

DECEMBER 29, 1976

Ford emerged on slopes at 11:15 a.m. with Susan Chaffee and consented to answer some questions. He was first asked about the amnesty issue again, specifically when he would make whatever recommendation he is going to make. Ford said he would decide "As soon as possible." Asked whether he would decide within a week or so, Ford replied: "I think that's a fair time span." Ford then was asked how he was leaning and he once more ran through the statistics of his own program, this time saying that 21,000 out of 105,000 had taken advantage of it. "It's a good program," he said. "I regret that many, many more didn't participate. We have to take an overall look at military morale, its effect on the public... and then see how it equates vis a vis a blanket order."

Ford then was asked whether he would give his colleagues a pay raise by approving the report of a Presidential study commission which recommends pay boosts for Congress, the Supreme Court, and (as your pooler remembers it) about 2,000 top-level executive jobs. President Ford said he was studying the matter. He then was asked whether he planned to leave it up to Carter. "We haven't made that decision yet," Ford replied. (When Congressional leaders met with Ford before he went to Vail, they formed impression he favored pay raise and would recommend it.)

Back to the amnesty issue. Ford was asked whether he would have reviewed the matter if Mrs. Hart hadn't asked him to. "I don't believe I would have," Ford answered. "She made a specific request as a widow of a dear friend of mine and at her request I thought it would be appropriate to do so."

On to gasoline controls. Ford was asked whether he would eliminate them. He said "We will make a recommendation, haven't decided on the details yet." In response to followup question, Ford said: "There will be a proposal submitted to the Congress because I made a commitment at the time I signed the energy act in December 1975 that we would eliminate controls as rapidly as possible, and we have in the case of metal distillates and the others, and this is the last that would be included. We haven't finalized the details yet." "So you will make a proposal to lift them?" asked a reporter. "It's highly likely", said Ford.

Ford also was asked whether he had finished work on the State of the Union message and answered: "That will be finished the night before we give it, maybe the day we give it."

As President Ford headed for the lift, Susan Chaffee raved about his skiing ability. Your pooler did not get the quotes. Ford, with Larry Buendorf alongside, then left on Chair Lift No. 6 without incident.

Lou Cannon, Washington Post

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