

Notes on Pre-Press Conference Briefing

November 5, 1958

Note: This press conference was held the morning after the election which produced a "sweep" of devastating proportions for the Democratic Party. The only single bright spot in the picture is that Nelson Rockefeller won his campaign for Governor of New York State by over 550,000.

The President had previously discussed with General Persons and Jim Hagerty what he would say about election returns. There was a little discussion in the larger group that assembled for the pre-press briefing.

Bright spots are: election of a Republican governor in Oregon; election of six out of seven in the Congressional race in Washington; Goldwater winning so handily; Mechem winning in New Mexico. But the over-all figures are so bad as to cause the President to say that there are scarcely enough Republican votes to sustain a veto.

The President said "it looks as though what the United States wants is to go directly to the left" and throw all responsibility into the Federal government. He said also that maybe the size of the defeat would bring the Republicans into one camp -- that maybe they can now forget some of the differences they have, at least not publicize them.

International. State has issued a flat denial to the charge by Red China that Nationalist Chinese were using bombs with poison gas. If the President gets a chance, he will say that Chiang is looking for political means to win the mainland of China, to win the hearts and minds of men rather than to win them by force.

Test Suspension. We do not have any conclusive evidence that since October 31st the Russians have fired at least two shots, that is the public line, although in fact the evidence does seem conclusive.

Conference on Surprise Attack starts on the tenth. This is really the Soviet acceptance of the President's open skies proposal of Geneva, plus the Arctic proposal. This is a conference of technicians rather than a political conference.



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DOMESTIC

Space Council question is still being considered.

Moon shot -- to go Friday morning.

Air Force Bomber that crashed -- carried atomic weapon, but no nuclear yield.

Mayor of Los Angeles -- General Persons said he had seen him (about report of fallout from Nevada shot over Los Angeles. Poulson has "put out the fire").

Airlines banding together to cover losses incurred by strike -- if asked, the President will say that he has read about their plan, but nothing official has been presented to him.

Integration -- protest vote against Harry Byrd. General Persons tried to get the President to say nothing about Harry Byrd if asked, but the President insisted he would say that the vote seemed to indicate that a great many people would like to see the schools open.

Alcorn question -- may be asked. Does the defeat mean that the National Committee might be looking for another chairman? The answer is we are going to start working today on 1960.

Size of staff question may be asked. In actual truth the staff is 25% larger than Truman's staff if correct figures are used.

