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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION
WITH THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS

THE SHERATON-PORTLAND HOTEL

4:24 P.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Vince Wasilewski (Laughter) -- I have learned a little Polish in the last few days (Laughter) -- it is great to be back in Oregon with so many good friends, and I feel sort of self-conscious after hearing all the wonderful comments and endorsements by Edith and the humor of your former Governor Tom McCall and the fine comments made by Bob Packwood.

I just want to say to you that it is a great privilege to be here in Oregon, and Edith hasn't asked me for any comments I might make about the debates, but I have made the observation that I think we would be better if Jimmy Carter answered the questions and I questioned my answers. (Laughter)

Well, thank you for the invitation to be here and participate in this regional conference. I would greatly prefer the opportunity to just respond to your questions.

I have a brief statement.

Just one week from tomorrow about 215 million Americans and roughly 150 out of that 215 million have an opportunity to vote. Tragically, it is indicated that no more than 50 percent of those eligible will vote. But, I hope and trust in the remaining eight days that through your efforts and the efforts of my opponent and myself, we can stimulate a greater participation.

I think it is one of the most crucial campaigns in at least my lifetime. The impact that all of you can have in stimulating participation can be very significant. Your coverage, as far as I have been able to observe, whether it is locally or by the networks, has been fair, evenhanded.

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It is also true that there is an abnormal number of undecideds. It is my job and that of my opponent to try to persuade that very significant element to participate and to make a decision.

I am a little prejudiced as to where I hope they cast their final ballot, but it is my job and that of my opponent to point out the very fundamental differences that I think exist -- what he intends to do if he were President both domestically and internationally, and what I will do following the two years that I have had the privilege of being your President.

The American people really in the past, I think, have used exceptionally good judgment, and I have great faith that in the next eight days there will be decisions made by them that will point the direction in which this country goes.

I hope and trust that I can be persuasive in giving them the option that I offer of the kind of programs we have had as a foundation for a better America for the next four years leading into our third century of America's history.

With this, I will be very glad to respond to any questions.

QUESTION: My question for you today is, how do you feel the broadcasters have treated you during the election campaign?

THE PRESIDENT: I say with great sincerity that I feel the broadcasters have been fair, evenhanded. I might have changed a little story here and there (Laughter) but as I said I have made a mistake or two, but overall I think the electronic news media has handled this election with great fairness, great equity and in the highest tradition of your profession.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

QUESTION: Washington, Oregon and Montana are three States -- among about 19, I believe -- that have initiative ballot measures regarding nuclear energy and the proponents believe we need more rigid controls on nuclear power plants and the opponents where the measures will stop further growth of nuclear power.

What is your recommendation to the voters of these States regarding nuclear power as a future source of energy?

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THE PRESIDENT: Well, I am not a voter in Oregon or any of the other States where that issue is on the agenda, but let me give you my personal feelings concerning the role of nuclear energy.

As this country faces the tremendous task of trying to meet certain goals by 1985 where we must have a much higher degree of energy independence than we have today, as you look at the potential sources of energy that we have in the United States, if we are going to make ourselves more invulnerable between now and 1985 against any Arab oil boycott, nuclear energy has to play a significant part.

But I, at this point, like to emphasize that nuclear energy utilization must have the highest safety standards possible that our scientific genius can give us.

Now, since I have been President, we have significantly increased our research and development funds in the energy resource and development agency so that by whatever means we can scientifically increase that safety factor.

But, I would like to add this parenthetically: The statement I make on nuclear energy I make in Washington, D.C., I made it in California in May and I make it in Oregon today. It doesn't change. Nuclear energy is an important, significant part of our overall energy program and, therefore, with adequate safety and adequate safeguards, I think that we must have in Oregon and the other 49 States a nuclear energy program.

QUESTION: First, I commend you on being able to pronounce the name "Oregon" properly. We are very proud as broadcasters for having been able to bring debates to the public and to provide an opportunity for the public to see both you and your opponent. We would ask you whether or not you would support the permanent or regular removal of the problems of 315 on Presidential debates in the future in order that they can be held without the exegesis and the burden that was previously employed by that act.

Secondly, would you also suggest removal of 315 for other debates at other levels so we could take another step forward on the First Amendment rights?

THE PRESIDENT: This is a very difficult question to give any pat answer to. I think you and this industry recognize it probably better than I. I believe in free debate among political candidates at all levels.

When I was a candidate on 13 occasions for the House of Representatives, I either challenged my opponent when I first ran against an incumbent, or I accepted a challenge whenever an opponent challenged me in the succeeding 12 elections.

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As you know, I challenged Mr. Carter to the debates that we have had this year. I think they should be institutionalized in our American political system.

Now, how you can do it in a legislative way without precluding candidates who might have a legitimate reason to be a participant, that is one problem. The other is I understand in some States there are as many as 19 Presidential candidates who are legitimately on the ballot in some States.

So, the conflicts that you run into are almost insoluble. I think if I had a choice, I would leave it up to the good judgment of those that have the responsibility in the electronic media to use how they think the airways ought to be used.

I have never seen that abused where it has been given some flexibility so if 315 has to be amended to put more burden on you, more responsibility on you, a responsibility that I think you have handled well, I would favor it.

QUESTION: If we can have the burden, we will take the responsibility.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am from Pendleton, one of the other cities you visited this year.

THE PRESIDENT: I remember it vividly out there in that wonderful arena.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I have an easy question for you, I believe. Of our two industries, radio and television, television gets much of the glamour but as a radio broadcaster, I know most of the people in my town start their day with the radio.

Sir, I would like to know, on an average day -- and I realize the past few have not been average for you -- how do you start your day? How much time do you spend with radio, sir? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: What was the last? I didn't hear that.

QUESTION: How much time do you spend with radio? Is radio important in your day?

THE PRESIDENT: I usually get up about 5:15 in the morning. I spend a couple of hours reading the Washington Post and the New York Times and the daily news summary and my intelligence briefing, and I usually do a little exercising to try and keep in reasonable shape.

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I get to the office at roughly 7:30 or a quarter of 8:00. While I am reading in the morning before breakfast, I either have the radio on, if television isn't on, or I have the television on while I am -- (Laughter) -- I have the television on while I am eating breakfast. But, I think it is a very important part of the first two, two and a half hours of the day: One, to get the news as it comes in two of the major newspapers in the East, and the news summary that I get, plus the up-to-date news that comes early in the morning with radio first and television second.

I wouldn't try to balance them in minutes, but I am the beneficiary of both.

QUESTION: Mr. President, this may seem like a broadcaster question, but it is really a public interest one in a way, and I know you are a sports fan. We have had a recent example here of where Home Box Office, a pay cable organization, was able to outbid local stations or an interested network in the NIT tournaments and in a very short period of time -- perhaps two or three years -- pay cable is going to be able, due to its affluence and income, to outbid networks and local stations for much of the top and choice programming, including sports, and I would like to ask you what your view is on the siphoning of free broadcast programming to pay cable?

THE PRESIDENT: It is my recollection that I just signed a bill within the last week that in effect had an agreed solution as far as cable television taking some of the programs from some of the networks that are now handling our sports programs. The copyright legislation which Edith and I--along with Wendell Wyatt, who I think is here--I am sure, can remember the debates that Dick Poff and Manny Seller and others had about seven or eight years ago.

But, it is my understanding in the bill that I signed there is an agreed resolution of how that problem between regular broadcasters and cable people handle the pick-up of programs. Am I wrong in that?

MR. WASILEWSKI: Unfortunately, sir, it does not apply.

QUESTION: I guess perhaps your general view about pay cable, highest price to the smallest market, you know, the philosophy of it.

THE PRESIDENT: I love sports broadcasts and anything that takes that away from me as a viewer or listener, I am going to raise the devil about it. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President, broadcasters have been working for an increase from three years to five years for license renewal periods. I wonder if you would comment on this longer license renewal period.

THE PRESIDENT: As I recall, Congressman Jim Broyhill of North Carolina has been sponsoring the extension from three to five years. I have supported that proposal. I think it is in the interest of the industry and in the interest of the public as a whole.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, many of us applauded your efforts and your speeches on the general area of deregulation. When you are elected President, will you support the proposals to deregulate the radio and television stations in this industry?

THE PRESIDENT: I did not submit to the Congress any deregulation legislation in this area. I did submit to the Congress regulatory reform in the trucking, the airline and the railroads. I am not familiar with any specific legislation -- at least none has come to my attention from my staff -- for any deregulation of this industry by the Federal Communications Commission.

Until I see what such proposals might be, what impact such proposals might have, I think the current circumstances, with the exception of going from a three- to a five-year license period, I think the situation has been reasonably well handled. So, without having more information I think it would be premature and unwise for me to make an off-the-cuff comment.

I would welcome recommendations from your industry. I am sure that Vince and all of you will see to it that I hear about it. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President, as a past member of the NAB Television Board, I would like to ask you, do you think the family viewing hour concept has been good for national television, and do you favor more industry self-regulation as opposed to Government regulation?

THE PRESIDENT: I will answer the last question first. I strongly feel that self-regulation is infinitely preferable to Government regulation, period.

Since our children are now grown up and we don't have any grandchildren yet, and since I seldom get back to the Residence to watch any programs until about 8:00 or 8:30, I am really not the best judge of how the programs have been going. But, believe me, the impression I get is that the honest, bona fide efforts to take this period of time and focus it in a wholesome direction, in a self-regulatory way, I wholly applaud. I have heard minimal complaints about the way it has been done.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am from Sacramento, where I do think you remember being there.

THE PRESIDENT: I certainly do. (Laughter)

QUESTION: It has been reported recently that Mr. Carter would make his first appointment to the Federal Communications Commission from the ranks of the Ralph Nader group. Do you have some feelings along those lines? (Laughter)

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THE PRESIDENT: I think we could find a more objective person (Laughter) than somebody that comes from that organization. I am proud of the appointments that I have made to the various regulatory agencies. I am proud of the person that I selected to be a member of the Supreme Court. We picked in that case -- and I use it as an illustration -- a person who was fully qualified legally, who was overwhelmingly approved by a potentially very critical United States Senate, dominated by individuals who are perhaps much more liberal than I.

But Circuit Court Judge John Paul Stevens was an outstanding jurist and he was overwhelmingly approved. So, for the first vacancy in the FCC, I would seek to appoint somebody of that same caliber in this particular field.

I don't think we ought to pull somebody out of a certain segment of our society just to perhaps show off a bit.

QUESTION: Mr. President, several months ago a member of your staff, Mr. Paul MacAvoy, issued a proposal which was so overwhelmingly in favor of cable television that it has caused serious concern among broadcasters.

May I ask whether you endorse Mr. MacAvoy's proposal and whether its goals will receive your active support if you are elected?

THE PRESIDENT: That report came to me roughly three or four months ago, as I recollect. I was not satisfied with that report. I told the group to go back and to reevaluate the overall situation and to report back to me when they had, in my opinion, made recommendations that I felt were more in line with my own views. That group has not yet reported back to me -- and I can't tell you when they will -- but I did not approve of the one that was submitted to me.

QUESTION: Mr. President, what future role do you see for the Office of Telecommunications' policy under your continuing leadership?

THE PRESIDENT: The Office of Telecommunications is currently more or less the telecommunications advisor to the President himself. There is a division of opinion in the Administration. One group advises me that it ought to be folded into a reasonably comparable unit within the Department of Commerce, the feeling being that those two were duplicating one another. Others feel that the Office of Telecommunications ought to be maintained as the communications advisor to the President, and probably expanded in some respects.

I anticipate that between now and January I will make a decision and I expect to have an option paper from the two differing views within the Administration. I don't think it is proper for me to make that judgment today, preempting the hard work that I know both are doing. I will make a judgment before January and make that recommendation to the Congress.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I think your schedule is dwindling.

THE PRESIDENT: I am enjoying this. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President, past Administrations have been highly critical of our free enterprise broadcast system. Since you have had the opportunity in your world travels to see how other countries operate theirs, how would you compare our system to theirs?

THE PRESIDENT: From my observations in the numerous foreign countries that I have visited, it is my strong conviction that our radio-television system here is far preferable to what I have seen overseas. On the other hand, I think it is proper for me to say that I have given more support, financially and otherwise, to public broadcasting than any other President. I think public broadcasting plays a very important role in our society, and I am pleased with the management and the content that I personally observed.

But, I think we basically want the free enterprise part of broadcasting to continue its very vital role. I would vigorously oppose any nationalization of the electronic media in this country.

Competition from public broadcasting is healthy and it performs a certain function. But, to have a totally monopolistic electronic situation in this country would be an anathama to me, and I would vigorously oppose it.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you think broadcasters might gain equal status with the print media, as far as the Fairness Doctrine is concerned, at least some time in the near future?

THE PRESIDENT: Would you repeat that again? You are getting me in the midst here. (Laughter) I like them all. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Do you think broadcasters might gain equal status with the print media as far as the Fairness Doctrine is concerned, at least some time in the near future?

THE PRESIDENT: In all honesty, when I say I feel friendly toward the news media, period, that is all-encompassing. I do. I don't always like every story I hear or every comment made on radio or television, but I have always adopted the feeling that I had a job to do in the Congress as Minority Leader or as President, and I hope they understood my responsibilities.

In turn, I understand that they have a responsibility -- a responsibility to the public, a responsibility to their employer -- and I have always felt that they performed very admirably. Don't get me in-between who is the best or the worst between the electronic and the writing press. I have enough trouble without that. (Laughter)

THE PRESS: Thank you very much, Mr. President.