

Yakima, Washington

August 29, 1967

10:00 a.m.

Transcription of Press Conference

- Gov I have just one announcement this morning a new position of Search and Rescue Coordinator for the State Department of Civil Defense. I am very happy particularly here in Yakima to announce that Harold Foss of Yakima has been selected to fill this newly created position. I have known Mr. Foss for some time personally and he is eminently qualified through his long background as a mountaineer, member of the Mountain Rescue Council, a man who has worked on mountain rescue operations for a long long time. I am confident he will do a great deal to improve the capacity of the state through its Civil Defense Department in this very important area of Search and Rescue.
- Q I assume this is a salaried job?
- Gov Yes.
- Q Could you give us the salary?
- Gov It is not in here - we will have to get that and maybe then a phone call.
- Q Governor, the president of the Labor Council said yesterday that your sales tax increase last session was unnecessary. You have a large surplus and it amounted to a cut in pay for every worker in the state. Care to comment?
- Gov I am going to comment as you might guess during my speech this morning to the State Labor Council and I would say just what I am going to say this morning, that with the growth problems here in the State of Washington, with perhaps with the last opportunity in the United States to prevent some of our urban problems rather than respond to them after they have happened. This is no time to be dividing up an investment in state government. If I am going to be criticized, let it be for having done too much rather than having not done enough when we still had a chance to do something. I think that there is every indication as we look ahead over the next couple of years that there will be growing pressures in several areas of state government pressures that may require additional state spending if we are going to meet our commitments and are going to meet the needs of our state. We are fortunate as a state to have built up during the past two years, a surplus for the first time in twenty years, but on a continuing basis the taxes that are now being levied are barely sufficient and may not be sufficient to manage our continuing needs.
- Q Governor, the plight of the migrant workers, was also mentioned that labor had made efforts to have them brought into a number of programs of workmens' compensation and unemployment, and that had gone through both the administration and the legislature. To what extent would you say that the problem with the migrant workers is the failure of the legislature?
- Gov For years there have been suggestions that a wide variety of workmen be brought under Workmens' Compensation, Unemployment Compensation and other social programs. It is a little more difficult to do it with migrant workers because under our system in order to qualify for Unemployment Compensation you have to build up credit for having worked for a certain period of time before you can qualify. Many of the workers who come here from other states



Gov would have no previous background or buildup and of course would not receive the benefits of Unemployment Compensation even if they were to be covered. I think that there is a great deal that can be done and should be done as time goes on in trying to stabilize a work force-where to handle the growing harvest of this part of the country. But I don't think they lie only in that narrow field. I think that what we have got to do is to try to, if we can, expand the opportunity for a longer period of time during the year for a worker so that he is more likely to be stabilized in the community and still be available for the harvest of crops. It is a problem that is not an easy one. There are no simple answers for it because we have the need still for a very large number of people for a very limited period of time, in order to get the crops off the trees.

Q Governor Evans, yesterday a state employment official, a Mr. Birchell from Olympia, labeled as "inaccurate" <sup>the reports</sup> and high unemployment among the <sup>Yakima</sup> migrant farm workers. We have reports trickling over here in Yakima from at least one Seattle newspaper referred to, I believe as "famine in the land of plenty". Secretary of State Kramer's visit proved this to be quite the contrary. What would your comment be?

Gov I have not had the chance personally yet to visit and look at the situation. I have talked to Secretary of State, Kramer and other officials of state government. There is no question that there has been a more severe problem this year than in most years because the crop failures in the south sent many more workers to the State of Washington earlier than normal, prior to the time they are needed for the crops. There has been an interim period when I believe some families have had difficulties. I understand from recent reports last night, that the number of requests by the various farmers in the area for pickers and for workers were more than the number of workers that had signed up, so apparently, at least temporarily we are over the hump. This is not a problem that is likely to be solved in the next few weeks, or the next few months. If families are hungry, if children are hungry, it is not only up to local and state officials but is up to the private sector of our economy as well to try to respond. But we have a much longer range problem and it deserves some real thinking - and I think that thinking is going into, on both the local and state basis.

Gov I think that in many cases, emergency assistance has been utilized, where it can be. Some of the problem I think is just plain contact. People who have problems who literally do not know where to go, or what to do. And I think in some of these cases it requires a reaching out program to find people who are really in trouble and don't know where to go to get assistance.

Q Governor, you said you had not had a chance to visit personally. Do you plan to go today?

Gov No, I will not have an opportunity today. I am leaving immediately after lunch for a meeting in Wenatchee. I might say one thing that we may very well have some problems if we - I don't want to under-emphasize the problem. I think that there has been a problem, but I don't think we ought to over-emphasize it either because we are going to face within the next few weeks one of the larger apple crops in the state's history. If we were to over-emphasize the problems of too many workers and no jobs, we could very well find ourselves with a very large crop and an opportunity for getting this



- Gov crop off the trees and not enough workers, so we can't do a job of discouraging people here for an apple crop that will be a pretty good one.
- Q Governor, in spite of the call of not jobs for the workers yesterday, the Yakima County Sheriff, Bert Johns, released prisoners from the County jail. He had sentences suspended by the various justices and judges because of the situation in the Moxee area. Growers could not get enough workers. What would you say to that?
- Gov It is pretty hard to respond to. I don't know what the situation was that led the sheriff to release prisoners. Let me reiterate however, that reports that have reached me this morning, as late as last night, indicated that through our Employment Service, last night, there were some six hundred job orders in the various branches, but six hundred more than they had workmen to fill. So apparently the situation is changing at least for a temporary period.
- Q Governor, criticizing your proposals for tax reform, the Labor Council have . . . . . by Governor Reagan. You come out pretty unfavorably, in their comparison
- Gov I thought Governor Reagan was a high saver. It is pretty difficult to make comparisons here that are valid and meaningful, and I don't think they are. Governor Reagan was working on a tax system that was already in existence and was merely raising the rates of an existing tax system. We were talking about revising an entire tax system through tax reform and they are very, very different things and can't be readily compared. So, I think the real difficulty is here. Do you want to make any progress at all towards tax reform? We came very close with an obvious majority of both houses of the legislature willing to support the tax reform that had been suggested - in fact close to a two-thirds majority but it requires the two-thirds majority and the minority kept the program from going through so we made no progress at all. I am convinced that a change - a further liberalization or a change of the tax reform program that had been suggested would have meant greater defeat than the program that we did pose and put forward. I think we were as close to success as you could come with a program and it is a question really whether people want any progress or whether they are willing to sit back and have no progress at all, hoping some day for the end of the rainbow.
- Q How are concerned with these very sharp attacks during the legislature and since then?
- Gov Not too concerned about anyone's attacks. I will just keep trying to do a job that is right and eventually the people will have a chance to decide whether it was or not.
- Q How.... would you say the organizations are, representing the rank and file?
- Gov I don't think very closely.
- Q Governor, it seems over the weekend it seems that Gummy Johnson made a number of suggestions to run against Senator Magnuson in the coming election. Among those were our own 4th District, Catherine May, . . . . and also Don Moos. Do you have any suggestions incurring those, or others?
- Gov I think they are all first grade people, highly capable on the jobs they now hold. If they have any desire to run for the Senate, I certainly think any



- Gov one of them would be an excellent candidate. I have not talked with any of them specifically about the possible desires, but I think that we will field a first-rate candidate and give the senior Senator, a good run for his money.
- Q Is there a possibility you could be a candidate for that?
- Gov Well, there is always a possibility but I think that I have pretty consistently indicated that it is not a likelihood.
- Q Speaking of candidates for various offices, Governor, .....  
Would you say that kind of amounts to an announcement?
- Gov Not necessarily. It might be someone else carrying the banner.
- Q Governor, when is Mr. Tony Chase coming here as State Federal Coordinator?
- Gov Probably on October 1st.
- Q Governor, back to the migrant workers - since the problem is common with California, Oregon and Washington, do you have notion of meeting with Reagan or McCall or any of the other governors- to plan on long-range solution of migrant problem?
- Gov There have been over a period of time, some meetings together at the staff level - of people from the various states. This has not only been a problem of the Pacific Coast states. In a larger sense, the problem of the migrant worker is a federal problem as it relates to those who come from Mexico and pick crops - particularly those from the southwest during portions of the year. So work has been done at the staff level both on a federal level and with the Pacific Coast states, I meet on a continuous basis with Governor McCall. We have had several meetings and will have more in the future. I suspect that this will be the subject of conversations between ourselves at future meetings. I think the same thing is probably true as far as Governor Reagan is concerned. I am sure that when it becomes desirable at the gubernatorial levels to get together on this problem, we will.
- Q Nothing has been set so far?
- Gov No, no scheduled meeting on this specific problem at the level of governors, We will be meeting however, at the National Governors' Conference, starting in another month and will very likely have an opportunity at that time to get together on these and several other problems.
- Q Governor, earlier you said you didn't think the problem of the migrant workers should be over-emphasized because it might discourage workers coming in for the incoming crop. Do you suggest that the workers should be brought in on the strength of one crop? What happens after that crop is taken care of?
- Gov You are talking about the pretty basic problem now. The fact that we have a seasonal industry and one of the largest in our state, particularly the apples and other tree crops - these cannot be picked by machine effectively. They need a great number of people for a short period of time and I am not wise enough yet to suggest how we might completely solve the problem of requirement of a large number of people for a short period of time and the question of where they go afterwards or what they do afterwards. I think this is going to take a lot more study and a lot more wisdom than any of us



Gov have up to now. The requirement still exists, that we have a choice of leaving a multi-million dollar crop on the trees or using labor to get it off. We really have no other choices.

Q Well, Governor, in spite of the obvious need for improvement in some of the farm-labor camps and for the migrants in general, some people who have lived in this area for long periods of time, believe that the report of famine and crisis have been out of proportion and possible correlation between these reports and the grassroots effort, the fact that the unions are making a concentrated effort to organize the migrant workers - what have you to say about that?

Gov Well, I wouldn't know whether there is any correlation. I am confident that this is a consistent and American and traditional practice for people who don't feel that they are perhaps sharing enough in the economy to tend to organize in order to better advance their own position. This is a traditional thing that has happened for many, many times for a long period of years, and I wouldn't be at all be surprised to see it happen among the migrant workers.

Q Governor, a week ago Mr. Kramer had a news conference following his tour of the Yakima Valley. He suggested that if we can have fine facilities for campers we ought to be able to provide better facilities for migrant workers. Has there been any discussion in Olympia in the Park Department or any other department for improving facilities for migrant workers?

Gov As I have indicated before, I have had a chance to talk with the Secretary of State and as a result of those conversations, we are taking some look at what might be done particularly on a cooperative basis with local authorities because I don't think this is the kind of thing that you can step in and usurp or take over responsibilities without working with people who have local knowledge and some local responsibility. I might say that if we were to attempt to create parks or a place for people to stay when needed for crops and then use the same place for recreational facilities during other parts of the year we have less ability to do that now through our State Parks and Recreational Commission than in some years because the Senate saw fit in its wisdom to cut out all of the capital facilities for State Parks in the next biennium.

Q What prompted Kramer to come over here? Did you ask him to come?

Gov No, I did not ask him to come because I was out of town at the time. I think he had a real interest. I have asked him to work on this Urban Affairs Council and I think urban affairs is directed very closely to this situation but in essence he is the man that I have asked to work with local governments on problems that are local but may affect the state in some way.

Q Then was it a letter or telephone call that really brought it to his attention?

Gov Not specifically, no.

Q Did you get a letter, telephone call or telegram from anyone in this area about this situation?

Gov One may have come to the office but I have been out of town up until this last weekend, for about a two-week period, so it did not come to my attention at least.

Q You have talked to Lud Kramer, then?



Gov Yes, I have talked with him and have a full report on his visit and his observations.

Q Was that the first you heard of it, when you talked with Kramer?

Gov Well, no. I had heard it immediately on my return. I did not have a chance to talk with the Secretary of State until yesterday.

Q When did you return?

Gov Monday.

Q Governor, based on the information that you received would you say that the Yakima County officials dropped the ball . . .

Gov Well, I am not prepared to say at the present time. If there is a local responsibility I would say essentially that this is a local problem. If the state has a way in which to help and can, of course we want to do it. There is not only a local responsibility to do this job but a private responsibility.

Q What did Kramer indicate to you?

Gov Well, an indication - a factual description on what he had seen and what he found - an indication that there were some people that had inadequate quarters inadequate living conditions with particular reference to families with children of those who had come, with a recognition at the same time, however, that these workers were needed, needed for crops that must be picked within a short period of time, and that we had an interim period of very real hardship for some and it would require not only the efforts of state and local officials but efforts of the private economy as well if we are to get over this hump.

Press Thank you, Governor.