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N E W S C O N F E R E N C E

#91

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:26 P.M. EST

DECEMBER 9, 1974

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: You have been handed four bills which the President has signed, two of which have statements by the President connected to them. Do you? We have two bills with statements and then two other bills without statements. Two other bills have already been posted without statements, and then you have two other bills.

Did you get your question answered, Jim?

Q No. In the meantime I am even more confused than I was before.

MR. NESSEN: Well, do you want me to take the time to do it now?

Q Maybe you better explain it to all of us.

MR. NESSEN: Jim raises a question in the HEW appropriations bill the second paragraph of the statement by the President, the second sentence starting, "Nevertheless". The point the President is making is that the Congress in the President's view has underestimated how much money will be needed for these programs, Jim, by \$1.2 billion. The President believes that if this appropriations bill truly reflected the amount of money that would be needed it would be \$1.2 billion higher than what they sent up here, okay?

Q I get the last paragraph now. In other words, he is saying because he thinks the mandatory ones are going to go up, he is going to submit deferrals on the discretionary programs.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

At 12:30, which is fast upon us, the President is meeting with the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Yigal Allon.

People have already gone in to take pictures of that, and there is also a writing pool in there, I guess, and we will hopefully be able to give you some information on what transpired at the meeting around 1:30 or 2:00.

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At 2:00 the President will have another one of his meetings with Roy Ash and members of the OMB staff to make his decisions on the fiscal 1976 budget. That also will be available for you to take pictures and film.

At 4:00 the President has another Congressional hour, and the Congressional hour is really an hour and 20 minutes. I think I have explained before that the President does have a lot of requests to see Congressmen, and these people have asked for appointments and are all being brought in on one day each week, or one day every two weeks for separate meetings with the President.

Q Are these mainly Republicans looking for jobs?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Anyhow, we will have a list for you of who attended after we find out exactly who is coming.

You have the announcement of the appointment of Robert Goldwin as Special Consultant to the President. He will be working with the Domestic Council, and his primary job will be to bring in new ideas and new people into contact with the senior staff members here and with the President. You have his biography, I believe.

As part of that job, he has set up a working dinner tonight for the President at 7:30 with three distinguished American scholars, or four if you count me.

The idea of the dinner is for these three scholars to exchange ideas with the President. It will be held in the Residence of the White House and the guests are -- do you have any handout on this?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: -- Martin Diamond, who is a Woodrow Wilson scholar in Washington, on leave from his professorship in political science at Northern Illinois University; Dr. James Q. Wilson, Chairman of the Department of Government at Harvard; and Daniel Boorstein, the Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of History and Technology.

Q Does the President feel a great need for something like this at this time?

MR. NESSEN: Ever since he came to office, and even before he came to office, Sarah, the President always felt a great need to be exposed to ideas.

Q Can you tell us a little about it? I mean is he seeking their ideas on the direction of the country, that sort of thing?

MR. NESSEN: I think one day out here before I mentioned the President has seen a number of other scholars and so have the staff members, just to be exposed to ideas, not on any specific subject.

Q Ron, would it be possible for us to get the brief of the presentation of each of these men? They are coming down here with something on their mind and want to tell him. Why don't they share this with the American people, what they are in-feeding to the President?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to be attending the dinner, and if you trust me to do a briefing on it, I could do it tomorrow if you would like.

Q I certainly trust you, but I just thought if they are going to be writing out something they might just as well give us copies.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it is going to be that kind of a presentation, Sarah. It is going to be a working dinner, but I think the conversation will not be that structured that they will have papers to pass out. I will let you know tomorrow, and we will make some notes and give it to you.

Q Ron, another question related to this dinner night. Dr. Goldwin is a man who used to conduct seminars at various universities. He was associated with the bringing together of people in the academia and public life and so forth and so on, if I am not mistaken. Did the President, when he was in the House, attend one or more of those seminars? Was that sort of the genesis of this thing?

MR. NESSEN: I remember talking about those seminars one day and -- are those at Aspen? Does he do his at Aspen? I remember the President saying he had been to a couple of them at Aspen. I will check that for you. I just frankly don't know. I know he has attended those kinds of seminars, but I don't know if they were Dr. Goldwin's seminars or not.

Q Will there be any other guests there besides these three?

MR. NESSEN: From outside the White House?

Q From the White House.

MR. NESSEN: There will be some staff members there.

Q Did you give Boorstein the right title? Isn't he a former Director, rather than Director?

MR. NESSEN: He became Director in 1969. As far as I know, he is still the Director, according to this biography.

Q What is that?

MR. NESSEN: The Smithsonian National Museum of History and Technology. He has written more than ten books on American history and politics, and won the Bancroft Award in 1959, and the Francis Parkman Prize in 1966.

Q Who has the President seen before now in the thinker category? Are Kristol and Kahn the only ones?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the other names right now, Jim, but those two I know of.

Q Ron, will this exchange of ideas be in any particular areas or from a broad perspective?

MR. NESSEN: These three men -- their expertise in a fairly broad area.

Q So they will be dealing with energy, the economy, and politics, and anything that comes to mind?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is just going to be a dinner table discussion and, as I say, I will let you know tomorrow.

Q Is there a format? Does the President ask them questions? Do they make presentations?

MR. NESSEN: If it is like that lunch with the five columnists, it is just people sitting around the dinner table talking about ideas.

Q What else have you got?

MR. NESSEN: I am glad you asked me that, Bob.

Tomorrow the President will go to New York to meet at 4:30 with a group from Vice President-designate Rockefeller's Commission on Critical Choices for America. The meeting will be at 4:30 at the Waldorf.

Do you want to know who is going to do that?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Nelson Rockefeller; Hans Marks, the Director of the Atomic Energy Commission's Ames Laboratory; John Foster, the Vice President for Research and Development of TRW, Inc; Dr. Edward Teller, First Professor of Physics at California; Carroll Wilson, Professor at the Alfred T. Sloan School of Management at MIT --

Q Is that the former Carroll Wilson of the AEC?

MR. NESSEN: I can't tell from this. It does not have much of a complete background. He is now Professor at the Alfred T. Sloan School of Management at MIT. -- George D. Woods, the former President of the World Bank; Oscar Ruebhausen, a New York attorney, and William J. Ronan, the Chairman of the Port Authority of New York.

The purpose of this meeting is to give the President a chance to discuss with the members of the Critical Choices Commission the status of some of its inquiries into the critical choices of America as it moves into the third century of its existence.

This meeting will begin at 4:30, and there will be coverage allowed of the beginning of the meeting. What I had planned to do was to come down to the press center at the Waldorf after the meeting and give you a fill-in on who said what.

Q Approximately how long will that run, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: About an hour and a half, after which the President will attend an awards dinner of the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame, which is also in the Waldorf.

Q Will they be inducting new members?

MR. NESSEN: Last year the President received the Foundation's Distinguished American Award, and that award will be presented again this year to somebody else, who has not been announced.

Also, there will be some former football players enshrined in the Football Hall of Fame, and the McArthur Bowl will be given to the top college football team, about which I am sure there will be some debate.

We will have a sign-up list for the New York trip posted right after this meeting. Roughly, the schedule looks like this: A 12 o'clock bus departure from the Southwest Gate or you can go straight on out to Andrews, getting there at 12:30 for a 1 o'clock press plane departure from Andrews. The press plane will go into Laguardia and then there will be buses into the Waldorf, putting you at the Waldorf at about 3 o'clock. You will be served lunch on the flight.

The President will leave the South Lawn at 2 o'clock, will depart Andrews at 2:30, will arrive at JFK at 3:15, helicopter to the Wall Street pad and get to the Waldorf at about 3:50.

After the dinner, the President will leave the Waldorf at 10:30 and get back to the White House at about 12:30. More details, I think, will become available this afternoon.

Because the bus leaves at noon, I really will try to get started here at 11 and hopefully be able to keep it brief so you will have time to file and get on the press bus.

Q There will be a press table at that dinner?

MR. NESSEN: Somebody was working on that just before we came out here.

Q Will we need special dress for that dinner?

MR. NESSEN: It is a black tie dinner. We will get those details later this afternoon.

For those of you going to Martinique, you should plan to turn into Ray Zook or Thym Smith a list of all your cameras and sound equipment that you are taking with you by Wednesday at 5 o'clock. I guess that is the typical description and serial number.

You should also know that we are going to get the press books to you no later than Thursday morning, and with any luck on Wednesday. Also, we will have a briefing on the trip later this week.

Dr. Kissinger is out of town, in Brussels or will be, so I can't tell you yet who will be doing the briefing, but we will have it for you.

Q When you say later this week, you mean Thursday or Friday, probably?

MR. NESSEN: Hopefully Thursday, Jim.

Q Could you give us an advisory on departure for Martinique? Does it look like Friday night or Saturday morning?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is Saturday morning.

Also, the President is going to address the Business Council Wednesday at 9 o'clock in the State Room of the Mayflower Hotel. This is a group of several hundred leading businessmen. I would anticipate that the speech is going to obviously deal with the economy.

Q Is that a.m. or p.m.?

MR. NESSEN: Nine p.m.; Wednesday night, in other words.

The President had a meeting last Saturday afternoon of two hours with Secretary Morton and Frank Zarb and others involved in the energy business. Frank and Alan Greenspan gave a fairly complete readout on Saturday, so I won't go through it again unless you have a desire to do that.

Those are all the announcements I have.

Q Ron, is the President prepared to accept the conference bill on strip mining restrictions as it now stands?

MR. NESSEN: John, that is still in conference and subject to change, as I understand it, and I just would not be able to indicate one way or the other until the President sees what the final form of the bill is.

Q Ron, do you have any idea of when the nominations for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission are going to go up to the Hill? I believe the deadline is tomorrow.

MR. NESSEN: I don't. I have not seen them yet.

Q Ron, you originally announced the review of the voluntary measures for conserving energy scheduled after the first of the year some time. Why was it moved up? Why is the President now reviewing voluntary energy measures?

MR. NESSEN: Alan Greenspan indicated on Saturday that really firm figures on energy consumption and imports and so forth really are not going to be available until we said they were, which is February or so. Enough information is now in or is coming in, will come in, by the end of the year, to get a fairly -- I think the way he put it was that you could take those figures and sort of project them in a fairly reliable way and also made the point that this national energy policy is something that goes way beyond a simple question of whether the voluntary system is working.

For instance, he made the point that it is not a question of a shortage of fuel, it is a question of the high price of fuel and how much do you want to pay for it. The fact of the matter is that the figures indicate that total domestic consumption is leveling off or has leveled off, and there seemed to be two reasons for this.

One is voluntary efforts, and secondly, that the cost of oil is also acting as a depressant on usage. So, whereas the projection for average daily oil consumption in 1975 was 17,600,000 barrels without any conservation efforts, it appears that the consumption in 1975 based on these preliminary figures will be closer to 16,600,000 barrels, on average, a day, so you see that there has been some reduction in what is anticipated.

The goal of one million barrels a day was a goal for the end of 1975. The problem here, and it is one of the problems that these recommendations will grapple with, is the domestic production of oil peaked in 1970 and that domestic production of oil has been going down since 1970.

So, even though consumption stays the same, and it appears to have leveled out because of both the voluntary program and the high price, with domestic consumption falling, the oil has to come from somewhere and so there have been increased imports.

This is why Frank Zarb made the point the other day that you have got to think about the supply portion of this and how to get domestic production up as well as getting consumption down.

Q Ron, let me restate the question.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, I didn't answer your question?

Q I was trying to get at something else.

Is the timing of the review connected to the talks with the French?

MR. NESSEN: No, the timing of the review is timed because, as I said the other day, all this vast wealth of background material was just put together a couple of weeks ago and it is on that material that these decisions will be made. It had nothing to do with the meeting with the French.

Q Would you be more specific as to the draft of the agenda for the meeting on critical choices? I notice that the participants in the meeting appear to be a little weighted toward nuclear weaponry and nuclear weapons research.

Do you have anything you can give us by way of a more detailed nature that you can discuss?

MR. NESSEN: I had another piece of paper on it which I apparently left in my office, but nuclear weapons is not on the agenda. Energy is on the agenda.

Q Will you post that agenda list?

MR. NESSEN: It is just some rough notes I made while I was talking about this dinner.

Q It would be helpful.

MR. NESSEN: All right.

Q Ron, a couple weeks ago the President said that the budget deficit in 1976 will probably be something between \$5 billion and \$25 billion, and he has been meeting with budget people on a number of occasions since then.

I wonder if it is possible for you to be any more narrow now, give any more specific information on what the President thinks the size of the budget will be in 1976, and what the total Federal spending will be in 1976?

MR. NESSEN: I really can't, Phil, because those meetings are being held every day, and I have not sat in on very many of them. I don't get any broad picture yet of what the budget is going to look like.

Q Ron, on the appropriations bill for HEW, do you happen to know whether this is the bill that had the Marjorie Holt amendment in it?

MR. NESSEN: No, that was a supplemental that Marjorie Holt was in. I am sure it was a supplemental that Marjorie Holt was in.

Q Ron, on Saturday Secretary Kissinger issued a statement in which he said he was speaking for the President as well, calling on the House to extend the Turkish aid cut-off until February as the Senate did. It does not look to some people as if the House will do that, which means the aid is cut off tomorrow unless the President issues a statement that substantial progress has been made in the military situation, I guess, getting Turkish troops out of there.

If, in fact, the House does not vote, what will the President do tomorrow? Will he authorize the cut-off?

MR. NESSEN: I think you are wrong in your description of the law. I think, as I understand the law, he made that finding earlier and thereby continued the aid until tomorrow. As I understand it, there is nothing in the law that he can do to stop the cut-off from taking effect tomorrow.

Q Ron, on the Wednesday night speech to the Business Council, will that be televised?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask the networks. We have not offered it for coverage. If there was any interest in it, we could.

Q Is it open to press coverage at all?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, we have worked that out. It will be.

Q How long will it run and will there be an advance text, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: There will be an advance text. I cannot give you the length on it yet.

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Q Ron, does the President consider this a major address on the economy?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to characterize the President's speeches.

Q Do you expect him to announce any new economic programs or policies in this speech?

MR. NESSEN: I have not even seen a draft of the speech yet, Jim, so I cannot tell you whether it will be or not.

Q Well, you might have heard perhaps he had something in mind, or had issued any instructions, or was considering something that might find its way into that speech?

MR. NESSEN: I think you better let me check before I give an answer on that.

Q Ron, last week, maybe Friday, I believe you suggested that in a couple days there might be some announcements involving oil imports.

MR. NESSEN: Did I? I don't think so. I don't remember that.

Q You don't?

MR. NESSEN: No. I don't remember doing that. I don't know of any announcements on oil imports coming in the next couple of days.

Yes, Phil.

Q Ron, is the President planning to move Mr. Hartmann across the street to another office?

MR. NESSEN: No. That story is totally wrong. Bob Hartmann is not going to move across the street to the EOB.

Q Will Mr. Hartmann's office be moved anywhere or will he remain in the same office, in the same room?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he is not going to move to the EOB.

Q I know. I am trying to go beyond that to find out if he is going to move anywhere else in the White House, any room other than his present room?

MR. NESSEN: I can check it for you. I don't know. Let me check it and find out. Have you heard something that indicates he is moving to another office?

Q I will hold my press conference later.
(Laughter)

Q Ron, has there been any discussion in the past few weeks about the possibility of moving Mr. Hartmann?

MR. NESSEN: There has never been any discussion of moving Bob to the EOB.

Q Have you discussed with the President, or have you heard the President discuss the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam? I am referring to the increased fighting in the Mekong Delta.

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard the President discuss increased fighting in the Mekong Delta.

Q It was carried on one of the wires this morning.

MR. NESSEN: I am aware of the fighting, but I have not heard the President talk about it. The United States is following the situation closely and is hopeful that the North Vietnamese will recognize the futility of broadening their attacks and will end actions which are in violation of the Paris Agreement.

The United States has noted that the Saigon Government has actually renewed an offer to reopen the two-party talks, and the United States thinks it is in the best interests of North Vietnam to return to the negotiations. The United States believes that the best way to settle this conflict is through political negotiations and peaceful means.

Q Ron, the spokesman for the Nixon Administration, primarily the Secretary of Defense, who is still the Secretary of Defense, always left open the option of resuming the bombing if there were a major campaign carried out in the South. Is that option still open to the President? Did President Ford consider that a viable option, or is that something that has been closed off?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I would have to get some information on the subject, John, before I could answer. I have never heard it discussed here, and I don't want to talk about that unless I know what I am talking about.

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Q The Congress, Ron, is talking about passing that bill, or considering the bill to let public service jobs that would finance that \$4 billion. The President talked about \$2.5 billion, I believe. What is his reaction to that? Would he veto it if it came down with \$4 billion in it?

MR. NESSEN: We never like to say what the President is going to veto until he sees what the legislation is.

Q What is the statement about \$4 billion in that bill? This is the one that would trigger the 83,000 --

MR. NESSEN: Well, as we said the other day, it would have been nice if Congress had passed this sooner, and they are making headway on it.

I think the answer I have to give you is that the President obviously feels that this is necessary and is happy that Congress is making progress on it, but would have to see what dollar figure they come up with, and what the other provisions of the bill are before we can say whether he would veto it or not.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 1:10 P.M. EST)