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Feb. 21 1977

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
ROBERT C. BYRD
DEMOCRATIC SENATOR FROM WEST VIRGINIA

NORTH LAWN
THE WHITE HOUSE

4:15 P.M. EDT

SENATOR BYRD: The spirit that prevailed at the meeting was very encouraging. The President was very considerate and gracious. Of course, he had not seen the plan before, and he would like to study it and consult with his own advisers.

He did say, by Monday, he would, at that time, get in touch with the Speaker of the House and the Majority Leader, Senator Mansfield, and state, at that time, what his position might be -- hopefully, that we can get together on a consolidated plan.

A suggestion was made that possibly he should forgo the imposition of the second dollar that will take place on March 1 and also the third dollar on April 1, and he said he would consider that and he would make that statement on Monday.

Q Senator, the second dollar goes into effect tonight at midnight.

SENATOR BYRD: But he claims he has the authority to rescind it.

Q And he indicated he might do so?

SENATOR BYRD: He indicated that if he felt that is what he should do, he might do so.

Q Did he express any opinion on the energy plan?

SENATOR BYRD: As I said before, he did not have a chance to read it, and he welcomed the fact we did have a comprehensive plan. And he will study it together with his advisers. He is going to consult with his Republican friends in the House and the Senate.



Q Is it your impression that he will forgo the second dollar increase?

SENATOR BYRD: I would rather not be speculating on that.

Q Are you going to meet again Monday, sir?

SENATOR BYRD: We are going to meet again after he makes his statement on Monday. He will confer with the Majority Leader and with the Speaker.

Q Did he talk about the Tuesday veto deadline, Senator? Is he going ahead with his veto?

SENATOR BYRD: I think he might. He did not say so, categorically, but I expect him to.

Q You expect him to do what?

SENATOR BYRD: To go forward with his veto. -- He has already said that, and I think that, in fairness to the President -- I suppose that he will have to go through with it.

Q Do you have any sense of how the votes lie on that thing.

SENATOR BYRD: Well, it is going to be easy in the House to override the veto, and in the Senate, of course, it is touch and go, as you well know. It all depends on what influence has been brought to bear on some people, who have voted for this postponement.

I want to thank you all, but I have to keep going.

THE PRESS: Thank you very much.

END

(AT 4:17 P.M. EDT)



September 10, 1976

Not released

THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE OF
ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH L. BERNARDIN
OF CINCINNATI
PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

THE BRIEFING ROOM

11:55 A.M. EDT

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: As you know, we met with Mr. Ford this morning. We met with him primarily in his capacity as the Republican candidate. I would like to read to you -- this will be made available to you later -- the introductory remarks that I made. You already have that.

I am Archbishop Bernardin. I think I want to read what I said and then I will give you a very brief summary of the meeting itself.

First of all, we indicated our appreciation of the opportunity to meet with the President, at his invitation, to discuss a number of issues of concern to us and the nation. I indicated that we met last week with Governor Carter, the Democratic candidate, and I indicated again that we addressed ourselves to issues only.

We neither endorse nor oppose candidates or parties.

Then, I went on to say among these issues is abortion and the right to live. "On August 18, I issued a statement in which I called the Republican platform plank on abortion timely and important. We would welcome a statement of your position on the plank, as well as clarification concerning the kind of amendment you support and are prepared to work for.

"We also wish to express deep concern over the substantial increase in the Federal Government's funds of abortion in recent years. We are anxious to know your views concerning the propriety of continued use of public funds for this purpose and also on the question of measures to provide alternatives to abortion.



"It is our prayerful hope that both major parties, their leaders and candidates for office, will adopt and pursue a consistent pro-life policy. We wish to take this opportunity to repeat our concern with respect to a number of other crucial foreign and domestic issues in addition to abortion and the right to live."

I mentioned four in particular. First, employment. "We urge appropriate Federal action including legislation aimed at solving our nation's unemployment crisis and providing a decent job for every person in this country willing and able to work. Government must recognize that opportunity for suitable employment is fundamental to the human development of the person and of the family."

Second, food. "We urge Federal action to combat starvation, hunger and malnutrition in this country and abroad."

"On the domestic front, while recognizing the need for effective reform of the food stamp program, we desire that the program be maintained and strengthened as an effective instrument of assistance to the poor and needy."

"Internationally, we desire practical, generous measures to share the precious resources of food with other peoples by such means as the creation of food reserves."

"Third, illegal aliens. We support the enactment of Federal legislation which will not only prevent the recurrence of the problem, but will deal constructively and humanly with the plight of illegal aliens now in this country."

"A specific dimension of our concern over this issue is its impact on families and family life. Specifically, this requires a meaningful regularizing of the status of illegal aliens."

Human rights in foreign policy was the fourth. "We urge that the defense and promotion of human rights be central to the formulation and conduct of U.S. foreign policy. We desire that this country seek consistently, by legitimate means, to influence other governments, including those friendly or economically important to the United States, to respect the human rights of their citizens.

"In concluding these comments, Mr. President, I emphasize our conviction that the central issue in our nation, in our world today, is the sanctity and dignity of human life. The sanctity and dignity of life are at stake in all of these issues and many others besides.

"For example, the many problems and needs of the American family: health care, housing, handgun control, and nuclear arms limitations. Certainly the sanctity and dignity of life are directly, massively violated by legalized abortion in our country today. This concerns citizens who are also moral and spiritual leaders.

"We desire effective Federal action to protect and foster the sanctity and dignity of life in every stage of its development and by every appropriate means available to our society.

"The Conference of Catholic Bishops intends to speak to all the crucial issues as they enter and move through the legislative process."

As far as the meeting itself was concerned, the meeting was courteous. There was a good exchange of information on many issues. Relative to the abortion issue, we are encouraged that the President agrees on the need for a Constitutional amendment. We urged him to support an amendment that will give the maximum protection possible to the unborn.

We also discussed at some length the issues of employment, food, illegal aliens and the defense and protection of human rights as a key element in determining U.S. foreign policy.

On these issues we explained our position, which generally calls for sensitivity to human needs and an acknowledgement of the legitimate role of government in a free society.

One final issue brought up by the President was aid to non-public schools.



Q Archbishop Bernardin, are you saying the President supports an amendment to prohibit abortion?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: He supports a Constitutional amendment.

Q To ban abortions or to just give it to the States and let them make up their own rules?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: First of all, he made it very clear that he supports the Republican platform, which calls for a Constitutional amendment to give protection to the unborn. As far as the kind of amendment, he is in favor of a States' rights amendment which he considers to be a legitimate interpretation of the Republican platform.

Q Do you understand the President's position, and are you comfortable with it?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: As I indicated in my preliminary remarks on the meeting, we are encouraged that the platform and the President are in agreement that there should be a Constitutional amendment to protect the unborn. As you know, we have not actually endorsed any particular wording of an amendment. There are some 47 different versions, I understand, that are now pending. We have consistently urged passage of an amendment that will give the maximum protection possible to the unborn.

We believe, however, that there is a better approach than that embodied in what is commonly known or called the States' rights amendment. So, we urge maximum protection possible.

Q Sir, unlike the meeting last week with candidate Carter, I take it you are not disappointed with your meeting today and with the President's position?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: As I indicated a moment ago, we are encouraged that the platform calls for an amendment, and the President made it very clear that he also supports the idea of an amendment.

Q I wonder if I could focus in on the word you used a week ago when you did say you were disappointed after your meeting with Mr. Carter?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: At that time, I said we continued to be disappointed because the Democratic candidate was not willing at that time to support an amendment to the Constitution. Now we say that we are encouraged that the Republican candidate is willing to support an amendment.

As to the kind of amendment, I have indicated to you what kind of amendment he has proposed. He, himself, has made this known publicly.

I also indicated that, while we have not taken a position on any particular amendment, still we have enunciated the principles that should be reflected in an amendment, and we have consistently urged for an amendment that would give the maximum protection possible to the unborn. And, as I indicated -- and I will repeat -- we feel that there are better approaches than the approach that is embodied in what is commonly known as a States' rights amendment.

Q Archbishop Bernardin, are you saying the President's position is more satisfactory to you than Mr. Carter's

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: We are saying that we are encouraged by any effort to support a Constitutional amendment.

Q There have been several columnists in the last week who have pointed out what they consider a gap between the campaign position of the President and his actual performance as head of this Administration, particularly referring to the new position on abortion at military installations, the change from the Nixon Administration, as well as HEW's funding, and the Vietnamese refugee camps -- abortion availability. Are you disappointed at the President's record and did you raise those specific points?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: As I indicated in my introductory remarks, we did express to him deep concern over the substantial increase in the Federal Government's funding of abortion in recent years. In the discussion that followed, we talked about that at some length. He indicated that his personal position is against Government funding, Government participation. He acknowledged that at times some of the departments seemed to go beyond what he feels should be done. He indicated that he would make a study of the situation to determine what needs to be done on his part in order to impose or being about some restraints.

We expressed our grave concern about what is happening. At the moment, it is not absolutely clear to us how much he is actually personally responsible for this.

One of the things that we are concerned about is the fact that the number of abortions has increased. In 1972, there were some 586,000 abortions. In 1975, there were over one million and, of course, the degree of involvement of the Federal Government has increased.

Now much of this is due to the fact that in 1973 the Supreme Court handed down two decisions, which has drastically changed the situation. But our position is that the Executive Department should do everything that it can, not to go beyond what the Supreme Court requires, not to promote in any way an interpretation of those decisions which would go beyond the decisions themselves.

We made this very, very clear and, as I said, what we got in answer to a statement of this concern was a promise or statement that a study would be made to see what more could be done about this.

Q Archbishop Bernardin, I am confused over just exactly what kind of feeling you are coming out of this conference with, with the President. You said on two occasions here that you think there are better approaches than one embodied in a States' rights amendment. You also said that you were encouraged by the meeting with the President in contrast to last week when you were disappointed.

But when you say there are better approaches than those embodied by the States' rights amendments, you are saying there are better approaches than the one which Mr. Ford advocates; is that correct?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: Yes. And I think you have to remember that this goes in steps, that a Constitutional amendment does not come about over night.

First of all, there has to be some support for the concept. There has to be some initiative in order to convince Congress that such an amendment should come into existence. Then, after that, you begin to talk about the specific kind of amendment. So, in saying that we are encouraged, this does not mean that we are totally satisfied.

Q Is it fair to say that, while you would like to see the President take a stronger anti-abortion stand, you find his views closer to your views than those of Mr. Carter? Is that a fair way to sum it up?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: I would say that the specific difference is an unwillingness at this time on the part of the Democratic candidate to support any kind of Constitutional amendment, and a willingness on the part of the Republican candidate to support an amendment.

Q You said in your statement here, "We neither endorse nor oppose candidates or parties."

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: That is right, and I would like to repeat that.

Q Am I wrong in recollecting that in 1960 the Catholic Bishops of Puerto Rico, publicly threatened with excommunication any Catholic who voted for Governor Munos Morin because he supported the establishment of birth control planks, that he won by about 90 percent and then those bishops were transferred to the Mainland.

Am I wrong in my recollection there?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: We can only talk about our own Conference of Bishops here in 1976 and I repeat that we neither endorse nor oppose candidates or parties. We address ourselves only to the issues and then the people themselves must make their decisions.

Q May I ask a question? Some of us who have been covering this issue here at the White House seem to note some ambiguity in the President's position on abortion and, if you would, I cite several positions.

One, he prefers the States' right Constitutional amendment. Two, he does favor abortions in cases of incest, rape, and where the mother's life is in jeopardy, and there have been yet other positions that he states, to wit, the no-interference with the military hospitals and so on.

Did you determine that there is any ambiguity in the President's position on abortion?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: I think that question should be asked of the President.

Q Wasn't that a matter of legitimate concern to you, as to whether you found his position ambiguous or clearcut?

Wasn't this a legitimate concern of yours as you went into the meeting? If so, what did you find?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: I really think that the statements that I have made indicate to us what our perception of the present situation is. I think that you have got to keep two things in mind.

I know I am repeating, but I believe, in a sense, that the question is repetitious. In regard to a Constitutional amendment -- agreements that there should be amendment -- while we have not endorsed any particular kind of amendment, we feel that a better approach is needed than the approach that is embodied in the States' right amendment.

Regarding the involvement of the Federal Government in abortion through funding and so on, we expressed our deep concern about this and we were told that this was a matter that would be looked into, a matter that would be studied with a view toward exercising a certain degree of restraint. Whether or not that will happen, only time can tell.

Q Archbishop Bernardin, you told us that you don't feel that the President's States' rights proposal is the greatest in the world. Would you tell us what you would prefer?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: We have consistently said that we urge the passage of a Constitutional amendment that will give the maximum protection possible to the unborn. We have not, at this time, endorsed any specific wording.

Q If I may follow that up, sir, you said the President believes that his proposals fit under that definition because -- you used the language almost the same that was used in the Republican platform -- you said you are calling for massive protection of the unborn. The Republican platform calls for a Constitutional amendment that protects the rights of the unborn. That is an ambiguous phrase. It encompasses the President's plan.

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: The President said he considers his position as being a legitimate interpretation of that. I am not so concerned about what the platform says. I am more concerned about the way the candidate interprets the platform.

Q The President has said, I believe, the reason why he does not support the sweeping Federal amendment but he is for the States' rights amendment is because he feels abortions in certain cases such as rape and incest -- he supports those. How do you feel about that?

ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN: We have said consistently that we have not up to this point endorsed any particular amendment. We simply urge the passage of an amendment that will give the maximum protection possible to life. We have debated this position to the Congress in our testimony. We stated our position to the Democratic candidate, and also now to the Republican candidate. But, I think you have to ask some of these questions of the President.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:14 P.M. EDT)

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

NOTE FOR:

San B. Dome

FROM:

RON NESSEN

*Send a copy
of this FYI
to Bill Baroody*

*RHN.
Also sent to Jim Reichly - 9/21/76*



September 20, 1976

INTERVIEW OF JAMES HARRIS
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

THE NORTH LAWN

11:25 A.M. EDT

Q Are you Mr. Harris?

MR. HARRIS: Yes.

Q Could you tell us what you told the President?

MR. HARRIS: Well, we talked about a number of things. I have a statement here. Maybe somebody can pass them out and I will read this very abbreviated statement.

Q Why was it incumbent for you to see the President?

MR. HARRIS: My name is James A. Harris. I am an educator and I am the immediate past president of the National Education Association. While I was president of the NEA I was most impressed by the President's open door policy, which enabled me as the elected representative of the nation's school teachers to participate in face-to-face talks with the President and it allowed me to take the NEA Board of Directors to the White House to discuss education matters.

I am very pleased that the President has announced that education is going to be one of the six top priority items that his Administration will push to improve the quality of life in this country in the next Administration.

As you know, the NEA has announced its endorsement of President Ford's opponent. I would point out, however, that this action was based on a vote that was not a random sampling of the back home membership.



Although the NEA has 1.8 million members, ballots were sent only to the 9,000 delegates to the NEA Annual Convention. One State Association Executive Board has already voted to ignore this action and others may follow.

I also note that Mr. Carter stated on Saturday that if elected he will place a far greater burden of the tax burden on the category of middle income taxpayers that includes the majority of school teachers. I think it is significant that Mr. Carter did not disclose this tax plan until the day after the NEA endorsement was announced.

Q Mr. Harris, did you ask the President, please, why was it incumbent upon you to see the President?

MR. HARRIS: It was incumbent upon me to see the President because, as I pointed out, I have been very impressed with the openness in which the President has operated. I and thousands of people like me have been able to go and discuss those matters that are mutual concerns. Even though we have been far apart on some issues, I feel if that kind of dialogue continued in the White House, then we are going to be having an impact upon each other's thinking.

Q Do you think Mr. Carter would not be open?

MR. HARRIS: I have not heard the kind of commitment, nor have I seen that type of performance in the past with Mr. Carter, that would suggest that this might continue. However, want to see that the process is not lost. I would like to get a commitment from the candidates that this type of thing would be perpetuated.

Q Would you support Mr. Carter if he gave you that assurance?

MR. HARRIS: If I were in the position that Mr. Ryor is in, I would have to support Mr. Carter because it is a mandate from that body, so I can understand why the action was taken that was taken, but I would be trying to get some commitments from Mr. Carter that would suggest to me that teachers were still going to have a chance to discuss their concerns with whoever is President.

Q Mr. Harris, are you endorsing President Ford for election?

MR. HARRIS: No, I have not endorsed anyone.

Q Are you going to endorse anyone?

MR. HARRIS: That decision really has not been made.

Q Do you resent the NEA taking and making an endorsement for the first time in its history?

MR. HARRIS: I don't resent that at all. In fact, that process was initiated even prior to my being President and I support it wholeheartedly.

Q What are you objecting to, just the openness question?

MR. HARRIS: I am not really objecting to anything. I am saying here is a process that I want to see perpetuated and I would be anxious that people not misunderstand the vote as being a random sample representing the thinking of all the teachers across the nation.

Q Mr. Harris, do you think it is not representative?

MR. HARRIS: I think it is the thinking of the specific group of teachers that attended the NEA Convention that were exposed to something that had been put together by the NEA, had been exposed to a presentation from Mr. Mondale that did not receive input of that type, first-hand input from anyone from the other side of the fence, and I think it would be a mistake to call this --

Q Are you saying they made up their minds on this endorsement all of a sudden, that they had never heard of it before Mr. Carter --

MR. HARRIS: No, I didn't say that they had made up their minds all of a sudden. I am saying that the process that is involved should not be misinterpreted as a random sampling and that we should not be too quick to sell out just on the basis of campaign rhetoric.

Q Mr. Harris, did you initiate this meeting or were you invited in by somebody in the White House? Did you ask him this?

MR. HARRIS: I have been involved in a number of trips to the White House and the meetings that I have been involved in, of course, have been initiated by me.

Q Mr. Harris, what about specifically in response to her question? Did you ask to come down or did some of the President Ford Committee or the White House ask you down for this specific meeting?

MR. HARRIS: I was asked to come to this.

Q By whom?

MR. HARRIS: I was asked to come by someone from the President's staff to help interpret the meaning of this vote that was taken.

Q I see. I would like to ask one other question, please. Does that statement which you read at the outset -- did you write that after your meeting with the President or did you write that at the White House or was that statement prepared before you came to the White House this morning?

MR. HARRIS: That statement was prepared before I came to the White House. I worked on it over the weekend.

Q Was that statement typed here today or is this something that was written at the White House this morning, typed up?

MR. HARRIS: That statement was written by me.

Q What about the typing?

MR. HARRIS: The typing was done not at the White House but by one of the secretaries.

Q What secretary?

Q Are you opposed to Governor Carter's daughter, Amy, attending public school in the District of Columbia?



MR. HARRIS: I am certainly not opposed to his daughter attending public schools here in the District. In fact, I would like to extend an invitation for her to attend the school where I am principal. I think we already have the best faculty available and the best student body and probably have to make some building adjustments in order to accommodate her, but certainly I am not opposed to doing that.

Q What is the point of your remarks here about it?

MR. HARRIS: My remarks were simply that rather than hearing announcements about where one particular child might be going to school, I would like to hear some statements about what is going to be done for all children throughout the country so that no matter where their daughter went to school, she could be expected to receive a top education.

Q What did you tell the President, actually?

MR. HARRIS: I told the President that I wanted to underline the fact that I was impressed with the fact that I found him available whenever I had a chance to talk about things. I would certainly hope that that kind of think spread and was carried on not only in the White House but that it might even move to some of our other levels of Government.

Q How long were you with the President?

MR. HARRIS: I was with the President I suppose approximately 30 minutes.

Q Who asked you to come here?

MR. HARRIS: I don't recall. My secretary received a call and forwarded the call on to me that I had received a call from the White House. Usually when I come over I have a chance to talk with Mr. Baroody and I contacted him.

Q I guess it really all boils down to the political fact that you have been used as a campaign tool for President Ford, is that right?

MR. HARRIS: I don't think it amounts to that at all. I think that if I can keep the point of dialogue going with whatever Administration is in office, that the teachers and students are going to benefit and that if we sever this openness that Mr. Ford has established, then I think that we will not have a chance to express our thinking.

Q Did he put you up to the tax thing?

MR. HARRIS: The thing was mentioned in the paper yesterday and I think that is a significant number of our teachers -- in fact, the majority of our teachers -- and I am quite disappointed that that announcement was not made at the time that Mr. Carter was receiving the endorsement because I think it probably would have underlined to our current NEA leadership some of the kinds of things that are concerned.

Q Did they ask you to talk about it?

MR. HARRIS: I read this in the paper and decided to react to it and just like I initiated all of the statements in the paper.

Q Did they tell you to talk about it?

MR. HARRIS: They did not encourage me to talk about anything. I wrote the paper and I decided that part that I thought really had some substance in it and the kind of thing that I want teachers to think about and I would hope that they did think on some of those matters.

Q Do you think that education has been one of the President's big, you know, strong points?

MR. HARRIS: I don't believe that education has been to the President what I would hope that it would be and, again, I would find out that the part that encourages me is the fact that he is willing to talk about it. I think that if we can keep that dialogue going, eventually we are going to have some influence from each other.

Q Can you explain why you think that there would not be that sort of openness if Mr. Carter were in the White House?

MR. HARRIS: I don't know what type of relationship there would be if Mr. Carter were in the White House, but I think now is the time to get the commitment.

Q Well, what about Carter's education policy?

MR. HARRIS: Again, I have heard very little of substance about what Mr. Carter has done for education, and I would hope to hear more and that was one of the things that I pointed out in the statement.

Q What kind of effort did you make to find out where Carter stands on educational issues?

MR. HARRIS: I think that we rely on the news media and whatever sources are available to us.

Q Would you have an interview with Mr. Carter? Would you come to see him?

MR. HARRIS: I have not had an opportunity for an interview with Mr. Carter and would certainly take advantage of that if I did have an opportunity.

Q Mr. Harris, you said a secretary typed this but never have -- a White House secretary? Somebody here?

MR. HARRIS: No, not in the White House.

Q In the President Ford Committee?

MR. HARRIS: No.

Q Executive Office Building?

MR. HARRIS: In the Executive Office Building.

Q You gave it to the President?

MR. HARRIS: At my request.

Q You gave it to them and they took it over and typed it and then brought it out for you to pass out; is that what happened?

MR. HARRIS: No. I prepared this statement on yesterday and this statement was typed yesterday. I had it to take to other people that I wanted to react to it -- for example, the Superintendent of Schools -- to see if there was anything in it that he felt might be offensive to the school system. He was very pleased with the statement, and so on, and then I --

Q When did this get typed at the White House complex? Today or yesterday?

MR. HARRIS: No, the typing was yesterday.

Q The Superintendent of Schools thinks it is okay for you to make a partisan political appearance here at the White House and attack Carter on his tax policy? He saw that part of it?

MR. HARRIS: The Superintendent of Schools read the statement that I have prepared here as you see it, as I wrote it, and the Superintendent was pleased with it.

Q When this vote came up on the endorsement, did you fight against it?

MR. HARRIS: No. I did not fight against the endorsement and I am not saying anything against the endorsement at this point. I think the endorsement had to happen. I think it is long overdue that teachers take that kind of stand. I helped work in that direction while president of NEA and I am simply saying, "Let's not let any of the important things get lost in the shuffle." And I want to see that that does not happen.

Q Mr. Harris, is this that process whereby they sent for 7,000 persons down in Miami Beach? Isn't that the process that was agreed upon by the representatives assembled of the NEA?

MR. HARRIS: Right. No problem with that whatsoever.

Q Then, why are you complaining that --

MR. HARRIS: I am not complaining about it whatsoever. I am simply saying that is not a random sampling of the NEA membership and should not be interpreted as such. It is a vote of the NEA delegates that attended the convention but received certain kinds of information and it simply triggers a process. It now says that the NEA has the authority to attempt to influence its membership through its publications. I have no problems whatsoever with the process. I believe it ought to take place.

Q To get back to the nub of this matter, which is the tax thing, where did you get the information on Saturday that --

MR. HARRIS: On the front page of the Star.

Q Yes. And since then, have you seen anything on it since then to indicate that Mr. Carter did not say that originally?

MR. HARRIS: I have not had an opportunity to read the paper this morning and I don't know the case since then. I think --

Q If you were told that the AP story moved the correction and quoted Mr. Carter as saying that he would lower the taxes for the lower and middle income taxpayers having -- the first AP story left out the words "and middle income", would that change your view of Mr. Carter's tax --

MR. HARRIS: I would examine Mr. Carter's statement in terms of how it affected the majority of the people of this country, and in particular teachers, and based on my conclusion, then, I would react.

Q If he indeed did say that he would lower the taxes for lower and middle income taxpayers, how would that affect most teachers?

MR. HARRIS: I would wait to hear where it was that he planned to get the kind of money to do the kind of programs that he is talking about and if he would suggest to me that he was not going to raise taxes for anybody, that he was going to lower taxes for the majority of the people, and such as this, then I would have some questions about some other kinds of things that Mr. Carter has said.

Q When were you asked to come to the White House, what day?

MR. HARRIS: I was asked about this specific matter on the day that the NEA endorsement was announced, as to what really did it amount to, what did it suggest?

Q Do you think it suggests that all teachers are going to vote for Carter?

MR. HARRIS: No, I don't think it suggests that at all. I don't have the slightest idea at this point. I just heard that they will consider --

Q Will they follow the NEA or will they --

MR. HARRIS: Some teachers will and some teachers will react negatively to it, and I think that that is yet to be seen.

Q What did you refer to this specific matter -- on the day the NEA endorsement was announced of Carter -- what specific matter? You were asked by the White House to come here --

MR. HARRIS: I was asked, what does a vote like this suggest?

Q What is the statement you think Carter made that you are talking about?

MR. HARRIS: That he would select the median wage and that he would remove some of the tax burden from those people below it and place a heavier tax burden on those people above it. So, we are talking about a figure somewhere around \$12,000 or \$13,000 and placing a larger portion of the tax burden upon those people. I think many people in those brackets are still struggling and finding it very difficult in order to be able to pay the taxes that they currently have.

Q Who are you going to vote for?

MR. HARRIS: I have not made up my mind.

Q Are you a Republican, sir?

MR. HARRIS: Yes, I am a Republican.

Q What is your school?

MR. HARRIS: Van Ness Elementary School

Q Are you the principal?

MR. HARRIS: Yes.

Q Did you and the President discuss a separate Department of Education, naming a Secretary of Education?

MR. HARRIS: Not on this occasion, but we have discussed that on other occasions.

Q You didn't discuss that today?

MR. HARRIS: No, we didn't discuss that today.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 11:45 A.M. EDT)

OCTOBER 12, 1976

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
AMERICAN LEADERS OF EAST EUROPEAN ANCESTRY



10:47 A.M. EDT

MR. NESSEN: The meeting has just broken up and the leaders of the ethnic groups will be down to speak to you. They are on their way right now.

The President read to them a statement at the beginning of the meeting which we have put into writing and will hand out immediately after this meeting. There was applause at the end of the President's remarks and then the ethnic leaders made statements and asked some questions. They will describe to you further the meeting.

Q How can we ask questions if we don't know what the President said?

MR. NESSEN: Would you like to have the statement handed out first?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: We can do that.

Q Were all of these people pro Ford?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so but you can ask them yourselves.

Q You told us the President would make a statement.

MR. NESSEN: There was a misunderstanding on my part about whether the President would read the statement or distribute the statement. It was a mistake on my part. The President has four stacks of bills that he is trying to get through before he leaves, which is in less than 30 minutes, and that is where he is.

Q How long was the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: The meeting was approximately 45 minutes.

I am going to let the leaders come up and introduce themselves and begin to answer your questions and I will hand the President's statement out so you will have it with you in order to ask questions.

MR. MAZEWSKI: I am President of the Polish American Congress which is a national organization. I did attend the session this morning. I am very much satisfied with the statement that the President has spoken. As a matter of fact he has reiterated his position on the acknowledgement on the freedom and independence of Poland as well as the self-determination of these European countries. He has clarified the position more fully. Not only that, he has admitted that he made a mistake. The statement was not accurate at all, and that --

Q He acknowledged he made a mistake?

MR. MAZEWSKI: Definitely he made a mistake. It was an error. It was never his true feeling and as a matter of fact we have checked his Captive Nations Proclamation. As a matter of fact the speech that he delivered at the Polish American Congress in Philadelphia on September 24 will definitely make anyone reading that, and hearing the statements, will know it must have been an error because he couldn't have changed his position of long standing in the last 30 years. Therefore I enjoyed hearing that and I am sure that our community will accept it as stated.

There will be a determination that will be made by any member of my community but for myself I am very much satisfied.

Q Do you think he will have the Polish ethnic vote?

MR. MAZEWSKI: There is no one that can guarantee anybody's vote. We have problems in guaranteeing our wife's vote, and our wife has a problem guaranteeing a husband's vote. But I am sure that the community is knowledgeable and that they will weigh the statement the way it should be.

Q I gather from your statement about the abortion issue that was reported in the newspaper the other day that you yourself personally opposed Mr. Carter because of the abortion issue. Was that correct?

MR. MAZEWSKI: Where you received that information I don't know. My name is Mayewski and I never made a statement on the abortion issue.

Q I am sorry about that.

MR. MAZEWSKI: And it was not made.

Q Are you pro Ford?

MR. MAZEWSKI: I am pro every American and in this case I have not committed myself to either candidate. I am president of a national organization and I don't want to influence my organization either way because they have the intelligence to decide on their own after hearing the facts.

Q But you have your own personal views, don't you?

MR. MAZEWSKI: I have my personal views. I have made a decision which I will disclose in the secrecy of the booth in November.

Q Were you wearing one of those Ford buttons?

MR. MAZEWSKI: I was not, absolutely not. I don't wear anybody's button.

Q Is there such a thing as an ethnic vote? Why are we all here?

MR. MAZEWSKI: I would say that it is a misnomer. We are all Americans and we speak about Americans and we speak about Americans of different ethnic background, and I happen to be of a Polish background. I am an American of Polish heritage.

MORE

MR. NESSEN: I think some of the other leaders have brief statements they might like to make, and then we can go to questions, okay?

MR. PASZTOR: My name is Laszlo Pasztor. I am Chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Hungarian Federation. I came here not because I wasn't convinced of President Ford's stand on these very important issues as far as Eastern Europe is concerned.

I have known President Ford when he was a Congressman and I admire him for his stand on the cause of freedom and liberty for all nations. He always emphasized that he doesn't make any difference as far as freedom and basic human rights are concerned, whether they are Eastern Europeans or from other nations.

I think that I was surprised that Mr. Carter wasn't aware of President Ford's statements in this area. I was very surprised that he made an issue of it and I think in the order of the fact that the President mentioned, as Mr. Mazewski said, that he made an inaccurate statement showing what a great President we have and what a human being he is.

I think, you know, that he can still speak with public opinion as far as the ethnic Americans are concerned. I think that the President's statements and his recent statement that he gave to us today, will clarify everything with some people who don't know him as well as some of us do, and that continue to support him as they did in the past.

Q Why did it take him so long to admit his mistake?

MR. PASZTOR: In my opinion, it was a slip of the tongue, and I think, right the next day, he made, in a positive way, a restating of his position. Even if you check his speech, right after that he made that statement, that Eastern Europe is not under -- I believe he said Soviet domination -- immediately, he stated that he will never concede the domination of Eastern Europe.



That was such an obvious correction, even in his statement that I, personally knowing him, didn't even catch the mistake in the first place. I have to admit that.

Q Did he say to you today that he made a mistake? How did he express it?

MR. PASZTOR: "I did not express myself clearly." I believe those were his words, and it is in his written statement. I believe you have that and you will have it in your hands, but he had the courage to say he didn't express himself clearly. I think that he showed to us that he is not ashamed to admit it if he didn't use the right expression.

Q You are now favoring President Ford?

MR. PASZTOR: I am working for him and I am going to continue to work for him.

Q Are you wearing a button this morning?

MR. PASZTOR: No, because I am a Hungarian and that was a Romanian button.

MR. PLEER: My name is Ilmar Pleer, President of the Estonian National Council. I am very much satisfied with the President's statement this morning regarding the situation in Eastern Europe and his slip of the tongue. He rectified his statement. We are very much satisfied with it.

He, himself, again mentioned that he will never recognize the overthrow of the Baltis States and the occupation by the Soviet Union, as he has done prior to the Helsinki Conference, and afterwards in statements to the Estonian and Baltic people. I will be very confident with the statement at this point, and I believe that the Estonian people will follow him and certainly support Mr. Ford for the Presidency.

MR. NESSEN: Let me put one thing in perspective before we go on, and that is as to who you are supporting, and so forth.

One of the leaders at the meeting, and maybe he will identify himself, pointed out that last week, when there was a rash of complaining public statements about the President's remarks in the debate, that many of those, or most of them in fact, were elected Democratic officials in various areas of the country. Maybe one of the leaders will want to talk about that because it was mentioned to the President this morning.

MR. BOBELIS: I am Dr. Bobelis, National President of the Lithuanian American Council. I was very pleased with the President's statement. However, I do have some reservations about our foreign policy as conducted by Secretary Kissinger.

Q What are the reservations?

MR. BOBELIS: He has never expressed himself in behalf of Eastern European countries. He made many statements announcing human rights violations in South Africa, Rhodesia and Chile, but at no time, has he ever made any statement announcing any human rights violations, which are much more severe in Eastern European countries.

MORE

MR. KIPEL: My name is Vitaut Kipel, representing the Byelorussian American Association of the United States. We are very pleased with the statement made by the President this morning and I must tell you that we as Russian Americans never considered as serious what happened last week in the debate. We considered that it was a mistake. However, we are very much disturbed that nobody from the press picked up that Jimmy Carter did not know that there were two radio stations broadcasting in the Soviet Union when he said Voice of Radio Free Europe, and then he stopped and he didn't know that the other station was Radio Liberty.

MR. LEJINS: My name is Adolfs Lejins, President of American Latvian Association of the United States. Now, we have a bipartisan organization. However, some of our groups had worked with President Ford for some 20 years and know him very well. However his statement last week did raise some questions and I hope President Ford's statement as distributed this morning will clarify some of those issues.

The Latvians, of course, are bipartisan and at least I hope that those who supported Mr. Ford in the past will also support him now.

MR. GECYS: My name is Stanley Gecys. I am National President of the Lithuanian American Community of the United States. As far as I personally am concerned, the President did admit his mistake and the case is closed. I think we should look towards the statement with the same eyes as the press looked toward Jimmy Carter's ethnic purity statement.

In a way I think it is fortunate that Eastern Europe was able to receive all of this attention from the press. We have felt that Eastern Europe had been forgotten and that primarily our concerns were directed to Africa, South America and Asia.

I just would like to point out that the Baltic States which are enslaved by the Soviet Union are strong and the people are fighting the Soviet regime, and I also hope that one of these days the Baltic States will be free.

I realize that President Ford is our friend. His record of 30 years in public office does show him to be the friend of captive nations, and therefore there are some things that all of us should forgive as one minute error in judgment.



MR. MEYER: My name is George Meyer. I am a representative of the Congress of Russian Americans. I have to confess to you that our 400,000 Americans of Russian descent, as all other of the voters in our country here, are for a solution. We have three ways to participate and to vote -- to support Governor Carter, to support President Ford, or to abstain.

I have to confess to you the mood of this group of American citizens is that they are very much afraid of Governor Carter, just as we were afraid of Senator McGovern. The problem is, is Governor Carter conservative or liberal? He has not cleared that up, up to now.

There are several facts which show that Mr. Carter, in this house, we believe, is the incarnation of Senator McGovern. He chose as Vice President Senator Mondale and the record of the Senator shows that Senator Mondale, by his votes in the Senate, is standing to the left of Senator McGovern.

Governor Carter has chosen, during the primaries, as his speechwriter the same person who had written the speeches for McGovern during the old campaign. Governor Carter has chosen as his counsel for foreign policy Averell Harriman and Dewey Rashin, and all of the people from Middle Europe very well know what advice these advisers gave and what advice Mr. Harriman and Mr. Hawkins gave to the late President Roosevelt. We cannot forget it.

The last thing we would like to bring to your attention is a speech which Governor Carter delivered three weeks ago in Penn Station, when he started his trip to Pittsburg. Have you noticed who stood at the side of Governor Carter when he delivered his speech? It was not Mr. Moynihan, who recently was nominated by the Democratic Party of the State of New York. It was Mrs. Bella Abzug, who was beaten by Mr. Moynihan. She was smiling and showing signs of victory.

This choice of Mr. Carter shows very clearly for us toward which part of the Democratis Party he is inclined.

MR. SEFFER: I am Dr. Uros Seffer, President of the Serbian National Committee, representing 26 Serbian organizations in the United States, Canada and the free world.

We know President Ford's record since coming to Congress. We consider him a very strong leader. We are very satisfied with his explanation today. We trust him and most of us will vote for him because we believe that he deserves to be President of the United States for the next term.

MR. MEDWED: Good morning. My name is Nick Medwed and I am West Coast Representative for the Ukranian Congress Committee of America. We are the eyes and ears of President Ford in our respective heritage communities. Therefore we were asked to come here because there was a feeling of urgency, particularly because it affected partially and to a great extent the American foreign policy towards the peoples that we as citizens are representing as the various ethnic heritage communities.

We came here today and are leaving greatly satisfied with the acknowledgement by President Ford that a mistake was made, and I am sure it is in the published statements being released to you, and we are going back with other statements that will be presented in the paper from now to November 2, and we want to thank you expressly, each of you, for giving us these front page headlines, and we need it very badly. Thank you very much.

MR. ABRAHAMIAN: I am Dr. Hratch Abrahamian, I am National President of the Armenian National Committee. I am from Eastern Europe and working for President Ford, and I don't know yet how my people are going to vote, but I was quite comfortable after the meeting today when the President restated or reconfirmed his previous statements when he was a Congressman about all of the people who were deprived of independence, freedom and self determination. He clearly reaffirmed all of the statements and I am very glad for that. At this time I don't have any reason to have doubt about his sincerity.

MR. SABAN: My name is Joseph Saban, National President of the Croatian Catholic Union of the Unites States of America. President Ford has convinced me this morning with his statement that he is for all people that are striving for their independence in their own countries, regardless of where they might be. Thank you very much.

MR. KIJ: I am Daniel Kij from Buffalo. I am a national officer of the Polish American Congress. I, like many of the others, was neither born in Eastern Europe nor were my parents who were born in Western New York. However, I feel what the President did today was clarify the record. There was little doubt in the minds of the ethnics in Western New York, and in the area served by our organization, that he really meant what he said, or as it sounded as it came over the television screen. Today, the President wanted to set the record straight and I think he did that.

I don't believe there was any doubt in the minds of those except Democratic Party leaders. I was the one alluded to earlier and I did state to the President that in Buffalo, this past Sunday when Betty Ford was the guest of honor at our annual Pulaski Day Parade, at which she was present, and also Senator Mondale, the feeling was neither pro-Ford nor pro-Carter. Both equally received the attention of the great Polish American community in our area.

I think that the President's statement may have caused a temporary slowdown in the ethnic inroads he was making, but I feel that the record that he set straight today is going to put him back on the track and people will not stop and be turned off simply because of something that he said during the debate.

Q Before you get off the stand, Mr. Kij, you are identified here on the list put out by the White House as being with the Polish Union of America.

MR. KIJ: The Polish Union of America is a fraternal benefit society founded in 1890 in Buffalo. I am the president of that organization, and is part of the Polish American Congress, which is the umbrella organization representing approximately 12 million Americans of Polish descent.

Q Which one do you prefer to be identified with? That is all I am asking.

MR. KIJ: It is immaterial.

Q Can you tell us how the meeting was organized? Were you earlier here in the week or last week for organizational purposes?

MR. KIJ: No, I was here in September at which time the Pulaski Day Proclamation, yesterday, was designated by the President on the anniversary of the American Revolutionary War heroes' death. This was done in September and at that time a member of the Polish American Congress was presented to the President bringing up several of the items that he covered, and at that time we were very well pleased with his answers to questions about the Sonnenfeldt Doctrine which were put to rest for the last time.

This is why just a bit of confusion erupted when the President said those words during the debate. I don't think that those of us who were here from throughout the country, there were only a dozen of us, I don't think we really felt there was a change in the United States or Administration policy, but we did want to have this matter clarified, and I fully believe that everyone that was here today was satisfied with his explanation that he misspoke. And I believe the actual words that he used are right in the prepared text.

We all knew this. I was notified yesterday there might be a meeting of people from the Eastern European nations, that is representatives of groups from that area.

Q Was Mr. Osajda there from the Polish Croatian Roman Catholic Union?

MR. KIJ: Mr. Osajda was not present here today. He is from Chicago.

MR. ROBERTS: The President is about to depart from the South Ground and those who wish to photograph or witness the departure should assemble up here at this time.

MRS. FALTUS: I just want to make a short statement. I am representing the Czechoslovak National Council of America and my name is Anna Faltus. The President admitted that he made a mistake in the debate and his statement that he released today should clarify the issue, and we are all convinced that President Ford's record in Congress speaks for itself.

Q Can anyone tell us how this meeting was organized? Who called whom?

MR. MEDWED: There was a telephone call made from the White House in regards to the statement because of the numerous telegrams and letters and phone calls, and we were bombarded in our local communities, and we in turn passed on to the White House the urgency of such a meeting. It was agreed by Mr. Ford to have this meeting this morning and some of us have traveled half of the night and early morning to be here in order to be present, those who were able to be available.

Q Did you travel at your own expense?

MR. MEDWED: We traveled at our own expense, that is right.

Q When did this start?

MR. MEDWED: I would imagine sometime yesterday afternoon. I was reached at 4:00 in the afternoon and made a plane right away.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 11:15 A.M. EDT)