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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE  
OF  
NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

THE BRIEFING ROOM

11:05 A.M. EST

MR. GREENER: I think, as most of you know, that we have completed six hearings around the country on domestic issues. The Vice President submitted his report yesterday to the President and is here to brief on it today. He has a brief opening statement and then he will be pleased to take your questions.

Mr. Vice President.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: I won't give you the full report, just one of three volumes. Let me just make an opening statement and then we will go to questions.

During the past two and a half months at the request of the President the Domestic Council has held a series of public forums across the country to explore public concerns and recommendations on domestic policies and programs. These public forums together with hundreds of statements submitted to the Council by individuals and organizations all across the Nation represented a profoundly moving portrait of America today, an America whose people are troubled yet hopeful, hard-pressed yet vigorous and, above all, faithful to the democratic process.

The common thread was an abiding faith in the process conceived by the men who founded this Nation two hundred years ago. We went to the people to listen to their words, voices raised in the belief that they would be heard and that somehow it would make a difference. "It almost makes one think the U.S. Government is interested in our problems," a woman said.

We heard criticisms and complaints and frustrations. We heard distress stories of individual tragedy and deprivation. But we also heard stories of success, hundreds of them.

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I came away from this experience buoyed by what I perceived to be a note of optimism that runs through this land today. People of widely differing views and backgrounds came to these forums and submitted constructive ideas to a process they trust -- the democratic process. The note of optimism that I hear is sounded by a free people who know that their voices are heard and that they themselves can make a difference in how we as a Nation will live and grow in our country's third century.

I would also like to say that the discussions of these forums, or at these forums, are divided into four subjects: economic growth, resource development, social policy and community building. And we held the discussions in the morning, plenary session, members of the Cabinet, brief presentations and discussion following, brief presentation by individuals who were selected in advance, and then general discussion from the floor, eight or nine hundred people present.

The cities we went to were Denver, Colorado; Tampa, Florida; Austin, Texas; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Los Angeles, California.

The three people principally involved were Jim Cannon, who is the Director of the Domestic Council; Jack Veneman, who is a counsellor for me, former Under Secretary of HEW and who organized and ran the hearings; and Art Quern, Associate Director of the Domestic Council, who was working on the collation and preparation of the material with Jack Veneman and his staff.

First we have a report with a letter to the President and a digest of the results of the hearings, and that is this and you all have it. Then that is backed up and you will have later a summary of each of the forums in the six cities, the results of those, about 30 pages on each, with quotes, and gives an extremely good flavor and a very interesting feeling as to what the American people's reactions are to domestic policy.

This will be released, sent to all the members who participated in each of the areas -- that is, the report for their area -- and all of it released to you.

We have also then given the President a series of recommendations relating to the subjects and background information for his own consideration and use in preparation of the Ford Administration 1976 program and whatever use it may be in connection with the State of the Union. That material he has and I think that covers the background. I would be glad to answer any questions.

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Q How did you come to choose these six particular cities, Mr. Vice President?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: At random.

Q Would you care to discuss --

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: It is very hard to select six cities in the United States which you choose. But we tried to have a geographic representative and so forth.

Q Will your recommendations be made public?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Excuse me, there was a gentleman --

Q Mine is sort of the same question. Would you discuss what your recommendations to the President are?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, as a Staff Assistant to the President and the Domestic Council being his instrument, until he has made his decisions as to what use he wants to make of those, I don't believe it would be appropriate for us to say, but I can give you some of the thoughts that were expressed by the people that we talked to.

Q That is in here. I would like to know what your thoughts are.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I would like to have you know them but that is not appropriate, unfortunately.

Q What was the President's original reaction to this?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: He was enthusiastic.

Q Did he say there was any area that he might be trying to stress?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: I think there were 19 different major areas covered. We tried to give a broad perspective of America today, the policy issues that are there, an analysis of the Federal programs and suggestions relating to the evolution that could be effective in meeting the criticisms and the suggestions made by the people.

Q Mr. Vice President, do you agree with what -- you say it is the majority opinion that national health insurance is necessary?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I think I first recommended in 1964 -- I tried to, in 1959, adopt it from New York State as a State, but found that the cost to the State and its business activities would be such that it would put us in a very adverse competitive position and that, therefore, the only way it could be done would be on a national basis.

Now the problem with national health insurance today is twofold. One, that the delivery system still is not adequate to handle the problem and, two, that it can only be handled, that is the insurance aspect of it, as the financial resources of the country are such to make it possible. So that the delivery problem and the financial problem are important elements in a program that has got to come for this Nation.

Q On the second point, if I could follow that, is it your view that we are in a position financially now to begin on a national health insurance program?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, it depends on what your definition of "begin" is.

Q Well, I will accept however way you choose to define it.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: I think there are some other steps that have to be taken first before beginning so that the public does not get the feeling that we are launching on something and then that the Government has promised them something that they don't get which I think --

Q What are those steps, Mr. Vice President?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: That is what is in the report.

Q Mr. Vice President, did you find in any areas that there was a rather sizable disagreement with Mr. Ford's policies?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: No, interestingly enough these meetings which were attended by Democratic and Republican Governors, Democratic and Republican Mayors, business and social work groups, civic groups, individuals, virtually had a non-partisan flavor. It was very interesting to me, having had the town meetings for years as Governor. The problems are problems they view as Washington problems, bureaucracy and red tape, over-commitment, under-delivery over the years. They are not identified with individuals or parties. They are just Washington.

And we now have 1,009 categorical grants and the administrative procedures, the red tape, is so great that they perceive this as a problem of bureaucracy and red tape and not of one Administration, although, as a matter of fact, I think that they feel, the impression I got, whether it was business or Government or even individuals, that the bureaucracy rather than the Administration controls their problems and, unfortunately, I think it is fair to say there is a growing feeling that rather than looking to Washington for the solution of the problem that the Federal Government is the problem.

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Q Do you have recommendations as to how to get around that?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Yes.

Q But you can't tell us what they are?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I can tell you, for instance, that Dan Evans, who is the Governor of the State of Washington and who has just retired as Chairman of the National Governors Conference, said he has just polled all the Governors, and it is in his report in here, that the feeling is virtually unanimous that they ought to move from categorical grants to block grants, thus eliminating bureaucracy and red tape, giving greater latitude to the individual local Government levels, whether it is State, county, village, town, city, so that they can make the decisions and be more flexible.

I mean, he cited a very interesting case of where they had worked for months to qualify for a \$7 million grant under one of these programs and that when they sent it in, and it was very well done, they got word back, sorry, that since they had prepared this that the regulations had been changed and, therefore, the application was cancelled and they would have to start again.

Q Sir, you found a note of optimism running through the land. Can you quantify that in terms of the number of notes of pessimism you may have found running through the land?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: 70-25. People are pessimistic but they don't feel that the problems are inherently necessary and that they can be changed, they can be removed, they can be modified, and, therefore, freed, and this country has the manpower, it has the brains, it has the people, it has the resources, if we can just get rolling we are going to have no problem, and that private enterprise can provide the jobs if it gets rolling again.

Q How about the other 5 percent, Mr. Vice President? You said 70-25. That leaves 5. Were they "no opinion" or what?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: I will amend that. It just shows my mathematics is slipping.

Q 70 percent optimism, Mr. Vice President?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Yes. I have now upped it to 75. (Laughter)

Q Mr. Vice President, about how much did all these conferences cost?

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VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: I have no idea. I can give you the list of Cabinet officers who attended. Each department paid its own expenses for the trip when they went and we paid part, I paid part, or my office, Domestic Council, the various departments and agencies, the field offices and so forth.

Q Mr. Vice President, we all know that these conferences were non-political, but some of Mr. Ford's advisers did hope there would be some political spill-over, that they might help in his quest for the Presidency. What do you feel has been the political impact, even though I realize it has a non-political purpose -- in fact, in real life these things do have political impact -- what do you think is the political impact upon the President?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I would have to think that it was not a conscious political impact. I would think that -- this was expressed quite often -- this was the first time that the Executive Branch had ever sent out people to represent them to find out what the public is thinking in connection with the preparation of the State of the Union. Congress has hearings around the country. But the Executive Branch has done very little of this. They have had speeches but not -- see, we really were not coming out to sell something, we were going out to try to find out what the public thought, so I think that that would be my reaction, that that was the biggest plus that the President would get, if you want to call it politically, but I think just in the sense of confidence in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government.

When I said non-political that was my appraisal of the people's reactions, that they were not thinking this is a political gimmick or this is a political thing, and they were not reacting politically; they were just thinking about their problems and coming up with suggestions.

Q Sir, how many people were heard from in terms of their opinions through all six of the cities?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, we heard from or received letters from -- you really have to include both -- what we did was --

MR. VENEMAN: About 1,025 verbally.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: 1,025, Jack Veneman says, were heard orally.

You see, in the afternoon they would break up in these four groups and the Cabinet officer would preside and there would be three or four hundred people in each group and they went all afternoon, and there a lot larger, a much bigger number of people were heard than in the morning where we covered the four subjects, and maybe 25 or 30 people from the floor would be heard and the others would be speakers who had been planned, who had been invited to speak. So he says 1,025 were heard from and the number of letters we received --

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MR. VENEMAN: About 500 written.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: About 500 written.  
We have about eleven or twelve thousand pages of transcript.

Q Mr. Vice President, Newsweek Magazine has a cover saying Ford is in trouble. A couple national newspaper columnists this morning say that the campaign is in trouble and perhaps on the rocks. Senator Barry Goldwater --

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Sounds familiar.

Q -- says he cannot find much campaign effort on behalf of President Ford out across the countryside and thinks a lot of spade work needs to be done and maybe some people need to be changed in the campaign.

My question is, do you perceive this and do you think the President perceives this?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, you made quite a long comprehensive statement that covered quite a few aspects of the political situation. Let me re-state it the way I see it.

At this point, which is very early in the game, the President's ratings are so much higher than mine ever were when I was running for Governor at the same time. I usually was down around 24 to 36 percent and then always came up from there to win the election. For someone to jump out in front as fast as has happened in the case of Governor Reagan, this early in the game, I think is unusual but because of its very unique character I think that myself if I were in his position I would be a little concerned that I was peaking too soon and it would be difficult to sustain particularly as it gets into the issues and the difficult problems that he is going to have to discuss in some detail and that the President, now taking the other side, is now in the period where he has had the courage to face the tough issues of this country, analyze them, and then take the positions which he felt reflected the long-term best interests of the American people and disregarded the short-term political aspects.

Now I happen to think that is the best politics. I think the American people are tired of politicians, fed up with them anyhow, and that they want somebody who tells them the truth, tells it like it is, and then has the courage to do what is in their best interests. So my hunch is that the President is going to emerge because of this and that this will have the reverse effect of what you now see.

So I would not jump--although I have to say that it does make good news and this is going to be a period now where a lot of people will be writing on politics and if you write on politics you have to write something so that you have to find something to write about.

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Q Mr. Vice President, Melvin Laird said this morning that the strongest Republican ticket next year would be a Ford-Rockefeller ticket. Would you agree with that?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I'll tell you, that is what he said a year ago. It shows he is consistent. (Laughter)

Q He says that the polls demonstrate that.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I have not taken any polls. They are very strict now on what you can do in spending money. Frankly, as I said in my letter, in order to avoid getting involved personally in the squabbling and in order to avoid President Ford having to spend time in relation to what seems to be totally unnecessary questions relating to politics when there are big issues that affect the well-being of the American people which he is trying to focus on, I just withdrew, but I had always said right along that I was not a candidate for Vice President in 1976, that I did not think the President should make up his mind until he got to the Convention, was nominated, and only then pick the person whom I felt at that time would best reflect the interests of the American people.

Q Mr. Vice President, once the Convention politics have been put aside at the point you just cited, if the President then says that for November the best politics and the best national interests would be served by your joining him on the ticket, would you then join him on the ticket?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I have to tell you the simple truth, that I have said now for almost a year -- well, it will be a year Friday -- that I would not say whether I would even be available. This is before I wrote the letter. I would not even say I would be available in 1976 because I felt that would put emotional pressure on him about selecting me and so that same thing is true.

I have already withdrawn. So now you are asking me to reconsider and that has even gone further than I was going before so I am not even thinking about it, much less reconsidering.

Q I want to ask whether you would be renouncing your political birthright?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Oh, no, I never renounce that. (Laughter)

Q That is a national heritage that we get as free citizens.

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Q Mr. Vice President, Mr. Callaway has made very candid statements about your effect on the --

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: So I read.

Q I was wondering whether you have any impressions of Mr. Callaway's effect on the campaign?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I will be totally candid with you. I have not been involved in the campaign activities of the Administration, and to appraise the success and the effectiveness of the campaign effort or a campaign leader one has to know all of the facts and what is going on, and my impression is the President has total confidence in it, and he is the one that is running. I am not running so I shouldn't have an opinion.

Q Mr. Vice President, Senator Goldwater also said that in his opinion if President Ford faltered in the early primaries, he speculated that you might submit your resignation and become a candidate for the Presidency, or for the nomination.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Is this a recommendation or a speculation?

Q I read it as a speculation, and I would like your reaction.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I appreciate the speculation. I have made no speculations myself. I wrote my letter and finished this work with the distinguished group that are here present, with whom I had the honor of working, and they have done a fantastic job, and I have given no thought and have no plans beyond the present.

Q Mr. Vice President, do you think Governor Reagan's record as Governor is fair game in the Presidential campaign, and what do you think of that record?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I have to tell you that I have found that in politics anything is fair game.

Q And the second part of the question is, what do you think of his record as Governor?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, he and I are good friends and we approach some problems the same and we approach some problems differently. Therefore, I would have to say that looking back he handled the situation, which was a difficult situation in California, in a way that seems to have been well received in California and that Governor Brown seems to be picking up quite a lot from him.

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Now, I was not a resident of California -- and we had a lot of problems in New York -- so I really could not give you any personal, detailed appraisal.

Q Mr. Vice President, could we go back to your statement and the letter on the Vice Presidency?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Yes, stand right on.

Q Are you saying that those of us or those who wrote this, this meant you were out -- you were gone out of the political landscape in 1976 as far as the Vice Presidency is concerned--are you saying they overread that?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: No, not as far as the Vice Presidency is concerned.

Q You are not a potential candidate for Vice President in 1976?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: No, sir.

Q Well, what are you a potential candidate for?  
(Laughter)

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: No plans and no programs.

Q Has the President sought your advice on what he should do on the tax, energy, and common situs picketing, and what do you hear about those?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: That is a pretty comprehensive question. I would say the answer is no, as far as the first part is concerned -- that is, sought my advice -- although there is a staff procedure in the White House where papers are circulated and you have a chance to express your opinion.

As to what he is going to do, I really have no idea.

Q What advice have you expressed on those papers?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Whatever advice I expressed to him is personal and they are confidential.

Q Mr. Vice President, you said the American people are tired of politicians.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Yes.

Q How many people can you think of who are even being mentioned for any office as high as President or Vice President who are not politicians, including President Ford?

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VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I don't include people who are just running for office as being politicians. I include people who are in office as being politicians and they are the ones that I am talking about. I know that a group of five or six Democrats in the last -- I was in New York last weekend and they had been there, and they were down--and these are permanent individuals they were down the lowest, they had nine people attending a meeting. Now that has got to say something to somebody that the people are not all that excited about the Presidential election.

Now that does not say that you all don't write about it, because you do, but I am not sure that the people are as excited about it as some of those who write. Now maybe they will get so later. Maybe they will get more excited later, but I don't think they have come to focus yet.

Q Mr. Vice President, if you were writing a Republican platform for 1976, would you recommend the conclusions in this report, as outlined, to be followed?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, these are the conclusions that we gathered from the people. Now we have written our own recommendations to the President and, while they are importantly related to this, they also involve balancing out some of these problems and relating them, and I think one of the most important things today is to develop a conceptual approach to national questions -- that we, as a Nation, tend to be a Nation of specialists and each specialist wants to go more and more into detail on his or her subject and the less that they have to bother by trying to reconcile other people's problems or programs with theirs the simpler it is, and this is the trouble, and I think the time has come when we have got to see these things in a conceptual framework, relate them to each other, balance them out and come forward with a total program that is going to be meaningful and is going to solve people's problems and restore their confidence, and I think it can be done.

I am tremendously optimistic. I think we are the most fortunate people. We have got the greatest people; we have got the resources; we have got the capacity. We need to get our policies clear and straightened out between Congress and the Executive. We need to get rolling. I think we can get the 2.8 million jobs. I think we can produce the 1.6 million jobs in the future. I think we can meet ecological needs with growth and with energy produced domestically. This is the most exciting period anyone has lived in and when you get going then we can help others in effectively dealing with their problems around the world.

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Q The answer is no on the question? (Laughter)

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, it is trying to say that those -- you see, I don't want to deny what is in here because it is good stuff, but I don't think it goes far enough. I don't think it is interpreted. It is raw material that is pulled together, but needs to be, which we have tried to do, interpreted and put together in the form of policy, programs within a conceptual framework.

Q Mr. Vice President, you said that President Ford is your candidate in 1976.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Yes.

Q What do you think ought to be done that is not being done now to enhance his prospects of winning the nomination and the election?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, as I said earlier, I think the most important thing that he does is to work on solving the problems of inflation and unemployment and bureaucratic red tape and our national security and freedom, and demonstrate the kind of courage which he has to take the positions that reflect the long-term best interests of the American people as against the short-term political expedience.

I think this country has lived too much by political expediency and I think we are suffering from it and I think that we cannot live in the election cycle and we have got to be able to have the courage and the sophistication as a free people and as representatives of free people to take those longer term positions that reflect their best interests, and I think the American people are getting more sophisticated, more understanding, and that they are ready now to bite the bullet and take the hard steps and the hard measures for the best long-term interests of this country.

Q Do you share the criticism that for the last several months the President has been constantly trimming his program to meet the Reagan threat and that he has not in fact been --

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: That is a slogan. I don't think that is true.

Q But it is often repeated.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Of course it is, but that is why slogans are so dangerous, because they are often repeated and then they are repeated without thought. That is what worries me. That is why I am against slogans, and that is why I have always thought that this business of liberal-conservative was a misnomer. I mean, it is misleading because people stop thinking. You can say liberal and conservative and you don't have to think.

Q Is it your impression that over this period the President has been doing, as you say, dealing with the long-term interests of the country?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Yes.

Q Well, how is it then that the country does not have the perception of him as a potential President, as a leader, as reflected in the polls, and why hasn't it worked up to now?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: That is what I was trying to explain, very simple. They are unpopular political positions today. I almost got beaten in one election for this very reason, because I did a lot of things that were tough and then it didn't show, the results didn't show, and it was just by a very good communications program that I was able to get the public to see the results of the tough steps. Now this is his problem, too, to get the results from these tough measures that he is taking.

Q Mr. Vice President, you meet with the President regularly, generally once a week.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Yes.

Q We had a terrible time finding out what goes on in those meetings. Could you tell us what do you talk about, sir?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Whatever is on my agenda.

Q On yours or on his?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Mine. I report to him on the various activities that I am carrying on for him and make comments on any subjects that I feel moved to comment on.

Q Mr. Vice President, during the course of those meetings he has never asked you for your reaction or for what you hear or for what you think on matters such as these?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Sometimes he asks me. I was responding to a specific question.

Q The tax increase or the tax veto?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: No, sir, he did not ask on that.

Q In terms of a popular political decision, Mr. Vice President --

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VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: They have the floor over here.

Q Thank you, sir. (Laughter)

Q Mr. Vice President, it has been reported that you have mentioned very strong statements to the Southern Republican Chairmen, and I am wondering, is there any accuracy in these reports as you were quoted and if you would make such a strong statement to the Republican Chairmen why is it you make such gentle statements regarding the gentleman that first suggested that you might be better advised to get off the ticket?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, I will tell you. When you say "strong statements," I don't know whether you are referring to my language or the substance. The language was a little strong.

Q Canine incest. (Laughter)

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: The language was a little strong and for which I apologize to you but not -- (Laughter)

Q I was not thinking of that.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: The language was appropriate for the occasion because it emphasized in a sense the points I was trying to make, which were very simple points of trying to -- sometimes it is hard to break through to an understanding.

Q I was not really concerned about that.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: All right. (Laughter)

Q I work with these gentlemen here (Laughter) and what I want to know, Mr. Vice President, is why would you speak so strongly to these Chairmen but so gently to Mr. Callaway? That is the question.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Mr. Callaway is representing the President of the United States. He is his campaign manager. I am working for the President and my candidate is the President. I will do nothing to undermine, or to in any way do anything but support his efforts.

Now if there is a matter of policy issue or matter of principle in it, then, of course, I will speak out and that is the understanding we have. I was trying to straighten out an understanding down there between these distinguished leaders and myself on some fundamental but simple questions.

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Q Mr. Vice President, you referred earlier to the President having taken unpopular -- well, decisions which are unpopular -- political decisions today.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Yes.

Q Do you consider the tax cut question one of those, and do you share the feeling that he should veto the bill?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: Well, now you have a two-part question there that seems to me is totally different; I mean, they are unrelated subjects. What was the first part of that question? Do I think it is a popular issue or an unpopular issue?

Q You said that the President has taken decisions which are unpopular.

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: If the unpopular was tying cuts in expenditure to the tax -- that is what was so unpopular, because everybody would like these expenditures and those who don't pay the taxes are enthusiastic about them. So that is where it took, I think, a good deal of courage, and he has been standing on that position.

Now, do I share the feeling about tax cuts or about the whole program?

Q About his particular position on the bill. In other words, would you veto that bill?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: You see, it is very hard to say what you would do until you go back to what the original position is that you would have taken. He is saying he is going to veto the bill, not because he does not like the bill per se but because he said he wants \$28 billion of tax cuts and \$28 billion of expenditure cuts. That is his position.

Now this bill is a \$17 billion tax cut with no revenue cuts. That is his argument on this and it has nothing to do with the merits or dismerits of the tax cut itself.

Q Well, I guess what I am trying to get out of you is whether or not --

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: I am not President. That is the simple answer, so what I think about this is interesting but totally irrelevant because I don't sign or veto bills and I don't take the --

Q I don't think it is something totally irrelevant. (Laughter)

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Q Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

Q I wondered if the President Ford Committee is now thinking that the President ought to cut back on his traditional campaign appearances around the country, spend more time in Washington, and they are thinking of using what they are describing as advocates -- friends of the President, members of the Administration -- to go out and make some of those traditional campaign appearances? A) Do you think that is a good idea, and B) will you step up your level of activity in that area?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: It would be impossible. I have been so active that I am exhausted. (Laughter) So I could not step up mine any.

Q But you will, for instance, be going into New Hampshire on the President's behalf and Florida and other States?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: I would doubt it very much. If, as was made clear, that my presence to many or to some -- many being small in our party, but we think of it as many -- (Laughter) -- it is what I refer to as the minority of the minority -- feeling that I was a liability, why would you want a liability in the middle of a campaign? So having dropped out as Vice President, why should I now renew that liability in those crucial campaigns?

Q Do you think you are a liability across the board in the primaries?

VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER: We are not talking about what I think; we are talking about what a group thinks and which I responded to in order to save the President from wasting his time with squabbling. I don't believe in squabbling or wasting my time, and you have been very gracious and said "Thank you, Mr. Vice President," four times and so now I will respond and say thank you, and it is a pleasure to be here.

THE PRESS: Thank you, sir.

END (AT 11:44 A.M. EST)