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MAY 14, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Bristol, Tennessee)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

TRI-CITY AIRPORT

8:56 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, everybody.

It is great to be back in Johnson City. I have been here on at least one occasion, I think, in 1972 or 1970. I wish it was possible for me to do more traveling in Tennessee. We are going to Memphis, of course, but I would have been delighted to go to Knoxville and Chattanooga and Nashville and the many other nice places in Tennessee, but the fact that I also have to do the job of being President, to a substantial degree cuts back my opportunities to see the many people in Tennessee and Kentucky and Michigan that I would like.

But, as I think all of you know, I am running on my record as President for the last 21 months. I think that is a good record. It is a record of achievement in the field of domestic affairs.

We have cut the rate of inflation by 75 percent. We have added 3,300,000 people in the job roles in this country in the last 12 months. We added 710,000 new people on the job roles just the last month of April. And if we look at the overall, we are at peace, we have got the strength to maintain the peace.

Finally, I think the Ford Administration has restored confidence, integrity, candor and forthrightness in the White House.

So, when you sum up the substance of the 21 months, I think I can say with pride that we have achieved peace. We are on the road to a growing and permanent prosperity and the White House today has the trust and confidence of the American people.

I am deeply grateful that Senator Howard Baker is here and your own Congressman Jimmy Quillen, as well as your fine former Governor Winfield Dunn.

I will be glad now to answer a couple of questions.

Too early in the morning? (Laughter)

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, Senator Baker said that it would be good for you to ask Mr. Ronald Reagan to be your Vice Presidential nominee. What do you feel about that?

THE PRESIDENT: As I understand it, Mr. Reagan has taken himself out of any consideration. He made a statement several weeks ago that he would not be a candidate for Vice President.

QUESTION: Would you consider him, though?

THE PRESIDENT: I certainly have never said I wouldn't, and I was only going by his own statement. We have an outstanding field of potential Republican Vice Presidential candidates, including Senator Baker, Senator Brock, former Governor Connally and a number of sitting Governors, so we have an excellent potential for Vice Presidential candidates and I have got one of them standing right at my right.

QUESTION: Do you plan to name your TVA appointee today?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I do not.

QUESTION: Are you worried about the crossover vote, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Where? In Michigan or here?

QUESTION: Here.

THE PRESIDENT: I have said repeatedly that we want all voters, whether they are Republicans, Independents or Democrats, who have the same political philosophy that I have, to vote for me. I want this to be a test of the total vote of individuals, regardless of political label.

QUESTION: Mr. President, why isn't Senator Brock on this trip?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that Senator Brock is going to meet us in Memphis, as I understand it, but, you know, he also has a campaign of his own and, as I recall, this morning he had some committee meeting of some importance that precluded his being on this particular leg of the trip.

QUESTION: Mr. President, how do you feel about Henry Kissinger in your Cabinet?

THE PRESIDENT: Henry Kissinger has done a good job as Secretary of State, and you can judge that by the fact that we have achieved the peace, and a Secretary of State's record is what you have to judge him on, and this Administration has achieved the peace. We are in a position to maintain it through our military capability and our diplomatic skill, and as long as a person does a good job I want him on the job.

THE PRESS: Thank you very much.

END (AT 9:01 A.M. EDT)