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Office of the Vice President
(San Francisco, California)

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE ST. FRANCIS HOTEL, ITALIAN ROOM
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

At 9:40 A.M. PDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is an honor and a pleasure to be back in San Francisco. I spent three months here as Assistant Secretary of State during the United Nations Conference, so that I have had the pleasure of knowing and admiring this great state. I discovered in New York when California passed us -- we used to be the biggest state -- I at least got Pat Brown to wangle me out of my first term.

But this is an exciting moment in history. I think, myself, that this is perhaps the most exciting with the greatest opportunities that civilization has ever had, and the United States is at the heart of it.

There is virtually nothing which this country cannot do. We just need to be on a solid base, have faith and confidence in the factors of freedom of the individual-- political freedom, economic freedom, and religious freedom-- to build on that creativity of free men and women.

I am proud to be here representing President Ford. He is a man, and I admire him, who has had the courage to take a long view of the situation affecting our country and the American people -- and sometimes the long view isn't the immediate popular view. He has restored confidence in the White House. He has restored the dynamism of economy, cutting inflation in half, and has regained the respect of people throughout the world. This is despite a two-to-one Democratic Congress which has opposed recommendations almost without exception. And that is why I am delighted that Bram Fanning and Jim Mills, two fine young men, who are here today, are running on the Republican ticket because the American people believe in a two-party system. Total domination by one party of any legislative body can give a warped position for an out, open discussion of the issues. These two men can add greatly to the strength of this country by their presence in the Congress.

I would be delighted to answer any questions on any subject, if I can.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Sir?

QUESTION: You said in the KGO TV interview a few minutes ago that you were too much of an activist to be Vice President, that you only took the job because it was a constitutional crisis.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Correct.

QUESTION: Are you unhappy in that job?

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I made a study for the President. I had the privilege of working for six Presidents. I made the study for President Eisenhower when I was Chairman of his Committee on Government Organization, preparing reorganization for the Government. Since I was Chairman for seven years, he asked us at one point to make a study of the vice presidency and recommend to him as to what he could give then Vice President Nixon to do.

After a study of three months, we came back with a conclusion that under the Constitution the only constitutional responsibility of a vice president is to preside over the Senate; that, beyond that, the power in the Executive Branch all centers in the President; that the President would have to give of his power to a vice president; and that if he did in any substantial measure, he could create a competing center, political center, within the Government which could cause confusion. And therefore, we recommended against it.

So I went down there knowing that I was going to be there as, what I call, stand-by equipment, but to represent the President as a staff assistant and do anything for him and for the community that he would ask me.

QUESTION: With that in mind, if an activist, such as yourself, really does not belong in that job, is that a good training post for President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I do not get the logic of your sequence there -- if an activist does not belong in the job. I don't say an activist does not belong in the job. It is just as an activist I do not want to be in the job simply because my trouble is when I see problems, my mind immediately goes to a solution. And that is not a place where the solutions are supposed to originate. You can pass them along to the President, but I would rather do things myself, frankly. This is just a personal predilection.

But I think, on the other hand, it is a place where anybody who has not been on the national scene and the international scene can learn a tremendous amount. In other words, if you go there sort of considering this a graduate course in government, should -- as I say, God forbid -- anything happen to the President, then I think you are in good shape.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir?

QUESTION: What was your reaction when, and if, you were watching the debate last week, when you heard President Ford say that Eastern Europe was not dominated by the Soviet Union?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I thought he made a mistake.

QUESTION: It took him a week to admit that mistake. Why do you think that took place?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I admit the next

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morning in Chicago, to me it is simply just to say, you know, "I made a mistake." The only time I have had the opportunity of speaking to the Senate -- because you have to have unanimous consent -- is when I got unanimous consent to apologize to them for things I said about them. But that, again, because I am activist, it is not the most pleasant thing to apologize.

The President, now, of course, said he made a mistake. The President has. He apologized before. He has. He had an excellent meeting with the leaders of all of the various groups representing the East European nations and I think the issue is over with; except I would say one thing which I brought out in Chicago, and again at the annual meeting of the Ukrainians in New York, and that is you can turn an adverse situation into a positive situation. I said, "Look, when in the recent decades has the problem and the plight of the East Europeans been given as much attention on the front pages and on the television and radio in this country as it has in the last week?" So that a great service was done to these people. Their problem, their cause, their case was brought to the American people as never before.

QUESTION: If so much was made of the candidate blunders, then we should be concentrating on the issues more?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, this is an interesting question. It is not that issues are not discussed, but issues are complicated. This is a very complicated period we are living in. The speed of change is so rapid, the interdependence is so great among nations, that the subjects are complicated. Therefore, when you have the media reporting these things, it is much easier to get a headline out of a goof than it is out of a half hour discussion of some complicated issue.

This is a really serious problem. You have now turned so that you are asking why we do not discuss issues. Well, that is a good question. I think that we have got to find some method whereby in a democracy, if it is going to function effectively on complicated issues that support the right actions by their representatives, that the public has got to be able to get the information; and I think that we share responsibility in that -- those in government and those in the media.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, following that same line --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: -- what could you typify as the real basic issues that people are mostly looking for now in this campaign?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I like that question because, in my opinion, when the voter gets in the booth, in the polls-- and the one that counts is when they actually vote -- when they get in that booth, I think they are going to ask themselves -- you are alone, and you now are exercising your constitutional responsibility and right of voting --

they are going to say, "In whom do I have trust? In whom do I have confidence to handle the problems at home and abroad in the next four years?" And I think they are going to say "Gerald R. Ford." He has a proven record. There are those who would much rather see in federal government a much more activist operation. He has felt that inflation was No. 1. Therefore, he wanted to hold it down. Therefore, he wanted to hold down government expenditure which feeds inflation, because it is the most insidious tax, and it hurts those least able to cope with it.

On the other hand, Mr. Carter -- and I don't want to say anything against a fellow Governor, but he has discussed a great many issues and, as he discussed them, he takes one position this time and then another position later. And then he says, "Well, maybe after I have had a chance to study for a year, when I am President, then I will have a different opinion." By this time the American people are beginning to get nervous and worry as to where does he really stand and what is he going to do; whereas, with Ford they know where he stands. They may not all agree with him, but at least they know this is a man of integrity, a man of courage, a man of deep faith and belief in America and the basic principles on which this country was founded.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, there is change in terms of support, especially here in California, where the big gap between Ford and Carter is starting to narrow. Are there any things that you can pinpoint that may have brought that about?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I really think it is this issue that I am talking about, which is basically trust and confidence; because, having been in public life for, now, 36 years myself, I understand some of these government problems pretty well. And I happen to be one who enjoys studying the issues, and one who really enjoys problem-solving. So I listen to these discussions and I listen to some of his positions and I have an intuitive feeling that increasingly he is going to an area, finding out what problems the people feel, maybe through polls, and then just identifying himself with their problem and saying, "Now it's the Republicans' fault."

Well, life is not that simple. It just is not that way. I do not think that the American people are going to be fooled. The American people are extremely intelligent. They are very sophisticated and they do not go for this business which we have been doing for too long, over-promising and under-delivering. They are cynical about government -- and I do not blame them -- and what we have done in the process, because we over-promised, we now over-spend and because we are over-spent, we are on the verge of bankruptcy. The only difference between New York City -- if you will forgive me for mentioning my home town-- and the federal government, is the federal government has got a \$60 or \$70 billion dollar deficit. But they can print the money; in New York, they cannot. Otherwise, they are very much the same.

QUESTION: Do you think that the President's statement has seriously hurt his campaign?

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: Which statement?

QUESTION: The statement on Eastern Europe. Is he going to spend the rest of the time trying to explain?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, no. He laid it to rest yesterday. He had this meeting at the White House and he admitted he was wrong. That is right, he should not have said that.

QUESTION: Mr. Carter is not likely to let him get out from under this big --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is Mr. Carter who will not, but the American people have a sense of justice. They have a sense of what is right and what is wrong, and how they get it, I do not know. I mean how they sense these things is hard to tell. It is almost like osmosis, but they do. It is an extraordinary thing, how they feel about issues. I think once a man has said, "Look, I was wrong, I am sorry." and then somebody keeps attacking him, the American people are going to resent it.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President --

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: A young lady on the right.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You're welcome.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, one of the people who are endorsing your party most closely -- referring to Mr. Ford's comments regarding the Eastern European situation -- made a comment afterwards that Mr. Ford certainly is a very lovable and nice man, but not too bright. That is sort of an interesting comment from somebody who is in the ranks of the stalwart Republican Party.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I will tell you, I have worked with this man for two years now and sat in on all the decision-making policy meetings. I have never seen anyone who spent more time trying to get different points of view to understand the issue and then to do what he thought was in the best interests of the American people for the long pull. This is not a man without great capacity and great sagacity and astuteness. He is not one of those people who goes around trying to impress you with how bright he is. He is a very self-confident man inside. He is a man at peace inside. Therefore, he doesn't have to try to put on a show. He is concentrating on what he thinks should be done and what is right. Now, we are all human and we all make mistakes.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you think that the voter apathy is gauged to how people feel about the two candidates?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I think maybe that is it partly. But I think the principal apathy is the long period that we have been through -- of Vietnam and of Watergate and over-promising and under-delivering -- and

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the people have just become cynical about government's capacity to do the things they say they are going to do. They just don't believe them. And I understand why they feel that way.

Public officials or politicians tend to want to be responsive and promise everything. But you can't spend more money than you take in -- this is true for a family, it is true for a state or a city or a federal government -- or you go bankrupt. There is no such thing as a free lunch. Somebody pays for it. And the only way you pay for it is by producing the goods and services and then a profit which goes in taxes. This is very simple.

I think we are getting back to fundamentals. I think President Ford really believes in this and understands it and has the courage -- I talked last night and introduced him in New York City -- he had the courage to say, "No loans from the Federal government and no assistance until you put your house in order." That was very unpopular at the moment, but the City is doing it and they have already received over \$2 billion under the recommendations of the President to the Congress, authorizing him to advance money. And the City is paying it back on schedule, or ahead of schedule. And they are going to get out of this.

So that this is a transition period we are in, and a very exciting one.

QUESTION: Mr. Rockefeller, this morning John Dean implied that President Ford, before he was President, had been approached by a member of the White House staff to hold back the investigation of the Watergate affair. What kind of effect do you think this is going to have on the election, even though the President has denied this?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You know, it reminds me of the full-page ads in the Eastern papers -- I don't know whether you have it out here -- in Playboy showing three pictures of President Carter. They are selling a magazine. John Dean has written a book. He is trying to sell his book. He has got to be selling it, he wrote it.

So what is the easiest way to get in the news -- to make some exciting statement.

Now, as to the facts: The man who was supposed to be the intermediary in this thing was a man named Mr. Cook. Mr. Cook has already categorically denied any veracity, any truth to that statement by John Dean. The whole thing was investigated when the President was before the Congressional committees in the hearings for confirmation to the Vice Presidency. So this is an old issue.

He has just brought it out now because he has gotten a headline out of it. This thing, he could have said this anytime in the last two years, but he hadn't finished his book.

QUESTION: But there were a lot of denials of allegations Dean made, and a lot of them proved out to be true.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: But that doesn't mean this one

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is.

QUESTION: You are confident it is not?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, going back to what you said a few minutes ago about the Vice Presidency, it doesn't sound like a very desirable job for anybody who had anything on the ball.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You would think it was pretty desirable if the incumbent disappeared and then you found yourself with the Vice President being President. So that we have to have people of experience and ability in that post.

QUESTION: You intimated that it wasn't a very desirable job.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No; I said for me. I am talking personally.

QUESTION: Personally?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Most people are crazy about being Vice President.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, there has been a lot of criticism of the debates themselves, that neither man is really coming out with the answers. What do you think of the debates?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I think they misnamed them. I don't think they are debates. I think it is a press conference where the questions are asked by the press and where the person doesn't seem to have the answer.

QUESTION: You don't think the voters are really getting any kind of benefit?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Oh, I think they are. I think the voters are seeing these people, these two candidates, in person. I think television is the most powerful medium that was invented. In the old days in this country you could go on the village green and you could talk to the people. Now, the village green today is the television screen, as far as I am concerned. I am crazy about television. This is where you see the person right up close. You know, it is almost as though he were sitting in your room talking to you and you can feel and understand him or her. I think it is great.

As far as the substantive issues are concerned, I agree with you, I am not sure that -- for instance, in the last debate, that first question that was asked Mr. Carter was a very, very, very well-thought-out, beautifully-expressed and stated question, and it was never answered. Carter never answered the question. Now, somewhere along the line somebody ought to say, "But look, excuse me, sir, but you didn't answer the question." Now, that doesn't happen if you are in a debate. You have got to answer or the other fellow can go back with you and point it out.

But then they get another question, so that, really, I don't think, myself -- because the League of Women Voters, and I have the greatest admiration for them, they always set this up in New York. But we have four candidates. We had Liberal, Conservative, Republican and Democratic.

As an incumbent Governor for three elections, I want to tell you if you are going to get shot at from the left and the right and the center, you have got some problem in trying to handle those situations. But, again, the public were satisfied, so I started way behind each time and then just at the end I crossed the line in time to win.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the President made quite a thing of the swine flu program when it was first announced. Do you think that, now that there has been some initial skepticism in Pittsburgh, that program is going to be of much advantage to do some good both for the people and for the Republicans?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think, frankly, the President is doing this for the Republican Party if you will forgive me. I think he is doing it for the American people, whom he is concerned about. We lost 33,000 lives at the end of -- what was it -- the '68 epidemic.

QUESTION: Do you think the program will be successful?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think the program is going to be successful. Now, two things you ought to keep in mind: One, the most susceptible people are the older people, so that they started inoculations for the older people because they are the ones most susceptible. It goes very fast, so you don't have time after it has struck to really do the job. But if you go to give the inoculations, as they are doing, to the older people, they are also the people who have heart problems, who have pulmonary problems, and so forth, and, let's face it, we all die at some point. So tragically, and I think coincidentally, not causally, these people, five or seven or whatever it is, have died. But the investigations will prove whether this wasn't their closing day anyhow, but not because of the flu vaccine.

I think it is very important that the public does not become frightened by this and then back away from it, because if we did get another epidemic, then it could be very serious. In 1958, which was ten years before the '68 epidemic, there were 60,000 lives lost. So we are talking about very serious dangers for the American people.

MR. MORROW: A final question, please.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you are there with two men standing next to you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Handsome men, too.

QUESTION: Can you tell us why they are there, what their names are, and give us some background on each one so that we know why you are endorsing them?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Bram Fanning is one of

these two gentlemen and Jim Mills is the other. They are running for the Congress of the United States of America. The Congress presently is controlled, two to one, by the Democratic Party, and they have absolute control of the situation.

I might just point out that what John Dean said about the investigation, if the Democrats had wanted to have that investigation of President Ford before, they would have had it because they had two-to-one control of that committee. So we want to keep that in mind.

We need more Republicans, and I think we need the kind of attractive, able young men and women who care about this country enough to give up their present occupations to run for office.

QUESTION: I am afraid I didn't make my question clear. Would you please tell us what has Mr. Fanning done before and what has Mr. Mills done? What are their political backgrounds?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think they can tell you much better than I can. So I therefore turn over the program to Mr. Fanning and Mr. Mills and let them tell you in detail.

MR. FANNING: I am Bram Fanning. I am running for the Fifth Congressional seat. I am running against John Burton. I don't have to explain anything about John Burton. So the Fifth Congressional is about a third of the city of San Francisco, all of Marin County and part of southern Sonoma County.

I am sure you are all anxious to get out of here. I can answer any questions you might want to ask or you can --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Excuse me. The gentleman who asked the question, who is so interested to know about these gentlemen, is not even paying attention to the answer. I would just like to call your attention to the fact that you are getting the answer to your question, if you would listen. Thank you, sir.

QUESTION: I know Mr. Fanning, but I don't know Mr. Mills.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: All right, but I would appreciate your listening.

MR. FANNING: We are both running to make some changes in Congress. As the Vice President said, this is where the problems are. We had Democratic Presidents, Republican Presidents, good Presidents and bad Presidents in the past; and the problems all seem to be here. And the people of these districts that we are running in are very, very concerned