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JANUARY 27, 1976

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT T. HARTMANN
COUNSELLOR TO THE PRESIDENT
BY SARAH McCLENDON
AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PRESS

THE ROOSEVELT ROOM

3:10 P.M. EST

Q We are just so pleased that you could give us the time. We know you are very busy.

MR. HARTMANN: I thought we had all the tapes removed from the White House.

Q We thought you might need them again so we thought we would bring them along.

We will go right to questions. Who wants to have the first question?

Q I would like to have the first question. I am going to ask you what I think is going to be the really gut issue this year and that is jobs. How do you plan to handle that?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, first of all, contrary to your answer, I agree with your premise that, at least at this point, it looks like one of the major issues, if not the major issue, and it is going to be the issue of jobs and the economy, which is kind of interlocked.

I think that the question is not limited just to jobs but to how one goes about trying to make more jobs. At least, judging by the President's State of the Union and related Messages and Senator Muskie's reply, it would seem that they have drawn the issue line rather clearly as to whether the best way to get more jobs and get them quicker is through direct Government action or through using the Government's powers to stimulate action in the private sector.

I think that the debate will certainly go on for some time on that point and may even be the major issue of the campaign, although I hate to pick the major issue right now any more than I hate to pick the Democratic candidate. I will be glad to speculate about who the Republican candidate will be.

Q Who do you think the Democratic candidate will be?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I have been saving just in order to have an answer when this question is asked me, and at the moment I would have to say Senator Humphrey, but I say that without a whole lot of conviction because people who pick candidates six months before the convention are very frequently wrong.

Q Some months ago you were quite sure it was going to be Senator Kennedy. I gather you have changed your mind about that?

MR. HARTMANN: I switched some months ago when I began to feel that Senator Kennedy's protestations were genuine, and I would not want to be in the position of not taking the gentleman at his word.

Q What made you switch?

MR. HARTMANN: I just became convinced that when Senator Kennedy said he was not a candidate and didn't want to be that he would not.

Q Do you think that Governor Wallace has a chance to be on the ticket with Senator Humphrey?

MR. HARTMANN: I am not a great expert at Democratic conventions. My last experience in that respect was in 1960 when I covered the convention at -- was it Chicago? No, it was Los Angeles, and so it has been a long time. I did pick the winner there, but I was wrong on the Vice President.

Q Bob, have differences between the President and Governor Reagan disappeared pretty much? That is how I see it.

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I would not say the differences have disappeared. I don't think that they have been as profound as the differences between either of them and anybody who is likely to be the Democratic nominee, but there are differences as to the degree in which we want the Federal Government to go out of business and the speed with which you want this to be accomplished and the ways in which you want to have it done and those differences being fairly clearly delineated by what Governor Reagan is saying and what the President is saying.

Q Who do you think is going to win the New Hampshire Republican primary, and also Florida, between Reagan and Ford?

MR. HARTMANN: Would you say that again?

Q Who is going to win, Ford or Reagan, in New Hampshire and in Florida?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I think it is bad for me to guess about those things. The easy out would be that the President is going to win in them all, but I mean that is --

Q What do you really think? You surely have said this is the primary issue now, isn't it?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I don't have any better crystal ball than anybody else does. Many of you have actually been there and I haven't. The President's campaign people are putting on a good battle and actually he hopes to win, but as to my guess as to who will or by what proportions I don't think that is very profitable because I don't really know.

Q Didn't you get any readings? I mean truly you are engaged in terms of what is happening in New Hampshire and voter psychology and so forth. Do you have any indications to think that Ford is not going to win in New Hampshire? Is that valid?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I think he is going to win them all and that is my state of mind. My factual knowledge is not very good. I will say for the record that, naturally, I hope and expect him to win, but if he does not win, he is going to go on to the next one.

Q What is the main reason why you think he is going to win them all?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, that is just my general optimistic attitude.

Q What about incumbency? To what degree do you think that that is important?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I think there are certain advantages to an incumbent President and there are certain disadvantages. In many ways Mr. Reagan is well-known to the general public through his previous career and through his Governorship of California and he is better known as a public figure than most people would be who are running for President for the first time, so that that, to some extent, makes up for some of the advantages.

Q Do you think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages so far as the incumbency are concerned?

MR. HARTMANN: I would have to say that the President enjoys an edge in any contest.

Q Bob, I believe you referenced in the differences between Ford and Reagan that "Federal Government to go out of business" -- I think was your term --

MR. HARTMANN: Well, that is a little extreme.

Q Isn't that what you said?

Q Yes, that is what you did say.

MR. HARTMANN: The degree in which you want to get to increase the role of the Federal Government, would be more precise.

Q What I wondered, in connection with that statement --

MR. HARTMANN: Get out of certain businesses.

Q Sure. Then there is Mr. Callaway's statement about throwing people out in the snow and so forth and so on. Considering the fact --

MR. HARTMANN: I didn't know about that one.

Q Yes.

Considering the fact that the Ford campaign has said that the common cause standards' willingness to appear on the same platform, among other things, with other candidates, and considering the President's own statement in the press conference when they asked about debating Reagan he said, "I am not afraid of anybody," why is it that as one of his principal political advisers you have not advised him to take on Reagan? He certainly could hold his own on the \$90 billion issue, couldn't he?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, first of all, you are stating an assumption as to what I may or may not have advised him.

Q No, no, I didn't assume anything. I said, why don't you in the future?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I might do that but, you know, I don't feel that what I advise him is something that I ought to go out and tell the world or what I intend to do in the future or whether even he ever asks me.

All I can tell you is that in the past the President has in his election campaigns always debated his opponent up in the Fifth District of Michigan in spite of the Council of the Elders saying that he should not give the exposure to an unknown candidate. So on the record, that is what he has done.

I won't go into the future because I think that is a question you ought to ask him.

Q I will try. I have tried. I have asked Mr. Nessen, I think seven times, on this. Mr. Nessen kept saying, "Well, is Reagan a candidate?"

Q Mr. Nessen is not holding this briefing. Mr. Hartmann is.

MR. HARTMANN: The next time the President has a press conference, which I assume won't be too long from now, that is a question to ask him. I can't answer it for him.

Q You say he might do that. Does that mean that this is in the consideration?

MR. HARTMANN: No; the question was, would I advise him to do that, and I said I might.

Q Because to win you have to have a background organization, the bell-ringers who go out and get the people to get the votes because without the votes you are not going to win. How strong is your organization in the 50 States as far as really going out to compete with Mr. Reagan?

My second question, to follow up, is, the issues that Mr. Reagan has used to attract this large segment of the population, millions of people have studied those issues to see why those people gravitate to him and not to the President?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, let's start on the first question.

Q The organization, yes.

MR. HARTMANN: I am not trying to duck the question but I have not been around the 50 States and I really can't answer it because I don't know. That is a question we ought to ask Stu Spencer or somebody in the Campaign Committee.

The second question -- have we studied the issues and have we studied the way Governor Reagan stands on the issues --

Q Why does he attract those people?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know. Until we get a vote somewhere I don't really know how many he does attract vis-a-vis the President. Of course, I have studied the issues. I have not studied the issues specifically vis-a-vis Governor Reagan because I have been too busy with the issues on the merits. Again, the campaign committee people are, I am sure, comparing the Governor's positions with the President's but I personally have not gone into it in great detail.

Q Bob, did you advise the President on the firing of Schlesinger?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't think it is right for me to say what I advised him on and not advised him on.

Q Can you say if you had any advance notice or if you had any contribution to that or anything?

MR. HARTMANN: I didn't receive any contributions for a long time.

Q I mean have you had any contribution to the thinking around the President that contributed to this?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, if I say, Sarah, that I have no contribution to the President's thinking, that will be a bad thing -- there would be no reason for me to be here. If I said I did, I just don't think I ought to talk about that.

Q Can you explain this matter? It is sort of a very important thing.

MR. HARTMANN: I can't explain it any more than the President has explained it for himself. He has explained it as fully as I know anything.

Q Bob, what weapons will the President use in his battle for New Hampshire? Will Susan go up and campaign for him or ski in New Hampshire?

MR. HARTMANN: You know, you are asking questions that you ought to be asking Callaway or Stu Spencer or Jim Cleveland.

Q We think you are important in politics, Bob, that is why we ask you.

Q If you would explain to us, please, how you function.

MR. HARTMANN: I have been preoccupied with the State of the Union and these other messages and things, and while I am, I find politics very fascinating. I really have not been dealing with these matters in terms of a campaign confrontation.

Q Bob, has your function changed in the last year and a half or so since the Ford Administration has been in? For example, I recall at the beginning, I believe, that you were supposed to be the political adviser; now, of course, we have Rog Morton. Then there were to be speeches and we have Bob Morgan under your direction. Has your function changed any or could you explain to us what you did do and what you are doing now?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't think it has changed very much. It never was very well-defined. People used to ask me what do I do and I say I do what the President wants me to and I guess that is still as good a definition as any.

Q Bob, who was the chief author of the State of the Union speech?

MR. HARTMANN: The President.

Q And who next?

Q Who was his chief assistant?

Q Mr. Hartmann --

MR. HARTMANN: Let me finish.

Q It was different from the others, that is the reason I am asking.

MR. HARTMANN: Generally, the President directed me to handle the mechanical process of putting the elements of the speech together and pulling it all together and coming up with something on paper on which he could start to work, but in the end, and after the long process, the speech was the President's own and very much more of the President's own than the one a year ago.

Not only more of it was in his own words, in his own language, but he was a part of the process of making the budgetary and programatic decisions over the whole year's period than he was the previous time. This time he didn't have to turn to an expert and take his word for it as to whether this sentence accurately represented what he wanted to say, he knew what it accurately represented or not because he had been part of the process of developing programs and priorities right from the beginning.

So it was very much more his speech and his program than it was a year ago. I am not just being modest, for which I am not noted, but I am being honest in saying he really was the author of the speech.

Q Bob, how did that State Department decision come about?

MR. HARTMANN: The briefing on the budget?

Q Yes.

MR. HARTMANN: He knew more about the budget than anybody else did so he decided to do it himself.

Q Was that his decision?

MR. HARTMANN: I guess so.

Q Now Elaine has a question.

Q Yes. I took this 70 issues in the budget document with me to the HEW press briefing and the Office of Education official told me not to use the education part because it was full of inaccuracies, but it is still being distributed. I wonder what is safe to use and whether you are going to get out a revised edition?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, that is, I think, a question you ought to ask Mr. Lynn or the Secretary of HEW. You know, I have not gotten down to the nitty-gritty of the details like that.

Q Bob, I think we need to know here just what you do so why don't you tell us in your own words what you do so we won't be floundering around asking you things you don't know.

MR. HARTMANN: Well, Number one, I do whatever the President assigns me to do and this varies from day to day.

Q Like what?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, it could be that he wants me to work on a certain speech or a certain statement or it might be that he wants me to handle a certain problem of an individual who he has not got time to spend all the time with getting the details, but he does want to keep personal --

Q You have some of the contacts with the people out over the country who are politically important or important as citizens, do you not?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, yes. You know, there is a lot of old personal friends that I know and he has known over the years and maybe they want to talk to the President and maybe they do, but he does not have time to call them back six or seven times about little details so he tells me to look into this and come back with the answer. It is impossible to describe these things in detail because they are never the same, and in that sense I suppose I do about the same thing I used to do up on the Hill.

Q Do you make policy?

MR. HARTMANN: No, I don't make policy. The President makes policy.

Q Do you often discuss policy?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I sit in on the Cabinet meetings and various other meetings at which the President discusses and asks others to give their views and I give mine.

Q Do you think the President has an imagine problem, and, also, what is being done to correct it because it seems to be a general feeling that he is coming off as bumbling because that is the way some of the news magazines have described it. Do you think this will hurt him?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't think that is true and I don't think it will last long if it is the current thing. It does not concern me. I think that the perception of the President over the long haul will be fairly close to an accurate perception and I don't believe that he is bumbling or clumsy.

Q Bob, what is the President's position on abortion?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, that is one that I can't exactly answer.

Q Has he ever, to your knowledge, taken a stand on it as Mrs. Ford has taken?

MR. HARTMANN: Back in the Congress he, I think, was a co-sponsor or the author of some legislation to leave it to the States, but I can't remember all the details of that. Abortion has never been much of a problem.

Q Well, Reagan has just endorsed a constitutional amendment. I am wondering if, on that basis, you might have studied it?

MR. HARTMANN: The constitutional amendment which leaves it to the States?

Q Reverses the Supreme Court.

MR. HARTMANN: Reverses the Supreme Court decision.

I have not been involved in that problem and I can't speak with any authority.

Q Is it possible to get one? We asked the other day when there were 60,000 demonstrators, but Ron --

Q I thought Ford had twice stated in his early days in the White House something on abortion.

MR. HARTMANN: All I recall is what is in his Congressional record and that is a matter of record. I don't remember the dates of it with any great precision, but I have no recollection of his having stated the position since he became President. Maybe he has, but I don't remember. You should remember that better than I can. It is not a subject that I have been involved in.

Q Do you think this is going to be one of the big issues in the campaign?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know. I mean I am at a time in life when it is a matter of no personal concern.

Q Bob, to get back to your duties, when you came over here everyone had the impression that you were the chief adviser to the President and now there has been some indication that some of your power, if you could describe it as that, has been cut down a little bit, the one being the speechwriting functions -- one of the speechwriters was fired -- and the other being your political advice on and your liaison with the committee has been, or will be, removed. I wonder if you have any feelings of hurt or resentment or if you would like to address yourself to that?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I find the comments in some columns and so forth entertaining. It is ridiculous, all of you people that I have known over the years and know very well, that no President ever relies on a single adviser for political advice or anything else.

It is impossible for the President to get along with a single adviser. It is impossible for the President to have a single adviser. All Presidents have numerous advisers. If the President is running things the way most Presidents do, nobody ever knows exactly who is on first, and if they think so, they don't stay there very long. So I am flattered by having been referred to in the early days in that respect -- that it really has not been so.

Am I hurt? The answer is no. I continue to do what I have always done and the best I can and I don't really feel that very much has changed.

Q The President really trusts you? You have known him longer than anyone.

MR. HARTMANN: That is a very good question to ask the President. I suppose he does or I would not be here. If he doesn't trust me, he certainly ought to get rid of me.

Q What I am saying is, would you be categorized like Harry Hopkins, for instance? Would you be that close?

MR. HARTMANN: I hope not. I mean, that close. I have not moved into the second floor of the White House as Secretary Hopkins did.

Q He was close. You can talk to him with your shoes off and that sort of thing.

MR. HARTMANN: The President has lots of people he can talk with. I have not noticed him removing his shoes but --

Q You know what I mean. Not actually taking them off but comfortably talking without being --

MR. HARTMANN: This President has dozens of people that he is comfortable with and I hope I am one of them.

Q How much campaigning do you think he will do?

MR. HARTMANN: He is much less of a remote person than most Presidents that I have observed, and he is comfortable with a lot of people, both within his official family and outside of it. Yes, I hope that he is comfortable in my presence. I certainly am comfortable in his presence but I don't think that is a particularly unique position.

Q Are you going to be sending any of your staff out to make speeches and contacts during the campaign?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, we all keep pretty busy. This is the first the thought has occurred to me.

Q The first time you thought of it?

Q Four speechwriters have left the White House. Did they do it on their own? Did they have help to find jobs?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, the speechwriters have been turning over ever since the start -- have always been coming or going. As you know, this place burns people out and they work very hard. The last bunch of stories--actually we didn't have four speechwriters leave. We had one resign and we had one go back to the detail from which he had been dropped for trial purposes and we had one transferred over to the First Lady's staff -- she had been doing that kind of work anyway for a while and so we just got her off of my numbers and onto somebody else's.

Q How could you let Paul Theis go when he knows so much about politics and the Republican Party and all that?

MR. HARTMANN: You know, I wondered when I read Nessen's transcript who asked that question and now I know.

Q I don't know whether I did or not, but it has been bugging me for some time.

MR. HARTMANN: Paul had a very good job offered to him and we are happy that he was able to get it.

Q He could not have gotten it unless you all wanted him to go. He would not have left if you had not wanted him to go.

MR. HARTMANN: He had been working very hard and --

Q Is there a difference here of philosophy or something about speechwriting or new Republicanism that you are trying to try out that is different?

MR. HARTMANN: No. There was not any philosophical difference; just some changes made in the organization in which we thought we would work more efficiently and --

Q Bob, the presentation of the medal to Mr. Colby yesterday, could that be interpreted as the President admitting he made a mistake in firing him?

MR. HARTMANN: Now you are in an area that is completely outside of my purview and I really don't know anything about it and I can't answer it.

Q Is it true you don't get along with Mrs. Ford?
(Laughter) And what does that date back to?

MR. HARTMANN: As far as I know, I have always gotten along with Mrs. Ford, whom I greatly admire and I hope she admires me

Q Well, did you endorse the Equal Rights Amendment, too?

MR. HARTMANN: My wife has had more than equal rights as far as --

Q We are not talking about your wife. We are talking about all the other women. Tell us, Bob, are you for it or against it?

MR. HARTMANN: Sure, I am for it. What the heck. (Laughter)

Q I just wondered how important you think humor is to the success of a speech?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I think that the President has always had a good natural sense of humor and extemporaneous conversation that comes out very well. His formal speeches sometimes may be deficient in that respect and this goes back to when he first became conscious of this, I guess, and was called upon to be the Republican spokesman at the grid iron opposite Vice President Humphrey in 1968, I think it was -- 1967-68.

At that time I was working on a speech and I missed a lot of help from all the fine people I knew -- Buchwald and Ken Abel and George Murphy, who was then in the Senate who had a pretty good sense of humor. George said, "Hey, I will put you in touch with a very funny man I know out in Hollywood," and so he put me in touch with Bob Orben and that was the beginning of our association and his association with the President.

We worked on that grid iron speech together and I don't know if he hardly ever met the then Minority Leader because it was mostly done by telephone and by mail. I guess he did come back at one point and meet the boss but that was the beginning of that association.

Then when he became Vice President he had another occasion to make a grid iron speech and this time he called Bob Orben and Guy down here and really worked it over.

When Ford became President we put him on the staff and he has contributed.

He is a very able and thoughtful guy and much more than just a joke writer. He is an excellent student of word of mouth communication of all kinds and he has done some very fine serious things as well as funny things, but he has helped bring out the President's own sense of humor and has given him the self-confidence he needed, like when he fell down the last two stairs in Austria he got up, brushed himself off and said, "Well, I am sorry I tumbled in" -- pure ad lib.

Q Do you think the President has changed in the White House?

MR. HARTMANN: Has what?

Q Changed. You have known him a long time.

MR. HARTMANN: I have no benchmark to compare with because I have not seen this process in any other person.

Q Well, you have, too. You have seen everything this man has done.

MR. HARTMANN: No, no. I mean, I have not known any other Presidents well before and after.

Q We are only talking about one President here now; we are talking about Ford.

MR. HARTMANN: All right. Let me answer. Yes, Presidents always change, I assume, but as far as the human being is concerned, as far as his personal relations with other people and his subordinates and so forth, I would say he has basically changed very little. If anything, he is a little more conscious of time and has to cut off the conversational talk a little quicker than he used to, but otherwise, at the same time, he maybe is a little more conscious of the way people knock themselves out in his behalf and never fails to thank people for just doing what they are paid to do. Maybe up on the Hill he was less conscious of the need to say thank you to the secretaries but as President he is unfailingly considerate not only of your time but of your effort.

Q Bob, why doesn't he get along with Congress? Doesn't he like Congress any more?

MR. HARTMANN: Sure. They get along personally.

Q Why is he always picking a fight and saying something nasty about them?

MR. HARTMANN: I think that is the nature of the system set up by the Founding Fathers; that they have to fight each other a little in order to keep you free.

Q Bob, did he make a statement about the override of his veto on the labor Health, Education and Welfare which was about one-third of his, no doubt about it?

MR. HARTMANN: What was the first part of your question?

Q Well, has he made a statement about the override of his veto of the labor HEW appropriation bill?

MR. HARTMANN: I am not aware. Is this something that happened today?

Q Yes. The House overrode.

MR. HARTMANN: I have not been in touch with what has happened since then. I didn't know they overrode it, but I thought they probably would.

Q Do you think that Reagan is acceptable as a number two spot or would it be too much of a one-sided ticket?

MR. HARTMANN: Would he be acceptable as a running mate?

Q Yes, or would it be too conservative?

MR. HARTMANN: That is another question you will have to ask the President. I don't think that is my prerogative.

Q After the State of the Union there was a story describing how long has been the process, nine months or so, and how far ahead it had been gotten ready and that sort of thing. One of the network reporters came on that evening and said there was utter chaos in the White House, the speech had just been finished on Friday and there were still last minute changes being made, yet they came an hour and a half early to the Hill which is the first time anybody can remember that.

What was the real story on the conflict of the State of the Union or non-conflict?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, the State of the Union is something like the budget done in words instead of numbers and the process of reconciling everybody's special interests in the final document is somewhat the same. Everybody makes appeals and last minute efforts to run around the end and all that to get their little thing in the message. The process, I am sure, is always the same although I have only been through it twice. To anybody peering through a window it looks like chaos but I don't know any other way to do it.

Q How did it compare with other years?

MR. HARTMANN: It was in my orderly process this year that the President was more completely in command of it because he too had been through it once before.

Q Bob, do you give any advice to Ron Nessen about how he arranges press conferences or any of the format? Do you give any advice to Ron on how he conducts his office?

MR. HARTMANN: When he asks me and sometimes when he does not.

Q That is what I --

MR. HARTMANN: Well, we all meet with the President almost every day, if not every day, and discuss a range of problems including whether we are going to have a press conference or not and where. Yes, I suppose I get my two bits' worth in there.

Q Does the President like the press?

MR. HARTMANN: You know that as well as I do.

Q I mean --

MR. HARTMANN: Generally speaking, I would say yes, he likes the press.

Q Bob, could I follow that up by asking this: You have mentioned that you read the transcript or at least you read one -- do you read them regularly and how often does the President read them?

MR. HARTMANN: I think the President reads them rather faithfully.

Q What is that -- twice a week, three times, once a week?

MR. HARTMANN: I think he reads them every day.

Q Every day?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I would not say never misses.

Q Then I would like to ask this question: One of the nicest people in the press corps, as far as I am concerned, is Dick Lerner of UPI. Twice in one day he asked Ron to recognize him for a question and Ron looked right through him and looked at somebody else. Now that, to me, is discourtesy and I asked the question the second time he did it: "Can you imagine the President of the United States treating a reporter like this?" And he said no.

Now I just wondered, why is this done?

MR. HARTMANN: The transcript would not show that?

Q That is right. It does not.

MR. HARTMANN: It just says: Q. Not having this to second guess Nessen, I don't want to answer that question.

Q How did Elliott Richardson get that favorite seat next to Mrs. Ford up in the Gallery? Did they have to draw lots or fight for it?

MR. HARTMANN: I can't answer that question either.
The First Lady's Gallery --

Q Was that arranged by the President?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know.

Q Well, it certainly did him a lot of good. I have heard a lot of comments on it.

Q If the President does not do well in the primary -- in other words, if he does not make a good showing in a series -- can you conceive of any circumstances under which he would withdraw?

MR. HARTMANN: I not only can conceive but have been told in no uncertain terms that if anybody thinks that I am going to get out of this race until the votes are counted, they are out of their minds

Q How much of a setback do you believe it would be if the President lost either New Hampshire or Florida?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, how much of a setback is a hard question to answer. Of course, any time you lose is a setback. The bigger you lose, the more the setback. I think the President's attitude in general is very much that of the old football player that some plays you lose ground and others you try to make it back and at the end you get your net yards gained from rushing.

Q Do you think he would have to go out and campaign harder in the Midwest, then?

MR. HARTMANN: Whether his exact tactic would be to come back and work harder on it, I don't know, but I don't think he is going to pull out as a result of one or two or three early setbacks. Votes are counted on the Floor at the convention.

Q What is going to pay in the campaign? I mean, is it wise to continue the negotiations into the campaign? Can you win votes with a more cozy relationship with the Soviets?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, now we are getting into Henry's territory and that is a dangerous place to tread.

Q No, that is not Henry's territory. We are asking a political aspect.

MR. HARTMANN: I would say the President's conduct of foreign relations, including those, or national defense questions which that embraces is done without regard for the campaign insofar as it is humanly possible for a person to comport themselves, that the personal political considerations would be the last thing he is considering and those are very important matters.

I think that I would have to say that anybody who holds the office of President would probably have to say that -- they are not worthy of the office.

Q Bob, you have not answered very many of our questions directly and I am wondering whether --

MR. HARTMANN: I am used to framing questions.

Q -- there are any areas you think perhaps we should be interrogating you in or is there anything perhaps that you would like to get across?

MR. HARTMANN: No. I have answered them as directly as I can. I really was not told that there was any specific area here and I was --

Q There isn't.

MR. HARTMANN: I was simply scolded by Sarah for having put her off this long. I managed to put her off until I was through with the State of the Union speech and I could not put her off any longer.

Q Bob, is Mr. Ford a hard man to work for? Does he put a lot of limitations on what you can say and do?

MR. HARTMANN: He doesn't even know I am saying anything.

Q I know, but has he told you in the past what you can say or do?

MR. HARTMANN: No.

Q Anybody around here that is quoted in the paper, do they get clobbered here the next day?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, he has been known to say that "You would have been smarter if you had not said it."

Q Well, does he put any limitations on people, say, on their bad drinking? Does he say how many martinis they can have for lunch or how many cocktails?

MR. HARTMANN: No.

Q Does he do much drinking himself?

MR. HARTMANN: You have observed his conduct in public which is about the same as in private.

Q I have not seen him drinking that way but some of my colleagues apparently said they did. I had a query on it and I told him that I had not seen anything like that.

MR. HARTMANN: I think he gets his work done and a good deal more than most people his age do so I don't think that is any kind of a problem.

Well, to answer the first part of your question, is he a hard man to work for, I think was the question -- he is a man that makes you work hard but he is an easy man to work for.

Q Does he ever lose his temper? There was a report he did during the State of the Union message.

MR. HARTMANN: He has been known to have a little flash of temper but it never lasts very long and it is more for effect than it is real.

Q What do you think his main problem is with Reagan? Between Reagan and Ford, what is going to be the determining factor really among the Republican voters? Reagan does have more charisma according to most people and he is a better speaker and so forth. Will these things weigh against Ford?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, if I could answer that, I could make a lot more money than I am making now. That is one of the great mysteries of our political process -- why do people pick one guy over another. They set them up against their image of what the President ought to be and I suppose that image varies quite a lot among individuals, and how do you know what their image is? Each one has his favorite idea of a good or perfect President and they compare these people who want to be elected or --

Q We are trying to find out how the President is going to knock off Reagan. I mean, it is as simple as that. Is there any strategy?

MR. HARTMANN: Step-by-step. (Laughter)

Q You write the speeches and you must have something to guide you as you write those speeches.

MR. HARTMANN: I will answer that.

Q Where he is vulnerable?

MR. HARTMANN: He is going to, if he does -- and I think he will -- by being himself, by trying to get across to people what kind of a man he really is, what he really believes and what he really hopes for the future of this country; and if that perception is in accord with what the people want, he will be elected both over Reagan and over whoever else he may run against. I don't know how to define it any better than that.

Q Aren't you seeking to persuade people to come to your way of thinking when you write these speeches? What is guiding you?

MR. HARTMANN: What is guiding me is that the message be as nearly what he means to say and wants to say and it will be understood accurately as a way of his communicating directly with people who are listening.

Q Have you analyzed why he went ahead of Reagan in the NBC polls today on several points?

MR. HARTMANN: I didn't know he did.

Q Yes.

Q 50 to 30.

MR. HARTMANN: The polls at this point seem to be flipping back and forth and they seem to reflect the last action of one or the other. The linkers in the person's mind that is being called and I just -- they are very volatile and he may gain because Reagan made somebody mad or he may lose because Reagan made somebody glad or vice versa.

Q Something can be said about the President not being out meeting people and staying back here until the polls look better.

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know that we can make that correlation. The circumstances have dictated his being here and working hard. Whether you can make that correlation I think it is a little soon to say.

Q Does anybody talk around the White House about the fact that New Hampshire and Florida may not be considered typical of the United States?

MR. HARTMANN: Does anybody around here talk about that?

Q Yes, does anybody talk about that?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, the electoral process in this country is done by giving due respect to every State.

Q I know. I am not saying they don't, but I am saying they do and --

MR. HARTMANN: Well, what State is typical? No State is typical.

Q Florida, because these States are becoming so critically important, especially since New Hampshire is such a small State.

MR. HARTMANN: No State is typical. How do you find a State that is typical?

Q Well, I would think one out in the Midwest would be more average.

MR. HARTMANN: It does not matter because you don't run on a national referendum. You run one State-by-State and so they are not supposed to be typical and you have to consider each one as it is.

Q You mentioned that you tried to put in words what the President meant, and it seems to us who are not down here all that much that it is difficult to find out what he does mean. First, he runs all around the country and then he stays in Washington. First, he says he is going to sign the situs picketing bill and then he does not. It seems that there is not any real firm foundation on which he is grounded. Would you like to comment on that?

MR. HARTMANN: No. (Laughter)

Q Bob, you are something. You are something.

MR. HARTMANN: All I am saying is that in terms of the President's speeches and communicating that way our standard is to as clearly as we can convey what he really wants to say and what he really believes and let people be the judge of that.

Q You know, if you are a newspaper man -- and you have always been a very good newspaper man as I have seen -- but you have written a very good story here today --

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I manage to appear before the National Press Club without anybody being able to find a lead in it. (Laughter)

Q Bob, the President in his last press conference on the 31st stated that among his New Year's resolutions he wanted to raise the spiritual level and so forth, and they asked him how and he said, "I want to participate with spiritual leaders."

Now right down here there was a three-day conference of the spiritual leaders -- a cross-section of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and so forth -- where seven candidates showed up and they answered questions. The scheduling office said that the President was too busy and he ended up going out to a ~~press~~ Presbyterian Church much further away where nobody could ask him questions.

Now, how does he intend to participate and why did he not go there but go out there where they could not ask him questions?

MR. HARTMANN: I cannot answer the first part but I think I can answer the second part.

Dr. Elson has been running that thing on the opening day of Congress ever since I can remember and the boss has been going to it ever since I can remember, and he did again this time. The other part I cannot answer.

Q It is too bad Mr. Nessen didn't answer that question like that when he got it.

Q I would like to get back to the jobs question that I asked originally.

MR. HARTMANN: This is the last question.

Q Do you folks have any thinking going on or any plans whereby you might be able to get people into jobs quicker than through the mechanism that appeared to be presented in the budget and the State of the Union message where it appears as a sort of trickle down kind of thing where, first of all, business has to have its incentives before it can take people on-board? Do you have anything on-stream whereby you might be able to pick up people faster in the private sector and provide more jobs in the private sector?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know of anything except what you have seen, but let me point out this plan for quick depreciation of investments in areas where unemployment exceeds 7 percent, advantage has to be taken of that tax break within 12 months so that means that you are saying to the businessman, "If you want to get this break you have got to start your project right now." It is not going to take long to get carpenters and cement mixers and all that to work.

This is not a change in the tax liabilities forever; they have to do that plant expansion, they have to buy the new lathes and all that within 12 months after the law is enacted so it would not be as slow as you might think. If they want to get that break, they have got to start the project right away.

Q Bob, thank you very much for taking time out of your busy work. Thanks a lot.

MR. HARTMANN: Thank you, Sarah.

THE PRESS: Thank you very much.

END (AT 4:09 P.M. EST)