduce crime rather than let it drift as it is. But, I indicated a few moments ago we will have some additional proposals between now and November 2.

QUESTION: Mr. President, how much money will you allocate from your campaign funds for New York, Texas and the South?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't give you those details. But, there will be a fully adequate allocation on a national basis so our campaign doesn't write off any State, and we will run a national campaign.

QUESTION: Do you plan to allocate the same amount to every State?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no, I can't give you those details. It is just impossible.

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QUESTION: Governor Connally said there is a growing trend of fear among the American people of Governor Carter. Do you think most people are afraid of Governor Carter?

THE PRESIDENT: Certainly we find a distinct uneasiness and, I think, many polls reflect that.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you mentioned before as one of the issues -- you said education would be one of the issues. Can you elaborate on that?

THE PRESIDENT: We have some proposals that I think will be forthcoming that will show the concern this Administration has for an improved educational opportunity program within the quality of life suggestion.

QUESTION: Are you talking about busing?

THE PRESIDENT: We will submit those at the proper time.

Yes, Dick?

QUESTION: Mr. President, could Governor Connally tell us what he meant by the fear of Governor Carter across the country?

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: Mr. President, let me respond in part by saying, yes, there is a great deal of fear on the part of those who are knowledgeable about foreign policy matters and defense matters. There is a great deal of fear that if he is elected there are going to be more serious cuts in the defense effort. The Democrats have already cut \$50 billion in recent years out of the defense budget. They are afraid they will suffer even greater cuts in the real muscle of the defense effort of this country.

There are a great many people, workers and factory owners alike, in this country who have a great fear when they see him get up and say he wants to out-Nader Nader. They are concerned about that. There are a great many other people who know something about energy in the country who are not only afraid but alarmed when they hear him say that he doesn't think we need to be concerned about importing crude oil, that we ought to just quit importing it. It shows a complete lack of understanding of the energy problems of this nation.

Those are three categories I can think of very quickly.

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THE PRESIDENT: Let me add one point to that. In Governor Connally's very effective speech at the Convention, he made a point which I think does reflect fear and apprehension of the American people. Peace abroad is a very critical issue.

I have the distinct feeling -- and I think some of the polls indicate it -- that the American people want an individual with experience running our foreign policy. They don't want a person whose name, as Governor Connally said, they didn't know a year and a half ago running American foreign policy.

QUESTION: Governor Connally, can we ask you a question, please? There was a story as recently as this morning in the paper that you were unhappy with President Ford following the Convention and indeed there was a rift. You have seen these stories, I am sure. Would you care to set the record straight on that?

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: Yes, I will set the record straight. It will probably last about 24 hours, hopefully, but I am not unhappy with President Ford, never have been, was not before, during or after the Convention. I am not now. If I was, I wouldn't be here.

I think he has been an outstanding President. I think, as I said a moment ago, that it is absolutely essential that all of us do everything we know how to do to re-elect him, and I was here to try to contribute what little I could to the discussion and I am going to be around the country contributing what little I can to see that he and Senator Dole are elected.

QUESTION: What about the story that you have indicated that you thought it was too late for the President to mount a winning campaign --

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: That isn't so at all.

QUESTION: Then you don't view him as a loser?

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: Of course, I don't view him as a loser. I think, you know, I am a fellow that understands these gaps. When I announced for Governor of Texas in 1962, the polls indicated that I had 4 percent. So, when you talk about closing the 10 percent gap, that is no hill for a stepper. (Laughter)

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Let me add one thing, if I may. Let me impose on you and ask for your indulgence for one moment longer.

Mr. Ray Hutchison, the chairman of the Republican Party in Texas, Senator Tower, some of the top people who were very strongly in support of Governor Reagan and I have extended an invitation officially through the chairman, Mr. Ray Hutchison, to the Vice President (Senator Dole) to come to Texas on September 10 and 11 to appear at a rally in Austin, Texas, a giant Republican rally the night of the 10th, and speak to the State Convention on the morning of the 11th.

He has kindly consented to do so. We are delighted he is, and we hope we can show him a real welcome there.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 10:30 A.M. MDT)