

May 22, 1976

INTERVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT  
BY  
OREGON STATEWIDE RADIO

THE SHERATON PORTLAND  
PORTLAND, OREGON

4:36 P.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: We have had a busy day in Oregon. We had a wonderful stop in Medford, and we have a real nice opportunity here in Portland. So, I am looking forward to a chance to talk with all of you from the radio media.

I don't have any opening statement, so why don't we shoot.

QUESTION: It has been said by a number of your campaigners who have been through here that Ronald Reagan is very divisive as far as the Republican Party is concerned. Do you agree with that opinion?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the political rhetoric we have had so far can be held. I believe the candidates are big enough to understand one thing, and I think the supporters of both are more dedicated to the philosophy than they are to any one individual.

So, I think unless something happens in the meantime, we can have a solid Republican Party in November.

QUESTION: To follow up on this, they have been saying that if Reagan were nominated we would have another Goldwater year like 1964.

THE PRESIDENT: That is a somewhat different question. I think I am far more electable in November than he, and I think that is the consensus among most people who look at the situation across the nation.

I believe that most of the political analysts, most of the columnists, commentators, agree that I have a much broader base politically than he and, therefore, I would be more electable. I think most of the polls indicate that.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in the same line as Jerry's question, this morning former Governor Reagan was quoted as saying he still thought he could get a first ballot nomination at the convention. Perhaps you could comment on that.

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: I think we will get that nomination on the first ballot. I got some good news today. The Kansas convention held this afternoon, we got 30 delegates. My opponent got four. Vermont, in a meeting of the delegates in Vermont, I got all 18. He didn't get any. We think we will do well in Alaska. The Pennsylvania delegates met this afternoon, and on a resolution to support me, I got 88 votes and my opponent got nine and five didn't vote and one was absent, so I think we are doing very well and, of course, with the very good victory in Michigan and Maryland, plus what I think will happen in New York, we are moving.

QUESTION: What would a loss in California do to you? Reagan has an edge there because he is the former Governor. That is what --

THE PRESIDENT: 167.

QUESTION: Yes, he has got a lot of delegates. He has edged you unless you start counting uncommitted, although he is expected to win there. What is that going to do in the momentum department for you?

THE PRESIDENT: On the same day that we have the California primary we have the Ohio and New Jersey primaries, and I expect to do very well in both Ohio and New Jersey, so it won't just be whatever happens in California. It will be the beginning of New Jersey, Ohio and California, and I expect to do well in both of the other two States.

QUESTION: Mr. President, a lot has been said in this campaign about Mr. Kissinger. What is your reaction to the criticism of him?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have to go back to the fundamentals. Has our foreign policy been successful? I think it has. We have achieved the peace. We have the peace today, and there is no reason that I can foresee why we shouldn't have peace in the future.

That is the job of a Secretary of State under the direction of a President, and as long as you have a successful foreign policy and the Secretary of State carries it out the way the President wants it, I don't see why you should break up a good team.

Now, a successful foreign policy doesn't mean that you should go around bullying people, and neither should you be afraid to confront them, if you are right and they are wrong.

But this foreign policy, the Ford Administration has gone down the road where we have been successful except in one instance, and that is where the Congress took away from the Executive Branch of the Government the capability, in a very small way, to meet the Soviet and Cuban challenge in Angola.

MORE

If the Congress hadn't backed off and lost its courage, we could have been successful in Angola and the Angolans would have settled the problems of Angola. But because Congress was timid, we now have 15,000 Cuban mercenaries in Angola, plus \$200,000 worth of the Soviet-Cuban hardware.

But, that was the only case and that wasn't Secretary Kissinger's fault. That wasn't my fault. That was Congress' fault. As long as we are successful, I think you ought to keep a good team together.

QUESTION: Mr. President, one of the questions about Kissinger, not too long ago on a television program he indicated he might not be around after the inauguration, whether or not you wanted him or not. If that happens, what is the Ford foreign policy going to look like in the years ahead?

THE PRESIDENT: It will be the same thrust that we have had. It will be a foreign policy aimed at making progressive steps toward a permanent, just peace in the Middle East. We have started constructively in the Middle East. The United States, during my Administration, is the only nation in the world that is trusted by the Israelis on the one hand and the Arab nations on the other. That will be a continued thrust of the Ford Administration.

The Ford Administration in the next four years would continue to solidify and strengthen the NATO nations and our alliance in Western Europe to meet the challenge of the Warsaw Pact nations. The Ford foreign policy would be to continue the improving relations that we have with the People's Republic of China.

It would be a foreign policy aimed at strengthening our ties with Japan, improving our relations with South American or Latin American countries, carrying out a constructive, affirmative policy in Africa. The thrust of the foreign policy in the next four years under my Administration will be a continuation and a strengthening of the policies we have had in the past, and they have been successful.

QUESTION: Mr. President, have you given any consideration to who the next Secretary of State might be should Henry Kissinger not be around next time?

THE PRESIDENT: I am hopeful that he will stay so until I hear to the contrary, I am not giving consideration to any alternative.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, Dr. Kissinger has openly stated that he would like to get the black Government ... have them the head of the Government in Rhodesia, and by doing this, might it not create a lot of bloodshed in that we don't want bloodshed and yet we are openly backing the black people to have power there? Is that going to create ...

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have not stated quite accurately what Secretary Kissinger said. Our fundamental policy is one of self-determination with majority rule with absolute guarantee of protection of minority rights.

Now, in the case of Rhodesia, that is fundamentally a British problem because Rhodesia was a colony of Great Britain.

Now, what we are trying to do is to avoid the bloodshed because if you don't make progress toward self-determination and majority rule and the guarantee of minority rights, you are inevitably going to have radicalization of all the South African black nations, and that will lead to more bloodshed quicker. That is inevitable.

Now, what we are trying to do is to get the moderate nations in South Africa to work with the British Government and us to the extent that we have an impact so that the transformation over a period of time will not be as a result of guerilla warfare but as a transition that will avoid violence and bloodshed.

So, our policy is just the opposite of bloodshed. Our policy is one to prevent bloodshed.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to change the subject. I know that you wield considerable power over public broadcasting in this country through your appointments of members to the Board of Directors of the corporation of public broadcasting.

At the present there are five vacancies, and that the people on the board--I wanted to draw to your personal attention, there is no one with interests or concern about public radio. And I was hoping that you would be able to wield some influence in your appointments-- (Laughter)--I am a public station manager of radio. I am a member of the Association of Public Radio Stations' Board of Directors, and we would just like to have you -- hope that in those appointments of those five -- that you might see your way clear even to appoint two with a concern for radio in this country.

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: First, I wasn't cognizant that we had five vacancies. If we do, we should have filled them because I don't like to have vacancies hanging in midair. I will tell one of my staff right now to make a note of that. We will check, one, to see whether there are five vacancies and, number two, you can rest assured we will give consideration to a vacancy, if there is one, to someone who comes from public radio.

QUESTION: We appreciate your asking radio to come by itself today. So often we are meshed down as a bright Cinderella. (Laughter) As my last follow-up question, you do invite commercial broadcasters to sit down with your staff and with you to discuss your problems, and theirs, in the White House -- would you consider inviting public broadcasters to come some day and talk with your staff about our problems and yourself?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I have met with or some of our people have met with the public broadcasting people.

QUESTION: Maybe they invited television. I want to be sure you invite radio. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President, on the matter of formal entrance to the veterans hospitals and the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee in testifying about eight replacement VA hospitals, Seattle and Portland, could you comment where the money is? Are we going to get a new VA hospital?

THE PRESIDENT: I made a decision about two weeks ago to expedite the construction of eight new VA hospitals, and I sent to the Congress a few days ago a request for about \$240 million for the design and engineering of all eight, and the construction money for two and made a commitment that we would add the construction money for two of the eight each year for the next three years, plus the money for the one that are in this year's budget.

Two of them, one in Seattle and one in Portland, are in this area. There is one in West Virginia. There is one in Camden, one in Florida, one in Richmond, Virginia. I can't remember where the others are, but I decided that we had an obligation to give the best care with the best facilities for the veterans. So, I -- despite the stringent fiscal situation we are in -- recommended this very expensive VA hospital building program.

The money request is now before the Congress. I hope the Congress approves it so we can start construction on two of them and start the design and engineering on all eight.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, a couple on Federal revenue sharing, please. How do you see the future of revenue sharing in Congress, and what is your general philosophy about the fiscal crisis cities are facing, and how Federal revenue sharing can help.

THE PRESIDENT: I was a proponent of general revenue sharing in 1972, and led the fight for its enactment, and that program has given to the cities and States about \$29 billion in the last five years.

I recommended to the Congress a year ago a five and three-quarter year extension of the present general revenue sharing program and recommended an increase on an annual basis, so that it would take care of some of the extra needs of States, as well as local communities.

I am disappointed and dismayed that the Congress has done very little to extend that program, which expires December 31 of this year.

Now, if Congress doesn't do something on that general revenue sharing program, every State in the Union, all 50, 39,000 local units of Government, including the City of Portland, will either have to discontinue services or add local taxes.

Now, the general revenue sharing program has done a good job. I can't recall all the details here in Portland, but nationally it has done a good job. I urge you in the media to point out that Congress is negligent in not passing this legislation and to get your listeners to write their Congressmen to pass that legislation so that 39,000 local units of Government in 50 States will not be faced with a fiscal crisis, either to cut back services or to add local taxes.

QUESTION: What is the deadline?

THE PRESIDENT: December 31, but it is even more imminent than that because many States and many local units of Government have to make their budgets up now, and if the bill isn't passed by Congress, they have to either indicate in their local budgets that they are going to have less local services or they will have to add local taxes. It is more imminent than December 31, believe me.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I understand that Governor Reagan has now suggested selling off the TVA. Would you comment on that?

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: The United States Government bought, paid for, owns and shouldn't sell the TVA.  
(Laughter)

QUESTION: Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir?

QUESTION: Could you tell us, please, whether or not you favor the equal rights amendment, and why?

THE PRESIDENT: When I was in the House of Representatives before I became Vice President, I voted for the constitutional amendment. I approve of it. I don't intend to change my mind. I don't see how anybody can be against equal rights, period. I voted for it, and I favor it.

QUESTION: Mr. President, please, what is your reaction to the oversight committee the Senate has put together now?

THE PRESIDENT: I had hoped the Congress would have a joint House-Senate oversight committee on intelligence. Unfortunately, apparently the Senate is going to have one and the House will have one. The better approach would have been a joint committee just like they have a joint Atomic Energy Committee, but the President really doesn't control those housekeeping matters in the Congress.

Somebody who hasn't asked one yet.

QUESTION: Last Wednesday Governor Brown signed into law in California a bill that would provide a 10 percent tax refund for people who installed solar heating units in their own homes.

How do you intend to emphasize this type of consumer measure in your total energy plan?

THE PRESIDENT: I recommended Congress approve two measures that stimulate consumer conservation. In January of last year I recommended \$80 million to go to the poor or disadvantaged so that they could get the necessary equipment to insulate their homes with local volunteer organizations, labor and others, installing it.

That is a good program. In addition, I recommended that there be a tax incentive for people who, with their own money, would go out and buy insulation equipment to reduce the utilization of energy in their own homes.

MORE

QUESTION: What about the use of solar energy in homes?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, in the case of solar energy, it is not as reliable a source of energy for either homes or for schools or factories, as some would like it to be.

I increased the money for research and development in solar energy from \$80 million to about \$120 million in the next year's budget, which is about a 40-some percent increase.

In addition, we are experimenting in the Federal Government with 226 federally financed homes where solar energy is actually being tried in a home occupied by a family. This is the way I believe to find out what we can do, how we can do it better. I don't want people to buy something unless it is reasonably well proven, and the best way to do it is the way we are doing it where we are experimenting with 226 homes with Federal funds and closely monitored experiences as to whether it works and, if so, how well it works.

I am a strong believer in solar energy. It is indicated by the 40 percent increase in the research and development funds that I recommended. And I hope and trust that we can make more progress than some of the scientists tell me we can. I am an optimist about it.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the Law of the Sea Conference is coming up. If no international agreement can be reached, how are we going to effectively enforce the 200-mile fishing limit?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the meeting of the Law of the Sea Conference ended, I think, a couple of weeks ago in New York City. They are meeting again in August. They made significant progress in the meeting that was held in the late winter and early spring.

I am told that there is a fighting chance that when they meet again in August they can resolve some of the remaining issues. If they don't, I signed legislation that provides for a 200-mile commercial fishing zone for the United States to go into effect -- I think it is March 31 of 1977.

The Coast Guard, in my judgment, with the equipment and the personnel they have and with that which we have included in the budget, will have a capability to adequately monitor the 200-mile zone that was established that I approved of.

Someone that hasn't asked one.

MORE



QUESTION: Mr. President, how do you justify your lack of action to have the Byrd amendment repealed in view of the fact that this Nation is now in defiance of the UN embargo on trade with the present Government of Rhodesia and by this action we are demonstrating a lack of support to black nationalist goals?

THE PRESIDENT: Ever since I have been President, this Administration's policy has been for the repeal of the Byrd amendment, ever since I took the oath of office. And we worked with the Congress a couple of months ago to get the House of Representatives to repeal the Byrd amendment. Unfortunately, it lost by about 25 or 30 votes.

I am on record, Secretary Kissinger is on record, for the repeal of the Byrd amendment. The Congress just hasn't acted.

QUESTION: Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes?

QUESTION: Many of the Democratic aspirants have indicated that they will not sign Senate Bill 1 should it reach their desk in the White House. Should the Senate pass this, will you sign it?

THE PRESIDENT: The Senate Bill 1, in its present form, is unacceptable. There are some provisions in it that I think have to be modified, and maybe several that ought to be eliminated, and there are some that we want in it that aren't in it now.

So, it is a long way from getting down to my desk. It is a sizeable document. It is the total recodification of all Federal Criminal Code. So, it is not just a minor matter, it is a very significant piece of legislation.

I hope they will move on it and provide some changes. But if they don't, there are some other additional criminal provisions that I think ought to be enacted into law anyhow.

But S. 1, at this time, is a long way from getting down to the White House.

QUESTION: Sir, what is your feeling on "The Final Days" book?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't read it.

QUESTION: Well, have you just read the excerpts?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't want to comment until I have read it, and I just haven't had time to do it.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, what would be some of those things you would like to see in Senate Bill 1? What are some of the changes you would like to see?

THE PRESIDENT: There are a couple of provisions that come to mind. One, I believe that we ought to make tougher the present provisions where a person has in his possession a gun when he commits a criminal act. I think there ought to be mandatory sentences and I think there ought to be certain sentences. I think there ought to be stronger, more certain and mandatory sentences for those who are convicted of being traffickers in hard drugs.

There are several controversial provisions in the civil rights area that I think ought to be reviewed and probably modified. Those are, in general, the things that --

QUESTION: To follow up briefly, there is one section that says it would be--if the bill is enacted, it would be unlawful to interfere with the legal function of a Government agency. Some people see that as meaning a broad sweep and it has no definition, and some people are quite concerned that such things as outlined in the Church report and the Rockefeller report would be (inaudible) than they are now. Would you have some comment to make about that?

THE PRESIDENT: I think we have corrected, by the Executive Orders that I have signed, the problems that arose in the intelligence agencies, so there cannot be and will not be the kind of abuses that took place beginning back about 1963 and running up through 1973. I think I have corrected it by affirmative action and I think you will find, at least in this Administration, there will be none of those abuses carried out.

QUESTION: Some people say there are some of them occurring now.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they are misinformed.

QUESTION: Sir, I wanted to ask you, assuming you will be the party's nominee during our Convention, in November, which Democrat would you choose to run against?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't really have much influence on that. (Laughter) But I have tried to promote Hubert Humphrey -- (Laughter) -- and I am very serious about that. Hubert is a very good friend of mine. I think he represents a very legitimate point of view politically in this country. He has a record and it is a record that is philosophically, on domestic issues, quite different from mine, and I think the American people want a clear-cut choice.

MORE

A few of the other Democratic candidates, I am not sure where they stand one day from the next. At least with Hubert you would have a decent man with a long record who will fight hard and he will fight fairly.

I would like to compete against Hubert Humphrey because of the things I have just said. I thought he had a good chance of being nominated, but then he found that Carter made a big upsurge.

But, anyhow, I know -- as an outsider, not an insider -- that there is a little shift. And Mr. Carter's nomination is not quite as certain, or appeared to be a couple of weeks ago, so I think Hubert has a chance and I think it would be a good contest -- Ford-Humphrey, different views on domestic matters, record, no equivocation, no, no wandering all over the ball park -- it would be a good head-to-head confrontation.

MORE

QUESTION: Sir, one issue, a local issue, right now in Congress, one bill, and the House is working on a bill now on clear cutting. I wonder if you could give us your view on how you might consider a clear cuttings bill, if it might include a ban or restrictions on the site of purchase?

THE PRESIDENT: The Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service have been working with Senator Humphrey on a bill that my advisers tell me is a good bill. Unfortunately, the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Senate Committee on Interior made some changes in that legislation that my advisers tell me are not good in meeting the problem.

So, I wish they would go back to the original Humphrey bill, which my advisers were supporting. We can't tell what will happen on the floor of the Senate. The House Committee on Agriculture, which has jurisdiction there, has not done anything on it. So, we are a long way from any affirmative action.

I happen to believe that the delay is not good because that court decision out in the Eastern Seaboard, the Monongahela decision based on an 1897 act is very harmful.

Now, it hasn't had its full impact here on the West Coast, but there is an Alaskan case, that if it gets confirmed, it will do the same thing on the West Coast that the Monongahela case has done on the East Coast. Then we are in a bind.

So, the Congress I hope will work with the Administration in trying to get an approach that gives to the Forest Service the right to manage the national forests, and it is my belief that the Forest Service can and will handle this great natural resource constructively.

QUESTION: Mr. President, Ronald Reagan has inferred that the United States military might is now lagging behind the USSR. How would you respond to that?

THE PRESIDENT: There isn't a single top-flight military officer who agrees with him. That includes the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and they know quite a bit about it. That has been their career. Because of their request, I have recommended last year, at that time the largest military budget in the history of the United States. And this year, again at their request, to keep us unsurpassed, I recommended the largest military budget in the history of the United States.

MORE

We have the capacity today for our military to carry out every assigned mission, and carry it out successfully. What I am trying to do with the budget I have recommended is to continue that unsurpassed capability to carry out our military missions.

What are those? One, to deter aggression by strength -- deter aggression. Number two, to protect our national security against any aggression. Number three, to maintain the peace. We have the peace, and there is every reason to believe with our military capability and our diplomatic skill that we will.

QUESTION: Mr. President, one question I have, in regard to the fate of the Palestinians, first American foreign policy in regard to the situation for all the Palestinian refugees, for example?

THE PRESIDENT: What we are trying to do is to keep the momentum going for a permanent, broad, constructive, equitable settlement of that whole Middle Eastern area of the world, which historically is the most volatile, the most controversial area in the history of mankind. The United States, the Ford Administration, is the only power where we are trusted by the Israelis on the one hand and the Arab nations on the other.

We are pushing both to try and make headway under U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338. If we can keep this momentum going for that kind of a settlement, it will in turn take care of the Palestinian refugee problem, which is a cancerous condition that has existed ever since 1946 or 1947. It is a problem that has got to be solved in the context of the whole resolution of the Middle Eastern problem.

QUESTION: Mr. President, we are pleased that you came to Portland to speak to radio.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very, very much.

END (AT 5:12 P.M. PDT)