

This Copy For _____

B A C K G R O U N D B R I E F I N G

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH U.S. OFFICIALS

AT 10:13 A.M. EDT

JULY 17, 1976

SATURDAY
(Hartford, Connecticut)

MR. NESSEN: From time to time some of you have asked questions about how the campaign is going and where the delegate count stands, and so forth. I thought you probably would want to hear those answers from someone who knows more about it than I do.

I think the best way to do this, so that the official can be as forthcoming as possible, is to do it on BACKGROUND basis with him identified as a senior campaign official.

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: I said so that he can be as forthcoming as possible, Fran.

Q What is to stop him from being forthcoming with his name on it?

Q Right.

Q We quote him all the time.

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Sometimes correctly, sometimes incorrectly (Laughter).

Q That is on the record?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: That is on the record.

Q Is that the only way you will do it?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL. That is the way Mr. Nessen wants it. That is the way we will do it.

Q How do you feel about it?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: I agree with Mr. Nessen.

Q What about the PFC?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: We have no division in the campaign between the White House and the PFC Committee. We are sticking together.

Q You won't be overstrained with using your own name, will you?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: We will go on BACKGROUND, Helen.

I have no statement. I would say that we are not trying to take away from the Connecticut Convention today. We feel this is one of the most important events of the primary campaign period for us because we feel that we will do very well here. Our goal is to take 35 delegates. We could end up with 33, but we are going to go after 35.

As of now, today, before the Connecticut Convention, we are at 1,068 delegates. Former Governor Reagan is at 1,000 delegates, so we feel that after today's Convention, we will be either at 1100 or 1103, which is sort of a magic number, we think, politically, for psychological reasons. We also think that next week, sometime, we are going to have another announcement for the press in terms of uncommitted-delegates that will come into our organization or into our count for Kansas City.

So, we are getting very close and this count that I am giving you does not include Hawaii, which we feel very good about, but are an uncommitted delegation by resolution of their Convention and includes no delegates

out of Mississippi, which is the biggest other block of uncommitted delegates, which is about 30.

So, with that, if you have any questions, I will be glad to answer them.

Q Are you saying that next week, there is a possibility you could go over the top?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: No, I am saying that we will be very close next week.

MORE

Q How would you imagine to lose two here with each district electing three?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: We could lose three if they are all by districts. Are they slated by districts?

Q There are 17 slated at large and in slates of three.

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: If you lost the district, you would lose three.

Q Which district do you anticipate losing?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: We don't anticipate losing any district.

Q Which district has the greatest possibility of being lost?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: I don't remember the number. Is it the third? I think it is the third where Reagan would have the most strength. It is the one down by New York. The second?

Q Do you think President Ford will have the magic number before the convention?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL; Yes, I think the President will have over 1130 delegates prior to going to Kansas City.

Q Where are those extras going to come from?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: All over the country, Bob, various States. We are not going to divulge that today.

Q Are they from uncommitteds?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: They will be from uncommitteds, yes.

Q How many do you think Reagan will get in New Jersey and Pennsylvania? How many new ones will he pry loose there?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Based on what we have seen with his trip into East Pennsylvania-New Jersey, we doubt very much if he is going to pry any loose. We felt all along that he had some support in both of those States and he will probably get that support, but in our count we don't think that he is going to pry any loose. We think his trip has been very futile.

Q Do you count him as having any in New Jersey?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL Yes.

Q How many?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: I don't want to get into State-by-State counts. I might have to live with them.

Q What is going to happen next week at the White House? Those delegates that are coming to the White House to talk to the President, do you have any idea how that is going to run?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: No, I don't, no.

Q Who is coming?

Q Has there been a shift in the uncommitteds since the Mondale ticket was formalized?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: No, I don't think that that has had any great bearing on the roughly 100 uncommitted delegates that are left. We have not seen it.

Q Have you sounded the Reagan forces out on Reagan taking the second place?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: No, we have not. There have been no discussions. To my knowledge there have been no discussions about the Vice Presidency at all.

Q Are you going to get any in Utah today?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: The only opportunity we have in Utah would be Senator Garn, and I don't like his chances.

Q Once again, which Congressional district do you think is the weakest for the President?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: The one that borders New York. Is that the second or the third?

Q No, that is the fourth. I don't think that is the one you mean. Is it the one that is around New Haven?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: I don't know.

Q Can you find out?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Yes, we will find out.

Q Is the Democratic effort to make an issue out of the pardon of Mr. Reagan, saying that if he is nominated that won't be an issue for the Democrats affecting the uncommitted delegates?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: No, I don't think so. We don't sense in any way -- the only thing we can sense within the Republican Party, whether it be Reagan supporters or Ford supporters, is the fact that we feel that the nomination of Mondale gives us the good divisive point, something that we can discuss in the general election. Maybe Carter thinks it is a plus for him. We think it is also a plus for us.

Q Why?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Because with the combination of Democratic platform and Carter embracing the Democrat platform in the nomination of Mondale, who is an established liberal, it gives us a division in the general election that we think that we can capitalize on.

Q Why? Do you think the people are not liberals?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Every piece of research we have seen and part of the way that Carter got to where he is indicates to us that the majority of this country is moderate to liberal -- or moderate to conservative.

Q Are you saying then you can capitalize on the pardon?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: No, I am not saying that at all.

Q My question was about the pardon.

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: I didn't understand your question. You will have to repeat it.

Q Mr. Mondale said in his acceptance speech that, "We have just gotten through the worst political crisis in the country and we are led by the man who pardoned the man who did it," and that is an issue as far as he is concerned. After that, Mr. Reagan said, "Nominate me and the Democrats will not have that as an issue."

Is that affecting the way the uncommitted delegates are talking?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: No.

Q What do you think in the Democratic Platform would be a good talking point for the Republicans and what is offensive to them?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: There are great numbers of spending bills -- the Humphrey-Hawkins bill, the National Health Insurance Program, things of that nature, which are tremendous amounts of dollars and I think that is where the debates will rest.

Q You said you were going to do well in Hawaii and you have been very hopeful in Hawaii. How about Mississippi?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Mississippi, in our judgment is still wide open -- they are an uncommitted delegation and we know that we have some support in the delegation at this point. A lot of them are truly uncommitted. They are wide open.

Q Is the President considering going down there next week?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: There has been some discussion of it, but no decision made.

Q Do you have any feel of the Reagan people on not having any credentials challenges? Does that still leave open the possibility that there will be some rules fight at the Convention that would affect the balloting --

for example, requiring Ford delegates to vote for him on the first ballot?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Yes, there could be some rules fights, yes. There is a unity resolution which was passed by the National Committee and that could be a fight in the Rules Committee. That is basically a resolution that says the delegates have to abide by the State laws or the States that they came from in terms of being bound. There could be a fight over that.

Q As the senior campaign official, do you expect Stu Spencer to resign after the Convention?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: I have no intention to, but that is always a good speculative story. In politics, you can always speculate somebody is going to leave.

Q Why is Peter Kaye leaving?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: You will have to ask Rogers Morton that. I am not going to get involved in it.

Q Will there be a President Ford Committee after the Convention or is the Republican National Committee going to take over?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: There will be a President Ford Committee, but there will be very close coordination and cooperation with the Republican National Committee. In fact, we have been in the process over the last three or four months in connection with the Reagan organization of working out the details of how we can best utilize both organizations. It will be much closer than in the past.

Q Why do you need two?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: You don't need two. The point is this, that the President has made the commitment that he wanted his campaign to be worked through and with the National Committee because of the things that have happened in the past. Now, we are trying to

fulfill that obligation, and when you only have \$21.8 million to spend, there is a lot of resources at the National Committee that you can use and we want to use them.

Q Did I understand you to say a minute ago that you don't think Reagan is going to pry any of the President's delegates loose?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: That is correct.

Q Then, why are all these State delegations being brought into the White House in the next couple of weeks? What is the purpose of these visits?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Some of them are uncommitted, some of them are already committed and it is a situation of getting them in a position so they know the President and what he stands for and keeping it firm.

Q Does this not indicate here that some of these people are borderline delegates?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Any uncommitteds are a borderline delegate, but I don't think that Reagan is going to pull any of them away from us is what I am saying.

MORE

Q Would you explain the Mississippi situation? I don't exactly understand what is going on down there.

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: What do you want to know?

Q For one thing, when are these people going to have to commit themselves one way or the other?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: They can do it at any time. They had a resolution passed. They had a meeting which in essence said that they would go uncommitted to Kansas City. They can hold a meeting tomorrow or this afternoon and uncommit that commitment and divide the delegation up any way that they want.

Q So, if the President went down there, presumably he would go before a meeting of some kind at which they would line up? Is that what you are saying?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: The invitation we have I think is to appear before a party fund-raising event in Mississippi. Whether he would meet with delegates or not, if he goes, I don't know at this point.

Q Could it end up with Mississippi deciding who the Republican candidate would be?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Mississippi could be very important, Hawaii could be very important because they are the two biggest blocks of uncommitted voters left.

Q How many in Hawaii?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: There is a total of 18.

Q How many in Mississippi?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: 30.

Q The President has said a couple of times that it would be interesting, a lot of what he does would depend on what the Democrats did at their convention, and he would be watching that. Then why does the choice of Mondale as the number two choice -- the Republicans in recent days have indicated that they could attack this ticket as a liberal ticket -- how does that affect the number two choice, do you think, for the President, and what would be most helpful to him?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: I am not going to get into any discussion of the Vice Presidency. That is a decision the President has to make. I have not discussed it with him, and I do not wish to speculate on it.

Q What is your current uncommitted count in New York and Pennsylvania?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: It is about 12 in New York.

Q In Pennsylvania?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Five.

Q Do you see a trip to Hawaii by the President before the convention? (Laughter)

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: No, I don't.

We are going to send Cheney to Hawaii.

Q Can I take you back to the very beginning when you were giving some numbers? What do you expect Reagan to have at the end of the day?

SENIOR CAMPAIGN OFFICIAL: Today he has 1000 delegates in our count, and if he wins all of them in Utah, which we think he will do, he will have 1020.

THE PRESS: Thank you very much.

END (AT 10:27 A.M. EDT)