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NEWS CONFERENCE

#35

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:15 P.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 25, 1974

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: It is pretty obvious to me, based on two days now, that we are never going to get this briefing started at 11:00. Partly it is my trying to get used to the system, and as I told you yesterday, trying to get all the information I can for you before I come out here.

Let's try for a while to make it at 11:30 and see if we can make that.

Q Does that mean it goes until 12:30 then?
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: It might. Put it up around 3:00 or 4:00. We will try 11:30 for a while, Jim and everybody.

I hope our procedure of handing out the package of announcements for immediate release was followed today and you probably have that. None of them I think was terribly important. If you have any questions about it, we will try to get them later.

You have seen the President's schedule for today. He went up to the Capitol Hill Club to have breakfast with the members of the SOS and the Chowder and Marching Society. When he came back to the White House, he met with General Haig, Secretary Kissinger, General Scowcroft, and myself.

I think most of you went out on the lawn to see the arrival of President and Mrs. Leone on the South Lawn, and you heard what they said to each other out there. They began meeting after that and are still meeting, I believe.

I think we will probably have something to tell you after the meeting.

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This afternoon at 2:00, the President is going to meet briefly with the Clemency Board to greet the members and attend their swearing-in. They have been meeting this morning, as you probably know, over in the EOB for their organizational meeting.

We plan to have Charley Goodell here for you at 2:30 and you can ask him your questions about how his board is going to be run.

Q 2:30 or 1:30?

MR. NESSEN: It has been changed to 2:30.

Q Is that for sound?

MR. NESSEN: 2:30 is the correct time, and it will be for sound.

The President is going to meet with the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr. Malik, at 4:30 this afternoon. The Foreign Minister is in the United States to attend the U.N. General Assembly, and today's meeting will give the President and the Foreign Minister an opportunity to discuss American-Indonesian relations, the situation in Southeast Asia, and other international matters of common concern.

Q Will you take a question on that now, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I can try.

Q Will they discuss oil policies -- Indonesia is an oil-producing country -- or oil prices?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think if oil is an international matter of common concern, I would assume that would come up. It might come up. I don't know what they are going to talk about because they haven't talked yet.

You probably know that there will be a State dinner for the Italian President tonight at 8:00 at the White House. President and Mrs. Leone will arrive at the North Portico at 8:00. That will be for open coverage. You will be taken over there at 7:45.

President and Mrs. Ford and President and Mrs. Leone will come down the Grand Staircase at about 8:10, also for open coverage. The dress tonight is business suits and street dresses.

Q Not for the dinner?

MR. NESSEN: Dinner is black tie.

MR. NESSEN: My sheet says business suits and street dress.

Q No, for the arrival at the North Portico.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, you are talking about dress for the press. You can wear business suits or street dress, but the folks who are coming I guess have to wear black tie. Sorry.

At 9:30 is the exchange of toasts by the two Presidents in the State Dining Room. There will be very limited photo coverage in the dining room -- four still photographers and one TV camera.

The pool will be posted and the poolers at that event will have to wear black tie.

The press room and the Family Theater will receive the toasts on the loudspeaker.

At 10:30 tonight, the entertainment will be in the East Room. It is Gunther Shore and his New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble. You will be happy to know that is open coverage. You can take pictures during the President's opening remarks, and you can film the first number and the final number and the President's closing remarks. But if you want to go, you have to wear your black tie.

I think those are all the official announcements. I will try to take some questions.

Q Can you tell us who is going to be at this meeting at Camp David over the week-end?

MR. NESSEN: The answer is that I don't know but that the State Department is handling all of this, and I suggest you contact them.

Q Ron, will the President attend that meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I said yesterday he will not attend the meeting.

Q It still stands?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Up until a while ago, at least, they were saying officially he could not concede the meeting was going to take place. Are you saying that either through the White House's intervention or through some other reason they will now talk about this meeting, at least to the extent of saying who is going to be there? Are you assuring us that State will answer?

MR. NESSEN: It is my understanding that the State Department is handling this and they will put out whatever information they can.

Q Ron, were you able to find out any of the answers to some of the questions we had yesterday; for instance, what kind of materials are being taken out to San Clemente aboard those courier planes and why?

MR. NESSEN: He is getting a weekly classified summary of international political, economic and military developments. It usually runs --

Q Is there a comma between "international" and "political"? Do you mean international political developments, or do you mean international, comma, political, and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, this is a foreign policy briefing. International is an adjective describing political, economic and military. It usually runs ten to twenty pages.

Q How often does that go to him?

MR. NESSEN: It has been averaging somewhere between once every seven to ten days.

Q Is there a special plane that goes out there, Ron, that takes that?

MR. NESSEN: The purpose of the flight is to fly the documents out there.

Q And why? What is the need for this? Is this to prepare, to give Nixon continuity for his book that he is writing? What is the need for this?

MR. NESSEN: The reason for it is that it is a custom that has been followed with former Presidents.

Q But not anything on this stage, Ron. Surely, they didn't fly courier planes down for briefings. They gave some briefings about every two or three months when they came up for it or something like that. We didn't do it with this regularity, surely.

MR. NESSEN: I am told, Sarah, for instance, the briefings for President Johnson lasted up until the time of his death.

Q With a courier plane going, taking summaries every seven days? Sure, the briefings lasted, but did they do it with this regularity?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the exact procedure followed by the Johnson Administration -- for former President Johnson.

Q Ron, why is a courier plane required specifically for this mission when there are any number of cross-country flights by the military and a fairly dependable, I am told, mail service?

MR. NESSEN: These materials are classified and there is a law --

Q Can't you send classified materials in the mail?

MR. NESSEN: The law forbids the transmission of classified documents through the mail or on commercial airlines, and I am told that this law was enacted at the time of the rash of highjackings.

Q What classification are they?

Q Ron, other than tradition, can you give us any philosophical reasons that a former President has to have classified documents on international affairs?

MR. NESSEN: I have said before and I will tell you again because it is the reason, it is the custom to brief former Presidents in this manner.

Q Ron, is anyone else on this distribution list or is this summary prepared solely for Nixon and going solely to him?

MR. NESSEN: The summaries are prepared by the staff of the National Security Council and whether he is getting a specially prepared 10-to-20-page package or whether he is getting material that others get in the form that others get, I can't tell you.

Q Ron, will this continue indefinitely? Is there a time on when it will stop?

MR. NESSEN: There is no time limit on how long they will go on.

Let me back up a minute to help out, Sarah. The briefings that were sent down to former President Johnson were also sent by courier plane and at about the same frequency that these briefings are being given.

Q How much does it cost to fly the courier plane to California and back?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an answer to that, Helen.

Q Ron, how often do former Nixon staff people or Nixon friends ride on this airplane?

MR. NESSEN: There have been occasions when members of the former President's family or members of his staff who are assisting him are flown on this flight when there is space.

Q Can you tell us what kind of aircraft is used? That will help us determine the price. Are we talking about a 707 or Lear jet? What are we talking about?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what kind of airplane they are using.

Q That seems an important part of the issue in terms of what it is costing.

MR. NESSEN: I thought we would get some more questions, and we will take them and bring back the answers, as we have done on this one.

Q Do reporters ride on this plane from time to time?

MR. NESSEN: Did you want to go, Sarah?

Q Yes, sometime, maybe.

MR. NESSEN: I will get that in my list of questions to find out.

Q Ron, were you able to find out from the President whether he made a judgment on former President Richard Nixon's health, the state of his health, based upon this last telephone conversation he had with Mr. Nixon?

He never had any statement where he based his assessment on firsthand contact. Now he has had that firsthand contact. How does he feel about Mr. Nixon's health?

MR. NESSEN: At the beginning of the last phone conversation, which was a week ago yesterday, the President, as a courtesy, and as almost anyone would, said, "How are you," or "How are you feeling," I guess, or "How are you feeling." This violates my feeling that I shouldn't quote the President directly, or the former President's either.

At that point the former President said, I am going to the hospital. That is not a quote. He told him he was going into the hospital for tests and for treatment, and as far as I can determine, that was the end of the conversation about health and as far as getting any assessment, his getting any feeling of the state of the former President's health, I didn't get anything.

Q He didn't get any feeling one way or the other?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't get any feeling from him on what his assessment of the former President's health was.

Q Ron, on that subject -- this is another question -- right now we are told out at the hospital, I think, a doctor is holding a news conference on that subject, President Nixon's health. He says he has a significant or fairly significant announcement to make. Has the White House been advised in advance of the nature of that announcement, and can you tell us what it is?

MR. NESSEN: If they have been, I don't know it, and I talked to him about this this morning and he didn't volunteer it.

Q Talked to who?

MR. NESSEN: I talked to the President.

Q Could I ask one question on this?

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute. Let me just get clear what I talked to the President about. I took up your question with the President, which was, has he assessed the former President's health, and he described to me this exchange about going into the hospital. I didn't take up your specific question about today's announcement.

Q Did he comment or did you ask about the state of perhaps Mr. Nixon's mental health? Did he say whether he was discouraged or whether he was upbeat? Was there anything like that?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't give me any assessment of how he felt about the former President's health.

Q Ron, going back to the courier plane for just a minute --

MR. NESSEN: Let me go back to the courier plane for just a minute. It is a Jetstar.

Q -- on the subject of the Government hold-down in spending, would it not make sense -- given our economic problems -- to use existing transcontinental military flights, which I would assume are still taking place, rather than to book a special courier plane, and a special flight for former Presidential needs?

MR. NESSEN: This is the procedure that is being followed and, if you would like me to inquire as to why another procedure is not being followed, I will.

Q Ron, I would like to ask you whether the President considers Richard Nixon an elder statesman on whose advice he would rely, and therefore feels that these briefings are necessary and also will the President send a representative up to Capitol Hill next week to testify in connection with the background on the pardon, the Hungate --

MR. NESSEN: Let's take one thing at a time.

Q Did you finish on the flight first?

MR. NESSEN: I said it was Jetstar, and I said if you want me to inquire as to why another procedure is not followed, I will.

Q Please do.

Q Could you get the point of origin and point of termination of the flight?

MR. NESSEN: It flies from Andrews and arrives at El Toro.

Q Ron, could you clear that up and a couple of other points about it? Are family members charged for the flight, or will that be in any way a part of the transition budget for travel that the former President submitted or do they ride free?

MR. NESSEN: I will check, Tom. I don't have the answer today.

Q Helen had two questions in there.

MR. NESSEN: I am going to get back to them. I had a feeling that people wanted to clear up this matter before they went on to the Hungate matter.

Q While you are clearing up the flight, I understand we have National Guard training flights that go regularly throughout the country. While we are saving money, why can't they -- maybe you would also inquire perhaps if this could be done by National Guardsmen.

MR. NESSEN: I think it falls into the same category as Jerry's question.

Q Ron, it would seem that the logic behind the custom of briefing former President's would go in terms of national interest, for keeping him informed so that the incumbent President might call upon him and, therefore, have access to his advice in matters of State.

Secondly, it is a courtesy and something of an honor to a former President. Mr. Nixon left this White House under very unusual circumstances, whether you agree or disagree that in effect he resigned because he dishonored this office.

And I am wondering why, in view of those unusual circumstances, that this custom should be continued? What is the reason behind this, in view of the fact that it does seem to suggest that Mr. Ford may call on Mr. Nixon for advice and that it is in effect a courtesy and an honor?

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MR. NESSEN: Well, we have said again and again that it has been the custom to do this with all former Presidents. If you would like me to find out whether the President intends to ask advice from the former President, I will try to. I think the President intends to rely on the foreign policy advice of his Secretary of State.

Q In that connection, Ron, does the President plan to send Secretary Kissinger out to brief Mr. Nixon any time soon?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know anything about plans for a face-to-face briefing, Pete.

Q Ron, how about the Hungate question?

MR. NESSEN: What was the question?

Q The question was, will the White House be represented at the hearings next week to explain the pardon by either Buchen or any other representative?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that there has been no request for either of those gentlemen to appear.

Q If they are asked, will they go?

MR. NESSEN: There has been no decision made on that.

Q Mr. Hungate said last night that he is considering whether to ask for Mr. Buchen or Mr. Becker to come up there and the wires reported today that he is writing a letter to the President to make a request for a White House representative.

Q If either Mr. Buchen or Mr. Becker were to go, could they invoke Executive privilege on this matter?

MR. NESSEN: I think you better back up a step to this other question, would they go, and I said there has been no decision. And to go a step before that, I said that there has been no request for them to appear. I think you are getting a little ahead.

Maggie.

Q Is there any way you could determine for us how much money in toto is being spent on Mr. Nixon right now?

MR. NESSEN: I will try.

Q Do you have a reaction to the Senate Committee vote on the files, papers, and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check that for you.

Q Ron, on another subject entirely, the Joint Committee, the Joint Congressional Committee on the Economy in a special report has recommended wage/price guidelines and in some administered pricing industries, urged the President to request authority for price rollbacks.

Is there a White House comment on those recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: That was the report of last weekend, was it?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have one right here for you, Jim. I will find out.

Q Ron, would you expect there to be a comment -- this was a report submitted by the Joint Committee for use in the inflation summit coming up -- would you expect there to be any comment on that in connection with the summit or otherwise?

In other words, are you anticipating that you will at some point have something to say about it?

MR. NESSEN: I will see. Maybe John Carlson can find out whether we have a comment while we are here and get it right back to you.

Q Ron, to pursue that just a bit further, there are reports indicating that certain consulting economists are advising their industrial clients to raise prices in anticipation of wage/price controls being imposed. Does the President have a reaction to this or a comment for you to give us?

MR. NESSEN: No. I don't mean "no comment". I mean I don't know what his reaction to that is.

Q Ron, the Chicago Tribune reported today that David Bruce will be the new NATO Ambassador. Is that right?

MR. NESSEN: I can't either confirm or deny that.

Q And one other question: When will the President announce what the Federal pay increase will be and how much will it be?

MR. NESSEN: He met with that board yesterday that did the recommendations -- that is charged by law with doing the recommendations, and let me see if I can find out just how soon they will -- I don't have a date for you, but I will try and get one for you.

Q Ron, about the wage and price controls, have you seen any indication of a change in the President's attitude on wage and price controls, or guidelines?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't; I haven't seen a change.

Q Ron, Mr. Buchen is being quoted as saying Mr. Seidman is going to be the permanent White House economic expert. Is that true?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything we can announce, but obviously you have heard the President speak very highly of Mr. Seidman and his talents, and I am sure he is going to be used.-- his talents in the economic area are going to be used.

Q In that connection, there is a story going around to the effect that Secretary Simon is going to be designated as the chief economic coordinator with Mr. Seidman as his deputy. Can you comment on this?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have anything to announce in that area today.

Q Does the President have any reaction to the California situation?

MR. NESSEN: As you probably know, that came over the wire just before I came out here, probably about ten or 15 minutes ago, and he was in with President Leone and I didn't have a chance to ask him about it.

Q Ron, you have given several answers to various questions which begin with "We don't have anything to announce in that area," leaving the implication that there is something stirring, there is something afoot, but you are just not ready to announce it. If the question is put that is there something doing on X, Y or Z, the fact that you are not ready to announce it shouldn't preclude, I think, giving us an answer on this.

The matter of announcing it is a formal thing. If somebody knows something about Seidman or about Mr. Bruce or anything else, I think we are entitled to an answer out here without the timing of the announcement being paramount.

MR. NESSEN: I will have to stick with my answers on all those matters that you raise.

Q Ron, one more question on the Nixon briefings. You referred to the fact that President Johnson also had briefings. As I recall, President Johnson indulged in some unilateral declassification when he published his books. Does the Ford Administration have any understanding as to what Mr. Nixon's latitude might be when he writes his memoirs regarding this classified material?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any understanding along that line. These are classified materials, and I assume the former President understands the designation of classified.

Q Is it fair to say that the precedent again would be followed and Mr. Nixon would have the same latitude that Johnson had?

MR. NESSEN: I can't say anything one way or the other on that because I don't know.

Q Ron, what is the classification of that briefing, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't.

Q Ron, there have been publications and some comments, one from Senator Humphrey, other comments and questions in Washington circles that after four or five weeks of Washington observers and professionals viewing the President's schedule daily, as to whether he is affording himself sufficient staff time and thought time to ponder some of the serious questions now on his plate in view of the fact, also--I raise the question because there is quite an intensive political schedule apparently being built immediately following the major summit conference which will carry through most of October. Could you comment now or could you take the question as to whether the President feels he is in fact having sufficient free time for staff work and thought on the economy, inflation, war threats, oil problems, and all the rest of it?

MR. NESSEN: That might be a question better addressed to the President at his next news conference. I have not heard him complain of lack of time, and I assume that he and his staff have organized his day in a way that gives him the time he wants to do all the things that you talked about.

Q In that vein, Ron, maybe this question was asked earlier and I missed the answer, but has the President talked to his transition team about their recommendations yet?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that answer. I will check it for you, if you like.

Q Ron, could you tell me whether President Ford initiated these briefings or whether former President Nixon asked for them in line with custom?

MR. NESSEN: President Ford determined that the former President should be briefed because he was aware of the custom.

Q There was no request from the former President?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Ron, is that Jetstar courier plane in the White House fleet?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that.

Q And are those briefings cleared by anyone apart from the NSC staff; that is, on President Ford's staff?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Tom. They are prepared by the staff of the National Security Council. Whether anyone looks over them before they are put in the packet, I will have to check.

Q Is it fair to say that President Ford has accorded President Nixon everything that all previous Presidents have gotten when they left the White House, living Presidents?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what former Presidents have received, Helen. I know what this former President is receiving, but I have no way to compare it with what other former Presidents --

Q What would he use as a slide rule?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that.

Q Ron, you said there were no plans for a face-to-face briefing between Nixon and Kissinger. Have there been any phone briefings? Have there been any phone conversations between Kissinger and Nixon?

MR. NESSEN: I am not the Press Secretary for either Dr. Kissinger or the former President, and I think you ought to ask one or the other of those.

Q Ron, to get back to the economy for a minute, is it still the White House position as expressed by Mr. Seidman that there will be either no or at the most only one major decision on the economy prior to the State of the Union and the budget and economic reports the first part of next year?

MR. NESSEN: That there will only be one --

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Q Seidman has said there will be no major economic policies announced or decisions reached with the possible exception of aid to the housing industry until the first of the year. It apparently was a described policy there and I am asking whether that policy is still the case, that you do not expect any major economic announcements with that one possible exception, until the turn of the year.

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to be in conflict in any way with Mr. Seidman and I don't know when he said that or his exact words.

Q To a group of reporters a week or two ago.

MR. NESSEN: Without being in any conflict with Mr. Seidman, because I don't see any, I believe, as you probably know, the President is going to make a speech at the conclusion of the economic summit meeting on Saturday and I believe he will have some important things to say about the economy at that time.

Q To follow that up, Ron, is the President going to announce his refined economic policy at that time? Saturday at noon?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think you could expect the President to announce major economic decisions. You see, we are trying to get your answers while you are right here on the spot. I don't think you could expect the President to announce major economic decisions on the same day that the summit is winding up.

Obviously these are things that need to be digested and reviewed by the President and by his staff and his economic advisers.

Q How long?

Q What do you mean "important things", then? I mean what should we shoot for, what are you really saying if there are no important decisions? You say, "I believe there will be some important things to say."

MR. NESSEN: I believe there will be some important things in the Saturday speech and then I think he will want to take some of the other matters discussed at the summit meeting and weigh them and digest them before he makes any other announcements.

Q You are saying in effect there will be some decisions?

MR. NESSEN: I would expect that you would find some important things in the Saturday speech.

Q Would you expect him to announce perhaps the new line-up in the economic policy-making team?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the timing is on that.

Q Would you find out how long the Leone meeting went?

MR. NESSEN: It is still going on.

If you want to just hold a second, Helen, I can answer two other questions that came here, if that is all right with you.

The courier plane is from the Special Air Mission Fleet at Andrews and I think sort of popularly known as the President's fleet, but that is not a name we have attached to it.

I hope we are clear -- just to clear this up before you go -- on the question on wage and price controls. The President sticks by what you heard him say at his news conference which is that there weren't going to be any, period, I think he added to that.

And on the question of imposing price rollbacks -- you may know this -- that at the moment the President has no authority to impose price rollbacks.

Q That is what I asked, Ron, and was he going to ask for that authority?

MR. NESSEN: He himself has said that he does not intend to ask Congress for the authority to impose wage and price controls.

Q I would like, as I did in the question, to take it one step further and ask whether that same statement applies to price rollbacks in selected industries?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to further explore the matter, Jim. I was trying to get some quick answers for you out here, but I will inquire further and we can get to it the next time we meet.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:53 P.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH JACK HUSHEN

AT 3:45 P.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 25, 1974

WEDNESDAY

MR. HUSHEN: This is a brief report on the meeting that President Ford had with President Leone this morning.

Following the welcoming ceremony, they met for approximately 90 minutes in the Oval Office and they were joined by Secretary of State Kissinger and the Italian Foreign Minister Moro.

They had a very full discussion on U.S.-Italian relations and a wide variety of international problems of mutual interest.

The conversation was friendly and candid and the two leaders exchanged views on U.S.-European relations and international issues, including the finance and energy situation.

A substantial part of the discussion was on the broad economic problems and the need for cooperation among nations.

They discussed the importance of regular consultations among the members of the Atlantic Alliance on bilateral questions and international issues, and President Ford reaffirmed his commitment to close and continuing consultations with leaders of Western Europe.

The two Presidents will meet again tomorrow at 4:30 in the Oval Office.

Q Was anything brought up about the possibility of a loan to Italy?

MR. HUSHEN: There is nothing I can give you on that.

Q Jack, as part of the President's commitment to close and continuing consultation with leaders of Western Europe, does the President plan to go to Western Europe soon?

MR. HUSHEN: Well, President Leone invited President Ford to visit Italy and the President has accepted in principle.

Q What does that mean?

MR. HUSHEN: That means he has accepted in principle. In other words, he has agreed to make the trip, no date set.

Q Do you think that will be this year?

MR. HUSHEN: I can't say.

As you know, he has a full October schedule. In November he will be going to the Orient.

Q Which leaves December.

MR. HUSHEN: Yes, that leaves December, but no date set.

Q Did they talk about relocating NATO bases from Greece?

MR. HUSHEN: Not that I can give you anything specific on.

As far as a further description of the meeting, the two Presidents agreed that their consultations were valuable and mutually beneficial. And there will be a formal communique issued at the conclusion of the visit.

Q Which will be tomorrow night, a communique?

MR. HUSHEN: That will be at the conclusion of their visit. I can't give you an exact time on the communique.

Q Tomorrow or the day after?

MR. HUSHEN: I am not sure.

Q The second meeting of the two Presidents, was that on the schedule or was it decided in the last meeting?

MR. HUSHEN: I believe it came up today and it is to complete the meeting which went for an hour and a half today and I think they had some unfinished matters they wanted to complete.

Q I have questions on other subjects.

Q Before you do that, Gaylord, can you be any more precise on the discussion of oil?

MR. HUSHEN: No, I cannot.

Q You said the energy situation. I took that to mean oil.

MR. HUSHEN: I can add a little bit to the fact that the discussion was in the nature of the President's speech

to the United Nations and to the World Energy Conference. The discussion was somewhat about the speeches but beyond that I can't go.

Q Did President Leone indicate support for President Ford's speeches?

MR. HUSHEN: I can't answer. I don't know the answer to that.

Q Did the Italian side take the occasion to explain the Italian political situation in anyway?

MR. HUSHEN: I understand that that did come up but that the primary focus of the meeting was not on the Italian political situation, that it was on the bilateral relations and international issues.

Q On the loan, you said that you could not say anything specific. Are you excluding that the topic was discussed or you cannot give any details about it?

MR. HUSHEN: No, I am not excluding the fact that it may have been discussed, I just have no information to give you on it.

Q And you apply the same thing to the bases then, you said nothing specific about the bases?

MR. HUSHEN: That is also correct.

Q You can neither confirm or deny that the topic was mentioned, was dealt with?

MR. HUSHEN: Hold on one second.

Q Isn't that a major point in Atlantic relations?

MR. HUSHEN: I can't go beyond what I have given you as far as the nature of the subjects discussed.

Q What did the President mean when he reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to the stability of Italy, when he said a U.S. commitment to a stable, free and Democratic Italy?

Q In his speech this morning. He is referring to the speech this morning, the welcome speech.

MR. HUSHEN: I think the President was easily understood and I am not going to try to interpret his remarks.

Q On another subject, has the President received a briefing on President Nixon's blood clot in the lung? Is so, what is his reaction? Has he talked to the former President's doctors or to the former President?

MR. HUSHEN: I have no information to impart on that.

Q When will we have some?

MR. HUSHEN: Was that a query left from this morning?

Q No, but soon after the briefing.

MR. HUSHEN: I didn't think it was.

Q We have been asking ever since word of the condition was carried --

MR. HUSHEN: Let me see what I can find out. I don't think that question was lodged with me.

Q It was raised at the briefing but there was no time to review it.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 3:55 P.M. EDT) #36