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PRESS CONFERENCE

GOVERNOR SPIRO AGNEW

AUGUST 8, 1968

GOVERNOR AGNEW: Mr. Nixon informed me that he has selected me primarily because he has some confidence in my knowledge of the problems of the cities, of county and state government, and we all recognize that there is a tremendous need to adopt a new set of criteria, a simplified set of programs that will allow the progressive steps to be taken in the urban communities and also stabilize and redistribute the population of this country -- at least provide the incentives which will allow the normal redistribution to come about as naturally as we do everything else.

I am looking forward to this challenge. I am most impressed with the fact that Mr. Nixon has indicated he views the vice presidency as an office that should have expanded responsibilities.

I had no intention of, in any event, considering any type of Federal appointment inasmuch as I am in the middle of my gubernatorial term. I am concerned to some extent about the fact that we have no lieutenant governor in Maryland, but I am persuaded by the best advice I can get, including that of my very fine personal friend and advisor, Rogers Morton, whom, incidentally, I have asked to nominate me tonight. I am persuaded by these people that the good of the party outweighs the considerations, the challenges, that have to be met with regard to what takes place in our state, and I am also persuaded that my presence on the ticket should provide a substantial boost to Republican candidates in our state.

I am ready for your questions.

Q: . . . civil rights' position.

A: My civil rights position cannot be simply described. I am on record with many, many statements on civil rights. I am pro civil rights. I am for the implementation of civil rights, not just the elaborate programming and distribution of money which is intended to bring about the equal opportunity and the justice that everyone talks about.

On the other hand, I expect fully that no civil rights can be realistically achieved without the restoration of order, without the abandonment of the condoning of civil disobedience.

I will work enthusiastically in civil rights, and I think that is one of the reasons I am on this ticket, because I have a record that I am proud of in this area.

Q: . . . do you consider yourself a compromise candidate between north and south?

A: Well, I don't know what geographic considerations went into my selection, because I wasn't in on the deliberations that led to it, and I suppose those questions could best be answered by those that made the recommendations to Mr. Nixon.

Q: . . . run in the northern city ghettos such as New York and Chicago?

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A: I certainly plan to run anywhere that votes are available; that the Republican party needs the strength and someone who is capable of articulating the positions and the desires to include urban areas.

I would welcome the chance to run in those areas.

Q: Selection by whom?

A: I am sorry, I didn't catch it.

Q: What time were you informed of your selection and by whom?

A: I wasn't watching my watch, because, frankly, when the phone call came I was rather shocked. I think it must have been no more than ten minutes before the public announcement.

Q: . . . poor people's campaign encampment in Washington. You said had you been president, you would have ordered the poor people off the government property and would have called out Army troops to do so.

A: That is not accurate.

Q: Would you recommend the same course?

A: That isn't accurate. What I said was, had I been President, I would not have permitted the encampment to have occurred in the first place. My decision and my statement on that had absolutely nothing to do with sympathy for or lack of sympathy for the objectives of the people who were demonstrating.

I simply ventured an opinion that the endorsement of such an encampment and the obvious results of the encampment, which are fully

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documented, and proved entirely fruitless, did nothing more than to irritate many people who wanted to be of assistance in this massive effort to relieve the problems of the poor in America.

These things were not productive of any good, and I don't believe that the allowing of this assembly with its attendant problems accomplished a thing.

Q: Do you have doubt about your capacity to fulfill the office of Vice Presidency?

A: I guess everyone has doubts about his own capacity to some extent. If we don't have those doubts, we will never improve.

I do think this: That I bring to the challenge of this position certainly a knowledge of government on the local level and on the state level, and some experience in considering the problems of government from an administrative standpoint during my tenure of office in Baltimore County, and I think I have a pretty good realization of how the components of government can best fit and work together.

Q: How did you learn you were selected? Rockefeller booster. Your defection and conversion to Mr. Nixon's side of the party.

A: I will answer the first question first. I learned by telephone call from Mr. Nixon this morning.

Now, the question about my -- what you call my defection, which, incidentally certainly does not recommend itself to that description, I didn't defect. I simply made an analysis and a political

judgment based on the fact that I felt the two candidates who offered themselves for the highest office in the country each had qualifications that would entitle them to be elected.

I have said on countless occasions that I think Mr. Nixon's articulation of solutions is overwhelming in the sense of priorities and attacking these problems led me to support him.

I also have to confess to a very pragmatic decision of timing on the part of both candidates that affected my decision.

Q: Do you consider yourself to be a liberal?

A: I don't departmentalize myself into any canned philosophy, because frankly, it gets very inconvenient when you want to take a position to have to call up the head of the liberal establishment or the head of the conservative establishment and see what you are supposed to be thinking.

Q: . . . one of those candidates . . .

A: Yes. The question is, how did Mr. Nixon and I begin our discussions after my decision to not support Governor Rockefeller.

I want to say this: That my first meetings with Mr. Nixon took place long before my decision to abandon my support of Mr. Rockefeller, and Mr. Nixon, whom I had a high regard to even while I was enthusiastically supporting Governor Rockefeller, talked with me on two occasions. One of them was the occasion of the Republican Women's luncheon up there.

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Subsequent to that I have had several private conversations with him, and most of our discussions centered around the very things that he has indicated he wishes me to take the lead in attempting to implement as part of our party program; that is, the problems of the cities and the states, the counties, and their inter-relationships with each other, and the terrible problem of impaction, and abrasion that is created by impaction which seems to have created a mall in which we continually pour money without achieving solutions.

Q: Did you have any conversations with Senator John Tower or Senator Strom Thurmond?

A: I have not talked to either Senator Tower or Senator Thurmond at any time since I have been here or before.

Q: How do you stand on Vietnam?

A: How do I stand on Vietnam? I suppose my stand is one that hopes that we will be able to bring this war to an end at the earliest possible moment.

I have a personal interest in that. I have a son that is in Vietnam and has been there for five and a half months.

I feel very strongly, however, that the simple yearning for peace, the continued attempts to rationalize the Communist position and accept it as one in good faith which we have no indication we can do, is not the answer to the problem.

I think that the Republican party platform has a very cogent note in regard to Vietnam when it says we have to begin to think of the subject of Vietnam not as a territorial war, but as a war that affects people and concentrated locations and ideologies and the representation of the government of South Vietnam and how it is affected

Q: . . . end war in Vietnam.

A: No. I certainly couldn't say I have such a program, and I want to emphasize I think our Presidential candidate is the outstanding authority in this area, and I think he brings me to the ticket because of my expertise in the city, state, local problems, and that I hope that during our conversations and discussions, I will receive the benefit of his knowledge and information on the subject, but I don't feel totally expert in that at the moment.

Q: (inaudible)

A: It pleases me immensely, because I feel that a candidate's contribution to a ticket and, after all, our purpose is not simply to elect a national ticket. It is to elect Republican candidates across the country to create a new image for the Republican party.

I think that this objective can best be accommodated and achieved. The people on the ticket speak to their strength.

Q: What is being done wrong now in the cities, states and local relationships?

A: The main thing that is being done wrong in city, state and local relationship is a proliferation of overlapping programs, none of which seems to achieve the desired result.

I have been frustrated as chief executive of a state by the fact that there are countless programs that are constantly being implemented by agencies of the Federal government, some of which don't even know that other agencies are involved in the same direction with the state and local governments.

Furthermore, I am concerned with the fact that specialized programs channel directly to city and local governments, circumventing the state, create competitive situations between the various levels of government, which make it very difficult for state legislatures to act intelligently and without rancor on city problems.

Q: . . . (inaudible)

A: I would certainly agree with that, yes.

Q: . . . analyze what political strength you actually do bring to a Nixon ticket?

A: I can't analyze any strength I bring, and I agree with you that the name of Spiro Agnew is not a household name. I certainly hope that it will become one within the next couple of months.

Q: . . . main concern will be domestic.

A: No, I don't. I feel as Vice President you are a heart-beat away from the Presidency. You must be equipped to assume those obligations, and, therefore, I must become prepared fully in the total spectrum of national affairs.

Thank you.

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