

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 18, 1976

Office of the Vice President
(Grand Rapids, Michigan)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
KENT ROOM, 2ND FLOOR, MAIN TERMINAL
KENT COUNTY AIRPORT
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

AT 12:35 P.M. EDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: To me this is a very key moment for the future of America, perhaps more than has been coming out in what has been said or what has been written, that we really are at a crossroad as to whether we are going to stick with the fundamental basic values on which this country was founded, a belief in democracy, a belief in three branches of government, three levels of government -- State, Federal, local; the government closest to the people is the best government -- and a belief in the American enterprise system, based on the creativity, the imagination, the drive of free people operating within a framework of laws but freedom within the framework; or whether we are going to continue adrift to greater and greater centralization of power and authority in the Federal Government in Washington over our lives, over local government, over everything.

I just feel myself that this is the fundamental issue and that President Ford understands this, has the capacity to lead us, as he has, out of the worst crises we have faced in generations, in the last two years to restore our faith in ourselves and in our system.

And when we listen, as we did the other night in the debate, to the Vice Presidential candidate on the Democratic ticket take off on all of the programs and say we are going to solve them all -- unemployment, inflation, everything else, as though he could wave a magic wand -- and we have been through a period of two-to-one Democratic control of the House and the Senate in which the present structure, concepts and laws have been framed and which have created this centralized bureaucratic red tape which is entangling our lives at all levels.

So to me this is a turning point and, therefore, a very important election. Therefore, every citizen that is eligible and registered should get out and express himself or herself.

Now, it isn't just the President, though, and that is why I am so thrilled to be here with this group that is standing here with me. Of course, your Congressman, Guy Vander Jagt, is one of the men that I admire most in the Congress. And not only is he doing a great job for you and the country, but he is also trying to preserve the vitality of the two-party system, which is the basis for the strength of freedom and democracy. He was just in New York helping us elect some New York Congressmen, and that just shows the dedication of Guy.

Marv Esch has got to be a great man, a wonderful record, outstanding Congressman, understands the system and

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now standing for election for the Senate. I would like to say we need him in the Senate. You need him in the Senate and we need him, as a Nation, in the Senate. I can't imagine a man with greater experience, more brilliance, more dedication, awareness, than Marv in what he has done already and what he can do in the Senate.

So I am thrilled to be here and to speak for him and, of course, Hal Sawyer. I wish I looked like that in the pictures is all I can say.

(Laughter)

That is the kind of guy we need, and I think he will continue the tradition that President Ford started in that seat in representing you and representing the basic values which are the best assurance for opportunity for future generations of Americans. And so Hal's election and Marv's election are essential, in my opinion, along with the President on the Ford ticket.

Now, your Lieutenant Governor is here, and I am always honored and thrilled to be with the governors. And I happen to be very partial to State government, so that I appreciate very much Jim's coming here and being here on this occasion. And I would like to salute him and say that you are very fortunate in your Governor and Lieutenant Governor, who are so widely respected among the governors and lieutenant governors throughout the Nation.

I would be delighted to answer any questions.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, Governor Jimmy Carter has suggested that he might be able to cut the tax rate 35 to 40 percent by closing the loopholes. Do you think he can do it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, of course, to me, the key word there -- and it is typical of Jimmy Carter -- is he might be able to. Now, obviously he can't do it unless he were to take all deductions away for charitable gifts to churches, to schools, to all of the operations that we consider are philanthropic bases for America, which would mean they would all become wards of the State, unless he were to take away deductions for mortgage interest payments on your house and all of the other deductions which are not loopholes that hit the so-called rich. They are the standard incentives which have been built into our tax structure by the two-to-one Democratic Congress and which are the basic heritage of our country in the relationship between Federal, State and local government.

Now, if you abolish those, you make everybody, all our philanthropic operations, all local government, all State government, all wards of the Federal Government. And I think that you destroy, because of the loss of the revenue to individuals.

And this isn't just so-called rich. This is everybody over \$11,000 income. And I just think that it is totally misleading to the American people conceptually, factually and in terms of its impact on our society as a society.

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QUESTION: But those are two things he says he won't close, charitable deductions and --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Then he can't do what he says he is going to do. This is the trouble. I listened to that debate the other night. They don't talk about how they are going to do anything. On taxes he has taken every possible position on taxes. First he was going to take taxes off the poor and put them on the rich. He never heard of a median income. He didn't even know what it was. When they told him it was \$11,000 to \$14,000 and he was going to raise taxes above that, he said, no, he wouldn't raise them on the middle income.

So then finally he ended up by saying, "Well, after I've had a chance to study it, maybe after a year, then I would have some concept as to what might be done." What I worry about and I think the President has made clear about Mr. Carter, that he is now in his desperation saying -- and I hate to say this about a former governor -- whatever he feels is going to be well-received by any group, that he will take that position.

I just don't think it's good enough. He has got no experience in these areas in national and international affairs. President Ford has. We know where he stands.

I just think that people are confused by what he says and now are worried about what he says and increasingly frightened. And I think the result is going to be, when they get in the booth they are just going to vote for Jerry Ford for President.

QUESTION: Every major poll -- the New York Times, CBS, NBC, Harris -- all indicate Carter is leading in enough states to give him an electoral vote of 270. On what do you base your statement that President Ford will be elected?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Trend. There has never been in history a Presidential candidate who after the Democratic convention -- or after their convention, but in this case the Democratic convention -- has slipped so fast or so far as has Mr. Carter. It is absolutely phenomenal. The more people know him, the more uncertain and the more confused they get and the more worried they get. And I think the result is going to be that this trend will continue and that President Ford will cross the line and win this election.

And as one who has had some experience, starting out anywhere from 24 percent -- 36 percent was the highest I ever started -- I understand this business of being an underdog and coming on up.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Sir, do you feel that way even though the polls seem to show that Carter has bottomed out and is coming up again?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, they haven't shown that nationwide. There are certain areas where that has been true, but I think the nationwide trend was more of a halt and then a continuation of the rise for Ford.

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QUESTION: Do you think the Special Prosecutor is out to get the President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Nobody told me that before. I never heard it.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, referring to what you call the fundamental issue in this campaign and then referring to what you said Mr. Carter is doing now in desperation, saying whatever he feels will be received by any group, Mr. Carter has campaigned for a long time that he would cut down the Federal bureaucracy and points to his record as Governor of Georgia. Sir, why do you feel that perhaps Mr. Carter could not do that if elected?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Because he did not do it in Georgia. He points to his record, but the bureaucracy grew in Georgia. This is the whole thing. You know, to me, it is just extraordinary what he will say, and then when you go back and look at the facts.

I mean, he denied that he had said he would cut the defense budget by \$15 billion, and yet I can read you here two quotes, specific quotes, of where he said exactly that. It is absolutely extraordinary, in my opinion.

I have been in public life for 36 years, worked for six Presidents, and I just think that you cannot take different positions on the same issue in different parts of the country and think you can get away with it.

You are talking about now he is going to reduce bureaucracy. He supports the Humphrey-Hawkins bill. That would extend at least 20 departments and agencies or create new ones, either one. And to carry out the programs called for under that would cause a major increase in personnel in the Federal Government. And I think the American people want to go the opposite direction. I think they want to have a framework of laws which encourage individual initiative and they want to have local government, State, county, town, village, city, whatever it is, given a framework of laws with Federal assistance because the money comes from there, but more on the pattern of revenue sharing and less on the pattern of categorical grants, of which there are now 1007, which tie local government up in knots.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you feel this country really needs the B-1 bomber, and, if so, can it afford it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, not being a military expert, I am not in a position to render a military judgment as to its merits. The military says yes. As far as affording it, this country can afford anything it decides it wants to do. This country can do anything it wants. We have the most fantastic capacity as a Nation, greater than any nation at any moment in history.

Now, the President sent up a whole series of programs to make this country energy-independent, and we couldn't even get hearings in Congress on a lot of them because the Democrats would rather keep the issue than solve the problem. Yet we are spending \$36 billion a year

abroad importing oil. Now they are talking about another 10 percent increase, which would up that another \$3.5 or \$3.6, when we could be producing that oil here and create 1,300,000 jobs from that money here in the United States. We can produce that energy in the United States from coal, from shale oil, from gasification of coal, from nuclear power plants, the whole range of things, as well as the thermal heat and various other things that look like they could be important in the future but haven't become important yet.

So as far as I am concerned, if America sets a goal -- take a small example. In World War II, when natural rubber was cut off, the Rubber Reserve Corporation was set up and the government financed seven companies to produce, through various means, synthetic rubber. Four of those hit and worked and it started a new industry in America. Now, this is the kind of thing, I think, we have got to do. We can do it in energy. We can do it in raw materials. We have got the capacity to produce the raw materials that we import, all but three or four of them, in this country through other methods or substitutes, so that we are just on the verge of the most exciting period. I think it is the most exciting time to live that this country has ever faced.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what comment do you have on the, quote, unquote "dirty nature" of the political scene with remarks by Mr. Butz, Mr. Carter and others at the front?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I think that one swallow doesn't make a summer. That is an old statement I grew up on as a child. And I think that to blow out of all proportion -- now, first, I have got to be careful because I don't want to say that I condone, because I don't. I thought Mr. Butz's statement was a tragedy, absolute tragedy and a totally unwarranted expression. I don't think he meant it as such, but it was to a very important segment of our society very unjust.

It was also a tragedy because there is a man who for 20 years has served off and on and served his country well. But I think to blow these things up beyond and say this is the basis of the campaign would be absolutely wrong.

Thank you.

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(AT 12:55 P.M. EDT)