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Last Updated: 09/30/2024

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Santa Barbara, California)

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
MARLIN FITZWATER

November 19, 1984

Vista Mar Monte Room
Santa Barbara Sheraton
Santa Barbara, California

10:03 A.M. PST

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#1229-11/19

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MR. FITZWATER: To begin with, the President was saddened to learn of former Senator Aiken's death this morning and will be expressing his and Mrs. Reagan's sympathy privately to his wife.

For the ranch report, the weather at Rancho del Cielo is sunny and warm today and the President had breakfast a short time ago and right now is beginning his horseback ride.

After lunch he will receive the Farm Bureau people for Operation ID and after that will clear brush at the ranch until Mrs. Reagan arrives later this afternoon.

Let me just give you a note on this Farm Bureau program. The President will participate this afternoon in signing up Rancho del Cielo in the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department's Operation ID program. In cooperation with the Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau, this program seeks to stop the widespread increase in rural theft by marking farm and ranch equipment, household and office goods.

Q Is he really afraid of somebody breaking in and taking his tractor?

Q What was the last sentence Marlin?

MR. FITZWATER: By marking farm and ranch equipment, household and office goods.

The marking program is carried out by the local Sheriff's Department and is sponsored by the California Farm Bureau using a numbering system established by the FBI. A separate number is issued to each ranch or farm and this number is placed on designated equipment. The number allows immediate identification of equipment anywhere in the country.

Q What's the number, Marlin?

Q One.

MR. FITZWATER: Representatives of the California Farm Bureau and the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department will visit the ranch today and give the President a number for the ranch and to mark equipment. The President learned of this program during his last visit to the ranch and wanted to participate to call attention to the program.

Q He has gotten --

Q Does he no longer have faith in the Secret Service?

Q Is Nancy's little gun going to be marked?

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Q Is the Service getting a separate number for their equipment?

Q Has the President ever had a theft problem on his ranch before?

Q Have you ever had as many comedians as this before?

Q Is he going to mark the horses?

Q No, I -- has he ever had a theft problem on his ranch?

MR. FITZWATER: Not to my knowledge.

Q Are you going to have a photo op for this?

MR. FITZWATER: AP and UPI photo. Yes.

Q That's all. No pool?

MR. FITZWATER: That's right. Just photo op.

Okay. Any questions?

Q It's alot better than the budget to me.

Q Are we going to see him at all between now and Sunday? Are there going to be any photo ops at all on the ranch?

MR. FITZWATER: Other than the one today, I don't expect any. But I don't expect any in which he'll be available to the whole press corps.

Q Marlin, what will happen today? Will he sign a paper or go out and inspect equipment and put nubmers on?

MR. FITZWATER: They will go out and visit -- I mean, and inspect some of the equipment, put numbers on whatever equipment that he has there and this is primarily just an opportunity for the President to symbolize his sympathy with the program, to give the Farm Bureau his support in their efforts.

Q Marlin, do you know today whether or not, or can you say whether or not the Heritage Foundation Report was distributed in the Cabinet Metting last week?

MR. FITZWATER: It was made available to the members of the budget working group and the Cabinet members. I don't know exactly what form or whether it was distributed or handed out in advance or how, but in any case, it was made available.

Q Has the President read it?

MR. FITZWATER: It's a -- I -- I caution you that it's a public document available to anyone.

Q Has the President read it?

Q No it's not, because it hasn't been published yet.

MR. FITZWATER: Well, it will be.

Q Marlin --

Q Has the President read it and reviewed it?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know.

Q What --

Q Had -- did -- did he have it reviewed during the Cabinet meeting by Ed Meese or anybody else?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know.

Q What kind of an imprimatur does that put on it when it is distributed in that fashion? I mean, can you give us some sense of how significant it is in the budget process?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, the Heritage Foundation produced a report similar to this four years ago. They have produced similar reports from time to time, if not annually, occasionally more frequently than that. And they have no official standing, but they are like any number of foundation reports that we find useful in the process of reviewing policy options.

Q Does the President accept --

Q Can you just -- can you -- when it's handed out like that -- I mean, are other foundation reports handed out? Is this one of many? And what kind of special -- can you give us some sense of the weight that this will be given in the budget process?

MR. FITZWATER: I really can't. I would say that there are any number of these kinds of reports that are available to the budget working group by private foundations and by people within the administration.

This process last week involved the review of all kinds of policy options for the second term, a number of program initiatives that were worked up by the White House staff, by the Office of Management and Budget and this was just one of the elements of it. But --

Q Could this be viewed as a counter-proposal to the Office of Management and Budget proposal?

MR. FITZWATER: No, I would not view it that way.

Q Marlin, one of the main recommendations in here is that people be allowed to opt out of Social Security for private pension funds. Can you say today whether the President accepts or rejects that idea?

MR. FITZWATER: The President has said many times we have no plans to change Social Security, and that remains the case.

Q So he absolutely rejects this one proposal?

MR. FITZWATER: We have no plans to change Social Security.

Q Wait a minute. I think he said he wouldn't cut benefits for Social Security. I don't think he's spoken, during the campaign, about whether or not he would allow people, as part of a reform, to get out of the system.

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I think he said that we have no plans to change Social Security.

Q Including this kind of change?

MR. FITZWATER: I can't go through every kind of option, but --

Q Well, this is actually making it voluntary. I mean, that's something -- the one thing he talked about 20 years ago, but I presume you've rejected now. Why don't you just come out and say

that you've rejected --

MR. FITZWATER: We think the Social Security system is sound, sound well into the next century. It's operating well, and we've no plans to change it.

Q But you're not specifically ruling this out. Why are you leaving that little hole for us to play with here?

MR. FITZWATER: I'm not trying to leave any hole. We're not making --

Q Well, will you say that the President has rejected this specific proposal?

MR. FITZWATER: Everybody under the sun has ideas about what can be done about one program or another, and I'm not going to go through every one and reject it or not. The fact is, they're all rejected. We're not changing Social Security.

Q Marlin, what if a better idea comes along than the present system?

MR. FITZWATER: They haven't -- I don't think we've seen it yet.

Q You said this was brought out or introduced as part of the policy review process. Was that the Ed Meese review, during the Cabinet meeting last week?

MR. FITZWATER: I think everyone took part. It's --

Q But this was the presentation he specifically was making, that -- you know, that he's been overseeing, right?

MR. FITZWATER: He's been -- he has overseen a policy review that's being carried out, in large measure, by Jack Svahn in the Office of Policy Development. And that has been a part of these budget meetings throughout last week. It's a matter of reviewing programs and policies within the administrations, take a look at which ones have worked and why they were established in the first place and should they be continued and in what form and can changes be made. And, finally, can we realize any budget savings by those changes.

Q Marlin, do you think reports like this, coming from the Heritage Foundation, will scare older Americans?

MR. FITZWATER: I hope not. They shouldn't. I think older Americans have had every assurance by the President imaginable. And I repeat them again this morning.

Q Another part of that recommendation was that it would charge patients more for Medicare hospital stays. Do you also reject that, given what the President said about --

MR. FITZWATER: I'm not going to comment on any of the specifics.

Q You mean -- Wait a minute. You can't say that the administration, as part of what it has said it's going to look at, Medicare, is considering changing the way -- the distribution system to the states?

MR. FITZWATER: I won't comment on any specific proposals. As we said when we started this budget process, that all kinds of options are being considered for all kinds of programs and I'm just not going to get into any specific items.

No decisions have been made. Even the preliminary

judgments haven't been made. Those will be presented to the President upon his return next week.

Q Marlin, what form would those take? Will they be, "Here's what we recommend that you do," or will it be, "Here's A, B and C, pick one."

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know. I'm not certain that it's been decided yet. But it will be generally areas of budget change and budget reductions that the group feels can be made where they can pick up significant amounts of money.

Q Specific recommendations of what to do, or just -- several options?

MR. FITZWATER: They'll be -- I think they'll probably be program specific, but beyond that, I don't know. OMB then will take them, make them a part of the Director's review process and consider the more detailed kinds of changes in the programs.

Q -- back to Social Security?

MR. FITZWATER: Yes, Frank.

Q Could you explain some timing? When was the last time Stockman gave the President deficit numbers, fresh deficit numbers, before last week?

MR. FITZWATER: The last time before last week?

Q Was there some kind of a long quarantine on that subject because of the campaign or what?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know, Frank. I don't recall any formal meetings, but I'm not privy to all the private sessions that might have been held. I just don't know.

Q Well, were there worsening numbers through the final months of the campaign while the President was talking that 170 figure?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know. I'm not sure that I agree with the premise. I mean, the fact is that the current service deficit increased as the result of increases in Congressional expenditures between the time of our mid-year review and the end of the year. Those were known to everybody who reads a newspaper. The other factor was the change in the ability of the Housing and Urban Development Department to finance bonds. That again was a public change. So, it was clear to everybody that the deficit would be somewhat higher at the current services level than it was in our mid-year review.

Q But I'm asking, was it clear to the President when he was talking of growing our way out of the thing right to the last day of the campaign?

MR. FITZWATER: Oh, I think the President has always talked about growing our way out of it, but he's also talked about the necessity of cutting government spending in conjunction with that. And that remains the same strategy.

Q Marlin --

MR. FITZWATER: Yes.

Q -- at the same time, along the same lines there, Stockman was saying -- or has said now that the slowdown in the economy is also contributing to this deficit. Throughout the campaign, the economy was slowing down, and yet the President was saying all along we're going to grow our way out of this -- the

booming economic recovery. Was he not getting this information from Stockman at the time, that --

MR. FITZWATER: The President was saying during the campaign that we expected growth to help us resolve the deficit problem in addition to spending cuts. I urge you not to buy that idea that growth would do it alone. I don't think anyone ever said that. I think that it remains the same.

We still expect growth to help reduce the deficit. Recall that the deficit at the end of fiscal 1983 was \$195 billion. At the end of fiscal 1984, it was \$175 billion. It is true that the growth has slowed. We had a 10.1 growth in GNP in our first quarter and 7.2 in the second quarter and down to 2.7 in the third quarter. But that -- we're still holding to our projection of 4 percent growth next year. And at that growth level, we would expect to achieve some reduction in deficits.

Q But here in August when you had your estimates out -- between that time in August and the end of the campaign, was the President not told or not -- or these numbers were not dealt with again? Was he still under the impression that he was going to have \$175 billion, \$176 billion deficit at the end of this year?

MR. FITZWATER: I think the President was aware of all of this. I think that his position today would be the same as it was then. We said during the campaign that we intended to get the deficit down by cutting government spending as the primary method, as well as expecting some growth in the economy. That's the same position we have today.

Q Well, is it still your position? Because when he talked about government spending during the campaign, he talked about waste in efficiency and spoke almost primarily of the Grace Commission and management savings. Wouldn't you at least agree now that there's no way you're going to get the deficit down without major program cuts?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't agree with that premise either. We have always talked about cutting spending. And we've talked about eliminating waste and abuse. You recall some of the --

Q -- more than waste and abuse now?

MR. FITZWATER: Absolutely. You recall the briefings, the President's press conference right after the election and many of the background sessions that you had. Everyone said that there would have to be reductions in government spending.

Q Yes, but, Marlin, in Reagan's own post-election news conference -- if you read it -- he says we can get it down without cutting programs, that we'll just have to go cut the fat. I mean, he was saying himself that you wouldn't have to cut programs and that regardless of what the aides were saying in the background briefings he talked about the Grace Commission and fat and waste. He never talked about program cuts and he didn't even the day after the election.

MR. FITZWATER: Well, we may have a problem of semantics here. I mean, the Grace Commission cuts are program cuts.

Q Oh, they are.

MR. FITZWATER: And I don't think the President -- I mean, I think the record is clear. The President has talked about reducing the size and role of government for 20 years.

Q What programs would be cut?

MR. FITZWATER: -- part of the budget process.

Q Marlin, there's a poll by The New York Times and CBS that says that a majority of the people expect a tax increase and, I think, 40 percent of those who voted for Reagan are expecting one. Does this indicate maybe -- if you knew these figures, that there might be some small mandate, if you will, for a tax adjustment upwards?

MR. FITZWATER: I refer you to the President's remarks to the Cabinet last week. He doesn't want to raise taxes.

Q Marlin, back on the deficit, the President said in his debate, and your remark just reminded me of it, he said that the -- that if the rate of increase in government spending can be held to five percent and in the debate he said it was now at six percent, that by 1989 that would reduce the budget deficit down to \$30 billion or \$40 billion. Do you buy that figure today based on the briefings last week?

MR. FITZWATER: That was the high-growth scenario that was first put forth in our mid-session review and not the --

Q -- it was based on a four percent recovery he said,

MR. FITZWATER: No, it was based on higher than that, was it not?

Q -- any time that we can have a four percent recovery continue for that same period of time, etc., etc., it would generate another \$400 billion in government revenues over that period.

MR. FITZWATER: I guess I -- I don't have an answer Bruce. I don't know what to tell you.

Q How about he made a mistake?

Q Well, it is true --

MR. FITZWATER: No, no no. I mean, look, we're just --

Q -- his figures are based on higher than four percent, right? They'd have to be.

Q The other thing, Marlin, is that he talked about five percent growth in spending when it was -- when this year you guys were going at 13 percent. I mean there -- you don't have a five percent spending growth, you have far higher. You'd have to do a lot of cuts to get to five percent. So, that debate claim was really not -- doesn't represent your current program, does it?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I'm not going to try to make budget policy here this morning. We'll just have to --

Q Aw, shucks.

MR. FITZWATER: -- await the outcome of the review sessions.

Q Speaking of which, is the President going to get progress reports through the week or just no contact at all?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't -- you mean on the budget?

Q Yes.

MR. FITZWATER: I don't anticipate any progress reports on the budget, no. He is in contact every day with the senior advisors. As you know, Bud McFarlane is out here and Ed Meese is coming out tonight, Craig Fuller is here today. But we don't anticipate any budget material going to the President until he

returns.

Q Can I ask you to get back on Social Security?

MR. FITZWATER: Yes.

Q This report was handed out with some kind of suggestion that all of the proposals were possibilities. Was any statement ever made that they were not supposed to look at what was said on Social Security? Was the Cabinet told that ever-- that that was off limits.

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know, but I don't think they were told that these were possibilities. I think they were told that here's a paper with a lot of ideas and we're in the idea business here this week, gives you something to think about.

Q Were they told there were a lot of ideas but ignore the ones about Social Security?

MR. FITZWATER: Certainly. The President has said all along we're not making any changes in Social Security.

Q What was the --

MR. FITZWATER: I don't think there's anyone in that meeting who doubts or has any question about the President's position on Social Security.

Q Well, is the President's position that there is no need and will be no change in Social Security or that he has no plans for any changes in Social Security right now?

MR. FITZWATER: He's been on record a thousand times -- I'm not -- I won't -- I can't go through it again.

Q Well, okay, then describe -- then you interpret what he's on record about because he's on record mostly on the question of benefits and when it comes to this question of the possibility of shifting at some point to some degree of, you know, voluntary participation --

MR. FITZWATER: We have no plans to change Social Security period.

Q He sees no need for any changes?

MR. FITZWATER: We have no plans to change Social Security period.

Q How about saying we won't change Social Security period. Will you say that?

MR. FITZWATER: How about going back and look at his own words. It's on the record many times.

Q As a last resort, would he change --

Q Marlin, why is the --

MR. FITZWATER: Candy?

Q This is a different subject so --

Q -- this is one more economy. Why is the stock market going down? The instant analysis says --

Q Yes, Marlin, why is the --

Q And where would you put your money?

MR. FITZWATER: I have no idea.

Q Have you taken your money out, Marlin, before the election?

MR. FITZWATER: No one -- No one knows why the stock market goes up or down. At least --

Q -- last week, Marlin?

Q Well, Marlin, could it be because that there are new fears that the President won't be able to get the deficit down to any substantial --

Q -- forbid.

MR. FITZWATER: I have no idea. Heaven forbid.

Q Suppose you were kidding.

MR. FITZWATER: The stock market goes up one day and down the next and who knows what motivates it.

Q The President claims credit for it when it goes up though.

Q Marlin, at what point in the budget process will the President hold a news conference or address the American people on this subject do you suppose? When will be the soonest we might see him?

MR. FITZWATER: I would expect the soonest you'll see an official budget is when we submit it to the Congress which should be late January.

Q No, not when we see an official budget, but when we see the President on the subject?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know. There's no way of knowing.

Q I thought he wasn't going to ever make more news conferences.

Q We won. We won. You got that?

MR. FITZWATER: There will be news conferences, but I haven't any idea when.

Q May we quote you?

Q Every two months.

Q Every two months -- that's all --

Q -- two years and eight months.

Q A farewell in December of '88.

MR. FITZWATER: Candy?

Q Has Mrs. Reagan seen a doctor since she went for a second opinion about her fall?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know.

Q Will you check?

MR. FITZWATER: I'll see what I can find out.

Q Do you know anything about her activities in Los

Angeles?

MR. FITZWATER: She was visiting family in Phoenix and I don't -- I'm not familiar with her activities in Los Angeles, no.

Q Could you --

MR. FITZWATER: She'll be here this afternoon.

Q Can you explicitly say she didn't go to a doctor? I mean, do you know that?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know either way. I don't know whether she did or not.

Yes, Ira.

Q A couple of abortion clinics were bombed outside Washington today. When that happened the last time, a series, sometime during the summer, there was not much said from the White House. And I'm wondering if, given the President's strong support of the anti-abortion movement, if there's any feeling that you need to make a statement that that's not an acceptable form of protest.

MR. FITZWATER: We abhor violence in any form.

(Laughter.)

Q Larry would be proud of you.

Q No, that was Beirut. (Laughter.)

MR. FITZWATER: Anybody else?

Q Yes, I've got a question. I've got a question. What do you know about Marcos' condition? There are a lot of reports that he's very ill. There are even reports he may have come to the United States. What can you tell us about his condition?

MR. FITZWATER: He has not come to the United States. He has not called the President.

Q But are we aware of his health?

MR. FITZWATER: I'm not.

Q You don't know anything about Chad? (Laughter.)

MR. FITZWATER: No.

Q What about the Phillipine woman who was deported and has written Reagan a letter asking to be able to come back? You know who I'm --

MR. FITZWATER: No, I'm not --

Q You haven't seen that report?

MR. FITZWATER: No.

Q Well, she had some hearing and she was put on a plane, hustled on a plane, couldn't say goodbye to her family, has written to Reagan for intercession.

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know anything about it, Maureen. Are you carrying that story? Is that a wire story?

Q Yes, I think so.

Q Marlin, we're carrying it with a little note --

piece of information that says that the husband who wrote -- more than Reagan -- was told by somebody in Santa Barbara, one of the aides, as to where to write and exactly how to contact the President. Could you ask around and see if somebody --

MR. FITZWATER: Yes, I'll see if I can find out anything, because I don't know anything about it.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

10:25 A.M. PST

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