

8-20-1974

Press Conference of Robert Hartmann, Counsellor to the President

United States. Office of the White House Press Secretary

Robert Hartmann

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/twentyfifth_amendment_watergate_era



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

United States. Office of the White House Press Secretary and Hartmann, Robert, "Press Conference of Robert Hartmann, Counsellor to the President" (1974). *Watergate Era*. 3.

https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/twentyfifth_amendment_watergate_era/3

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Twenty-Fifth Amendment Archive at FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. It has been accepted for inclusion in Watergate Era by an authorized administrator of FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. For more information, please contact tmelnick@law.fordham.edu.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 20, 1974

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE

OF

ROBERT HARTMANN

COUNSELLOR TO THE PRESIDENT

THE BRIEFING ROOM

2:10 P.M. EDT

MR. TER HORST: Here, live and in person, is Counsellor Robert Hartmann to answer your questions on the President's selection of his Vice Presidential nominee. Bob?

MR. HARTMANN: Thank you, Jerry. As you can see, I got myself a terHorst pipe. (Laughter.)

It is good to be back here in the press room. Though I never worked in the press room, it is still good to be back and find some people who were here when I last covered the White House about ten years ago; something like that.

I understand there is some interest in the manner or the mechanism by which the President made his decision and I should say at the outset that I am not going to attempt to explore the President's mind or tell you what I think went on there because I don't know, nor does anybody else, except him, and you will in due course have an opportunity to ask that yourself of the President.

But I will try and give you as best I can the things that went on physically by way of supporting him with staff work and helping him in reaching his decision.

Maybe it would be well if I tried to anticipate some of your questions although I am sure I can't anticipate all of them, but I will try to answer a few of the more obvious ones in the beginning.

The first question was when did he reach his decision? The answer to that is that he talked to Governor Rockefeller by telephone on Saturday -- the exact time, I am not sure, but perhaps the Governor told you that -- and asked numerous questions which might very well have aroused the Governor's suspicions that he was one of the candidates, one of the finalists. He did not flatly tell him nor had he flatly made up his mind at the time nor did he tell the Governor that he was asking similar questions of other people, but it certainly was enough to make the Governor, I am sure, feel that he was in the running.

MORE

(OVER)

The actual decision in his mind, he informed me, was made late last night after he had retired upstairs in the Residence.

Q What do you mean "late"?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, between the time he went upstairs and the time he went to sleep. You can find out what the time was he went upstairs. I don't know what time he went to sleep.

Q Governor Rockefeller said he got a call last night about 9:00 o'clock, wasn't it?

MR. HARTMANN: That is correct. He got a call from General Haig last night. He did not get another call from the President. The call from General Haig was simply to tell him to get down here by a certain time this morning.

Q You mean he wasn't told last night why to get here?

MR. HARTMANN: He probably was told by General Haig.

Q We would like to clear that up, because we were told it was a personal call. We would like to know exactly what Haig told him.

Q Senator Scott said that the President had called him at 9:00 o'clock. He said that in the car.

MR. HARTMANN: Senator Scott said the President called Governor Rockefeller at 9:00 o'clock?

Q That is what he said.

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I won't argue with him. Those questions the Press Secretary will probably be able to look up for you. I can only speak to what I know.

Q Is it correct, then, that the decision was made by the President still before 9:00 o'clock last night, if that was the time Haig called Rockefeller and informed him?

MR. HARTMANN: It must have been. I don't know what the time was that Haig called.

Q Well, Rocky says at 9:00. What we want to know is was he told at that time?

MR. HARTMANN: Why didn't you ask Rocky when you had the chance?

MORE

Q Because we have been told all day that you were going to brief.

MR. HARTMANN: Well, mind you I am going to go further back into the process than this. I wasn't the one told to call the Governor so I don't know the exact time sequence.

The question would undoubtedly be asked whether the FBI was asked to make a check of the Governor or other potential nominees. The answer to that is, yes. The Director of the FBI was in last Friday to see the President and alone with the President the President gave him three names to report back if there was any derogatory material about those three names.

This was not, at that point, the full list of possibilities, but they were three of the names on his final list of possibilities that were not elected Members of the Congress.

Q What was the time of that meeting; do you have it?

MR. HARTMANN: That will show on the schedule, I believe.

Q Was Rockefeller on that list?

MR. HARTMANN: Yes.

Q Who else?

MR. HARTMANN: The President would rather let you guess.

Q You say they are not elected Members of the Congress?

MR. HARTMANN: They were not elected Members of the Congress. The President felt to ask the FBI to inquire around among associates and so forth of an elected Member of Congress, providing that person was not going to be his nominee for sure, would be a disservice to the Legislative branch.

Q Can we assume that George Bush's name was on the list?

MR. HARTMANN: Yes, you can assume it. I am not going to confirm it.

Q I have talked to friends of Don Rumsfeld who have said they were called by the FBI over the weekend.

MORE

MR. HARTMANN: You can put together all the pieces you want, but the President does not wish to specify -- since you now know whom he selected, he doesn't want to be too specific about who was on the semifinals and the finals and all of that.

Q Bob, before we leave that, he felt it was not necessary to have the FBI check into possibly derogatory information on those Members of Congress who were on the list?

MR. HARTMANN: No. Had he wound up with an elected Member of the Congress, a Senator or a Member of the House as his final choice, there would of course have been some kind of a check, but to do this to people who were not going to be his final choice at a point when he didn't know for sure, would have been a disservice to them and probably would have cut across the bounds of separation of powers.

Q Bob, I am still not clear. These three then were not his final three? He did not narrow the list down to three?

MR. HARTMANN: No.

Q There were more on this list?

MR. HARTMANN: There were in the neighborhood of half a dozen at that point.

Q As of last Friday, still half a dozen?

MR. HARTMANN: As of the time he talked to the Director of the FBI.

Q If he had decided to name a Member of the Congress he would have had that one investigated by the FBI?

MR. HARTMANN: He would have added that one, yes.

Q Then by the process of deduction, you would have three Members of Congress on that final list, I would assume, from what you said about the FBI check. Three elected officials?

MR. HARTMANN: Elected people, yes.

Q Excuse me, then, Bob; this exception was not just to Members of Congress but to elected officials that he felt it might not be quite --

MR. HARTMANN: Since I don't know what the list is, I am somewhat at a disadvantage in answering that question, as to what the larger list included, but he did give them three names to begin a quick check on and none of these three names were Members of Congress. That is the fact as I know it.

MORE

Q And one of them was Rockefeller?

MR. HARTMANN: One was Rockefeller.

Q Bob, is this going to be a secret forever kept or something?

MR. HARTMANN: No one, so far as I know, has ever got the story completely straight about the nomination of Gerald R. Ford. There has been a great many verities and I think it would do a disservice to those who were not selected. After all, this was the President's private decision and I didn't know myself until I met with the President first thing this morning who the selection was.

MORE

Q Bob, when is the first time that Mr. Rockefeller was told by the President of the United States that he was the nominee?

MR. HARTMANN: Told by the President?

Q Yes.

MR. HARTMANN: When he came into the White House this morning, came into that little office off the Oval Office.

Q What time was that, 9:45 or so?

MR. HARTMANN: It was certainly before the 8:30 meeting with the legislative leaders.

Q He didn't get there until after 9.

MR. HARTMANN: Pardon me, it was after the meeting broke up. I learned about it before that meeting, but when the meeting in the Cabinet Room broke up, the President went back and they were setting up the TV and all in the Oval Office and went into the small sitting room off the Oval Office and Governor Rockefeller was there, and Mrs. Ford. That was the first time the Governor was told flat out by the President.

Q What time would that have been?

Q 9:30?

MR. HARTMANN: It was shortly before 10, ten or 15 minutes before 10.

Q Well, they had time to call the former President.

MR. HARTMANN: The President placed a call then to President Nixon in California and told him and then put the Governor on the phone, and he spoke also with President Nixon.

Q Was that the first word President Nixon had gotten?

MR. HARTMANN: To the best of my knowledge.

Q He hadn't been alerted by anyone else in the White House?

MR. HARTMANN: Not by me.

MORE

Q Was he consulted on the appointment?

MR. HARTMANN: Not to my knowledge.

Q Were there any other Governors on the list?

MR. HARTMANN: How long a list are we talking about?

Q How about the list of the three names to the FBI?

MR. HARTMANN: We can play this game on the last three names until you know them.

Q Well, five know they weren't selected. Is there really any harm in saying who the six were now that it is over?

MR. HARTMANN: You can ask the President that.

Q You are not authorized to reveal it?

MR. HARTMANN: I am not authorized to do it, and I would rather just go back a little now and tell you how this began.

Q Are you specifically ordered not to reveal them by the President?

MR. HARTMANN: No, I just understand that the President doesn't want it revealed right now.

Q Could we put a question through Jerry to see, or maybe you, to specifically ask the President whether these names can be revealed at some point?

MR. HARTMANN: Sure. Why don't you let me finish what I have to say? I don't want to get into the Press Secretary's role and, of course, you can put a question to the Press Secretary, but he was not present in my discussions with the President about this matter over the last few days, nor in my discussions with the President just recently about this briefing, so he can't answer those questions either right now until he has an opportunity to talk to the President.

Before we have the questions, let me finish just a little play-by-play on this.

When the President started upon this, which was one of the first things he did upon being sworn in, as you know, he asked certain categories of people to submit to him by last Wednesday night their first, second and third choices in sealed envelopes and my personal secretary and I were given custody of those envelopes and he did not see them until Friday evening.

MORE

She tabulated these different categories and the first thing he asked to see were totals without the names of the nominator, but just by categories; that is to say, the Cabinet, the Republican Members of the Senate, the Republican Members of the House, Republican Governors, members of the Republican National Committee, and others.

Q Could you go through those categories one more time?

MR. HARTMANN: Members of the Cabinet and Counsellors, Republican Members of the Senate -- this is, incidentally, in no order of precedence -- Republican Members of the House, Republican Governors, members of the Republican National Committee and others, solicited and unsolicited.

In addition to those categories, as you all know, he asked that certain Members of the Congress and others come in and talk with him about it and, as you know, on Sunday a week ago, I believe it was, there was quite a parade of people in here.

He conferred with a number of leaders in the Congress. I don't have that complete list with me, and in addition to the Congressional people, it included Mel Laird and George Bush and Bryce Harlow. I guess that is all that were not Members of Congress.

When he had seen the tabulations in these groups and the total tabulations, which of course were unweighted; that is to say, a great proportion and total number of votes came from either the House of Representatives or the National Committee, many fewer from Senators and many fewer from Governors. so the grand total was really kind of meaningless.

You found that there was no one who led all the lists, but the Governors, as you might expect, would tend to have a Governor or former Governor as their favorite and the Senators would lean heavily towards somebody who had a background in the Senate or was presently in the Senate.

The House the same way, and the National Committee, of course, had an affinity for someone associated with the National Committee, so that it was much more meaningful for him to study the totals by group than it was a grand total. The grand total was more or less meaningless.

Having done that, he continued to confer with people, sometimes in unscheduled private visits and sometimes here in the office or on the golf course or by the telephone. I can't keep track of all the telephone calls, so don't try to ask me about who those were, except I do know that he did confer with the Speaker and Senator Mansfield and with Mr. Rhodes and Senator Scott.

MORE

I guess Mr. Rhodes and Senator Scott were in to see him on that Sunday, but he did confer with the Democratic leaders of the House and Senate, the Speaker, Mr. O'Neill and Senator Mansfield.

Q This was just this last Friday you are talking about, that he looked at the tabulations, just three days ago?

MR. HARTMANN: Yes. He really started to focus on this at that point, other than the earlier private talks that he had.

From that point, the next step in the process was to ask the Director of the FBI to give him a fast check on certain names of those who were not elected Members of Congress, from which he got back a negative report.

Q When?

MR. HARTMANN: Yesterday.

Q On all three?

MR. HARTMANN: On all three.

Q By negative report, I assume that means there was nothing bad in the report about them?

MR. HARTMANN: No, there was nothing established to be derogatory.

Q Did he also ask for an IRS report?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't believe he did so specifically, but that is part of the FBI report.

Then yesterday, before taking off for Chicago, he asked his counsel, Mr. Buchen, to take a list of five names, or six, as I think I told those of you who were on the pool on the aircraft, to the Special Prosecutor to ascertain if the Special Prosecutor had any charges pending or any derogatory information against any of those names.

Q When was that?

MR. HARTMANN: Before we took off for Chicago yesterday, early in the morning, 8 o'clock, around there.

After he returned, at 5 or 6 o'clock yesterday evening, Mr. Buchen reported back to the President that the Special Prosecutor had assured him that there was no derogatory information directed against any of those names.

MORE

Q Did you say that list was five or six that went to the Special Prosecutor?

MR. HARTMANN: I believe it was five, but it could have been as many as six.

Q What would be considered derogatory?

MR. HARTMANN: If they had any charges against them. The Special Prosecutor part, Watergate-related charges.

Q Had he eliminated at that point one of those under consideration if he sent only five?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know. I can't answer that.

Q She means the list, had it dropped from six to five?

MR. HARTMANN: No, I am just unclear as to whether it was five or six that he sent over to the Special Prosecutor.

Q In any event, these were the finalists.

MR. HARTMANN: These were the ones he was going to pick one of them from, yes.

Q Was there any ranking in the tabulations that made any sense that you could look at the tabulations and these were the five or six finalists?

MR. HARTMANN: The tabulations did not necessarily conform -- well, first, let me say, his finalists were never ranked any place but in his own head, as far as I know, but he was, yes, guided by the tabulations. But as you might imagine, Governor Rockefeller did not lead all the categories.

There were those among the finalists who were rather low down in the numerical tabulations.

Q Did he personally call these five or six to put to them the same questions that he put to Rockefeller on Saturday?

MR. HARTMANN: No, sir, he did not.

Q He called on Rockefeller?

MORE

MR. HARTMANN: To the best of my knowledge he personally called only Rockefeller.

Q Earlier you said he was asking Rocky the same questions he asked some of the others.

MR. HARTMANN: He had talked to some of the others many times during his Presidency.

Q Well, was his call to Rockefeller on Saturday caused by the story that was going around town?

MR. HARTMANN: That was one of the reasons for the placing of the call, yes. It wasn't that he called him to tip him off that he had made a decision, because he hadn't at that point.

Q And then having him on the phone he asked him certain questions?

MR. HARTMANN: That is correct.

Q Can you tell us what any of those questions were?

MR. HARTMANN: No, I think you will have to direct those questions to the President.

Q Bob, was Governor Rockefeller then the leading candidate on Saturday, not the only one, perhaps, but the only one that he felt necessary to talk to in person about it at that time?

MR. HARTMANN: No, he was obviously one of those under consideration; and the story broke and the President talked to him.

Q But the Saturday so-called smear story was the immediate reason for the call; is that what you are suggesting?

MR. HARTMANN: Yes.

Q Out of that came the general questioning?

MR. HARTMANN: Yes, he asked him a bunch of other questions, too, which he would be expected to ask.

MORE

Q Bob, I am a little curious about the real reasons for all these tabulations and soliciting of a wide range of opinion since some finalists figured relatively low, but they were still finalists. Is this actually more of a way of letting the various Republican officials and those around the country and here in Washington feel they are being consulted? They don't appear to have been very significant.

MR. HARTMANN: One, it gave him a feel for the reception which the candidate might receive in his confirmation when you looked at the Senators' choices and the Members of the House choices, and, two, he probably -- and here again I say I am not going to put myself inside his head -- but it certainly gave me, as I looked at them, an idea which candidates had some support in all elements of the party and which were limited to one or two elements.

Q Could I follow that? If Governor Rockefeller did not lead in all categories, focusing on the Senate and the House, did he fare pretty well in each of those chambers and was there any kind of veto, you know, "Anybody but Rockefeller", recommendations out of that body?

MR. HARTMANN: There were none in the form that was sent in on paper. Of course I can't speak as to the private conversations, whether they were both negative and positive.

But I am sure that cut both ways with all the candidates.

Q But we have been told by interviewing people on the Hill that he was not first in the House. Was he in the Senate? Did he rank up there at the top or very high?

MR. HARTMANN: Let me say that he had solid support in all the categories.

Q Bob, could you give us a brief summary of the criteria the President applied to his choice of Vice President?

MR. HARTMANN: I think he answered that himself for you, Pete, when he said he would make a good President.

Q Could you go into more detail, please?

MR. HARTMANN: Again, I am not going to put myself in the President's head. He never laid down any specific criteria to me because he wasn't asking me -- he did include me on his list, I guess of those he wanted to submit ballots, but I didn't submit one. I submitted a guess in a sealed envelope, and said this is not my choice but a guess.

MORE

Q Were you right?

MR. HARTMANN: I won't tell.

Q Was the overwhelming criterion then whether the man could step into the Presidency on a moment's notice?

MR. HARTMANN: Yes, sir; I am convinced that it was. You had better ask him again, but I am convinced it was.

Q Let me ask another question in terms of the House and Senate. Did Rockefeller lead in the House, or did he definitely not lead in the House? Did he lead in the Senate or not lead in the Senate?

MR. HARTMANN: If you can poll the Republican Members of the House on it, I suppose their opinions today might be a little different from their ballots and I wouldn't want to embarrass them.

Q You are not going to say he actually led in the House or Senate?

MR. HARTMANN: No I am not.

Q Are you finished with the chronology on how he came to his decision?

MR. HARTMANN: I have a couple of other things I want to add to the story.

Q Can we stick for a minute on the meeting between Buchen and the Special Prosecutor's Office? Was that between Buchen and Jaworski? How long did they meet? Were there any negative reports from Jaworski on any of the people?

MR. HARTMANN: There were no negative reports from Jaworski on any of the people. How long they met, I don't know. I was in Chicago.

Q It was Jaworski?

MR. HARTMANN: That was my understanding from Buchen.

Q To follow up, if the President felt there was something wrong with the FBI investigating people who held legislative office, that this somehow violated separation of powers, why did he think contacting the Special Prosecutor didn't violate separation of powers?

MR. HARTMANN: That is a good question. You know how sensitive Congress is to having the FBI in possession even of

MORE

information about them, and he knows that, and as long as the guy wasn't going to get the apple for sure, he wasn't going to do that until he had to.

I can't answer the other part of your question. Maybe it was just one of those inconsistent situations which most of us sometimes fall into. The Special Prosecutor is a special case. He could not have made his final decision without clearing up this aspect of it because everyone of the finalists was a working member of the Republican Party for the last five and one-half years and you would all have jumped all over us, I am sure, if he hadn't done that.

But he couldn't give the Special Prosecutor just one name, because that would announce his decision.

Q Bob, could I follow up either question on the criteria. Some people at the White House had sort of spread the word that he was looking for a man who would be young enough to serve as Vice President for six years and then be in a position to run himself in 1980. Rockefeller would be 72 --

MR. HARTMANN: I think the President's decision answers that question, Ron. He was not looking for the survival of the Republican Party, but of the Republic if anything happens to him.

Q Well, this raises a question, too. Does this mean he has plans to keep Rockefeller as Vice President for two years instead of six?

MR. HARTMANN: Your guess is as good as mine.

Q Did he trade off his desire to have a younger man for other considerations?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know, Ron, what went on in his head. I only know where it came out. I really don't know what went on in his head. I have done the same kind of speculating in my own mind without any more information than I have now.

Q Before we get away from it, I gather where we left it was that Rockefeller was the only one of the five or six, whatever it was, that he ever talked to personally?

MR. HARTMANN: He wouldn't have talked to any of them, I am sure, if this matter hadn't come up.

Q Why not?

MR. HARTMANN: I mean at that stage of the game.

MORE

Q Did he ever talk to any of the others at any stage?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, as you know, he was talking to some of the others that were prominently mentioned frequently.

Q About other business, but what about this?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know. I wasn't there. Maybe he asked them some leading questions about this matter, too. I don't know.

Q You saw the totals. What was the total number of ballots that were submitted?

MR. HARTMANN: It was in the neighborhood of 1,000.

Q How many of those were Rockefeller? You can tell us that, can't you?

MR. HARTMANN: Wait a minute; let me pull that back. When you added firsts, seconds and thirds, you had a total of about a thousand mentions of people. So it was 300 and some individuals heard from.

Q In any category, within place and show?

MR. HARTMANN: Yes.

Q How many mentioned Rockefeller within that thousand, Bob, roughly?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, Rockefeller was up at the top of the list when you did grand totals, yes.

Q Up at the top or close to the top?

MR. HARTMANN: Close to the top.

Q Among these categories what was his average place?

MR. HARTMANN: We have some statisticians here, but as I said, he didn't approach this in a statistical way and knowing that, I didn't fiddle with statistics.

Q Let's go back to chronology.

MR. HARTMANN: Last evening after he received the assurance of Mr. Buchen from Mr. Jaworski that there was nothing in the Special Prosecutor's files that affected any of these five or six people, he then at some point prior to Al Haig's call to Governor Rockefeller, made his decision.

MORE

Now I do not know what that precise moment was.

Q When did you last see him last night?

MR. HARTMANN: You mean yesterday, when did I last see him? Is that what you mean?

Q Yes.

MR. HARTMANN: The last time I saw him last night was at the reception he had over in the Residence for the old Vice Presidential Secret Service detail.

Q Do you know to whom he communicated that decision? Did he call any Congressional leaders? Did he call anybody on it?

MR. HARTMANN: The first communication of that decision other than this phone call from General Haig to Rockefeller, was, I believe, during the legislative leaders' meeting this morning when he informed the bipartisan leadership.

Q Did he tell General Haig why he wanted to see Rockefeller?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know that, but General Haig is a pretty smart fellow and I imagine he got the point.

Q You said at the beginning of this that General Haig told him to be down here this morning?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I don't know if he put it exactly that way. The President would like to see him at 10:30 or something like that.

Q Wasn't there some point when Governor Rockefeller accepted?

MR. HARTMANN: Yes, that must have been about five minutes before we went into the room.

Q You mean he was called down here without the assurance that he would accept?

MR. HARTMANN: I assume that he got that assurance in that Saturday call, but I am assuming that; I don't know.

Q But you are saying to your knowledge Haig did not tell Rockefeller last night over the phone?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't know. I haven't talked to General Haig about this call. All I got was from the President that he asked General Haig to do this.

MORE

Q Can you find out, Bob, a kind of key point here that we don't have? Were there actually six names sent to the Special Prosecutor?

MR. HARTMANN: Does it really make a difference?

Q Yes.

Q Did General Haig suggest that the Governor bring his wife?

MR. HARTMANN: His wife was invited and she was unable to get ready in time, I guess, to get down here that fast.

Q Can you tell us the exact way the President told Rockefeller the word?

MR. HARTMANN: No, I really can't. David Kennerly was in my way snapping pictures. (Laughter.)

Q Do you have any more on the chronology?

MR. HARTMANN: I have one more rather important announcement, I think. This morning just before he brought Governor Rockefeller into the Oval Office, in fact while Governor Rockefeller was talking to former President Nixon, the President called George Bush from another telephone in my office and told him of his decision.

As Chairman of the Party and so forth, he was entitled to a little advance notice.

Q Did he also call Rumsfeld?

MR. HARTMANN: Ambassador Rumsfeld was in the room with the rest of the Cabinet and White House staff that he told after telling the bipartisan leadership and before bringing the Governor into the Roosevelt Room.

Q What was the look on Rumsfeld's face when he told him?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, I wasn't exactly looking at him at the time but he seemed to be very happy about the whole thing afterwards.

Q What did he tell Bush and what did Bush reply?

MR. HARTMANN: I only heard half of his end of the conversation and I haven't seen George.

MORE

Q What did he say to Bush?

MR. HARTMANN: He just said he had made his decision and told him what it was and said it was a very tough decision, and he thought it was best for the country, and I don't know what was said.

Q Did the President talk with Dr. Kissinger about this on a one-on-one basis and to what extent was the foreign policy consideration a factor in this choice?

MR. HARTMANN: I think that is a question you will have to ask Dr. Kissinger or the President. Dr. Kissinger was present in the Cabinet room, and he had been with the President before the President met with Governor Rockefeller.

MORE

Q My question was, did he talk to Dr. Kissinger in advance of making his choice?

MR. HARTMANN: He has been talking to Dr. Kissinger four or five times a day.

Q On this subject?

MR. HARTMANN: About this subject, I do not know. He asked all of the Cabinet to give him their views, and I am sure they all did, but mostly by word of mouth.

Q When he talked to Rockefeller on the phone on Saturday, he put to him questions about the smear, but presumably other questions about potential embarrassment, you know, what we have come to call, if you like, Eagleton questions. Were any similar questions asked of any of these other candidates, direct questions about whether there was anything embarrassing in their background, giving them the impression they might be under consideration?

MR. HARTMANN: Not to my knowledge, but he has talked to some of the other candidates so frequently that I don't know.

Q Bob, at the other end of the process, this chronology, when did he start thinking about a Vice President?

MR. HARTMANN: As soon as he got over the shock of being President. He mentioned the matter the first day, I believe, in one way or another.

Q How did he mention it?

MR. HARTMANN: He said it was one of the first things he was going to do, and he was going to try to do it that first week. But as you know, he didn't get it done that first week.

Q Did you ever hear him talk about it before he became President?

MR. HARTMANN: No.

Q Did Cyprus sidetrack him to any extent from this search?

MR. HARTMANN: That was one of the things that crowded up the time in the past week. As you know, there were many others.

MORE

Q Did the Long report, this statement by Long about Rockefeller, did that have an effect in delaying it until today?

MR. HARTMANN: I don't think that contributed any appreciable delay. The check out by the Special Prosecutor was done rather speedily.

Q It was more Cyprus that delayed it than lies? It was supposed to be a week or ten days.

MR. HARTMANN: Cyprus chewed up an awful lot of his time this past week.

Q Bob, maybe you answered this question, but I want to ask it again. The same questions that he asked Rockefeller on Saturday, did he ask any other man these same questions?

MR. HARTMANN: The answer is, not to my knowledge. He told me of asking some questions of Rockefeller during that Saturday talk. He did not tell me, nor has anyone else told me, that he had asked any other questions.

Q In connection with that, has the President talked to Mr. Rockefeller either on Saturday, or anytime since, about the role he envisions for Rockefeller as Vice President in his Administration? Perhaps that is one of the subjects that was discussed on Saturday or maybe this morning. Do you know anything about it?

MR. HARTMANN: No, I think that is a bridge to be crossed when and if Governor Rockefeller is confirmed and meanwhile, we have a lot of other things to do and worry about.

Q Governor Rockefeller said they did talk about it, but not in any detail.

MR. HARTMANN: That is right. I mean, you know, I want to be all the help I can to you.

Q Since the criterion was fitness or qualification to step in and be President, do we have here a situation where in effect these other men were being measured against Rockefeller's seniority and depth experience?

MR. HARTMANN: If so, it was inside his head, and I can't speak to that.

Let me go back to your question about the role he would play as Vice President. Before that happens, of course, he has to run a very difficult gauntlet, which nobody in the world knows better than the President and about a half dozen or dozen people who assisted the President when he was a Member of Congress in getting through the first test of the Twenty-fifth Amendment route to becoming a Vice President.

MORE

Knowing that this is only the second time this process has occurred under the Constitution and that he and a handful of his friends and staff were the sole possessors of the guidelines for this process from the nominee's point of view, the President, when he met with the Governor after the announcement, offered him the services of all of those of his staff, including me and the others who were with him during the hearings, to assist him in preparing for these hearings to the extent that we can.

Now, specifically, he assigned Richard T. Burress, who has been Assistant to the Vice President during the past eight months in charge of our legislative liaison, to be the liaison man between the White House and Governor Rockefeller and his staff on the preparation for the hearings simply so that he can make available what we know about going this route.

Q That doesn't include Cramer; does it?

MR. HARTMANN: Well, Bill Cramer isn't a member. We can't direct what Bill Cramer does. The Governor is aware and if he wants Bill Cramer's advice, I am sure Bill will be glad to give it to him.

Q Bob, does the President envision a substantive role for the Vice President? Does he expect that he will be in charge of certain parts of the Government without getting entirely specific?

MR. HARTMANN: We haven't talked about that, but you go back and read what he said his vision of the Vice Presidency was, and I suppose it hasn't changed very much.

Q In connection with the Congressional hearings, President Ford, when he was there, made available to the committee a complete financial statement. Do you expect that Governor Rockefeller will do the same thing, make a complete statement of his net worth?

MR. HARTMANN: That is up to Governor Rockefeller and the committee.

Q Does the President have any thoughts about whether this should be done?

MR. HARTMANN: The President has already indicated what he thinks should be done by what he did.

THE PRESS: Thank you, sir.

END (AT 2:55 P.M. EDT)