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THE WHITE HOUSE  
REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

THE NORTH LAWN

5:55 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: I am very, very pleased to announce that I feel very happy about the fact that the League of Women Voters have concluded the negotiations that will give the American people the opportunity to have three Presidential debates and one Vice Presidential debate.

I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to discuss in detail before the American people the four subjects that I suggested -- foreign policy, defense policy, domestic policy and economic policy.

It seems to me that with the three debates between myself and my opponent, and between the two Vice Presidential candidates, the American people will see firsthand, hear firsthand the views of the four of us and this is the way I believe this campaign can best be decided.

I will be glad to answer any questions.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you feel that the arrangement gives any particular advantage to one side or the other, one candidate or the other?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe the negotiations turned out well for the American people. We have the four subjects I suggested. We will have ample time in the first debate to discuss in depth and in detail domestic and economic policy.

Our whole approach was how we could get the debates on as quickly as possible with broad subject matters and I think the negotiations ended very well.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you consider the debates to be crucial and the most important part of the campaign? And, by the way, when does your campaign start?

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THE PRESIDENT: The debates, I think, are very important. I hope that in the time that will be given to them, the American people will have an opportunity to see what decisions, what programs my opponent has and, of course, the American people know my views, my record, but the debates are important so they can get an honest comparison between the two. .

We will announce when my campaign starts very shortly, Helen.

QUESTION: Mr. President, are you disappointed that the first debate won't be on national defense, as you requested?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think that is significant. I said a moment ago that the four subjects that I suggested are included in the first two debates with the final debate to cover any other issues that have not been covered previously.

Our whole effort was to have a broad subject matter and those four, plus whatever else comes up, is fine.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you have a preference for location for the debates?

THE PRESIDENT: The negotiations are still going on and I think it is premature for me to make any comment on that.

QUESTION: Do you think an incumbent President has any advantage in something like these debates because of the wealth of information he has available to him through, let's say, the Pentagon, the Defense Department and all the various Government agencies?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that an incumbent President ought to know all the subjects and know them very well, and I would hope that any challenger would likewise.

QUESTION: But do you think you have an advantage as the incumbent with all of this information immediately at your disposal?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think I should pass judgment on that. I think the debates will bring out very clearly just who is going to handle the questions the best.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, you prepared at length for your acceptance speech in Kansas City. Do you plan to prepare that way for these debates?

THE PRESIDENT: I am sure that I will be ready for the debates and the sooner they start, the better.

QUESTION: Are you sure you will win?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the American people will be the winners, Helen.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 6:00 P.M. EDT)