

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 1976

Office of the Vice President  
(Cleveland, Ohio)

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PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT  
SAVOY ROOM, BOND COURT HOTEL  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

AT 9:25 A.M. EDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am glad to be here with Senator Taft, who carries one of the great traditions, not only of the State but of the country, and a man who is making in his own right a major contribution in Washington. We not only need him back for Ohio but for the country.

I am delighted also to be here with Mayor Perk, for whom I have great admiration.

I love this city. I have some roots in this city that go very deep, and I am very grateful. It is a pleasure to be back.

We have only relatively few days to go between now and the end of the campaign. I have a feeling that when the people get in the booth individually, alone, to make a decision about the next leader of this great free Nation, that they are going to boil their considerations down to some very simple fundamental thoughts, and that is, "Who do we trust? In whom have we got confidence to carry the load for us and for the world in the next four years?"

And I think that the extraordinary record of restoring confidence, the economy and respect throughout the world for the United States that Jerry Ford has done is going to result in a decision by the majority of the American people that they want Jerry Ford for another four years as their President and Bob Dole, who is an outstanding man with an extraordinary record, as his running mate.

I am delighted to be here.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you mentioned the economy. President Ford had said the inflation rate would be down by election time. Indications are that it is continuing to climb, along with the cost of living. Has that hurt his credibility?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, everything is relative. It is half what it was. There were very few people that thought it would be possible to get employment moving up and inflation moving down, and he has done the impossible, as far as the economists were concerned.

Inflation has moved down from 12 percent to 6 percent, the second lowest among all the industrial nations of the world. Vitality is being restored. There are just under four million net new jobs in this country in the last 18 months. We have the highest employment in the history of our country.

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It is interesting to note that one month recently, when the unemployment rate went up, it wasn't that there weren't more jobs. There were 400,000 more jobs. But there were 700,000 more people that came into the labor market, because their confidence is back in America, and I think confidence has been restored in America. I think the people know it.

There is no question that the costs have gone up on imported materials and domestic materials. You can't have wage increases and you can't have cost increases without the net result being a slight increase in the cost of living. But the rate is such that it is tolerable in the process of getting this country rolling again.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, last week a picture was taken of you gleefully extending one of your middle fingers in an obscene gesture to a group of your fellow citizens. Are you proud of this example, and do you wish it to be emulated by the children of the country? And does this represent the attitude of the Ford-Dole administration toward the electorate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You weren't at the occasion; therefore, you don't have the background or the atmosphere. Let me say, this was not a planned event. This was a spontaneous response to a sustained salute from a small group of one of the State University units which I had built. And as I pointed out to this group, they wouldn't even have been here if it hadn't been for the fact that I had been governor and we extended the State University from 23,000 to 243,000 students in 72 campuses in the State.

Now, there are people who believe in different ideologies. This happened to be a group of Marxists. They do not have respect for the traditions of our country, the officials of our country. And if you want to know the truth, it was one of those unfortunate situations where I had had it.

QUESTION: How much of a taint of Watergate do you think will be coloring the election with the new investigation into Ford's financing in the past?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think at all, myself. I think that Mr. Carter has tried to create a little bit of that atmosphere by assuring us constantly he is not going to raise it and in the process, of course, does.

I don't think the American people want to go backwards, and I think that is exactly why the President took the action he did, which took a lot of courage. As he pointed out then, and as I think the American people have realized since, we had to stop looking backwards and introverted. Sure there were mistakes; sure there were tragedies; sure there were all kinds of things done that we are ashamed of. But we have got problems ahead. We need to focus on those problems. And I think that is what this country is doing and why we are rolling and why we have regained our position in the world and why the American people have regained their confidence in themselves.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, the people will judge. The Bible also said, or Christ said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." If we are going to stick to the issue here, I will stick to the quotes. I think that is a very sound admonition. Therefore, I am not about to judge what other people are going to judge. They will decide that when they get in the booth.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you think that the Watergate Special Prosecutor's subpoenas have tarnished the President's otherwise clean image?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I think that you have forgotten the fact that we have a system which says a man or a woman is innocent until proven guilty. Now, you don't get tarnished by something until there has been a finding which shows you are guilty. And I think we have got to be very careful that we stay on the fundamental principles on which America was founded. This is the strength of America. And I think we have got to be careful that we don't use this stuff loosely and lose the real fundamental values that relate to human dignity and the worth of the individual, which is the strength of a free society.

QUESTION: Will the investigations affect the campaign seriously?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think so.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, Senator Mondale said yesterday that the Republican Party is trying to deceive the public by picturing themselves as the friends of the middle class, and traditionally they have been friends of the rich. How would you respond to this?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I can respond to it very simply. I was elected Governor of New York four times. The Democrats have a one-million plurality over the Republicans. New York is a pretty representative State. The people are very sophisticated.

I think that is a myth, it is phony, and I think they are trying to perpetrate it for political reasons. I think the American people vote for the man or woman on the basis of the record and on the basis of their views.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, the polls indicate there is a great deal of apathy about this Presidential election this year. Do you think this indicates to you in any way that perhaps neither candidate has inspired faith and trust in the electorate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think it is a leftover of the cynicism that is gradually dissipating after a long period of Vietnam and then a short period, a very sad, tragic period of Watergate.

QUESTION: Do you think that President Ford, by staying around the White House, will perhaps create this kind of trust and confidence?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. I think the President is doing that because he is President of the

United States and he has a responsibility. In case you are not fully aware of the fact, the Congress is winding up its session. And if you have studied government long enough, you will know that all the important measures are held until the end, and then the trades are made and the measures are passed. At that point there are all kinds of amendments and changes made. He wants to be there and has to be there to protect the American people from things being done which shouldn't be done, so that he can have a constant vigilance.

He would be better off on the road. But he is doing it because he has the courage to do what is right as President rather than expedient as a politician.

QUESTION: Do you think it will damage him politically?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. I think the American people are a lot smarter than you are giving them credit for. They respect someone who assumes his responsibilities of leadership or for leadership.

QUESTION: Inasmuch as a President has 10 days to review a bill in any case, why does he have to be --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: He doesn't want the bill to come to him in the form where he will have to veto it, if he can get it in the right form before it is passed. I have been in this legislative process. I was governor for 15 years. I know those last two weeks of the legislature are the key weeks. And, believe me, if anyone could have gotten me out of Albany during those two weeks, it would have taken -- well, they couldn't have gotten me out. That is the crucial period. You have got to study government to know that.

QUESTION: Do you see a place for yourself in the next Ford Administration?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: At home.

QUESTION: Will you be a private citizen at the end of the year?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

Thank you very much for being here.

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(AT 9:40 A.M. EDT)