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INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT
BY
MIGNON SMITH
MIGNON SMITH WASHINGTON-ALABAMA NEWS SERVICE

MARRIOTT INN
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

9:45 P.M. EST

MS. SMITH: Mr. President, in 1965, all five of Alabama's new Republican Congressmen supported you to become minority leader, and you have been considered a friend of the South, making several visits to Alabama.

Since becoming President, some say you are a little more liberal. Is this because you see the national election this way or is it because of the more liberal Democratic Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: I certainly don't think I am a liberal, by any standards. At most, I am a moderate and certainly on fiscal affairs I am a very, very conservative person. I think I had one of the most conservative records in the House of Representatives on handling Federal finances and I have tried to carry out in the same way in the White House.

I really don't know where anybody gets the impression that I am liberal. I have fought this Democratic Congress pretty hard, vetoed 48 bills, and got 39 of them sustained, and saved the taxpayers \$13 billion. So I have been challenging the Democratic Congress, which is very liberal, and I have been maintaining my past record of fiscal conservatism.

MS. SMITH: Mr. President, former Governor Reagan has recommended in Texas and Alabama that Democrats who are conservative or supporters of Governor Wallace vote in the primary for him. Would you recommend that Alabama Democrats vote in the Republican primary in Alabama for you?

THE PRESIDENT: I would certainly be very grateful for any Democrats in Alabama or elsewhere who could properly vote in the primary, voting for me. I say that very specifically because I know there are many, many Democrats in Alabama who agree with my philosophy, and if they could and can legally vote in a Republican primary, I would appreciate their support.

MS. SMITH: Former Governor Carter has said he would recommend that the new solar energy research center be put -- well, first he said Boston and he later said Cape Kennedy, when he was campaigning there. Would you support putting it in Huntsville, which already has so many fine facilities?

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THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have been to Huntsville and it has an outstanding technical facility. It is in a great center of research and development.

I can't make that decision. That is a decision that will have to be made by Dr. Robert Seamans, the head of the Energy Research and Development Agency. I hope and trust that Huntsville and any other city in the United States that wants that solar energy center would make application and get their applications in so Dr. Seamans and his people can make the decision on a technical basis.

Huntsville has lots of fine assets for it, but I think the scientists and experts have to make the evaluation as to which applicant is best qualified.

MS. SMITH: What do you see as the future for Huntsville?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have always been, as you know, a very strong supporter of the space program, right from the very beginning. I recommended to the Congress for the next fiscal year a slightly larger space program than for the current fiscal year.

I think we have many, many new projects that can be undertaken, including the space shuttle, in the NASA organization. So, as long as I am President, space will get a very big boost.

MS. SMITH: Alabama farmers have been concerned about restricting soybean sales to Japan, which meant Japan, Belgium and Brazil. What is your policy now on soybeans?

THE PRESIDENT: I have never imposed any embargo on the sale of soybeans to Japan. If my memory is accurate, my predecessor did for a limited period of time, but I have never done so, and with the outstanding projection we have had in American agriculture, including soybeans, I see no reason whatsoever for any embargo on soybeans or any of our other major crops.

MS. SMITH: Will you continue to support the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway which will open up the Midwest?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, in the budget that I submitted for the next fiscal year, I recommended to the Congress the full amount proposed to me by the Army Corps of Engineers. I can't tell you off the top of my head just what that amount is, but it was a very substantial new increment in the construction of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.

MS. SMITH: Thank you.

END (AT 9:50 P.M. EST)