

POOL NUMBER 46

MECCA Auditorium, Milwaukee; to Marc Plaza Hotel and Mitchell Field

October 29, 1976

A big crowd, packed from curb to wall on the block of Wisconsin Avenue beside Marc Plaza Hotel and along block of Fifth Street along front entrance to hotel, greeted Ford motorcade. Overflow along block of Wisconsin beyond hotel was not so thick, but equally enthusiastic. A local reporter said Ford campaigners had been working for days to build up the crowd with radio and TV invitations. At hotel entrance on Fifth Street, a dozen or so children, boys and girls, in various European "ethnic" costumes presented Ford with dolls and other gifts that your pooler could not identify. He leaned over and hugged each of the little girls, shook hands with and patted the boys. He then made the shouting, pleading crowds on each side of the entrance before he entered hotel and climbed stairs to mezzanine where several hundred people packed space between stairs and Monarch Room where Ford Committee workers were assembled.

Ford made his standard rally speech: stay strong, no defense budget cuts, tax reduction, higher personal exemptions -- the lot. He was more explicit than usual in his invitation to inaugural: "I am going to invite every one of you to come to Washington January 20 and be there for the inauguration." On the election: "We are going to win Wisconsin... Wisconsin is crucial, Wisconsin is critical. If we carry Wisconsin, WE ARE IN!" (his emphasis).

Leaving reception and hotel Ford walked to crowd on both sides of Wisconsin and Fifth Street intersection, shook hands, then went to podium set up at corner on hotel side and repeated the standard speech, evidently talking longer than rally planners had expected. In passage quoted here with rough precision, inexact but basically accurate, he seemed to pooler tougher than usual on crime: "Crime in America is a problem... We are going to solve it by being tough on the hardened criminals... The problem is the recidivists, the professional criminals. We're going to send them to jail and keep them there. There is only one place to put them, in jail, and the sooner they are there the better."

Perhaps 100 Carter supporters were lined up together at the intersection facing Ford as he talked from podium and again as his limousine turned right from Fifth into Wisconsin on way to airport. Sample signs: "Carter Cares" and "No Pardon for Ford." Sample Ford sign: "Beer Drinkers for Ford."

Enroute to airport in city streets, Ford stood in limousine and called as usual to clusters of people and even to individuals: "Hi, how are you, thank you, how are you all?" At corner of Michigan Avenue and Fourth Street, where a new Blue Cross building is under construction, green-hatted hardhats were clustered on Michigan. Ford stopped motorcade, got out, shook hands and chatted briefly with them. An audio pooler heard Ford aides fretting at him: "Come on, Mr. President. We gotta go."

Remainder of ride to airport was uneventful.

John Osborne - New Republic

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