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Office of the Vice President
(San Francisco, California)

REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
ON KNXT-TV, CHANNEL 2 (CBS)
INTERVIEW BY CONNIE CHUNG
OAK ROOM, ST. FRANCIS HOTEL
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

(AT 10:15 A.M. PDT)

MS. CHUNG: Mr. Vice President, there is a big issue out here in California -- that is Proposition 14. What is the President's position, in light of the fact that Senator Dole seems to be saying he doesn't support it, he does support it and the jury is still out? It is unclear.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course, I have always felt a policy as Governor of not interfering in the affairs of other States' positions on issues, and not trying to tell them what they should do.

I think that is really a question for the people of California to decide. This is a local issue. The President is running for President of the United States and not for Governor of California. Therefore, I don't see why Mr. Carter got into the issue. These are things our whole Federal Government system is based on -- the responsibilities of the States there, the local governments there, and this division of power. It has ramifications across the country, but I don't think the people of California want somebody out of State to come and tell them how to proceed on their own proposition. I never would do it.

MS. CHUNG: Then you would condemn President Ford or Senator Dole if they did?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't condemn them, but I wouldn't do it myself. I wouldn't take a position on an issue which is a local question.

MS. CHUNG: Do you think or don't you think that your conversation with Speaker Albert was just as bad concerning blacks and Jews as derogatory as Earl Butz' comments?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I don't. There was absolutely nothing derogatory about it. I was explaining the history of Liberia, which was a factual history about the past; and it was absolutely accurate. There was nothing derogatory. There was nothing against anybody. It was just a description of what had happened. He made the remark about Ed Brooke, and I don't know really how he happened to make it. It is just one of those things.

Of course, I should point out that under the rules of the House, the information coming over the system going into the press room was only available for the speech and the introduction.

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Therefore, it was a violation of the rules of the House in picking up anything else by the media who used it.

MS. CHUNG: But you laughed at what he said. No?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Because to me, you laugh sometimes nervously at something that really doesn't make any sense.

MS. CHUNG: But Mr. Vice President, you said --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That Ed Brooke was having a one-man receiving line.

MS. CHUNG: All right.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Which was true. He was receiving all the ambassadors. He happened to be sitting in the front row. You must remember that we had been waiting one hour for the Senate to come over, so that we had run out of conversation.

MS. CHUNG: So it dwindled down to something like that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I was just looking down at the audience and 50 ambassadors come in and they go by all the Members of the House and the Members of the Senate. They come to the beginning of another seating line and Ed Brooke was sitting there. He is a very good friend of mine and I admire him greatly.

He was very conveniently just putting out his hand, shaking hands, and then two or three Senators behind them were following suit. So I just made the casual comment to Carl that Ed seemed to be having a one-man receiving line, which was a perfectly factual statement.

MS. CHUNG: Would you have fired Earl Butz right away? I think you would, wouldn't you?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes. I thought that it was really a tragic situation because it was an aspersion that was totally derogatory. I know Earl Butz, so I know that he is a storyteller, and without the greatest discretion as to what stories he tells, if he thinks it is in fun.

But you can't afford to be funny in this world at somebody else's expense. I thought it was just an absolute tragedy. And I think it was a tragedy for Earl Butz, who has been a good public servant for -- I don't know 20 years -- 14 years, and he was leaving anyhow, so that the whole thing was one of those sort of nightmares that you just feel terrible about.

MS. CHUNG: Well then, why didn't President Ford act the way you would have, which was to have fired him right away?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, he had an apology. He brought him in and told him what he felt about it, which is just what I

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feel. And there had been a very important service to the country. I think that is personal loyalty in a sense to the devotion that Mr. Butz had given to his country held him back in taking the action which ultimately was taken, which is a human quality.

But sometimes you have to put friendship and human qualities aside and go to what is the bigger question, which is the nation as a whole or any segment of the nation who have been impugned without any basis at all. I mean it was just a tragic situation.

MS. CHUNG: What has happened to you? You have been rather naughty lately, someone said.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: This sounds exciting. I am interested.

MS. CHUNG: Making obscene gestures and ripping down a sign at the Republican Convention.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let's separate the two. Let's take the Republican Convention. You know, conventions are so boring for the public that you are all on television and keep leaving and moving around trying to get some excitement. I believe in excitement too.

We had a North Carolina delegation who were very provocative. They were standing in front of us holding up signs for Reagan. We were for Ford all the way. And this just got on our nerves because they were holding the sign up and we couldn't see the speakers.

As I told the Chairman of the North Carolina delegation, you can't have amateurs come to a professional operation and think they can create a provocative situation and then be unwilling to take the consequences.

This was during that vote on 16-C, you remember. I had been sent out around to various delegations to get a few votes and trying to convince people of the importance of voting against this resolution, which I had been reasonably successful in doing.

As I came back, this gentleman who, let's say, had been celebrating a little early for the Reagan victory, came out to the edge where the aisle was, and held a sign up, and I just took it and sat on it.

MS. CHUNG: But then he pulled the telephone out.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No; no, he didn't. You see, your information is not as accurate as you usually are, Connie. What happened was an inspired gentleman from the Utah delegation came over. He jumped out of his seat. He had nothing to do with this thing. He grabbed the phone and pulled it out. Then I made a comment on television saying that I thought he had been celebrating too.

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It turned out he was a Mormon and he got all kinds of telephone calls and wires from back home because, of course, the Mormons don't drink. He was terribly upset, so that I had to get that straightened out, to reassure his public that it was his zeal rather than any condition that caused the situation.

MS. CHUNG: All right. Let's get back to the original question.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You want to come to the other half of the question?

MS. CHUNG: I remember it, but I think I know what you are going to tell me.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I just responded, after a sustained salute from a small group of students. I happen to believe in freedom of speech. I think this is the basic strength of democracy.

I don't think any group -- and I don't care who they are or what their cause -- have got the right to prevent people from having freedom of speech. They can speak afterwards.

I said to the people, "Once you leave, then you can say your thing." They chanted and talked and gave me the salute the whole time. Finally, in a moment of unanticipated responsiveness, I just returned the salute. Obviously, it was unwarranted. But sometimes we do things, you know.

MS. CHUNG: But you didn't act that way during the two years that I was covering you. You were a little bit more reserved.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is because you were there, you see. In front of you, I wouldn't want to do anything of that kind. I wouldn't want to do it anyhow. It was just one of those things. You know, it is very hard in life always not to be spontaneous and to be controlled. I am pretty controlled.

But this group, the only reason these kids were in college was because I had built the college there when I was Governor of the State. It was obviously a Marxist-oriented group and they don't believe in freedom of speech. They don't believe in our system. They don't believe in any of the values which we share.

My feeling is that if Mr. Solzhenitsyn had to leave a Marxist country to get freedom, we ought to preserve it here.

MS. CHUNG: Could you tell me why you are acting so loose? Is it that you don't care anymore? Or is it a sense of frustration?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Neither. I am totally relaxed because I believe in what I am doing, which is supporting wholeheartedly the President for reelection because I think he is the

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best for the country. I think the American people will elect him because they have trust and confidence in him, and I think that is the key issue.

MS. CHUNG: But let's talk about you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: All right. I am coming to it. This is me. Therefore, I am doing something that I believe in that is best for the country. And I am not running for office. I have been running for office off and on now for -- what? -- 20 years. So if you are not running, then you can enjoy politics. I love people. I love to be with people. I love to campaign.

Of course, we have to remember that politics is a means to an end, not an end in itself -- and the end is good government. I think they are going to get better government under President Ford. I don't think the American people really know now where would be President, where Governor Carter stands on issues.

He takes one position at one time. Then he takes another position, and then later he says, "Well, after I have been in office for a year maybe I will have a different point."

MS. CHUNG: Do you think it helps President Ford that you give an obscene gesture to a group of demonstrators while you are campaigning with his running mate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Since President Ford was not responsible for that and I am not a candidate, and with the reaction of that audience or those people, I think there is a limit in this country to how much people can abuse other people and abuse our system and try to undermine and destroy our system without getting some reaction.

I think the American people are fed up with some of this stuff, if you want to know the honest truth.

MS. CHUNG: The demonstrators?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MS. CHUNG: There aren't that many though.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, there are not. But they are still fed up.

MS. CHUNG: Have you --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You never had this kind of thing happen to you, because you are a very popular personality. But some day, if you ever did, then you have got to tell me what your reaction was afterwards, if you get at the whole speech.

MS. CHUNG: You have been through that in New York.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, I have.

MS. CHUNG: And you have been through all of it, but

you have never done anything like that before.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, that is right. There is always a first.

MS. CHUNG: Have you talked to Senator Dole and told him that the job of the vice presidency isn't that terrific?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, the job of vice presidency is terrific in that, God forbid, if something happens to the President, you are President. So that you have got to look at it that way.

MS. CHUNG: That is the only good thing about it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. You preside over the Senate, and that has great dignity. It is the greatest deliberative body in the world, and I am very honored. I happen to be an activist and therefore, except for the fact that this was a constitutional crisis and the President asked me to come in, I wouldn't have come in.

Now we are going back to a more normal period. We are through the constitutional crisis and I have to say this country came through with flying colors, both the American people and the Constitution. Now we go to a normal period and, therefore, I want to get back where I can do things myself. It is very simple.

MS. CHUNG: Are you tired of the White House set; in other words, being Vice President in this Administration, or being connected with the White House and that entire Washington operation?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I worked for six Presidents in the last 36 years. Therefore, commuting to Washington and taking a job and leaving is like committing to me. So I have no feeling about it.

MS. CHUNG: Mr. Vice President, what do you think Mr. Ford's biggest mistake has been so far in the campaign?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: To tell you the truth, I think that it was not going after Carter on the question that was first asked him, which was a litany of the things that the Ford Administration and the Republicans had accomplished for this country in the international field and how could he, Mr. Carter, criticize when all of this had been done?

Mr. Carter didn't answer one word of it. I am not sure, if I had been Mr. Ford, I would have said, when his time came, "I would like to give up my time to Mr. Carter so he can answer the question that was asked him." I think it would have been very interesting.

I would have asked the man to repeat the question, and then Mr. Carter to answer it. Then I would have stuck with that, because I think that Mr. Carter is avoiding the fundamental

questions and is saying the kinds of things whatever seems to be at the moment what the audience would like to hear.

I think it is very serious because I think it could mislead. But the American people are so intelligent, I think they are beginning to understand this. Therefore, there is a growing uncertainty about Mr. Carter -- where does he really stand.

I mean the whole thing on the taxes, where he is going to take taxes off low income and put them on high income. Then he found the median tax was \$11,000 to \$15,000 so he would be raising taxes on all the middle-income families.

Then he said no, he would have to study it for a year. Then he criticized the tax codes. He didn't realize the tax codes for the last 22 years had been written by a 2-to-1 Democrat controlled Congress.

The Republicans had nothing to do with it. These are the things which just create a sense of uncertainty about this man. I am not criticizing him as a governor. He has had no national experience, no international experience.

MS. CHUNG: You don't think President Ford's statement concerning Soviet domination of Eastern Europe was the biggest mistake he has made so far?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It was a mistake, but I don't think it was the biggest. Because what it did really was -- and it is quite fascinating -- it brought the plight of the captive nations to the front pages of the papers where they hadn't been in decades. So that all of a sudden, due to his mistake -- which he has now said was a mistake and he apologized for and said it was a mistake -- this had given attention to a group of people who hadn't been able to get attention from the American people before.

It turned out to be an asset. Therefore, I don't think the mistake is going to be a liability.

MS. CHUNG: It is maybe an asset for those countries, but it isn't much of an asset to President Ford.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I said for the people.

MS. CHUNG: For President Ford.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think now that he has said it was a mistake, that covers that, period. That is it.

MS. CHUNG: Don't you find it rather astounding though that the President should make such a mistake?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. For instance, you and I have talked a lot on television. If I hadn't been around for a long time answering questions, I could get in a situation where I might make a mistake simply because of the pressure, and when you

know that 90 million people are listening, and the whole thing is whether you are going to be President or not hinges on what you say. You are under tremendous emotional pressure and you have certain ideas in your head.

It came out just in reverse. Okay. This is life. He wouldn't be human if he didn't make some mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes.

MS. CHUNG: Isn't that the whole idea, that during the debate that the man who should be President of the United States should be able to take that kind of pressure and come out with the correct answers?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Sure. And that is why at least they ought to be correct but there ought to be answers and that is what I was saying to you earlier. Mr. Carter didn't even pay any attention to the question. That is the worse mistake, in my opinion, because the American people are too smart.

Then he goes off talking about a whole lot of other things instead of answering the key question about foreign policy that was asked him. I think that is a far worse mistake and a slip of the tongue, because that was a conscious avoidance of a very pertinent question which was a key question.

MS. CHUNG: Mr. Rockefeller, what can we expect from you in the next few months, and then after January? Are you going to be surprising us again with -- what can we call it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Some new idea?

MS. CHUNG: Or of something interesting again, like you have been doing.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Dramatic?

MS. CHUNG: Yes.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, those things grow out of events, you know. But I think the public likes excitement and action, let's face it. And they like their candidates to reach out to them and come to them and respond to them, and so forth.

I will be campaigning in the next three or four weeks. After that, then I will be helping Mr. Dole get acquainted with the responsibilities of the job, and so forth, and help him with the members of staff that he may want to keep, and so forth.

One has to recognize the hard reality, that until January 20th, if anything happened to President Ford, God forbid, then I would for a brief period have to be President. So I have to keep in touch with the intelligence reports every day, the developments, the problems.

MS. CHUNG: Is that what you have believed could have happened during your Administration here as Vice President?

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: Which?

MS. CHUNG: I mean, you do bring up that in these last few months if something should happen to President Ford.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I said --

MS. CHUNG: Has that been --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't know whether you were on that trip, the first time the President was shot at. Remember, I had been at the press conference and I had been at the lunch and I hadn't heard. Just as I came in the press conference, somebody said something and my first reaction was, thank God nothing had happened. So this is one of those things.

I worked for President Roosevelt for five years and when he was shot at down in Florida with Mayor Cermak, or whoever the mayor was of the city, they were in Florida -- Miami, I guess it was -- was shot and killed.

Then there was the tragedy of President Kennedy. So that one has to, unfortunately, live with these very rough realities.

MS. CHUNG: Can I just ask one more question?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Surely.

MS. CHUNG: I am a bit puzzled that, even in these last few months, you still mention the possibility that you could ascend to the presidency.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I haven't in the last few months.

MS. CHUNG: No, no. What I am saying is that I am puzzled --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You mean in connection with the danger, if something happened to the President?

MS. CHUNG: Yes.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, that is why you have a Vice President, and I have to just be aware. I mean, in other words, I am not walking away from this until January 20, because of that fact. That is the responsibility of, that is the principal reason for, a Vice President.

MS. CHUNG: And you would still like to be President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, that is, not that way. I would like to be President, sure. Because I think this is the most exciting time in the history of civilization, and more things can be done not only for the people of this country but for the people of the world.

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We have science and technology now, managerial experience, and so forth, that make it possible to have rising standards of living for everybody. I mean this has to be absolutely the most extraordinary period that ever happened.

MS. CHUNG: What I mean is that it is fascinating to me that in these last few months before January 20th, there is still a glimmer of thought in your mind of being President.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. That is different in liking to be and the thought that I might be. I don't think there is a chance. So I have dropped that. But that doesn't mean that I don't feel this office is one in which somebody, who is dedicated to the greatest civilization, which is the one we have -- which has done more for people and given them greater opportunities than ever before in history -- shouldn't want to augment these opportunities and our role in the world.

I think that this is democracy. We have tremendous opportunities. But we only are going to preserve those opportunities if some of us are willing to assume the responsibilities, whether it is the responsibility of voting or running for office or playing a role of production, whatever it may be. There are lots of ways you can serve your country.

MS. CHUNG: Thank you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Connie, we miss you in Washington, I want to tell you that. The West Coast is lucky.

MS. CHUNG: Thank you very much.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And the best of luck to you.

MS. CHUNG: Thank you.

END (AT 10:45 A.M. PDT)