

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of the Vice President
(West Orange, New Jersey)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
TOWN AND CAMPUS MOTOR INN
RUM KEG ROOM
WEST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

(AT 4:08 P.M. EST)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here with a great many old friends and people whom I admire; Webb Todd, who has been a leader here in the Republican Party, Bernard Shanley and Kay Neuburger and now Jack Ewing on the financial side.

I came over to be of any help I can in connection both with the financial situation for the party and in connection with the Republican Convention which is not too far off.

Sir?

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you believe that President Ford will be nominated on the first ballot?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I believe President Ford will be nominated on the first ballot and elected in November, and I can tell you why -- because his record is really extraordinary.

Two years ago this country was faced with tremendously difficult problems: loss of respect and confidence in the Executive Branch of government, the leadership; the economic crisis with inflation, unemployment, recession; and problems in the world that almost looked insurmountable.

Two years later what has happened. The President has restored confidence and respect in government, in the White House. In the economy, he has cut the inflation rate in half. There are 3,200,000 more people working today in the United States than there were a year ago -- an absolutely phenomenal growth.

The growth rate of the economy at the present time is 8.7 percent. Nobody thought that inflation could be controlled and jobs restored both at the same time.

He has done it. He has done it by his courage, by his belief in fundamental values. And on top of those two, we have peace in the world, despite the most extraordinary, delicate and difficult situations, including the Middle East.

So in my opinion, the American people are not going to want to change that kind of leadership which has the courage and the ability to deal with the problems that have to be faced and that have been faced which very few people thought could be.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, with the delegate count so close and so critical, is your role in the campaign that much more important, especially here in New Jersey?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't think anyone from the outside really affects the internal decisions in a State. I think the State leadership, in their wisdom and judgment, are the people themselves.

We faced in New York a situation very similar to the one which New Jersey does. We had an uncommitted delegation. We decided to go with the President about a month and a half ago, I guess it was, because we felt it was a psychological moment.

Pennsylvania and New York both went with about 250 delegates. Now New Jersey finds itself in a key position with an uncommitted delegation. And I think this is the psychological time for maximum impact for the benefit of the President when they act. I think it is going to be a tremendous lift.

QUESTION: Are you confident that your prestige will help push the uncommitted delegates to come to Mr. Ford?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You are very gracious, but I am not even confident in my prestige, much less what the delegates are going to do or when they are going to do it.

But I think that this is the time to do it. I think the sentiment here is strong for Ford simply because this is a very intelligent electorate here in New Jersey, very intelligent leadership in the Republican Party, and the record speaks for itself.

Therefore, for anyone who believes in this country and who has confidence in its future, why change leaders when you have a proven leader who has brought success.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in effect you just called upon the uncommitted delegates in New Jersey to announce now for Gerald Ford. If that occurs, will that provide sufficient impetus for a real Ford bandwagon at this crucial time?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: First, I don't want to say I called on them, because it is not my responsibility. I said that this is a very psychological moment. And if they act now, it would have maximum impacts psychologically.

It certainly would help to give the momentum you are talking about for the Ford victory. I think President Ford is going to have that victory. He is now what, 90 votes ahead. And I think he has 999, or something; a thousand now. These things move.

So that he is within 130 votes now of the number needed to be elected. Now, we have 15 uncommitted, 16 uncommitted; New Jersey has 67; Pennsylvania has some more uncommitted. I think this thing is rolling myself.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, what is your role on the team? Are you going to be the second man on the team in the fall as far as you know?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I have withdrawn my name from the consideration, as you know, in a letter some months ago.

QUESTION: Others have also withdrawn at times and not meant it.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, they didn't put it in writing.

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And I would just like to say that I have said right along the President shouldn't make up his mind as to who he wants until he is nominated. At that time he ought to make his decision and hand it to the convention.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, with the voting as close as it has been with the delegate count, do you expect the Republican Party to be terminably split in New Jersey?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not sure what you mean by the word terminably. It will be split. I have to think when President Ford is nominated that some of those who were supporting Governor Reagan will probably not be very active or even go over.

However, seeing as President Ford is in the center and Mr. Reagan has been to the right of Mr. Ford, and seeing the voters generally are in the center or to the left, when you get beyond the 19 or 18 percent which is Republican, I think if the extreme right in the Republican Party opposes Mr. Ford, it is going to help him in getting elected President of the United States on the Republican ticket.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the most recent surveys have shown over and over again that in a Ford-Carter contest it would be Carter.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I know. I know what you are saying. I have got to tell you that I ran for Governor of New York four times, and each time it showed exactly the same as far as I was concerned, only it wasn't Mr. Carter; it was four other Democrats. I was never more than 36 percent when I started, and I was as low as 24 percent.

But when you get to the voters and give them a chance to face two people, squarely, and the record which President Ford has, I am confident that the American people are going to say, "We want to continue this kind of solid, sound leadership." So I am not worried about those polls now.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the New Jersey Delegation voted yesterday to stay uncommitted. How do you read that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course, I wasn't there. They are uncommitted. So I don't know what a vote would mean

MORE

to say uncommitted. They are uncommitted. Until they commit, they are uncommitted. So that doesn't seem to me it was a very meaningful vote.

What I simply said was that psychologically for those who are interested in seeing President Ford selected as the Republican nominee, if the New Jersey delegates, any of them -- and I understand there is a very real feeling for Mr. Ford here -- then this is the psychological moment for them to make their vote have its maximum impact on behalf of President Ford.

QUESTION: Would you urge them to go back tomorrow then and revote?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. As I said, I am very hesitant about interfering in anybody else's affairs.

QUESTION: Would you be disappointed in anything less than 100 percent support among the delegates?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is very seldom anyone gets 100 percent of anything.

QUESTION: You are expecting some defections?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't know as I call them defections. They are uncommitted. Therefore, how do you know what a defect is? You have to be committed to be defective.

I would just say I wouldn't expect anybody to vote 100 percent. This is America. This is a democratic country, a democracy. We all have individual points of view and they differ. If you had a united position, it is very rare.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, your individual point of view, please. Is Henry Kissinger now an asset or a liability to the Republican Party?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: A tremendous asset to the Republican Party; one of the greatest it has ever had. That is the reason he is under such attack; because both Mr. Reagan, who is opposing the President, and the Democrats, who are opposing, want to come in.

They have to go after the Republican Party and the President's strongest position. That is foreign policy. Mr. Kissinger has been a man who has handled for the two Presidents foreign policy. Therefore, you have got to destroy the party where it is the strongest. He is the symbol.

QUESTION: Do you believe that President Ford's pardoning of Richard Nixon will figure into the way the electorate will respond in November?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think there are some people who were upset about it at the time. However, his rationale was a very understanding one. This had torn our country apart; the whole Watergate situation, on top of the Vietnam situation.

He said this should be gotten behind us. The Congress had acted. They had come to conclusions. It was his opinion

that this should be put behind us as a Nation and we should then focus not on what had happened but what tremendous problems we faced. I think that that was a very really sound position he took.

QUESTION: Did Mr. Ford ask you to come to New Jersey?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. He doesn't even know I am here.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, if we could get back to the foreign policy angle, do you feel that at least in part the President's actions in the Lebanese evacuation this weekend were in part politically motivated?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir. They were to give those Americans who were in Beirut the opportunity to seek security in the light of the tragic assassination of the Ambassador and Economic Counselor and the driver. I attended the funeral this morning.

The situation there is extremely volatile, as you know, and there are many cross-currents. Practically everybody in Beirut has a submachine gun now. Therefore, the situation is very perilous.

He wanted to give those Americans who wanted to seek security and protection and who could not get out on their own the opportunity of coming out.

QUESTION: Just a year ago, about a year ago when the Marakesh incident happened, the President gained very strongly in the polls right afterwards. Do you foresee the same thing happening?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think they are similar situations really at all. I sat in on the conferences on both. I don't think they were similar. I don't think that the public reaction will be in this case what it was before.

QUESTION: In the event Mr. Reagan is nominated, could you support him vigorously, Mr. Vice President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Seeing that in my opinion there is no chance of his being nominated, I haven't even anticipated or considered that eventuality.

QUESTION: In the event that happened, however unlikely you feel it is, Mr. Vice President.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If I were to even speculate about that, it might give comfort to those who are supporting his cause. Therefore, I don't even speculate about it because it is not going to happen.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you totally rule out the chance of being Vice President again?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I do. I don't see any possibility.

QUESTION: What are your plans for next year then?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, to see more of Happy and the two boys. And then to read the newspapers and listen to the radio, and out of that I will get ideas of what is going on. Out of that I will have ideas of what I might do to be useful to the country. This is what I have always done.

QUESTION: Are you telling us for the short run anyway following the next election that you are just out of political life in America for a while?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is what it looks like to me.

QUESTION: You have really ruled out being the Vice President next time around; absolutely ruled it out?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I have written a letter to the President saying I withdraw my name from consideration.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, have you made any recommendations for Vice President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, ma'am. This is the responsibility of the President. If he asks me, I will advise him on any subject.

QUESTION: Do you know who is considered?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have no idea.

QUESTION: What about a new role in the new Ford Administration, if that takes place?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I can't foresee it. He has an outstanding Secretary of State, and that is the best man he has got.

QUESTION: There has been a lot of talk about Secretary Kissinger. Do you foresee Secretary Kissinger staying on past January if the President is elected?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think there is a very good chance of that. I certainly hope so.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, how do you assess Mr. Carter's position on the political scale? Is he left, right; what is he?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course, that is an interesting thing that I guess the whole country is trying to figure out. Any man who has got the ability to get support from the north and the south and east and west, from the liberals and conservatives, to take Wallace's voters away from Wallace, to take votes away from all the liberal left wing candidates, has got to be an unusual person.

The question is how does he do it and what position does he take on the issue that has brought this to pass? That I think is going to be the interesting thing as this campaign begins to come into focus. After the candidates have been selected, then the issue will be in sharp focus. Then he is going to have to sharpen his focus on those positions.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, you have a long history of being concerned about the criminal justice system in the United States and New York.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes.

QUESTION: What is your reaction to the sentencing of Bernard Bergman to four months?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I thought his was frankly a tragic situation and that a great many people have suffered as a result of his activities.

QUESTION: Do you think that four months was a sufficient sentence?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I am not a judge. I am not a lawyer even, so that I would hate to --

QUESTION: What is your gut feeling?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: My feeling is that this man misled a great many people and that he conducted activities which were far from the kind that one would like to see in this country.

QUESTION: Are you satisfied with the four months sentence as a man?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, listen, I find that as an executive man and in the Executive Department I don't try to second-guess the Judiciary, nor do I second-guess the Legislative. There are three separate branches. Each has a separate responsibility. When the courts make a decision, we have to support the court decision.

Thank you.

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(AT 4:25 P.M. EST)