

CABINET MEETING  
Ford Administration  
August 10, 1974

From 10:00 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. in the Cabinet Room, President Ford had his first Cabinet Meeting as President.

I was out of the room during the first part of the meeting on the phone with Marty Hoffmann. During that portion of the meeting, I am told that the President simply opened the meeting and extended his greetings.

When I arrived the President was talking about his successor as Vice President, indicating that he wanted Bush as National Chairman to crank up his apparatus to get information from the party leaders around the country; he wanted the Cabinet and the Counsellors to give him their recommendations on a one, two, three basis. He wanted it all funneled through Al Haig, and he said he would ask Scott and Rhodes to get the one, two, three recommendations from the members of the House and Senate; said he would personally talk to the Democratic leaders and some close advisors on a one-to-one basis so that people could be thoroughly direct and honest.

The President said that he had deep admiration and affection for Richard Nixon and he wanted nothing in the Ford Administration that would reflect adversely on him. He felt he was a great President and he respects the job he did and under no circumstances will he speak adversely about him, nor does he want others to do so.

The President mentioned his speech Monday night to the joint session and said that he wanted the Cabinet to be present, and indicated that he hoped it would be a relatively short speech and was soliciting any suggestions they might have and they should be funneled through Al and Bob Hartman.

The President said he had asked Al Haig to stay on in the very important role that he had played doing things that needed to be done and that he knew Al and worked well with him. He said everybody's style is different and Ford's will be different. He said he likes to see people and he is a better listener than a reader, and he liked people to come in and get their business over and not a lot of chit-chat. They can come in and tell him their problems, but time is precious and we will see how it works



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on that basis.

The President then mentioned the Transition Group: Rumsfeld, Morton, Marsh and Scranton. He said he had asked them to take a look at the White House organizational setup. He said that he, the President, has some of his own ideas, and he wants them to talk to others, and to talk to Al, and then make recommendations to the President. He said he will probably make some changes, but before anything is done, everyone will have a chance to talk about it.

The President said we have a tough period and a tough row to hoe, that we are starting in the right atmosphere, and how long the "honeymoon" will continue God only knows, if we work at it we can keep the "honeymoon" going.

Kissinger was the first Cabinet Member to speak. He said that what brought those people in Government to Washington was an opportunity to perform a national service and that he also believed the previous Administration was of great importance to the country, and that the President could count on total loyalty and unflagging support from the Cabinet and that the fate of the country and the world depends on the success of the Ford Administration. Anything the Cabinet can do will be done. As the President outlined yesterday, we are moving.

The President then said it was a fine team and he looked forward to working with them.

Rog Morton spoke on a matter of procedures saying that as a member of the Transition Group he would be talking with them to get their ideas.

Brennan spoke and said that we owe loyalty and we should get on with a tough task, get the country back together and he made reference to a call that he hoped the President would make, namely, to Meany, without mentioning his name, and referred vaguely to some project -- get on with the project that we have talked about. He also made some reference that whether he stays or leaves, he is anxious to have it work.

Butz spoke and said the task is to prevent erosion of the Conservative vote on the Hill, and that he was working with George Bush. The President said he hadn't had time to think about the politics of it yet, but that with the exceptions of Saxbe, Kissinger, and Schlesinger, he knew that the Cabinet members were working towards that end.



Saxbe spoke. Said he had a number of items in Justice that the President wanted to know about. He said he feels that jawboning on crime does do good and he hopes that the President's speech to the Congress will mention crime, and said it would be welcomed by the police. He said there is a serious crisis in Congress concerning the Freedom of Information legislation that is in Conference and he feels that a veto of the bill could be sustained. He said that if it passed, it would wipe out electronic measures in foreign affairs. The President said he should get together with Al Haig to see what could be done after Monday.

Morton said there would be questions on what happens next to the prosecution of Richard Nixon. Saxbe said there is no way Congress can pass on the matter other than a sense of the Congress Resolution on Immunity. He said that the prosecutors seemed to want to close up shop in a reasonable period of time. Saxbe said he didn't talk to Jaworski, however, and that there is the problem of the equality of prosecution in that others are going to jail, and it would stand in contrast to Richard Nixon's going free. Saxbe said he wanted to talk to the President about it. In the meantime it was agreed that as far as the press goes and others, there should be no comment on this matter. Ford said he felt there was a feeling in the atmosphere of understanding of some sympathy for the President, for Richard Nixon, and that it would continue, and that if others continue their efforts towards revenge that the public might revolt against such harrassment. The President said he was not sure that the opponents of Richard Nixon were wise enough to know that going too far could lead to sympathy for Nixon. He phrased his comments carefully and gave no indication really of any legal steps he intended other than saying time is a healer. He said also that pardon should not be mentioned.

Cap Weinberger said that he had urged all HEW people to stay on the job and that the use of President Ford's name was well received.

Schlesinger said that the healing process goes on, but that an opportunity to exploit the good will is present now and may not be later. He said labor he feels will support the President's efforts, but the press offers an opportunity to smoke the peace pipe with them, and they will be critical, but nonetheless the opportunity is there and for the time being the Administration will get the benefit of the doubt.

The President said that he had had good press relations, he had urged others to be affirmative with respect to the press.



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Schlesinger said that he hoped that President Ford would deal with the publishers early on.

Simon spoke and said that he thought there was a tremendous opportunity to regain the confidence of the people, to deal forcefully and credibly and quickly with the problems. He said that the Ford atmosphere is right and that we even got some rain to help Earl Butz.

Butz spoke saying that the drought has been serious but that cereal and wheat are OK and our exports are up only a half of last year. The situation is not dangerous.

The meeting ended at 10:45 a.m.

