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THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
ROBERT J. DOLE
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF KANSAS

THE BRIEFING ROOM

12:11 P.M. EDT

MR. ROBERTS: There will be 15 minutes filing time after the appearance of Senator Dole and with that, in response to your request, here is Senator Dole.

SENATOR DOLE: Good morning. I have only been in this room one other time, and I think that is when I was leaving as Chairman of the Party. (Laughter)

Q What does that mean?

SENATOR DOLE: That means I am no longer the Chairman.

I have just had a very fine visit with President Ford. We were talking about where I have been and what I have said and what I have done and how the campaign looks.

Q Are you selling tickets? (Laughter)

SENATOR DOLE: Right, but I think I can say with a straight face, and maybe some bit of bias and prejudice, that we are going to win this campaign. Things are on the upbeat. I have been in politics for a while, and when you start to feel good about the campaign, it does mean something: either you are exhausted or the campaign is looking better. Since I am not exhausted, it must mean the campaign is looking better.

We have had large, enthusiastic crowds in farm areas and wherever we have gone. It just seems to me things are coming together at about the right time. The polls look better. We reported on some we picked up in Nebraska where we were 17 points ahead, Indiana 7 or 8, and scattered polls of that kind.

If you have any questions I will be glad to respond.

Q Will you elaborate on how much ahead you are in these States?

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SENATOR DOLE: All I know is based on polls that we have seen going around. I mentioned a couple to the President that we had heard about -- Indiana 7 or 8 points; in Nebraska 17 points; in my State of Kansas, 5 points; reports that it is even-up in Pennsylvania and about the same in California.

Q What, behind, you mean?

SENATOR DOLE: No, even-up. I didn't give you anywhere we were behind. (Laughter)

Q These are based on what, Republican polls or general public opinion polls or Teeter's polls or whose?

SENATOR DOLE: Just the information I had from Republicans based on polls they were aware of and had seen. Others were based on newspaper polls.

Q Senator, you have been going around the country apparently suggesting possibly where the Special Prosecutor's probe was politically motivated. I was wondering, inasmuch as the Attorney General has now taken responsibility for ordering that investigation, along with his top aides, do you think it appropriate to apologize to the Special Prosecutor?

SENATOR DOLE: I don't think so. I just said it was highly coincidental and the timing was somewhat remarkable. But the President -- we also touched on that in our visit upstairs -- he said to me what he said to you yesterday. I certainly believe President Ford. I think, as he indicated, integrity is the important thing and that is what he brings to this place, this White House and this country, and justice delayed is justice denied, and that is where it stands.

Q Senator, I don't think perhaps --

SENATOR DOLE: I understand the question. (Laughter)

Q You haven't answered it.

Q Do you think perhaps you owe an apology to the Special Prosecutor, inasmuch as it was the Justice Department and not any political motivation?

SENATOR DOLE: I don't think so.

Q Do you think it is politically motivated?

Q There still hangs in the air the allegation of a \$5,000 alleged contribution to you, which was the subject of a Federal inquiry, which may still be going on. Will you write the Special Prosecutor and ask the status of that inquiry?

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SENATOR DOLE: We have said from the start, you know, that our records are available, that they can have all the records we have. I am not certain whether I should be in touch with the Special Prosecutor on a personal basis or write letters to the Special Prosecutor. I think that has been one of the clear distinctions made by President Ford. He hasn't contacted anyone. No one can say we have directly or indirectly pressurized anyone. They certainly have a right to conduct an investigation. No one quarrels with that.

Q Do you think the American people should have to go to the polls not knowing what the status of this inquiry is?

SENATOR DOLE: I think you could check with the Special Prosecutor.

Q We can't. We understand you have to ask directly.

SENATOR DOLE: If I do that, I am putting pressure on the Special Prosecutor.

Q I don't think that is true. I think that would clear the air.

SENATOR DOLE: You may not, but there may be nine others here that do. I want to add, in addition -- and I know you have a proper concern for that -- I think the press has every right to make inquiries, and they make a great many inquiries, and we try to be responsive and responsible, but I want to keep it in bounds and that is about where I see it. I have said as far as I am concerned there is nothing to it, and I think it is not up to me to press it further. But I think the one thing in this campaign that indicates there is movement and the responsibility for movement in this campaign is the great doubt about Governor Carter -- his weird performance and his judgment -- and I think what people want now, particularly in foreign policy, is experience and not an experiment.

We are getting more and more people and we are, of course, raising questions that he talked about -- income tax, he has talked about defense, and he has so many positions on the various issues that it just seems to me when all this comes together it is going to mean victory on November 2, and that is what this is all about.

Q Senator, what is the difference now why you see the campaign is on an upbeat, what is the issue that makes it an increase for you people?

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SENATOR DOLE: I think the debates were a big factor. I have been asked probably everywhere I have been since the debate, who won the debates? I would stand up and say, "President Ford won the debate." I can also back that up with every poll I have seen. Whether it is CBS, Newsweek or Time, or whatever local poll it may have been, it indicates very clearly that President Ford was the winner. I think he is going to be even a clearer winner in the foreign policy debate. It indicates not just that he won. The American people are not so concerned about that. But how do they see Governor Carter? How do they see President Ford? I think President Ford has projected that confidence and leadership the American people are looking for. It is going to make a difference on the outcome on November 2.

Q What do you mean by "weird." (Laughter)

SENATOR DOLE: I thought nobody would ask. (Laughter)

Q Can you elaborate on that?

SENATOR DOLE: It just strikes me as rather strange that someone, whether it is Governor "X" or John Smith or who, can always find fault in a very harsh way. He can refer to former Presidents now deceased as liars, cheats and distorts the facts and run to the telephone and call the widow and say, "I didn't really mean it." He can talk about raising the taxes of those above the median income and then have his running mate run off to Maine and say he didn't really mean it, he meant the rich. If you look at all the buzz words that he uses, it is always loopholes, or the rich, or cheats, or liars, or distorters, or insensitive, and then you look at his judgment in the Playboy interview and his interview with Norman Mailer. It just seems to me that it indicates -- then his private meeting with some of the press where he, in effect, complained about the bad coverage he had, the hard questions he had, that President Ford had the soft balls. It seems to me there was some effort to intimidate the press -- it is all rather strange -- which indicates to me the campaign is in great difficulty.

Q In bringing up Carter, Senator, aren't you showing concern that the focus of the campaign be off Carter and his mistakes and maybe onto the President in this investigation?

SENATOR DOLE: Am I showing concern?

Q Yes. Do you think the focus has switched?

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SENATOR DOLE: I don't think the focus has switched. I think the focus is right out there. I think the American people have confidence in President Ford. He has leveled with the American people from the first day he walked in this White House. That hasn't changed, and it is not going to change. I think the focus is clearly where it belongs: Who can best lead this country in the next four years? That is what it is all about. The first debate indicated who can do it the best in domestic areas. The second debate will cover foreign policy. The third debate will sort of be the second --

Q I would like to go back to an earlier question. Did you know, before you made your comments about Ruff, that Mr. Levy had initiated the probe, and if you didn't know that, would you have made the same comments?

SENATOR DOLE: Probably not. I didn't know that. I probably wouldn't have made the same comment.

Q You didn't know?

SENATOR DOLE: No.

Q Senator, speaking of intimidating the press, did the President encourage you to continue attacking the New York Times?

SENATOR DOLE: I can answer that several ways, but he didn't.

Q Senator, what was wrong with the Mailer interview, would you tell us, Mr. Carter's interview with Mailer? Would you say that was one of the bad judgments?

SENATOR DOLE: I don't really know because they didn't print all the language. I want to commend the New York Times for not printing all that interview. (Laughter)

Q Would you say Levi is politically motivated?

SENATOR DOLE: Not in the least. I think that is the strength of this Administration.

Q If Ruff would be, why wouldn't the other one?

SENATOR DOLE: There is a distinction, I guess. I don't know.

Q By saying "weird," are you suggesting Governor Carter lacks the psychological make-up to --

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SENATOR DOLE: No, not in the least.

Q Senator, speaking of weird performances, doesn't your staff know you don't just tear pages out of ledger books?

SENATOR DOLE: I think it depends on the time it was done. If somebody picks up a book way back when you are keeping your records and says well, here is one that we will take out some pages -- I don't know what happened. I didn't keep my records. If you are insinuating that someone did it after the investigation started, you are wrong and I resent that.

Q I am not insinuating that.

SENATOR DOLE: You are insinuating that. That is not the case. The Special Prosecutor didn't say that at all. It was only raised by the press, after we accommodated some member of the press for 3-1/2 hours -- and I wasn't present -- to go over all my records, he has to write something bad, so he writes that.

Q How do you know the Special Prosecutor has no problem? Have you talked to him about it?

SENATOR DOLE: That is my understanding, but I haven't talked to him about it.

Q Are you saying that the Washington Post deliberately wrote something bad or twisted something about you? Are you referring to the Washington Post article about --

SENATOR DOLE: I am suggesting -- we had an inquiry. We tried to cooperate. We are trying to cooperate with the press, and I understand that he floated the so-called "missing pages." It had sort of a sinister note to it.

Q Senator, do you think you put yourself perhaps in league with Governor Carter? If I understand correctly, at one point you accuse Governor Carter of attacking the press and you seem to be doing the same thing now. Am I misinterpreting something?

SENATOR DOLE: No, I think there is a vast difference. As I said with reference to the New York Times, I don't have to like every story that appears in the New York Times, but I don't have to call them in to a private session, an off-the-record session, for two or three hours and complain and moan about my treatment by the press. If I have something to say about the press, I will say it openly. We don't have to like every story that shows up. They don't like everything we say. I don't see any problem with that, but I think it is when we try to gather everybody together and complain in private that we are not treated properly, that is the --

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Q Are you saying in effect that your criticism in being open in public and direct is more akin to what Spiro Agnew did?

SENATOR DOLE: No, I didn't say that at all. I would say we have a right to disagree. I hope we have that right. That is a First Amendment right, as I understand it, free speech as well as free press.

Q I don't understand why the first nine pages were missing. Would you go into that again?

SENATOR DOLE: You would have to ask Joanne Coe. I didn't keep the records. As I understand, they had an old book, they had some other material in it and when they started, they just started fresh --

Q Was that an economy measure?

SENATOR DOLE: I don't know whether it is economy or not. The point is the figures are what is important. It is not how many pages are missing. She might have started on page 20. Somebody said, "Why are the first pages blank?" I don't know. I didn't keep the record. The point is we kept track of all our cash receipts. They are there. They have been available. Joanne Coe kept the records, I didn't.

Q In a short while the President will have to decide whether he is going to sign a \$4 billion appropriations bill to create more public service jobs. How will you vote on that bill? Pardon me, what will be your recommendation?

SENATOR DOLE: I didn't make a recommendation on that bill. I leave that up to the President.

Q How would you have voted?

SENATOR DOLE: I think I might have voted for it.

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Q Senator, did you understand that some in the White House might be a little unhappy with the thrust of your campaign, they want you to focus more on Carter and less on the New York Times? Did you get any kind of --

SENATOR DOLE: I haven't really focused on the New York Times. I made one little statement out in --

Q Okay, but have you been asked to be more forceful on Carter?

SENATOR DOLE: No.

Q When are you going to take the gloves off?

SENATOR DOLE: I have been portrayed as -- the press set me up as a hatchet man almost before I opened my mouth, so I have been afraid to say anything. I am not intimidated by the press, but I want to try to be a nice fellow. But, we are going to try to get around to some of the more specific areas as far as Governor Carter is concerned.

I found nothing but praise from President Ford. I can say that very honestly, when I walked in and when I walked out. The first thing he said was you are doing a great job and the last thing he said was keep it up. I had to assume that he thinks I am doing a good job.

Now the polls are changing. I don't suggest I deserve much of the credit for it, but we have been in farmareas, we have been in cities, we have been meeting with the Mexican-Americans who said before I went in there -- they are 80 to 90 percent Democratic in Los Angeles -- they are going to support President Ford. We think we have had a fair way to gauge the electorate.

I am not perfect, but I think I can tell movement when I see it, and when I feel it, and it is there. Now we are still behind. I don't think anybody suggests we are ahead nationwide, but it is close and it is getting closer. The timing is right and on November 2 we are going to win.

Q Senator, what would be the reason why the Mexican-Americans would have changed from Democrat to Ford? What has he done for them recently?

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SENATOR DOLE: I think that is the same, what I think is a prime factor in this campaign. President Ford is a known quantity. He is dependable. He is in a sense predictable and people have trust in President Ford. They may not always agree, but they know where he is going to be tomorrow or next week. They know he is accessible. They know they can have their input.

Governor Carter, on the other hand, may be here today on defense, there tomorrow, and somewhere else. He says himself he likes to shade his comments to coincide with the audience. He not only shades his comments, he shades his policies. I think it is that same lack of certainty. Some call it fear. I call it doubt. There is a great doubt about Governor Carter, and I suggested -- you know, we are having three debates, so he can give all his positions but --

Q Senator, you told a group of Mexican-Americans on September 24 in Los Angeles that you opposed Proposition 14 and put fair labor standards in the agricultural field. Ten days before you told a group of businessmen in San Francisco that you do oppose it -- I am sorry, you told the Mexican-Americans you had not taken a stand and you told the businessmen ten days before you flatly opposed it.

How can you attack Governor Carter for inconsistency when you appear to have the same problem?

SENATOR DOLE: I don't think I have that problem. I said in San Francisco that I opposed Proposition 14, but I said at the Mexican-American meeting -- and there wasn't any secret about it, they knew how I stood before I walked into it -- my views on Proposition 14, what I said and what I intended to relay, and I think I did relay to those who were there that I was not out crusading for or against Proposition 14 as compared to Governor Carter who, on the pro forces, whatever it is he is out there lining up with Cranston, Tunney and others -- not Bernie Sisk, he resigned -- but I haven't gone to California to speak at any Proposition 14 rally. I just stated my own opinion, I didn't state the President's position. I don't know the President's position. I stated mine.

Q Senator Dole, you mentioned Governor Carter's weird judgments and performance. Do you see any similarity in the mental make-up of Governor Carter's performance and judgments and that of former President Nixon?

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SENATOR DOLE: No, I am not suggesting that. I am just suggesting that I find it hard to understand a man who finds it so easy to find fault with everyone. Now, they have gotten Billy Graham into the act. Somebody will say, well, that is his son. Well, he probably heard it at home. You know, who knows?

Q Senator, yesterday your representatives and Mondale's representatives met to talk about the debate. Will it be just like the Presidential debates in format and setting and style?

SENATOR DOLE: Style? (Laughter)

Well, I don't know. It is going to be on a Friday night, which is the all-American high school football night, and if anybody is watching it, it will be by accident. But, there is some question on whether it should be on the 15th or the 16th. There is some question on the site, there is some question on the format and there is some question on the length.

Beyond that, all the other issues have been resolved. (Laughter)

Q Do you want it to be just like the first Presidential debate in style?

SENATOR DOLE: I think it should be a little shorter. I thought 90 minutes was a bit much. Of course, you had that other gap in there. I won't mention it to you, Ann, but it was -- (Laughter)

Q Senator, wouldn't you like to have it different? You and Mondale could really put on a good show.

SENATOR DOLE: I don't know whether we are supposed to entertain or help our running mates.

Q You could have a real debate. Wouldn't you like to have a real, honest-to-God debate?

SENATOR DOLE: Before or after the election?

Q On this particular occasion, you know what I am talking about.

SENATOR DOLE: I don't know. I think we are somewhat constrained by what President Ford has said in the first and second debates. Anyone who is running for Vice President who thinks he is a policy maker should go back and look at history. I can't stand up and say in the first 100 days I am going to do this. I might not do anything the first 100 days. (Laughter) That might be a good statement to make. I think the American people would be assured. Here is a guy who says he is not going to do anything for 100 days. I will vote for him. (Laughter)

Q Just as a "yes man," as the Vice President, do you think that is the only role?

SENATOR DOLE: No, but I have to be there first, you know, before I develop that role. When you are behind in the polls, you don't spend all day planning on what you are going to do in January. I am planning now on going to Russell, Kansas and on to the election and being there to watch the returns come in.

Q Where do you go today, tomorrow and so forth?

SENATOR DOLE: I go to Connecticut today, tomorrow we go to Vermont and Maine, Sunday we go to New Hampshire, Monday we are here to talk to the American Bankers and Tuesday we go to Virginia. Hopefully sometime we will get a little time off to work on the debate or there will be just one debater there, and that will be Mondale. (Laughter)

Q Senator, while you were up talking to the President, presumably you discussed a little bit about how you are campaigning, how you are going to interact with him, how your strategy works together. Will you tell us what was decided, whether there will be any changes in the way to go about, whether there will be more coordination?

SENATOR DOLE: We think our scheduling now is based, at least in large part, on polling information, indications where we can either strengthen ourselves or otherwise. In addition, I have sort of the role of going to fund-raising activities for candidates running for Congress and Governor, so we get that added duty.

So, I just say in closing it looks good and I hope to come back to this room after the election and tell you how it happened, how we did it.

Q Sir, this week a Texas Democratic Congressman said to me that he believes Governor Carter will lose Texas.

SENATOR DOLE: I agree with him.

Q What are you hearing on the subject of the polls?

SENATOR DOLE: The last survey had showed we were about five points behind in Texas, and that has been two or three weeks ago. I think there has been movement in the South, and I have to believe the remark about the former President didn't set many on fire down there.

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Q Sir, a Texas Democratic Congress said to me he thought Carter would win. What do you think about that?

SENATOR DOLE: They both can't be right, and I will take the first one. (Laughter)

THE PRESS: Thank you, Senator.

END (AT 12:35 P.M. EDT)