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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

September 14, 1984

Mr. Speakes' Office

9:22 A.M. EDT

MR. SPEAKES: Today is the Hispanic --

Q It's Friday.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes -- oh, yes, since today is Friday -- in honor of Friday, I would like to brief here at 9:15 a.m. and answer any questions you may have and not brief at noon to give you a little breathing spell. Anybody got problems with that?

Q Wait a moment, we haven't asked for a breathing spell.

MR. SPEAKES: You've got one.

Hispanic --

Q Will the President take questions in the Rose Garden?

Q Does that mean we're getting a lid, too?

MR. SPEAKES: Dosen't plan to.

Q Now that we're all here, could we have a little news conference?

MR. SPEAKES: Hispanic Excellence in Education event in the Rose Garden at 1:15 p.m. That's about 200 students from a number of states who will be here as the President emphasizes the administration's commitment to education.

Q -- be a short speech.

Q And emphasizes -- (Laughter.)

Q Now, now, now.

Q -- how many?

MR. SPEAKES: About 200 students.

The economic figures are out today. The Producer Price Index once again declined at one-tenth of one percent. This provides renewed evidence that inflation remains under control. The measure of prices at the wholesale level remained unchanged in April, May and June, increased slightly in July, and then declined in August for the first time this year.

The record of low inflation provides a foundation for the lasting economic growth. We have retail sales out this morning at eight-tenths of a percent. I presume all these are 10:30 -- 8:30 releases?

MR. FITZWATER: Right -- well, the industrial production is 9:30.

MR. SPEAKES: We're alright on that.

Q Ha.

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Q Oh, go ahead. Tell us.

MR. SPEAKES: Eight-tenths in August. This --

Q Which one? What is this?

MR. SPEAKES: -- declined eight-tenths of a percent in August.

Q Which one, Larry?

Q What did?

MR. SPEAKES: Retail sales. This sales record is consistent with the generally moderating economy. (Laughter.)

Q -- the depression.

MR. SPEAKES: Most of the drop was in auto sales, which, yesterday, rebounded to the tune of 29.7 percent for the first ten months -- or first ten days.

Q Are you reading USA Today?

MR. SPEAKES: Those happen to be New York Times.

The domestic sales -- auto sales in early September reached a second highest point of the year. Industrial production which is out at this moment increased by two-tenths of a percent in August. This isn't quite as strong as the nine-tenths of a percent increase in July and reflects some decline in production of consumer goods, but production of business equipment and defense related equipment continues strong.

Q Larry, is the --

MR. SPEAKES: We enter the fall season with a stabilizing economy poised for long-term growth with low inflation.

Q One more time?

Q Yes, we enter what?

MR. SPEAKES: We enter the fall with a stabilizing economy poised for long-term growth with low inflation.

Q What about interest rates? The warm weather is almost over.

MR. SPEAKES: I never make predictions about interest rates but I just happen to have a few headlines here that appear in the current press today.

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Q Larry, yesterday the President said that the deficits are coming down. Are they?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Where are they coming down? I thought they were still going up.

MR. SPEAKES: Look at your economic --

Q Well I thought that the deficit this year was going to be more than it was last year.

MR. SPEAKES: -- mid-year economic --

MR. FITZWATER: They've already dropped \$20 billion in '84.

Q From what? From last year?

MR. FITZWATER: From last year. Fiscal '83 with \$195 billion and fiscal '84 which ends in two weeks with \$184 billion.

Q One what?

MR. FITZWATER: I mean \$174 billion, I'm sorry.

Q Getting back to Ira's question --

MR. SPEAKES: Blows another piece.

Q Getting back to Ira's --

Q Where does the President get the figure that the deficit is \$20 billion lower than originally estimated at the start of this year. I can't find that --

MR. FITZWATER: He was referring to this figure: \$20 billion lower than last year.

Q He didn't say that.

MR. FITZWATER: Right, but he meant --

Q He twice or three times said it's -- the estimate is \$20 billion already lower than he estimated at the beginning of the year.

MR. SPEAKES: So.

MR. FITZWATER: He was referring to --

Q He's an old man.

Q He was referring to what?

Q He can't remember things for Christ sakes.

Q What was he referring to?

Q Can we get back to Ira's question? The President said that interest rates would drop before the warm weather was out and, --

MR. SPEAKES: -- refer back to what he said.

Q Before the cold weather starts?

MR. SPEAKES: Refer back to what he said.

Q He said summer.

Q Before the summer is over.

Q Well he changed that to -- to push it further in the future.

Q -- good conversion.

Q It's getting cold.

Q Well, in the area he was talking about --

MR. SPEAKES: Mike, go back and read the whole context before you start citing untruths.

Q Well, Larry, you amended it once to push it further back --

MR. SPEAKES: No, no no. Back and read the context of of thing before --

Q Alright, you stand on the Dallas words, we'll stand on the Dallas words.

MR. SPEAKES: Go ahead with it.

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Q In any event, we're getting close to the point where he said he thought interest rates would drop. But there's been no decline in mortgage rates, no declines in the prime interest rate despite whatever market fluctuations there might have been -- which happen daily. Those things bounce around.

Q Larry --

Q -- but mortgage rates and prime rate haven't gone down. Do you still expect that? Does he still expect that?

MR. SPEAKES: Hope to. And as he said the day he made the statement --

Q He said what?

MR. SPEAKES: As the day he made the statement. Look back and read the statement that day.

Q Larry, anything on the disaster request for North Carolina?

MR. SPEAKES: No, we have not received it yet, Deborah. We would anticipate getting it very shortly. FEMA has their teams, I think, enroute down there. We can run a check on that, but --

Q Would that come today?

MR. SPEAKES: Could it come today?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: It all depends on Governor Hunt, but I would assume it could come today, because it's quite obvious that damage certainly qualifies for a federal declaration.

Q How does it come? Is it a -- you have to have paper, or --

MR. SPEAKES: He sent a telegram.

Q What is the theme of the President's speech Saturday night with Mondale there and all the other people?

MR. SPEAKES: He hasn't finished his remarks.

Q Is it going to be a partisan speech in the sense that he will attempt to answer criticism from Mondale to his face?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know, Sam, until the President finishes.

Q Is it your understanding that they'll all four sit there for the event and listen to each others speeches? No one is going to leave?

MR. SPEAKES: I only speak for two of them. They'll be there.

Q What's the latest on the debates, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: The latest on the debates is that at this moment there is not a meeting scheduled for today. Possibly there could be, but right now there isn't one scheduled. As far as any prediction as to when it will be finalized, I can't make one.

Q There's a report that the negotiators have agreed to two Presidential debates and a Vice Presidential.

MR. SPEAKES: The negotiators haven't agreed to anything.

Q Do you look for any kind of an announcement today?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. I'm certainly not predicting one, but --

Q It could come today?

MR. SPEAKES: It all depends.

Q Well, how's it going to be done? If they meet again today and make a decision, will it be announced by the negotiators, or will it be announced by the principles, or what?

MR. SPEAKES: I would assume they would decide that in the meeting. I would judge it would be announced on the curb side, as these other things have.

Q Is it possible --

Q So the -- is the story that there's been an agreement on two debates -- I mean, that's wrong?

MR. SPEAKES: There has been no agreement on anything, and there won't be until everything's final.

Q Well, is it possible that they've agreed that far, but haven't agreed on format, so that --

MR. SPEAKES: I can't answer that.

Q -- so that both --

MR. SPEAKES: I can't address that, Ira, because we're just not talking as to general --

Q Well, when you say there's no agreement on anything, I mean, that doesn't take into account the possibility they've, you know, agreed on points one through five, but still have six through ten to go through. Do you want to stand on they haven't agreed on anything?

MR. SPEAKES: There have been no final agreements on anything in the debate discussions.

Q Larry, what's the President think about the possibility of an auto strike? Is he -- is there concern about the economy?

MR. SPEAKES: We generally have not gotten involved in any type of union-management negotiations, and we don't intend to.

Q You heard what he said in Detroit -- I mean, he go involved there.

MR. SPEAKES: Once again, you have distorted what he said.

Q I just said -- you heard what he said. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: No, once again you've distorted -- you distorted at that time what he said, and I would direct you back to the transcript. As I tried to correct you a day later, and you still haven't gotten it right.

Q So he's siding with the union.

MR. SPEAKES: If you want to distort -- I mean, once you start distorting, you can't un-distort.

Q If you want it correct, why don't you correct instead of always telling us to go back and look at things. What are you trying to say specifically about what he said, and then again earlier on the --

Q Interest rates.

Q -- on the interest rates. I mean, why don't you just tell us what you mean?

MR. SPEAKES: No, no, Lesley, I've been in this game --

Q No, I've been in this game, too --

MR. SPEAKES: -- I've been in this game longer than you have, and I'll direct you back --

Q No, not much longer. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: -- back to his record on what he said.

Q Longer than I have. (Laughter.)

Q I mean, if you really have a point to make, why don't you just make it, instead of telling us to go back and back and back. Make it.

MR. SPEAKES: I know it's troublesome to have to to -- to do your own research --

Q It's troublesome to have you speak in innuendo.

Q -- insinnuendo -- (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: How is that innuendo? Is that innuendo?

Q Absolutely.

MR. SPEAKES: Oh. (Laughter.)

Q Well, because you're implying that he got it wrong, but you won't --

MR. SPEAKES: All right. Anything else?

Q Yes, let's go back to the auto thing. Let me finish the auto question. Not getting involved in union and management, will it hurt the economy if there's an auto strike?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm just not commenting on it. Sorry.

Q -- hurt the economy if there's not a strike --

Q Has the President delayed the report --

Q Shh.

Q -- to Congress on arms control?

MR. SPEAKES: Has the President delayed the report to Congress on arms control? No, he has not. The President has not received the report, nor signed off on it. Congress, on the other hand, has been briefed on the report's contents and are aware of what's in the report. The report is presently undergoing an interagency review and until that's completed, we won't do anything with it. When it is completed, we will send it to --

Q Well, has anybody delayed the report on arms control --

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q -- if the President hasn't?

Q Now, you wouldn't look for it to go up before next Friday, would you?

MR. SPEAKES: I can't -- I can't predict, Sam. When they're finished with it they're finished with it.

Q Two weeks.

Q All right, two weeks.

Q But, in other words, they're going to finish -- they're going to study it and study it and study it and study it and study it?

Q Well, what do you have -- I mean, what do you have to say to the reports in the paper --

Q What do you mean --

Q -- that it's being delayed purposely -- someone had talked to -- exactly the same quote to both The Times and The Post and said it's --

Q Get your clip out.

MR. SPEAKES: Probably the same fellow.

Q Well, so what are you -- what's your response on it?

MR. SPEAKES: Same State Department guy. Pardon?

Q So what's your response? They're saying --

MR. SPEAKES: I already gave it.

Q -- it's purposely being delayed past the Gromyko meeting.

MR. SPEAKES: I already gave a no.

Q What?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q No what?

Q It's not being --

MR. SPEAKES: It's not purposely being delayed. There's been no decision made to delay. It's undergoing a review process. When that's completed, it will go to the Hill.

Q It sounds like a purposeful delay to me.

Q Do you want to say something more on background?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q It's your last chance --

MR. SPEAKES: I spoke the truth on the record. (Laughter.)

Q I'll give you one last chance to fall out.

Q Is the President an honorary member of Burning Tree?

Q What?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q What was the question?

Q I asked if the President was a member of Burning Tree. But whether he is or is not, this is an issue that may go up into the courts. Is there an administration view on private clubs that discriminate and get tax breaks, as there was with schools?

MR. SPEAKES: I'd talk to the Justice Department to see if there's any previous case on that. I don't --

Q Has he ever been to Burning Tree?

MR. SPEAKES: I think he went out there with Ford. Is that where Ford went? Where did we go with Ford?

Q Yes, I think we did.

Q How about next week's schedule?

MR. SPEAKES: That's a good suggestion.

Oh, yes. I have a note here -- the President, this morning, sent a message to Shimon Peres. In it, he reaffirmed the strong, enduring ties that bind the United States and Israel.

Next week, Monday --

Q We don't get the letter?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't guess we want to release the letter, would we?

There's nothing scheduled Sunday. On Saturday is the Italian-American Foundation Dinner.

Q On Saturday, when do you think we'll get the text of the President's remarks?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know that we'll do an advance text. You might check in here 1:00 p.m. or so and see if we'll do one. It's very brief. It's about 5 or 6 minutes.

Q You said nothing on Sunday, right?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q Okay.

MR. SPEAKES: On Monday, the President meets briefly with the U.S.-Japan Advisory Commission. That's all I have for Monday.

Q What's that on? Is that trade or --

MR. SPEAKES: What is that, Bob, do you know?

MR. SIMS: It's basically trade and overall economic relations with Japan and the U.S.

Q Is this a government group?

MR. SIMS: Formed by the government --

Q That advises the President on trade issues?

MR. SPEAKES: On Tuesday, he meets with the Executive Committee of the American Farm Bureau and has a photo made with the Boys Club's Youth of the Year Finalist.

I'll give you the trip business off the record, and at noon, I'll put out a written announcement that gives you the details.

Q Boys Club Youth of the Year?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: On Wednesday -- this is off the record -- we go to Waterbury, Connecticut for a Reagan-Bush rally. He leaves here at 10:00 a.m.

Then he comes down to Hammonton -- H-A-M-M-O-N-T-O-N -- New Jersey for another Reagan-Bush rally.

Q What part -- do you know what part of New Jersey?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Wherever Hammonton is.

Q Southern.

Q What?

Q I think it's southern.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: He's due back to the White House at 6:30 p.m.

And then on Thursday, we go to Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Cedar Rapids includes a farm event with a Q&A with farmers and a community picnic.

Then he comes back to Michigan -- to Grand Rapids -- and visits a Westinghouse facility and then has a rally at downtown Grand Rapids.

Q We're shooting the rapids on Thursday.

Q What time does he get home?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: 7:30 p.m. back here. Pardon?

Q Shooting the rapids on Thursday.

Q The rally in Grand Rapids, is that a Reagan-Bush rally, so characterized and so constituted and so organized?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes.

Q Will Ford participate?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't know whether Ford will be there or not. I don't know the answer to that.

Q What time does the President leave on Thursday? Do you have that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: About the same time again, I think.

Q Are you making this public at noon?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes. And it's 9:00 a.m., it's an hour earlier on Thursday.

Q Do you know anything about -- well, will you put out a tentative schedule at noon?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I believe so. I'm not sure if Mark's that far along. It just may be a trip announcement.

Q Friday?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: And Friday -- I really don't have anything that I'm certain of yet.

Q Do you think next weekend's clear on what we'll be doing?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We'll be doing something for the last half of next weekend.

Q Do you think the President will hold a news conference next week?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know, Sam, but when he has one, we'll let you know.

Q What do you interpret the President to mean when he said the other day that he's been also talking or thinking about a half-hour televised news conference?

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MR. SPEAKES: He means what he says.

Q Well, I mean, one interpretation is that all of his advisors -- tell him not to do it; but he sort of wants to do it.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, that one's wrong. You can scratch that one. (Laughter.)

Q Scratch that one.

Q His advisors want him to do it and he --

MR. SPEAKES: Scratch that one.

Q Nobody wants to do it.

Q How about a news conference next week, though, seriously?

MR. SPEAKES: Not one scheduled at the moment, Sam. But when one is scheduled, we'll promptly notify you.

Q Do you have a timetable on the steel announcements?

MR. SPEAKES: Timetable on the steel announcement? No, chances are there will be one more Cabinet Council meeting on that next week. It is due on Saturday the 22nd, and we'll do it then or before.

Q But you don't have that scheduled --

Q Do it Saturday.

Q You'll do it Saturday morning.

Q Do it Saturday.

Q What's your estimate of what happened yesterday here? I mean, the President clearly solicited questions. He wasn't even asked a question, unfortunately, by the reporters who were covering his departure. He had to stop and say, "No questions?" And someone said, "Well, yes, how about your meeting with Dobrynin?" (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: That was your reporter.

Q That was the first question.

MR. SPEAKES: That was your reporter, too.

Q And he trotted right over and he -- and then he had a five-minute news conference. And then he had to say, "Well, what about the polls? A-en't you going to ask me about the polls?" (Laughter.) And, you know --

MR. SPEAKES: That's your tip-off --

Q -- the suspicion might be that he --

MR. SPEAKES: That's your tip-off right there.

Q -- he wanted to come and talk about the polls, which is fine.

MR. SPEAKES: That's your tip-off.

Q But most of us would like to have been there to help question him, so we could handle the story. Most of us were unable to handle the story in -- where we were, Nashville.

Q It wasn't planned, though, was it, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: No. He decided to do it on the spur of the moment. He did want to talk about the polls and President Dewey and he did it.

Q What?

Q Yes, but what about talking to the White House Press Corps --

Q I mean, it wasn't planned that he didn't talk to the White House Press, was it?

Q I mean, speaking only for myself, I mean, down in Nashville, I could have probably handled it and actually put it on the air. I was unable, as you know, to handle it, up here, though, since I wasn't here.

MR. SPEAKES: Are you throwing off on your Justice Department reporter who was here to cover it?

Q No, he's a good man. But I wasn't here.

MR. SPEAKES: No, the President has talked with White House Press in the Briefing Room and --

Q And -- we all used that. There was a transcript in The New York Times, The Washington Post. I failed to see the transcript of yesterday's news conference anywhere. And I think it's probably because a lot of reporters who were in Nashville could have handled it had they been here, or vice versa.

MR. SPEAKES: Sam, I don't really want to question how you run your news organization; but it strikes me that if -- just because you aren't there doesn't make it not news.

Q That's correct.

Q Oh, you're wrong.

MR. SPEAKES: You don't have to be there to make news. (Laughter.)

Q You're absolutely right. But for my news organization, if I'm the one going to do it, then I have to be there. Otherwise, it doesn't get done for my little news organization. But you're correct, if a tree falls in the forest, if no one's there, it makes a sound.

MR. SPEAKES: Even you can't be in two places at once.

Q That's right. So why don't you -- since he was going to be in one of the places that I was going to be in -- (laughter) -- why couldn't he wait and do it there?

Q Next time, stay home, Sam. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: That's right, yes. "There's my man over there."

Q Yes, I mean --

Q Larry --

Q -- Friday, Mondale -- the budget and the needy --

MR. SPEAKES: The Associated Press did right nice, didn't it?

Q They did. Absolutely. If I used anything, it would have been the fruit of that question.

Q Larry, I notice that Vice President Bush said in Atlanta that we have had the greatest drop in unemployment in 20 years. But are they being fair to the people when unemployment now, overall, has just reached to where it was when the President came in? For blacks it's much lower. Why don't they give the complete picture to the people, so -- and just -- it seems to be a cover-up. Why don't -- Answer. I mean, I wish you would answer.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. I really don't know.

Q But you realize that they are not telling the full story when they don't say that now we have gotten back with the overall picture where we were when President Reagan came in; But for blacks, it's lower.

Well, don't you think they should give the full picture or -- You're just shaking your head.

Q Yes, but, Alfreda, there's the employment, you go pick some cotton. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: I really don't have anything on that.

Q No, but I would be -- cook the meals for them --

MR. SPEAKES: No briefing. We'll get on a lid as quickly as we can this afternoon, take the afternoon off.

Joe.

Q Why is it you're not doing a briefing?

Q Yes, are you staying away from --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I'll be here. I just thought you might need a breather, and I didn't have anything hot.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

9:45 A.M. EDT

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