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PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE
VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
HYATT REGENCY
HOUSTON, TEXAS

(AT 12:10 P.M. CST)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure for me to be in Houston, Texas. I am delighted to be here for the Southern Leadership Conference of the Republican Party. I am very happy to answer any questions anyone might have.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what do you make of this Gallup Poll, what does it mean to you in terms --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not much.

QUESTION: Because why?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: These things go up and down.

QUESTION: You are not startled to see this?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I have run for the office of Governor in New York four times. I never, at this point, was higher than 36 percent. That was the highest point I ever reached. Each time I got elected or reelected by a plurality of 400,000 to 700,000.

You can't be in office and do tough things that are in the long term best interests of the country without having some people on the short term basis get upset, politically. If you are not in the game and take no position, you are in a strong position.

QUESTION: When will you be behind the Republicans?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Pretty much most of the time.

QUESTION: How can the President restore himself among the good graces of the Republicans?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Do what is right for the American people.

QUESTION: Can you be a little more specific?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Which area are you interested in?

QUESTION: The energy bill, for example.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Okay. We all are talking frankly here? I have to say this compromise, in my opinion, is a hoax and a sham on the American people. I just think and happen to believe also you can't fool the American people. They are a lot smarter than the politicians think.

They understand the basic issues we face in this country today. What does this bill do? It rolls back prices until everybody gets reelected. Then they start to go up. It encourages consumption at a time when we are trying to hold down consumption and it increases imports and discourages production. The most serious problem we have got in this country, in my opinion, you talk about being frank and going to the people on the issues, the most serious problem we have

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got is our dependence on imported energy. We are importing 40 percent of our oil right now. Next year we will spend approximately \$30 billion. If that \$30 billion was spent here in America, it would produce at least a million jobs for Americans who are unemployed. We are totally vulnerable from a security point of view because of these imports, 40 percent; 80 to 90 percent on the East Coast of the United States.

Our economy is totally vulnerable both as to price and as to supply. We have the natural resources. We have the technology. We have the managerial skills..

The President has told the Congress that we have got to go to energy independence. That it is essential to achieve this by 1985. He has presented a bill to the Congress, an Energy Independence Authority, calling for a \$100 billion Federal pump priming to get going.

In my opinion, that is essential to get the economy rolling and that is essential to get the 2,800,000 jobs we need for Americans right now. We have got it right in the bag. We can do the whole thing. What has Congress come along with? A bill to roll back prices during the election.

Okay. Any other questions?

QUESTION: Should he veto it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not the President. I have told you what I think.

QUESTION: But you said, responding to the question to restore himself, to do what is right for the American people --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Take a strong position on this issue.

QUESTION: What about common situs picketing?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, his position on common situs picketing is that under President Johnson, certain statements were made to the unions who were pushing this. If they do so and so, then it would get consideration.

Under President Nixon, the same thing was said. If they make certain changes, it would get consideration. I think the President has felt that those conditions having been met, that he has to give it consideration.

What his final determination is going to be, I don't know.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the President has seemed to have vacillated on New York. His Secretary of State isn't too popular among some Republicans.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: What has he got to do with New York? The Secretary of State? Are you talking about Secretary Kissinger?

QUESTION: I said one problem is New York, where he has vacillated. Another problem is Kissinger. What can you do in those areas? You say strong action is needed, but we don't seem to have seen it in relation to the Republican electorate.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let's take both of those questions, one at a time. On New York, the President's very simple position was, number one, you couldn't bail out New York, in quotes, "bail out." In other words, you couldn't go where a city was spending more than it had in the

way of income, where the law says you have got to have a balanced budget. You can't pick up that deficit because if you do it for one city, every other city in the United States that has any tendency in that direction, is going to say, "Well, do it for me, too." That is an impossibility. He was right in saying that.

Number two, he said that he did not think New York would have the muscle to take the tough political action to restore fiscal integrity by balancing their budget by 1978. Therefore, the only way they would take the action would be to go into bankruptcy. This is what he laid out.

Therefore, he said that they ought to change the bankruptcy laws. He was right on changing the bankruptcy laws.

I have to say to you that both Mr. Carey and Mr. Beame came down to Washington two or three months ago, after getting some high priced lawyers to rewrite the bankruptcy law, with a bill to change it. They knew the law was very, very bad, the present law on bankruptcy. It only applies to corporations.

He was right on that. I happen to feel, having lived in that great State for quite a while, that they would take the tough steps. When they took the steps, then the Federal Government was going to have to help them bridge over that three-year period before their credit was restored in the marketplace. That is where our difference was. It wasn't a major difference.

New York has been taking -- the state and the city -- the steps. Therefore, the President said, "In view of the fact you are taking them, then I recommend that Congress take action."

That has been his position and he says, "Because I took the tough position is why New York took the action." Maybe that is right. I felt they would take it anyhow. So, the important thing was they take the action. Okay, that is number one.

Number two, Secretary Kissinger. Secretary Kissinger, in my opinion, is one of, if not the most brilliant Secretary of States this country has ever had. He has greater understanding of the world as it is today in this period of interdependence and of rapid change. He has the capacity to think conceptually.

He has the capacity to talk and deal with the leaders of other countries and understand their points of view and interpret ours. I think he has done a superb job. That has been reflected by the high standing in the polls with the American people, higher than any other public official in this country.

We won't get into the fact that the lowest is the Congress of the United States. But the highest is the Secretary of State.

When you talk about New York, I don't know what you are talking about. New York being upset about the Secretary of State. There are jealous people. This always happens. Anyone who reaches the top, then he gets shot at. That is human nature.

When you talk about New York, you tell me who you are talking about.

QUESTION: They may be popular with the electorate

at large, but they don't seem to be popular with the Republican electorate that is going to be voting.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let's not kid ourselves. Republicans don't elect Presidents, because they only have 18 percent of the vote. So, let's not shape our policies just on what Republican voters -- if that is what you are saying to me.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what happened in your meeting with the Southern Chairmen this morning?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We had a good, frank discussion just like we are having here.

QUESTION: What did you discuss?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Politics.

QUESTION: What about politics?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We just had a good meeting of the minds on the different points of view that exist in the Republican Party. And the fact that the Republican Party is a minority party, as this gentleman brought out or I brought out for his benefit.

Therefore, being a minority party, as I said last night when I had spoken to the black businessmen and previous to that, had spoken with the black Republicans, I said we are both minorities. Maybe if we get together we will be a majority.

We minorities have to get together with other minorities and we are going to have more voice in the system.

QUESTION: Did you raise the point with the Southern Chairmen this morning that you raised here, that a Republican President cannot be elected with only Republican votes?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am trying to think whether it came out in that form. The subject of minority, our minority position came out. But I don't think I ever put it just that way. I assume, these being very intelligent public spirited citizens, they are aware of that.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did the chairmen ask you why President Ford wasn't here, since he was expected? Do you have any opinion as to whether he should have made it here?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. Neither of those questions came up. There was no discussion about his Presidency.

QUESTION: How about the last thing, what do you think? Do you think he should have made an appearance?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: He has got some very difficult decisions to make right now on bills before him. Two of them we discussed already. There are some others, the low tax bill. I think that it was just impossible for him to leave Washington at this moment and give the attention that I think is being focused' on to these very difficult questions.

QUESTION: Do you think perhaps he had some apprehension, if that is not too strong a word, about a confrontation with Ronald Reagan?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I can't imagine he would.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, how well do you think the Ford campaign is doing at this point?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: When you talk about the Ford campaign, you have got to talk about the President, really. It is two things. I suppose if you talk about the Ford campaign you have got the President himself. The campaign, I think, has been slow in getting started. But I think the President has this extraordinary quality of trying to understand what he deeply believes will reflect the best, long term interests of the American people, and then take action on it regardless of the short term, political implications.

That I respect. So, I think that while there may be some short term political irritations, that the long term political significance of doing the right thing for the country is the most important thing. I go back to what I said, I think the American people on these issues are ahead of the politics.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you think Ronald Reagan could get elected?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think he is going to get nominated. I think the President is going to be nominated. I haven't really speculated on the second part of the question.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in Nashville yesterday, you said it was of utmost urgency that Congress pass revenue sharing. If they didn't pass it before the Christmas recess, things would come unglued for New York City. But revenue sharing doesn't expire until the next fiscal year. Could you explain the details of that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Very simply, because the fiscal years of cities and states do not coincide with the fiscal year of the Federal Government. The Federal Government's fiscal year is different than the others.

Therefore, they are making up their budget, including New York City and New York State, now. They will present them in January. Those budgets are for 1976 and 1977.

If while they are making up the budget, the Congress hasn't acted, their next year's budget, they can't include an item that the Congress hasn't acted on.

That is part of the three-year budget balancing process. For New York City it is \$243 million, if my memory is correct. So that this situation is going to -- and I have not read the act that was passed by the Congress authorizing the President to guarantee bonds, so I can't give you the details -- but my understanding is the act authorizes him to guarantee bonds or whatever the Federal role is, if the city balances its budget.

Then if it loses revenue sharing it is going to be out over a quarter of a billion dollars. Then they will not be able to qualify under the terms of the legislation. Then they are right back in the soup.

Personally, I would have thought that the revenue sharing should have been in the legislation, relating to the guarantee for New York, because it was an essential element. But then I think it is essential that the Congress, this week get it out of committee and get it on to the floor. Or in my opinion, their vacation is going to be cut short for Christmas.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, will you support the Republican nominee?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I support President Ford. He is going to be the Republican nominee.

QUESTION: What if he isn't?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't speculate about that. That would give an indication that I thought there was a weakness. I don't think there is.

QUESTION: Why don't you think Reagan is going to get it?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Because I think Mr. Ford is and two people can't get it.

QUESTION: What do you feel Mr. Ford is doing right and Mr. Reagan is doing wrong?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. Ford is dealing with the tough problems that face the American people. Mr. Reagan is a very attractive person.

He has got a speech that is a tremendous speech. I envy him and I admire him. That has got 28 applauses in it. That is a lot. How can you beat that?

But that doesn't deal with the tough issues yet. Now that he is a candidate, he is going to start having to explain how you take \$90 billion out of the Federal budget and pass it back to State and local government, who are already in financial difficulty.

Just put in your mind for a minute, what that means to New York City or New York State. That knocks the whole thing into a cocked hat.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did the Chairman feel the way you do about Governor Reagan, having no chance with the nomination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We didn't discuss it.

QUESTION: What did you discuss, sir?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Politics, personalities.

QUESTION: Whose politics and whose personality, if not Mr. Reagan's and Mr. Ford's?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We didn't discuss personalities. We discussed politics.

QUESTION: You said politics and personalities.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We discussed politics, not personalities.

QUESTION: Who, in your opinion, would have a better chance getting elected in November, Mr. Ford or Mr. Reagan?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If I was supporting Mr. Ford because I thought he was going to lose, I would be a damned fool. I am supporting him because I think he is the best for this country at this time. This country is looking for openness, integrity. We have had all of the complexities and so forth in the past. I think this country wants somebody who is open and straightforward. I think he is it.

QUESTION: With all due respect to yourself, you are a surrogate in this instance. President Ford seems to be sending surrogates to speak to Republicans.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The word surrogate under these circumstances would mean I was supporting, coming here to campaign for Mr. Ford. This is against the election law.

Therefore, I would be in violation of the election law. I have to question the word surrogate. I think that would mean I was campaigning for him. I cannot. I can support his programs.

QUESTION: Is he going to speak for himself to Republicans in this State or is he going to have other people in effect, speaking for him?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: This business of just speaking to Republicans is beautiful. But we are talking about an election. At this point anybody who wants to be President of the United States in 1976, has got to speak to more than Republicans. He has got to speak to the American people.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in view of your analysis of Reagan's speech and the applause element --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It was not mine. I was given this report.

QUESTION: -- how do you account for the large increase in Reagan's popularity among Republicans in this current Gallup Poll that people are talking about? What happened?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You are a very sophisticated gentleman who knows this business very well. The recognition factor is very important. If you are on the front page of two popular weekly magazines and you are announcing your candidacy and getting the kind of attention which has been given, I don't care who it is, he is bound to go up. This is what I would call his moment.

It is a little early if you are looking at it from a political point of view. This is a little bit early. Those of us who have been in politics a long time, like to start low and work slowly up, so when you hit the line you are just there. You get too far out ahead, way, way ahead of the time.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, have you suggested any running mate for President Ford?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. I have said ever since I was confirmed by the Congress after a great deal of difficulty and exposure, that I thought that he should not make up his mind. He should give no indication until he was nominated. At that point he ought to determine who can best help this country and help him in the election.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, John B. Connally has been traveling extensively around the nation rendering what he calls a public service.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: He sure has.

QUESTION: I wondered if you would call it a public service or politicking or what thoughts you have on what he is doing?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: This is a very fluid moment in the political life of most parties. Therefore, likely candidates or prominent citizens who are identified with

politics, this is a good time to get around. I am sure it is a public service because he is a very able speaker and a knowledgeable person.

QUESTION: Is there anybody else that you know of doing what he is doing?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: About 15 or 20 Democrats.

QUESTION: Any Republicans?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. Reagan, of course.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what is your stand on the situs bill?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think the situs bill, from the labor point of view has tremendous advantages. I think it is extremely unpopular with the construction industry and that therefore, it is a very difficult position for the President.

QUESTION: If it were up to you, sir, what would you do?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you don't know by now, I have to tell you again. I am a staff assistant to the President. I am not an independent political personality. Therefore, I give my advice to the President on all issues. Some requested and some I volunteer.

What he does with that is entirely his responsibility. I have no responsibility except to preside over the Senate of the United States, which is a great honor. Unfortunately, I cannot speak without unanimous consent. I have only had that twice in a year.

QUESTION: Have you given your advice on that matter?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have discussed it with him.

QUESTION: What did you advise?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you will forgive me, I cannot say publicly what I say to him. Otherwise, I would violate the whole relationship and undermine it.

QUESTION: In light of your meeting with two separate black organizations last night, what is your opinion of the minorities, their situation and role with regard to national politics in this upcoming election year?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I believe very deeply in a two-party system. I think a two-party system has been the strength and vitality of democracy. I don't think it ought to be a two-party system just in the north and west. I think it should be a two-party system throughout the country.

I don't think it ought to be a two-party system just for whites. It should be a two-party system for blacks, for all groups. I don't think labor ought to be in any party's pocket. I don't think the blacks ought to be in any party's pocket.

I think they have to be on their own, live, vital participants in the democratic process in this country. To be that there has to be a two-party system, increasingly.

QUESTION: Are they involved in the two-party system now?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Increasingly. It takes a lot

of courage for them to move over. I told them that last night. I have great respect for that group.

QUESTION: Did you come out of the meeting with concern for President Ford's ability to gain a majority of the delegates from the southern blacks, those States represented here?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you think Reagan will win as a Republican nominee or do you think he will not?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We already had that question. I said before I am not speculating. I don't expect him to be a candidate. Therefore, that is not something in my mind. My candidate is President Ford. I think he is going to be nominated. To talk the other way would just indicate that I felt there is some weakness, which I don't.

QUESTION: You did not support Senator Goldwater when he ran for President.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, I did. This is the standard position. If you had been in Albany, which is the capital of New York, I introduced him from the steps of the Capitol with a glowing statement which reflected my belief in all of the qualities which he has and he has a great many.

QUESTION: Many Republicans, however, don't know that.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is right. It is statements like yours that increase that rumor.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what do you view your role after you leave your current position, your role in American political life?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: My feeling is you can serve your country in many ways. I love this country. I have tried to serve it and I will continue to do so. I have no concern. I am sure there are plenty of opportunities that will come up.

QUESTION: In your meeting with the chairmen this morning, did they thank you or express any feelings about your decision to not be a Vice Presidential candidate?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. The matter was discussed, but there was no expression of appreciation.

QUESTION: What did they say?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It was noted.

QUESTION: What did you say? Can you give us any more detail on this?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. We brushed by that pretty rapidly. But we got it on the record.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, I think Bo Callaway suggested to reporters the other day that you might be, if not

a surrogate, at least an advocate for President Ford in New Hampshire. Do you have plans along those lines?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. Nobody has ever mentioned it to me. I would assume in view of the fact that his expression of my liability to the ticket, a public expression to that effect, that the last person they would want in New Hampshire would be me. That I just assume. Nobody has talked to me about it.

QUESTION: Mr. Callaway's expression of your liability?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes.

QUESTION: Where do you think you could help?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is another question, that is, my opinion as against Mr. Callaway's opinion. I think I can help him anyway.

QUESTION: You sound as though you want to say more. We would like you to say more.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I have got a lot of friends around the country. I think the American people are looking for people who will talk out honestly, openly and forthrightly and believe there is one country based on equality and respect for human dignity. We are all Americans, regardless of our backgrounds. I just feel the door is wide open in the Republican Party for all Americans.

We want to take in all points of view. This is the basis of democracy and that we shouldn't be afraid of different points of view. We can debate them and argue them out. Those in the majority win and the rest, support them.

QUESTION: You are saying, Mr. Vice President, that your role in the campaign is sort of fuzzy now.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I didn't use the word fuzzy. I haven't expressed my opinion. I answered two questions; one about New Hampshire and whether Mr. Callaway was going to ask me to go up there. You asked me where I thought I could be helpful and I said.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, yesterday Governor Carey took action which, in effect, dismissed about three percent of New York State's work force, about 3,000 employees to balance the State's budget. If you were before those 3,000 former State employees at this particular time of year, a couple of weeks before Christmas, what would you say to them?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I dismissed 7,800. So, I know exactly what the problem is.

QUESTION: What did you say to them?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We didn't have the money to pay them. We felt very badly about it and tried to find work in other places. But you cannot go on spending more money than you have, no matter how valuable the human elements are. A State has to have a balanced budget. A city has to have a balanced budget.

I raised taxes that year, \$1 billion, \$500 million in the early part of the year, \$500 million at the special session at the end of the year. New York State now has the highest taxes, State and local, of any State in the nation, the result of which is lost business and that has attracted people who need help from all over the country.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, FBI Director, Clarence Kelly says we may have to abdicate some of our civil liberties in the interest of national security. Do you think that is something that will be considered?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It depends on the relationship of one to the other. If abdicating some of our civil liberties is in the interest of national security, then, of course, he is right. But under those circumstances they will forfeit their civil liberties.

QUESTION: Do you support Senate Bill 1?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't know what it is.

QUESTION: I won't go into it now.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You have talked about the value of debate and discussion and diverse points of view. But you have also talked about the minority role your party has.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not the role, the minority status.

QUESTION: The minority status. Is the Reagan candidacy a healthy thing as some party officials say, or is it a bad thing for the party?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Who is afraid of competition?

QUESTION: Does it divide a minority party up and make it thus, weaker, or does it strengthen it somehow?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: To a degree. It is very interesting, I ran against Averell Harriman in 1958. He had the nomination. His focus was on the Presidency. The State, he assumed, was his. We had about five of us running for Governor.

It was 1958. It was a very good year. There were five people fighting, going out to the people to arouse their interest. That analogy there, I think, says exactly that. Of course, under these circumstances the Democrats have us beaten five to one on candidates.

But it is very interesting. It has gotten so many that they are having a hard time getting audiences to come listen to them. Nine was the lowest I heard for a function in New York City for one of their prominent candidates.

QUESTION: Thank you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is a pleasure.

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(AT 12:40 P.M. CST)