

October 6, 1976

POOL REPORT #5

The President emerged from the Sutro residence at about 11:30 a. m., P. D. T., for the trip to check lighting and microphones at the Palace of Fine Arts. A group of about 20 pre-school and kindergarten children were ushered from across the street to greet the President before he departed. He chatted with them briefly, shook a few hands, and waved to the small crowd across the street.

He arrived at the Palace of Fine Arts at 11:43 a. m., PDT, after a short drive through the Presidio to get there. He immediately went inside through a stage entrance. About 15 minutes later, pool newsmen and photographers were allowed in. The President was standing behind his podium, facing the desk where the questioners and moderator will sit. Those chairs were now occupied by Ford staffers including Nessen and Mike Duval.

Ford told reporters and technicians on the stage that "it's getting lik old stuff," and that he "feels very comfortable" there.

The President exited the Palace at 12:15 p. m., PDT, and stopped for an impromptu news conference with reporters.

He was asked to answer a charge made by Jimmy Carter during his visit to the Palace earlier, that Ford showed insensitivity about blacks for not apologizing for the Earl Butz affair and that it was a legitimate issue for the foreign policy debate.

Ford said, "that it seems to me that Governor Carter ought to think back to his comment about ethnic purity, which was interpreted to be a slur against blacks and his subsequent apology, so I don't think his record is clear itself." Ford added that he thinks "we took the appropriate action in the way we handled the Butz matter." Ford reminded newsmen that Butz did apologize and was reprimanded by him.

He was asked to respond to another Carter statement to the effect that both Ford and Carter would be debating as equals tonight. Ford said, "I'll let the American people decide that."

Ford disagreed with aides who said the President would be participating in the foreign affairs debates with added constraints because foreign leaders will be interpreting Ford statements as U. S. policy. Ford said, "I'll speak very frankly, I believe that a President under these circumstances whose got a good record can speak forthrightly, straightforwardly, and frankly and I intend to do so." He added, "I don't see any" constraints.

In a response to a question, Ford told reporters to "listen carefully" when asked if he planned any surprise foreign policy announcements tonight.

Asked if he intended to be more aggressive in tonight's debate, Ford advised, "we'll wait and see."

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On the Mayaguez GAO Report, Ford asserted "It's always very easy for someone 18 months after a very critical issue has taken place, to write a report. Of course, none of those johnny-come-lately, Monday morning critics were there when the incident happened... so they didn't have to make the minute-by-minute decisions. I can't help but feel that the issuance of that report at this time, is another example of partisan politics." He continued "I don't believe the American people will believe somebody, who in the luxury of 18 months afterwards, can sit back and write a report. I think they'll believe the President, who was there and had to make the tough decisions on an incident that was important to the American foreign policy."

Ford was asked how he assessed the significance of tonight's debate in his overall campaign. He said "they're all very very important and I look at this one as important and I look at the one on the 22nd as important."

He left the Palace area at about 12:23 p. m. for the trip back to the Sutro residence via the Presidio road again. Awaiting him at the residence on the sidewalk, was Silas McGee (spelling?), who is said by aides to be an old football teammate of Ford's from high school. Ford then returned inside.

Knoller - AP Radio

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