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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
SENATOR HUGH SCOTT
AND
CONGRESSMAN GERALD R. FORD
THE BRIEFING ROOM



10:20 A.M. EST

MR. ZIEGLER: The meeting this morning, which lasted from 8 o'clock until 10 o'clock, was the first meeting of the Republican Leadership in the 92nd Congress.

As you know, the President held a bipartisan leadership meeting on Saturday. But this was the first Republican Leadership meeting to be held in this session.

Senator Scott and Congressman Ford are here to give you a rundown on that meeting.

Senator Scott.

SENATOR SCOTT: The President this morning, in summarizing the goals, the six important goals in his State of the Union Message, expressed the hope and desire that this Congress would give a hearing and a vote on all of these matters. And the President, the Vice President, Cabinet Officers, and various Republican Members of Congress will, or course, be explaining this program in many places in many parts of the country in speeches during the forthcoming months.

It is important, it seems to me, that all of these goals be supported in a bipartisan sense by the Congress. This is bold and daring and this is a new American revolution in its concept. It has struck a very favorable note in my opinion in the press and I hope that as the program is more fully explained and details developed in numerous meetings to be held here in the White House, for example, that public opinion will rally to this chance for a new order of things in Government.

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I would simply supplement what Senator Scott has said by saying that the President considers the total package of six proposals all equally important. And he believes, and I certainly subscribe and I think there is unanimity among the Leadership, that the Congress this year and next year has a great opportunity for the title of an action Congress, action in welfare, in full employment, budgetary action, in health, in environment, in reorganization, and in revenue-sharing.

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These are basic improvements in the overall picture, both structurally as well as substantively, and the Congress can and I hope will be known as an action Congress in 1971 and 1972. And this is the whole thrust of the proposed visits of the President around the country, the Vice President in various areas of the country, and the efforts that will be made by those of us in the Leadership in selling this program to the American people.



Q Could you tell us any more details about the President's plans to sell this to the people?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: There was no discussion of where he would go or how many visits he would make around the country, but, as you may have noticed in the morning paper here in Washington today, the Vice President in conjunction with one organization of local government is going to make at least four appearances specifically. I think this is an indication of the attitude of the President and the Vice President to sell the program to the American people.

SENATOR SCOTT: And, as you know, there are meetings at 2 o'clock and 4 o'clock today with bipartisan leadership of the House and Senate. There are meetings set regularly now with the Chairmen and ranking members of the Committees. There will be a great deal of elucidation to the people's representatives in the first instance so that the program will be pretty well understood by the time the specific legislation comes up in the near future.

Q What will be the first message and what do you mean the meetings are set regularly? You mean Committee Chairmen are going to meet with the President every week?

SENATOR SCOTT: I don't believe there is a formal arrangement of that kind, but they are beginning with meetings promptly, this very week, as you know.

And the President's message tomorrow will, I believe, be something of a wrap-up of uncompleted legislation -- isn't that right, Ron? -- from the 91st Congress. This is what I called the "wish list" last time, and I think this time the action list.

Q Then you won't have to resubmit the Welfare Reform?

SENATOR SCOTT: My understanding is that that is pending. It will be H. R. 1, introduced by Representative Byrnes.

CONGRESSMAN FORD: It has been introduced, I understand, by both Chairman Mills and by Representative Byrnes. It was given the designation of H. R. 1. I am told hearings will be held, those that are necessary, in the House Ways and Means Committee at a very early date as soon as the House Committee or Committees are established.

Q Is that tied to the Social Security?

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CONGRESSMAN FORD: I can't tell you off-hand whether the two are included in H. R. 1, but my general impression is that it is put together in that particular bill.

Q Is that good or bad?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I think it is good.

Q Mr. Ford, there is real skepticism, apparently, among some powerful members of Congress particularly about the revenue-sharing and the Government reorganization proposals of the President. How do you see the outcome?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I am optimistic about this Congress acting affirmatively on both revenue-sharing and the Governmental reorganization. There is a great ground swell throughout the country with local officials and State officials for action on revenue-sharing. I think this will be effective in getting the Congress not only to hold early hearings but I hope affirmative action.

Of course, the reorganization program will take a little longer, but obviously we cannot go on in the future with a governmental structure that has not necessarily done a good job in the past. And I believe that the proposed reorganization will strike a responsive cord with the American people and this Congress, I think in the final analysis, will act affirmatively.

Q Senator Scott, what do you think are the realistic prospects for those two proposals?

SENATOR SCOTT: I share Jerry's feeling that during the course of this 92nd Congress that action should be had and I think there is a very good chance that it will be had. It is natural at the beginning that there are many points of view heard, as you referred to skepticism. In my opinion, the President is entitled to hearings and the country, the people, are entitled to hearings and are entitled to decisive votes on all of these matters. And I believe it will be the bipartisan position of the Congress to provide that; and if it is provided, there is a strong pulse within the nation for the achievement of these better things.

Q Congressman Ford, the key Committee on revenue-sharing, I assume, is going to be Mr. Mills' Committee, which the ranking Republican is Mr. Byrnes. Both of these men have indicated they are opposed to revenue-sharing. How are you going to get it out of Committee?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: As I understand it, President Nixon is meeting both with Chairman Mills and with Congressman Byrnes this morning to discuss with them the need and some of the details of the program.

I am confident that that Committee, which is a very responsible Committee in the House, will hold hearings on revenue-sharing. And when the case is made before that Committee and with the ground swell of public opinion back of it, I have great optimism that revenue-sharing will come out of the Committee on Ways and Means and will pass the House of Representatives.



Q After this "wish list" message, which is coming down in a day or two, what is the schedule then -- as you referred to it, the action list or whatever you want to call it?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I believe that the next one is revenue-sharing. The ones that will follow after that, and I can't give you the precise dates, will be health, environment; of course, the budget which is the full employment, non-inflationary budget proposal, will come up on Friday.

So that is five of the six on the basis that Welfare Reform is already before the Congress. So the only one that is not coming immediately, but is coming shortly, is the one on reorganization of the Government.



Q April?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: We hope it will be earlier and the pressure is to get it up earlier, and I trust that it can be before the Congress prior to that time.

Q Congressman Ford, in what form will the bill come out of House Ways and Means Committee on revenue-sharing?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I think it will come out in the final analysis much like the one that will be submitted. But I think that will be determined on the basis of the presentation by the Administration, the views of the Governors, and the views of the local officials. But the basic thrust of the President's program will be contained in the version that will come before the House.

Q In the list tomorrow, will it be all the bills that were not acted on the last time?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: As I understand it, it will be a good portion or at least the major ones that were not acted affirmatively on by the Congress in the last session.

Q But would it not include revenue-sharing and Welfare Reform?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: No, they will be separated because they are a part of the President's new legislative package for 1971 and 1972.

Q How extensively will the President travel and do you know when he will start?

MR. ZIEGLER: There has been no final determination as to what extent the President will travel. I think the point that the President was making this morning and the point the Leaders are making is that it is important for the Congress, who has to act on this new program, to have complete and full details and that is why the briefings are taking place throughout this week and will continue.

It is also extremely important that the American people understand the scope of these proposals, and that is why the President will hold, as Congressman Ford referred to, a series of regional briefings in the coming months. We have not determined the dates or where those briefings will be held.

But they will be somewhat similar to the sessions which the President has held from time to time to discuss foreign policy with the various news media executives and personnel in various parts of the country.

As soon as these details are firm, we will give them to you.

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Q When will the Vice President start his meetings with the public on SST?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I haven't seen any public announcement of that. I did see the announcement in the paper this morning of the regional meetings that are aimed at working with local officials on the revenue-sharing program. But I have not seen the schedule on the SST.

Q What are these meetings throughout the week that you keep referring to?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: There is a meeting this afternoon with the bipartisan leadership on the program ---

Q You mean a Presidential meeting?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: It is with George Shultz and with the others who have specific jurisdiction over the programs that were in the six-package program of the President, starting, I think it is tomorrow or Wednesday. There will be breakfasts with Republican members of the House of Representatives and, as I understand it, there will be other meetings with a bipartisan group, committee chairmen and ranking Republicans over the next week or ten days.

Q Are these with the President or with somebody else?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: Some will be with the President and some will just be with George Shultz and the others who have specific responsibility for the implementation of the program.

Q Will the one this afternoon be with the President?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: The one this afternoon, I believe, is at 2 o'clock with the Senators and at 4 o'clock with the House Leadership.

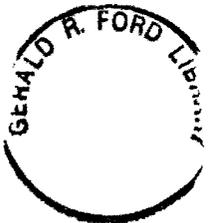
Q Mr. Ford or Senator Scott, I believe some of the questioning in Congress about revenue sharing is as to whether the other levels of government can really spend the money wisely and also the fact that the Federal Government needs some money.

How do you answer such questions?

SENATOR SCOTT: Everybody needs the money. That is the first answer. The second answer, the Federal Government has the broader tax base, that States and municipalities are right up against situations, up against the wall, in fact, fiscally. And there will be some general revenue sharing and then there will be a series of specific proposals in addition to that and these will be designed to provide a somewhat more equitable distribution of the revenue than the present unequal tax base permits.

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I believe if you look at the budget that will come up on Friday, you will see that under the full employment budget, the Federal Government can sustain the \$5 billion proposed for Fiscal '72 in revenue sharing, and \$10 billion in the broader area of funds for States and local

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communities aside from revenue sharing, plus the \$1 billion with some readjustments in categorical grants.

The Federal Government in Fiscal '72 can sustain that financial burden to a better degree than State and local governments in the comparable period of time.

Q If there are no strings attached to this \$5 billion revenue-sharing money the President is recommending, do you think that the States and the counties and the cities can be counted upon as spending it wisely?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I am absolutely confident that the locally-elected officials or the State-elected officials can use that \$5 billion in a proper assessment of their priorities.

I think their judgment on these matters is infinitely better than some of the decisions that are made by the bureaucracy in Washington.

And, if over a period of time these local officials and State officials don't use that money wisely, the people at those levels will make changes in their various officials.

SENATOR SCOTT: The President made that point very strongly in the State of the Union Message. It is also a Republican promise being kept. It was in the '68 platform and in the modified form with reference to block grants, I believe, in the '64 platform.



Q Is this program of general revenue sharing, this \$5 billion, conceived of as a permanent program or is this a temporary program in this year when we need an expansionary budget?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: In my judgment, from listening to the presentation, it is a permanent program that will grow as our nation grows and as the tax revenues from our progressive income tax makes more money available.

I have forgotten exactly the figure. But by 1980, I think it would grow to approximately \$10 billion a year on the basis of the anticipated Federal revenues and the anticipated share that would be returned to the States and local governments.

Q Mr. Ford, is this about the first time we have had the President and the House leaders going back to the people to present the programs in Congress?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: This may be a new way of doing it, but I think the leadership in the House and the Senate over a period of years have gone out and sought to sell the President's programs.

His approach may be broader and more active, but I think the need is fully justifying the expanded effort.

Q Did he indicate to you that this would be just the press or would it be sort of like town meetings on a regional basis or what?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: We didn't get into that detail.

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Q What time is the President seeing Representative Mills?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I believe that the President is meeting with Mr. Mills and Mr. Byrnes at the present time.

Q Did the President, Mr. Ford, confirm the budget figure of \$229.2 billion?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: There was no discussion of that figure.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 10:37 A.M. EST)

