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TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "NBC'S MEET THE PRESS."

MEET THE PRESS

Produced by Betty Cole Dukert

SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 1976

GUEST:

RONALD REAGAN - Candidate for the Republican
Presidential Nomination

MODERATOR:

Bill Monroe - NBC News

PANEL:

Tom Pettit - NBC News

David S. Broder - Washington Post

George F. Will - Syndicated Columnist

Don Oliver - NBC News

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MEET THE PRESS

1 MR. MONROE: MEET THE PRESS is originating today from the
2 studios of WCKT in Miami, Florida.

3 Our guest is Ronald Reagan, Governor of California from
4 1967 to '75. The Florida primary day after tomorrow could
5 prove a decisive factor in Mr. Reagan's campaign for
6 the Republican presidential nomination.

7 Twelve days ago in New Hampshire, the only primary so far
8 where both sides waged active campaigns, Mr. Reagan won 49
9 percent of the vote, President Ford 51 percent.

10 We will have the first questions now from Tom Pettit of
11 NBC News.

12 MR. PETTIT: Mr. Reagan, do you expect to lose next
13 Tuesday and, if so, why?

14 MR. REAGAN: No, I am going to hope to win, but I realize
15 it is a horse race, a very close race here in Florida.

16 MR. PETTIT: Are you saying you will win?

17 MR. REAGAN: I never say that. I have always felt
18 that you campaign on the basis that you are one vote behind.
19 I say that I hope very much to win, but I know how close
20 the race is.

21 MR. PETTIT: But the question was, do you expect to
22 lose?

23 MR. REAGAN: I don't think that in a close horse race
24 it could be a loser for a challenger.

25 MR. PETTIT: The President has been subject to some

1 criticism from you lately, some heavy criticism. If he
2 should be the nominee of your party instead of you, could
3 you support him?

4 MR. REAGAN: Tom, I have always said that is a part
5 of the creed we believe in out in California. Yes, I believe
6 it is essential to have a Republican victory.

7 MR. PETTIT: Now, last year, Mr. Reagan, you proposed
8 a plan to transfer some federal functions to state govern-
9 ments, and attached a \$90 billion figure to it.

10 Much later you said you were only talking theory,
11 that the numbers didn't really mean anything.

12 Now, for those of us who try faithfully to report
13 your views, how can we tell when you are making a serious
14 proposal and how can we tell when you are only making a
15 hypothetical example? How do we know that you are leveling
16 with us?

17 MR. REAGAN: Well, Tom, I don't think that correctly
18 states my position. I said the \$90 billion figure was used
19 to illustrate the extent of the programs that I believe
20 properly belong back with the state and local government.

21 MR. PETTIT: But you did not say that at the time.

22 MR. REAGAN: \$90 billion, yes, is what they cost in
23 the present budget.

24 Now, I also, at the same time, said two things. I
25 said that with the transfer of those programs to the states

1 and local governments should go a transfer of the sources of
2 revenue presently used by the federal government. I also
3 said that there would not be a net savings of \$90 billion
4 because very obviously the state and local governments would
5 be taking those same tax sources and using them to pay for
6 the present federal share, but I said there would be considerable
7 savings because, No. 1, you would get rid of a layer of
8 administrative overhead at the Washington level and at the
9 same time I believe the states and local governments would
10 run those programs far more efficiently and effectively.

11 There is no organization in the United States, including
12 the United States government, that has as high an overhead,
13 administrative overhead, as does the federal government.

14 (Announcements)

15 * * * * *

16 MR. BRODER: Governor, I suppose the fundamental question
17 facing your candidacy at this point is this: With the nation
18 at peace and economic recovery obvious, why should the
19 Republican party change nominees or why should the country
20 change Presidents?

21 MR. REAGAN: Well, Dave, I disagree with the idea
22 that prosperity is evidently at hand. I know that just
23 recently some figures have been released to indicate that
24 possibly the cost-of-living is going down and that unemploy-
25 ment is dropping and so forth. At the same time that some areas

1 of the country, particularly in the northeast, have seen an
2 increase of tens and tens of thousands of unemployed,
3 but isn't it possible that we are much in the same position
4 we were at the time of the so-called Nixon recession?

5 In 1970, the bi-election that year found the Republican
6 party suffering because we were in a recession; we had
7 unemployment of about six or seven percent, and we had
8 inflation of about six and a fraction percent, and then,
9 with the 1972 election coming on they started emergency
10 measures, anti-recession measures; not fighting the
11 original cause of all of this which is the inflation. They
12 brought inflation down to 2.4 percent; they brought un-
13 employment down and everyone went into the '72 election and
14 the campaign year talking prosperity and business upsurge.

15 And then in 1973 the roof fell in. Only this time
16 inflation was 12 percent and unemployment was ten percent.

17 Now, I fear very much that we may be in exactly the
18 same position. We have been resorting to recession
19 emergency measures. Nothing has been done yet to fight the
20 real cause of this, which is inflation.

21 Now, when the roof falls in again, after the '76
22 election, as a result of it, is it going to double again?
23 Is this time the inflation going to be 25 percent? Is the
24 unemployment going to be double the ten percent we had the
25 last time?

1 MR. BRODER: In 1972, if I recall correctly, you keynoted
2 the Republican convention here and strongly supported Mr.
3 Nixon.

4 MR. REAGAN: Of course.

5 MR. BRODER: If the arguments you are making today
6 are valid, why weren't they equally valid in 1972?

7 MR. REAGAN: Oh, listen, I disagreed publicly on the
8 basis of the same thing, of fighting this. At the same
9 time, however, let me point out that Mr. Nixon himself was
10 willing to admit in that campaign that things like wage
11 and price controls were temporary measures which he felt
12 had been forced upon him and that he would not institutional-
13 ize the bureaucracy that was running those programs.

14 Now, organized labor, the hierarchy of organized labor,
15 was much opposed to him for not making this permanent, and
16 a part of our government procedure, and he wouldn't do it.

17 I made all of those things clear and was still speaking
18 out against the real villain which is inflation.

19 Now, right now we have the figures that, under the
20 present administration, virtually a fourth of the entire
21 national debt has been accumulated in this brief period.

22 We have gone \$95 billion deeper into debt than we were just
23 one year ago. That is not a way, I believe, for a permanent
24 solution to our economic problems. On the international scene
25 I have been speaking out in the last few days on what I think is
wrong there. I think that internationally, in the foreign scene
this country is in great danger, and I just read the interview
that has been given by General Haig of NATO where he describes

this as being at the edge of disaster.

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1 MR. WILL: About foreign policy issues, Governor, let me
2 ask you a few specific questions: If you were President,
3 today, would you be prepared to tell the American farmer
4 that you would embargo further grain sales to the Soviet Union
5 until they and their satellite troops got out of Africa?

6 MR. REAGAN: I happen to believe in the free marketplace.
7 I have, earlier I have expressed questions as to whether we
8 properly studied the whole matter of trade with the Soviet
9 Union. Since that time, being interested in the farm
10 problems as I have for many years, and being on the fringe of
11 farming, myself, I looked into this matter.

12 We don't have a monopoly on grain. We can't just stub-
13 bornly say we won't sell. I happen to believe that right now
14 the free marketplace, allowing American farmers to sell their
15 produce in the international market, even the Soviet Union,
16 is a greater advantage to us than it is to the Soviet Union,
17 and I think the mistake that was made with our farmers was
18 when the government told them to raise everything they could,
19 grow all the crops they could, and that they would have free
20 access to the market; and then yielded to pressure from
21 another direction, and after they had harvested the grain, put
22 an embargo on, and when they were finally released to sell it,
23 the market had shrunk because they had found other sources,
24 but also the price had been cut virtually in half.
25

1 I think we should turn the American farmers loose on the
2 free marketplace to do what he can do better than any other
3 farmers in the world.

4 MR. WILL: Governor, if you were President today, would
5 you support using pressure, such as Senator Jackson's measure,
6 to make economic cooperation with the Soviet Union contingent
7 upon them liberalizing their immigration laws?

8 MR. REAGAN: Oh, I think, whether that particular specific
9 is one or not, I think we should -- well, this is what I
10 criticized about detente. It has been a one-way street. We
11 are making the concessions, we are giving them the things they
12 want; we ask nothing in return. In fact, we give them things
13 before we ask for the return. I think it has to be a two-way
14 street, and depending on the importance of what it is they
15 ask, I think that should measure the importance of what we ask
16 in return.

17 MR. WILL: Yesterday you made a speech in which you said
18 "If we are going to recognize Castro for the dictator that he
19 is, we should act accordingly." You said "Let's have action
20 match our words." What action would you use against Castro?

21 MR. REAGAN: Well, there has been a very strange thing
22 about Cuba in the turn-around in our Administration. We
23 started last May to open up relations, and we began persuading
24 the Organization of American States to lift the embargo against
25 it. By July we had managed to twist enough arms in that

1 organization that by one vote they lifted the embargo.
2 And then here in our own country we appointed Senator Mc-
3 Govern's former advisor on international affairs to a position
4 in the State Department dealing with this subject. He went on
5 the Hill and told the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee of
6 the Congress that we should be relaxing these tensions with Mr.
7 Castro.

8 Our own Commerce Department opened up the trade on the
9 part of subsidiaries of American corporations, and then, what
10 I thought was rather significant, they transferred trade with
11 Cuba, in the State Department, from the International Trade
12 Division to the East-West Trade Division, which seemed to be
13 putting an official stamp on our recognition that Cuba is a
14 Russian satellite.

15 Now, some of the things I think could be done if we
16 really mean, now, as Mr. Ford said here in Miami just a few
17 days ago, that he now recognizes Castro as an international
18 outlaw and we will never recognize him, well, then, I think
19 that means we go back to the Organization of American States
20 and ask them to reinstitute the embargo. I think we tell our
21 Commerce Department to go back to the embargo that we had
22 with regard to American firms dealing with him; and we do a
23 number of things of that kind. We might even ask Mr. Rogers,
24 now, where he stands with regard to Mr. Castro.

25 MR. OLIVER: Governor, at one point in the New Hampshire

1 primary, in the race, it was generally conceded that you were
2 ahead. Then President Ford won. Similarly in the Florida pri-
3 mary race, at one point I think most of the polls showed you
4 to be quite a distance ahead. Now, you are said to be neck
5 and neck. You claim to be neck and neck. Why this slippage?
6 What is happening to your campaign on both of these primary
7 states?

8 MR. REAGAN: I never thought that it was slippage. Cer-
9 tainly you have got campaign people and campaign aides who
10 joyously come out and proclaim when a poll reveals, if those
11 people who will state, now that more of them are stating in
12 my way than in the other way and they do the same thing.

13 But in each instance there was a large block of undecided.
14 Now, no one could realistically believe that that block of un-
15 decided would not polarize and begin to take sides.

16 My own feeling has been that it is an uphill fight
17 against an incumbent. An incumbent has a great many things
18 that he can do. For example, he can make news and be virtually
19 on the network news and on the front page of the papers every
20 day without moving out of the Oval Office. In addition, an
21 incumbent can go into an area and announce that the shipyard
22 is going to stay open. He can go to another area and say
23 that the highway is going to be built. He can stand in front
24 of a group of disabled veterans and tell them he is going to
25 build a new hospital. And these are all the things that go with

1 an incumbency that a challenger can't do.

2 Now, I have only met Mr. Ford in one contest and that was
3 in New Hampshire, and Mr. Oliver, if you will forgive me for
4 correcting you here, the unofficial tally had him at better
5 than 50 percent. The official tally is that this is the first
6 President in the history of the New Hampshire primary who did
7 not get 50 percent of the vote. He got 49.4 and I got
8 48 percent, and then there were write-ins for 2 or 3,000 other
9 Republican candidates. I outnumbered him better than two to
10 one in Democratic write-ins on the Democratic ballots. I came
11 away from New Hampshire, I think, as a challenger, with a vic-
12 tory.

13 MR. OLIVER: You think the same thing is going to happen
14 to you in Florida?

15 MR. REAGAN: If it should happen in Florida, again, we
16 go by delegates. And right now we are ahead of our own projec-
17 tions in the number of delegates that we thought we would have
18 at this particular point, not lifting a finger in Massachusetts.

19 MR. OLIVER: No, I am asking about Florida, Governor.
20 Do you think the same thing will happen among those voters who
21 have not indicated a preference?

22 MR. REAGAN: That is the mystery. That is the thing you
23 don't know. That is the thing that makes it a horse race.
24 I know that we have a fine campaign. I know that the people
25 working for us have done everything possible to do, and I

1 know that going down to the wire, not counting the undecided --
2 yes, we still had an edge. But that block of undecided is big
3 enough/^{not} to turn that edge. And as I have said right now, not
4 getting the press attention in the primary is in a number of
5 states where they are having caucuses, choosing convention
6 delegates, we are running ahead in those states that are
7 going at that right at the moment.

8 MR. MONROE: Governor, in connection with your criticism
9 of detente and talking about taking a tougher line with Russia,
10 would you have challenged the Soviet Union and the Cuban
11 troops in terms of their interference in Angola the way
12 President Ford and Secretary Kissinger did?

13 MR. REAGAN: Well, was that really a challenge, or did they
14 go before the Congress and ask the Congress to support them
15 in trying to arrange a coalition government which would include
16 the Communists?

17 MR. MONROE: What would you have done?

18 MR. REAGAN: Well, the point that I have been making to
19 audiences here, and I have to include myself with the
20 audiences in this, the argument that went on in Washington was
21 done without any -- well, without the American people being
22 provided any information on the strategic importance of Angola.
23 This again is a part of the weakness of our national policy,
24 or our foreign policy. We have not been told the facts as to
25 where are the strategic areas that are important to our national
security.

1 We weren't told. Is Angola important? Does Angola with a
2 Russian presence there in any way endanger our national se-
3 curity? If it does, the people have a right to know this.
4 If it doesn't, then I don't know what the argument was all
5 about. We shouldn't have bothered. But I think to say that
6 the Ford Administration was defeated by Congress on the matter
7 of whether we should help and try to defeat the Soviet in-
8 fluence ignores the fact that, no, they had already agreed
9 that they would go for a coalition government involving the
10 Communists, and we found out in Laos that when you have a
11 coalition government with the Communists that means the
12 Communists eventually run the country.

13 MR. MONROE: In terms of your own assessment of the impor-
14 tance of Angola, would you have done anything specific, any-
15 thing different from what the President and Secretary Kissinger
16 did?

17 MR. REAGAN: I have to tell you that I don't have the facts
18 on that. At one time I thought I did, but this was prior to
19 this particular trouble. Back when it looked like Angola was
20 going to be released as a colony from Portugal control, I had
21 a briefing from Navy sources that indicated the Navy had great
22 concern about the ability of force on Angola being able to
23 control the south Atlantic sea lanes, particularly our tankers
24 coming around the tip of Africa.

25 Since that time with Russia's activity up in Somalia and
up in the Indian Ocean, the same people have revealed Angola
did not loom so important because Russia can head off those

1 tankers without letting them come around the tip of Africa. So
I don't know what the other facts were that were involved.

2 MR. PETTIT: Governor, you consider yourself to be a
staunch anti-communist, I would guess?

3 MR. REAGAN: Yes.

4 MR. PETTIT: Ever since your days in the Screen Actors'
5 Guild when routing the Communist influence in that union was
6 important in Hollywood. Let me ask you about your views of
7 Henry Kissinger and what he thinks about communism. Do
8 you think that Henry Kissinger is naive about the Soviet
9 Union, or do you think he knows what he is doing?

10 MR. REAGAN: Well, I am quite sure that Mr. Kissinger
11 knows what he is doing, but whether what he is doing is
12 to the best interests of the United States or not in the long run
13 I am not challenging his sincerity or his honesty.

14 MR. PETTIT: How about his patriotism?

15 MR. REAGAN: Or his patriotism. But he might conceive
16 a more pessimistic view than I have. He might believe that
17 the time has come in which it is necessary to make concessions
18 to the Soviet Union because we are no longer the No. 1
19 nation in military strength. My own view is that we become
20 once again the No. 1 nation, as the greatest guarantee for
21 peace, and freedom of this country.

22 MR. PETTIT: Do you think Kissinger has too much
23 influence on Mr. Ford?

24 MR. REAGAN: Well now, I think that is a question you
25 would have to ask Mr. Ford or Mr. Kissinger. I am not privy

1 to their meetings.

2 MR. PETTIT: Do you think they are soft on communism?

3 MR. REAGAN: Not in the sense of agreeing with
4 communism or being sympathetic to it, in other words. That
5 term "soft on communism" I think has a connotation in the way
6 it was used some several years ago, that someone is leaning
7 that way or does not believe that it is such a harsh
8 philosophy, or totalitarianism. No, I wouldn't say that
9 about either one of those men; whether, as I said before,
10 there is a pessimistic view in which we have deviated from
11 the belief that our greatest ability to maintain the peace
12 depends on our maintaining military supremacy in the world.

13 MR. BRODER: Governor, you spoke of the power of in-
14 cumbency and we have seen Mr. Ford do a number of things
15 from granting television interviews to making a judicial
16 appointment with an eye to the Florida voters. Has he done
17 anything in the course of this campaign that seems to you
18 to be an abuse of the presidential office for political
19 purposes?

20 MR. REAGAN: No, as I said before, these are the
21 powers the incumbent has. I would hope, however, that
22 our electorate would be sophisticated enough to recognize the
23 use of those powers.

24 MR. BRODER: Now, you have used hard language in
25 referring to his leadership, calling it timid and vacillating.

1 How long can this kind of a struggle between you and
2 Mr. Ford go on inside the Republican party, without denying
3 either of you a chance to win the general election?

4 MR. REAGAN: Oh, I don't think this can deny either
5 one of us a chance to win the general election because you
6 only have to compare the record of the present Democratic-
7 dominated congress to see that whatever I said about Mr.
8 Ford goes double for them. I think this Democratic
9 congress, under its leadership, is the most irresponsible
10 that I can remember in my lifetime, and I would do everything
11 I could, if I were the nominee of our party, to help
12 campaign, and, with others, as a member of a team and see if
13 we couldn't get a change in that congress.

14 MR. MONROE: We have a little more than two minutes.

15 MR. WILL: Governor, if you had become President
16 when Mr. Nixon resigned, would you have granted him a full,
17 free and absolute pardon?

18 MR. REAGAN: I don't think there is any way to answer
19 that question from outside where you don't have access to
20 the facts that the Vice President had at the time. After
21 all, Mr. Ford had been appointed Vice President; he was a
22 part of that administration for many months. He was closely
23 associated with the President and he went through the last
24 horrendous hours leading up to the resignation, and what
25 information he had I have no way of knowing.

1 MR. WILL: But is there some information that you think
2 is missing now? On the basis of the evidence you have now?
3 Do you have any objection to the pardon?

4 MR. REAGAN: I have to say at the time I thought it was
5 a humane thing to do.

6 MR. WILL: Have you changed your mind at all?

7 MR. REAGAN: Well, no, other than I have to -- I
8 do have to have, I think, that proviso, that I don't know
9 upon what facts other than humanity it was based upon.
10 Now, I don't know whether some of the charges that have been
11 made that there were still unexplained things that were
12 headed off by that, whether that is true or not. I think
13 maybe in the near future history and the revelations of
14 others, including President Nixon, we will be able to shed
15 some light on this.
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1 MR. OLIVER: Governor, you said yesterday in a speech
2 that former President Nixon was summoned to China because, "The
3 Chinese hoped he could explain to them why America seems to
4 be unwilling to play her part as a super power." What is your
5 source for that claim?

6 MR. REAGAN: Well, the source is an accumulation of
7 sources. I have had no conversation with Mr. Nixon. I don't
8 know why he was invited to China. I haven't talked to him since
9 I called him on November 19th, along with Mr. Ford and a number
10 of other people to tell them I was going to make a declara-
11 tion of candidacy.

12 But I think this comes from, obviously the knowledge
13 that the Red Chinese are interested in the United States be-
14 cause of their fear of Russia, based on their belief that we
15 are a great super power, number one militarily four years ago
16 when they opened these negotiations.

17 MR. OLIVER: Have you been in contact with the Chinese
18 government?

19 MR. REAGAN: No.

20 MR. OLIVER: Then how can you make a specific charge
21 like that, if you haven't talked to Mr. Nixon or to the govern-
22 ment?

23 MR. REAGAN: No, I said I gave a supposition that they
24 possibly sent the jet for Mr. Nixon because they wanted to
25 know: Is the United States still the super power it was;

1 is it going to hold firm, or are we going to continue making
 2 concessions to the Soviet Union to the point that maybe one
 3 day they might be one of the concessions.

4 MR. MONROE: I am sorry to interrupt, but our time is
 5 up.

6 Thank you, Governor, for being with us today on MEET THE
 7 PRESS.

8
 9 Next Week: Senator Henry (Scoop) Jackson, D. Washington)

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