

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of the Vice President
(Chicago, Illinois)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
BOULEVARD ROOM, CONRAD HILTON HOTEL
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AT 4:06 P.M. CDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. Thompson, ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you that for me this is a very exciting occasion. This is something, as I think about tonight, that is symbolic of the vitality of the democracy of this country. Here is one of the strongest evidences of the two-party system and the strength of democracy.

Here is one of the most attractive personalities, one of the ablest members of the community, a man who has had a very successful career, who is offering his services as governor of Illinois, one of the outstanding States in this country, one of the biggest States in this country.

And to me, coming at this particular moment of cynicism and concern and disinterest in public life, I think that what Jim Thompson is doing in running for governor of Illinois is one of the most important things happening in this election, and I am just delighted and honored, as a governor for a good many years in another State, and as one who loves this country and believes in this country and what it stands for -- our political system, our American enterprise system.

To me this is a very exciting moment and a very reassuring one in terms of the turnout and the response of the people, both as displayed by the attendance this evening and by the indications in the polls of the response of the people to quality leadership for high office in this country.

Now, I come from the national scene and will be talking tonight about the President and the Vice President -- or at least the Vice Presidential nominee of the Republican Party. And I think we are equally fortunate on the national scene that in a moment of constitutional crisis, that President Ford was there, that he was picked, that he stepped forward and had the capacity to deal with the complex problems that he did before. And we find ourselves now with confidence in the Presidency restored, the economy revitalized and respect for this country abroad.

I am delighted to answer your questions.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in your opinion, what is the likelihood we will have a majority black government in Rhodesia somewhere around 1978 without a lot of bloodshed?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I have to say I think that Secretary Kissinger is one of the most outstanding if not the most outstanding, Secretaries of State we have

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had in this country's history, and that if anyone can negotiate what you are talking about, it is Secretary Kissinger. I am optimistic, based on the reports I see coming back, as reported in the media. And to me it is a situation where he now presents the best alternative being achieved through peaceful means for the problems of all concerned.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, a few moments ago you were talking about cynicism in this country. About a week ago you were faced with a lot of that yourself and you returned it with a gesture that was given to you. If you had it to do all over again, would you do that again?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, let me say that it was not a planned response.

(Laughter)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: But, you know, in the heat of the enthusiasm of the political system and the right of free expression, I think that these things are understandable.

(Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, last week the Federal Energy Commission announced that through a mistake it made, it allowed the oil companies to charge more than \$3 billion more than they should have, and they are considering letting the oil companies keep that money. What are your thoughts about that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I saw in the press that there had been a mistake. I did not see the figures which you mentioned, because I didn't read the details of the article what their contemplated action was. So I would have to get the facts in order to be able to speak intelligently on the subject.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the Watergate Special Prosecutor, Charles Ruff, is seeking campaign records or campaign contribution records from several unions in Kent County in Michigan and apparently is beginning some kind of investigation of Mr. Ford's campaign contributions prior to the time he was President. Do you have any comments on that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, if the Special Prosecutor can find something which 400 FBI agents were unable to find, I would be very surprised, because they combed his records with the greatest care, and he has testified on every subject. Therefore, I have full confidence there is nothing. Why he is asking for them, I don't know.

QUESTION: Do you know whether or not they combed the unions' records, their campaign contributions. The two unions were the big financial mainstays of Mr. Ford's campaign.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I can't believe they didn't, if what they did to me was any indication of the thoroughness with which they went about their duties. As a matter

of fact, I learned a great deal from their investigation that I didn't know myself. So my hat is off to them. It is a process that most Americans are not used to, and most seem to feel that privacy is a desired goal to attain. But under the circumstances, a very special constitutional crisis, I was glad to go through the investigation, and so was President Ford. And I think both houses of Congress acted on the basis of those records, and I have total confidence in that.

QUESTION: Do you believe that Jimmy Carter was exercising political smarts when he was quoted in Playboy magazine that he has mentally lusted for women in his life?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, my reaction was that it was an unusual forum to use for the discussion of Christ's teachings.

(Laughter)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And my feeling was that perhaps one could summarize what he was trying to say by quoting Christ's own words, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."

QUESTION: If you were his campaign manager and Playboy magazine called you up and said, "We would like to come over and interview your candidate," what would you say?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I think I would go back to the Bible and say, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." I am not running for office, so I have no problem.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, have you had any communication with the President today regarding the story that U. S. Steel perhaps paid some of his golf bills?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, ma'am. I assume that also was investigated.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the Democrats insist that the main campaign issue will be on employment. Don't the Republicans feel that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, of course, as you know, there are more employed today in this country than at any time in the history of our Nation, that in the last 18 months we have had almost four million new jobs in private enterprise, which is where the really meaningful jobs which people seek are to be obtained. This is the result of a growth rate which has produced more jobs than any similar period in history, and there is no reason to believe that it will not continue and that it would not take more than another 18 months of that same rate of growth to catch up.

QUESTION: What do you consider an acceptable rate of unemployment?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is any acceptable rate. If you are unemployed, it is unacceptable. I would point out as a matter of interest, though, that last month there were 400,000 additional jobs. But the

unemployment rate went up because 700,000 people, due to their growing confidence in our economy, thanks to the leadership of President Ford, applied for work. So you have a situation where people's confidence is coming back. Therefore, they are applying for work. And the interesting thing is that the majority were women.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the cost of living in the Chicago area in this State has gone up for the third straight month in a row. How can you continue to say the economy is improving?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, there are elements that cause increases in the cost of living. One of them has been food, and the cost of production has gone up. The President has reduced the rate of inflation from around 11 to 12 percent to around 6 percent. It dropped below that, but I think it is close to 6, 5.9. So what we have is a very major reduction in the rate.

He has had the courage to veto one popular measure after another which the Congress, a two-to-one Democrat Congress, passed, very attractive political measures, because he wanted to hold down government spending in order to stop inflation.

Now, there are certain essentials which are being carried out, but we are going to run a deficit in the neighborhood of 60 or 70 billion dollars. Until the President can bring the budget and the Congress back into balance, you are bound to have inflationary pressures.

QUESTION: What do you say to people who are looking at their pocketbooks and seeing the cost of living going up for the third month in a row?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You tell the truth, that you still have inflation in this country, and the President has done an extraordinary job in cutting it in half. The only major industrial nation in the world that has cut its inflation rate more rapidly, and only slightly so, is Germany. And nobody, I think, two years ago felt this was possible, that you could increase employment and cut inflation at the same time. The economists didn't even believe it was a possibility, and it has happened.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, when you were elected governor of New York, you had to face the problem of raising taxes, which is a problem that Mr. Thompson may have to face if he is elected governor. If he asks for your advice on this today, what kind of advice could you give him?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I would advise him to do what he thinks, in his wisdom, after studying the facts, is in the best interests of the people of the State. And I think that they would accept it, because he is a man of integrity and a man of honor and experience and dedication to the people, absolutely outstanding.

I think in the raising of taxes, if the people understand why you are doing it, what the money is going

for and the services that are being rendered, that they will accept it. This I had done in New York, and I have to say in modesty, at the local level, that I was reelected four times, after having raised taxes, because the people felt that the reason for the tax was justified by the expenditures which were made for the benefit of the people.

QUESTION: Sir, do you agree with Senator Dole that the President could have better spent some of these last weeks campaigning than in the White House?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think Senator Dole has said that. At least I have never heard him saying it. I think the President has done exactly the right thing. He has done the honorable thing. He is President of the United States. He takes that job very seriously. And his position, his responsibility keeps him in Washington in the closing days of the Congress.

Now, you look like a very sophisticated gentleman.

(Laughter)

Therefore, you know that all of the major bills jam up to the end in the closing days of the Congress, and that is when the trades are made and when the deals are made, if you will forgive me.

(Laughter)

And the amendments are made to get votes for this bill and that bill, and the President has got to be there to protect the American people from actions which are not in their interest.

I admire him for his courage in staying in Washington while his opponent is running all over the country talking about cutting taxes and raising taxes and so forth. And I think that he is doing exactly the right thing, even though it may be to his political detriment.

QUESTION: Is it to his political detriment?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't know. I said even though it might be. I think he puts that second. His first responsibility is the country.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, come election day, do you rate Illinois as pivotal? Since 1920 everybody who has run for President has had to win Illinois to get in the White House. Are there any political characteristics this year that would make it particularly pivotal?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is a big State. You have got an attractive governor running on the ticket who, according to the readings -- while he is relaxing in no way -- is showing the kind of response that one would expect from the public to a man of his caliber and record and character and stature. So I think that that is going to be an important positive factor.

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But I agree with you, Illinois is a pivotal State. Modestly, those of us who live in New York like to think New York is a pivotal State, too. But I wouldn't want to stress that out here.

(Laughter)

QUESTION: Is Jim Thompson helping Mr. Ford, or is Mr. Ford helping Mr. Thompson?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: They are two fine men. I think they are going to help each other and both help the party.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, would you have a role, should Mr. Ford be reelected, or be elected, -- would you have a role in that administration?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. I am looking forward to getting back, after 20 years, to Happy and the children and to catch up on some of my own family responsibilities.

QUESTION: Isn't it hard to drop out of politics?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't say I would drop out of politics. It is sort of in my blood.

QUESTION: Going back to the U. S. Steel question, do you think it was proper for President Ford, when he was a Congressman, to take those two weekends paid for by U. S. Steel?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: One thing, I don't know what year that took place, but --

QUESTION: It was 1964 and 1971, I believe.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, it is very interesting. In this country we have sort of mores or tribal customs which vary, and we tend to judge in the present what happened in the past, whereas at the time it happened, it may not have in any way conflicted with the traditions and the customs of the times.

Now it is getting so that you wonder whether you can ask some politician to ride in your car, because you are giving him a free lift. Now, you can say that's silly. Then I will take it to a plane. Should you ride in somebody's plane? You know, I mean, this whole thing. Should you spend a weekend at a camp? In the old days nobody thought anything about it. You had friends and they invited you to come for a weekend, and people were not that cynical.

Now, I have to say that the founding fathers in the Federalist Papers did say that they had rather a dim view -- or, rather, I guess, maybe a realistic view -- of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of human nature, and they set up the government and the structure so as to counter-balance these weaknesses and protect the people.

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But I have to be perfectly frank and say I think we are trying to go backwards and pick events of another era and say, in the light of today's mood postWatergate, that something is cynical about it. And I don't think there was.

I don't know the facts of it at all, but I am just making a generality out of it.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, at the time Mr. Ford selected Robert Dole as his running mate, there was a lot of criticism from the moderate or liberal wing of the Republican Party. Do you think that they have come around now? Do you think that they have accepted Senator Dole as the Vice Presidential candidate that they would like to have running?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I think a lot of that criticism was in the media about moderate Republicans like myself rather than actually coming from us moderate progressive Republicans. I think that it was very amusing. I got asked by Senator Mondale on the program at the convention right after the nomination, how could Jake Javits and Cliff Case and McC. Mathias accept Bob Dole because he was so conservative?

I said, "Wasn't he very active in the food stamp program for the poor in the Congress, for the needy?" And one of the commentators who was on with Mr. Mondale said, "Oh, yes. That was the Mondale-Dole bill, wasn't it?" And Mr. Mondale said, "Yes, it was." And he said, "I don't think we need to pursue this one any further. They are liable to renominate Jesse Helms out on the floor." This was up in the booth.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Vice President, on behalf of the Thompson campaign and the spirit on behalf of the press corps, can we end this press conference by presenting you with a memento of your visit to Chicago? It is an original copy of the cartoon that appeared in the Chicago Tribune several days ago, with your finger on the pulse of the times or anything else like that.

(Laughter)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I want to tell you -- "Sorry, Mr. Rockefeller; President's orders."

MR. THOMPSON: It is from Wayne Stayskal, who is the cartoonist, who presents it with his very deep wishes and profound respect.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: This is a memento I will take back not only of the visit to Chicago but the visit to Binghamton.

(Laughter, applause)

END

(AT 4:25 P.M. CDT)