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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:15 P.M. MST

DECEMBER 24, 1974

TUESDAY

(Vail, Colorado)

MR. NESSEN: The President began working at his house at about 8 o'clock. He had some papers and reports from Washington that he went over. As promised, he left the house at about 9:30 and went on up and skied down and I think you all know about the skiing.

We have several announcements today. Judy is passing out to you an exchange of letters between the President and William D. Eberle. Mr. Eberle is resigning and the President is accepting his resignation with deep regret.

Mr. Eberle has two positions. One as special trade representative and one as Executive Director of the Council on International Economic Policy.

Q Ron, do you have a bit of biography on him at all -- age, et cetera?

MR. NESSEN: We will check that for you.

New Jersey has been declared -- let me rephrase that -- the President is declaring New Jersey as a disaster area as a result of recent severe storms, high winds and abnormally high tides.

Q Do you have a date on those stories?

MR. NESSEN: I am told the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration, which is a part of HUD, is putting out full information. Not the entire State has been declared a disaster, it is portions of it and you can get the full information from the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration.

The President will be working this afternoon at the house with Don and myself. I don't get any feel yet as to whether he is going to have signed or vetoed any bills. We ought to probably set up the same kind of arrangement we had yesterday, which is a posting at 5 o'clock, let's say, no earlier than 5 o'clock, for bills or any other decisions he makes this afternoon.

Is that acceptable to everyone?

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Q That falls right on the deadlines in the East.

MR. NESSEN: Would you rather push it to 4 o'clock?

Q The Christmas deadline is tonight.

MR. NESSEN: Would you rather hold everything until tomorrow?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I am agreeable to that.

Q Not if it is a trade bill or something.

Q Why not hold everything until the 26th?

MR. NESSEN: I think the wires have a problem with that. We can wait until tomorrow, but that is Christmas.

Q Look what happened. It was given out in Congress on the tapes, and so forth.

MR. NESSEN: All right. There will be nothing posted earlier than 4 o'clock. I can't promise we will have anything at 4 o'clock, but we will hold everything until 4 o'clock to give you a couple of hours free.

The Fords will be going to church today. I don't have the precise time at the moment.

Q The President said midnight mass.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the exact time for you. I will have the exact time for you at probably about 3 o'clock, but if we are going to make 4 o'clock the posting time, we will make that the time to post the church services time, too. Also, at 4 o'clock, I hope to have for you some kind of possible coverage by a pool -- you know, the Ford's tradition is to open their presents at midnight, or so. I have had a number of expressions of interest in some kind of coverage of that and I can have that word for you at 4 o'clock, too, if you would like to do it that way.

If we are going to do it, we will do it in some kind of pool like we had yesterday. We will give you that at 4 o'clock.

As far as dinner tonight, the Fords are going to have -- it has been a tradition with them to get together on Christmas Eve and have dinner with Ted and Nancy Kindel at the Kindel home. Tonight's dinner will begin at 7 o'clock and the Kindels will be there with their five children.

The other guests at the dinner will be Jim Brown and his wife and their five children and the President and Mrs. Ford and their four children and one daughter-in-law.

Dinner will be buffet style, I am told, and will include ham, roast beef and fresh salmon.

Q That is at the Kindel home?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. The daily protective pool will operate the same as they did last night. The daily protective pool, it seems to me, is shaping up as church services, dinner -- whatever order that is in -- and Christmas present opening.

Q Will the gifts be after the church services?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Where will he go to church?

MR. NESSEN: There is only one church in Vail, I am told. It is the Interfaith Chapel.

Q Ron, who is supposed to be on this continuing pool? Isn't there supposed to be someone besides the wires who are supposed to be filing these pools?

MR. NESSEN: We have a whole week's pools posted.

Q They are not showing up.

MR. NESSEN: Fran, you are absolutely right. You ought to get on your colleagues and find out.

Q I am just not going to file any more.

MR. NESSEN: There is a protective pool posted for the entire week.

Q Today, I think not. It is just the whole lodge expanded pool.

MR. NESSEN: There is a protective pool every day.

Q Could I clarify the church services? We are sure he is going tonight but we don't know what time; is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q What will the services be, denominational or interdenominational?

MR. NESSEN: It is interdenominational.

On Friday, the President will be meeting with his energy advisers here in Vail to review the energy situation and to review the work that the Energy Resources Council has been doing during the past couple of weeks.

To review the work the Energy Resources Council has been doing during the last couple of weeks will be Under Secretary Morton, the Chairman, and Frank Zarb, the Executive Director.

This will be the third time this month the President has met with the members of the Energy Resources Council in a big formal meeting like this. I am sorry that at the moment we don't have the exact time of the meeting but you should probably count on it lasting at least a couple of hours.

Q Are they all flying here from Washington?

MR. NESSEN: Let me get through the rest of this.

Those who are coming for the meeting are Secretary Morton, Frank Zarb, Alan Greenspan, Secretary Simon and Bill Seidman.

They will be coming out Friday morning for the meeting later on Friday.

Q Is this a decision-making meeting, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't expect we would have any final decisions made.

Q Excuse me. Was that relative to this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Ralph asked if they would be making any decisions and I said no final decisions.

That looks to me like the announcements for today.

Q Will there be any press conference or photo opportunities for this thing?

MR. NESSEN: I am planning on having fairly extensive press coverage of them arriving at the house and then we will have some brief periods inside the house, I think, before they get started with the meeting.

Q Can you give us a schedule or rundown of what you expect the President's activities will be Christmas Day and whether you intend to brief tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I have not planned to brief tomorrow and by 4 o'clock -- this 4 o'clock posting -- it looks to me like it is shaping up for a 4 o'clock briefing or posting, and I would hope to nail down everything from now through tomorrow.

Q Ron, is the President aware that a James Angleton has resigned from the CIA and has he received, or will he receive, a report today from Colby?

MR. NESSEN: I am told that Bob Anderson at the State Department commented extensively on the CIA situation. I am sure you were covered on that in Washington. Would you care for me to pass on some of that to you just for your information?

Q We would care for you to tell us if the President is going to get his report today, which seems to be the view in Washington.

MR. NESSEN: Bob Anderson, at his State Department briefing, said that Dr. Kissinger expects to receive the Colby report later today and transmit it to the President.

Q Will you be having anything to say on that tonight, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: No.

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Q Nothing at all?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q You said we should not draw conclusions until you had the report. Is that report going to be made public or will the President make a comment on the report?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have to wait for the President to get the report and study it before we are able to comment on it.

Dr. Kissinger's words, as relayed by Bob Anderson, were these: " Dr. Kissinger earnestly hopes that judgement on these allegations will be suspended until the President has received and studied the Colby report and the facts are known, and until the President has decided what further steps may be needed."

Q Would you expect he will receive Dr. Kissinger's report later today?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know how long the report is and how long it takes to transmit it so I can't give you a definite answer on that. It depends on how it is transmitted.

Q The technicalities of it, is it going --

MR. NESSEN: That hasn't been decided yet. You know, one possibility would be to transmit it through secure channels. Another way would be to have it brought out by courier and that hasn't been decided yet.

Q Ron, is the President aware that James Angleton has resigned because of "police state" interference of the Agency in domestic affairs?

MR. NESSEN: He has seen the newspapers or wire reports this morning, Helen.

Q Did he have any comment on it?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Is there a possibility Dr. Kissinger himself will bring out the report?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard of any plans like that. He is about to leave for Puerto Rico tomorrow, or today, I don't know exactly when.

Q Can you give us an idea whether anybody else will be coming out, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: It is not fully arranged, yet. Zarb will be bringing two aides with him -- you probably know these gentlemen -- Eric Zausner and John Hill, and Dick Cheney will be coming out. I am not sure whether he is coming to relieve Don or to help Don, but he will be coming.

Q When Simon and Greenspan are out here on Friday, will the conversations be related to energy, or will they also discuss the economic situation and the budget?

MR. NESSEN: The Friday meeting concerns energy.

Q Will they stick around for any additional meetings?

MR. NESSEN: It is possible there may be additional meetings focusing on the economy but I haven't got anything to give you on that.

Q Does the President have a schedule for Thursday?

MR. NESSEN: Let's see, that is the day after Christmas. Thursday is shaping up as work in the morning and afternoon with skiing in between.

Q What is it at present, mainly legislation today and tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Partly legislation. Actually this afternoon a lot of concentration on legislation and this morning more concentration on reports from Washington.

Q Can you say what sort of reports?

MR. NESSEN: I can't.

Q Did you say how long Zarb and Morton might be staying, or Seidman, or Simon?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't say.

Q Will you?

MR. NESSEN: Well, certainly through the meeting on Friday and, as I said, beyond that the plans for the rest of the week are not firm yet, but I can give them to you as soon as they are firmed up.

Q Ron, is there any Presidential reaction to Bethlehem Steel's plans to raise their prices?

MR. NESSEN: I saw a statement that Albert Rees put out yesterday saying that he had asked to have them send him in writing justification for their price increase.

Rees' statement commenting on the U.S. Steel price rollback, I think, contained a sentence or two that other companies might notice this and follow the example.

Q Was Rees' action the result of a request from the President? Did he order that?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't specifically order it from Bethlehem Steel but I think he followed it as a result of the U.S. Steel increase.

Q Will there be a signing on the strip mining bill this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: He has 150 bills and some of them are complicated and take a lot of reading. I don't get any feeling he will act on that today.

Q Have you talked to the President since he got back from skiing?

MR. NESSEN: No, I have not.

Q Have you heard any comments on whether there was a near collision of the President with another skier this morning?

MR. NESSEN: This morning?

Q Yes, there was a report this almost happened.

MR. NESSEN: Was it in sight of any of our groups?

Q The report came from a ski patrolman who said there was a near collision.

MR. NESSEN: People ski down behind him. Did anybody see anything like that?

Q These energy advisers, do you expect them to spend the weekend or go back Friday?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, Helen, the full schedule of meetings is not set yet, other than the first one on Friday, so I can't give you the definite travel plans yet.

Q That group that is coming in, does that compose the Energy Council?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do they have rooms or special homes set aside for them?

MR. NESSEN: Somebody has been working on their room problem, I heard.

I heard the President say yesterday that somebody was finding them a place to stay. I don't know where it is exactly.

Q Can you tell us anything about Kindel, what does he do?

MR. NESSEN: Kindel is the Director of Vail Associates. They have lived in Vail for the past 12 years. They have known the Ford family for some time and, in fact, Mr. Kindel's father was President Ford's Eagle Scout leader in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Q Is he a native of Grand Rapids, then, Kindel?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Well, if he is not a native, he lived there.

Q Our reports from Washington say that the President also talked by telephone to Dr. Kissinger today.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he did.

Q What was that about?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know but I am sure it involved a number of matters, Helen.

Q Did he talk to anyone else by phone?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

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Q Ron, if Dr. Kissinger has been Director of the National Security Council since Mr. Nixon's first time in office, wouldn't he then bear some responsibility if the CIA had violated its charter during that time-frame inasmuch as the Chairman of the NSC would have overview on the U.S. intelligence community?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that Bob Anderson talked at some length about that and relayed some words from Kissinger relating to that and I would rather not try to do it here, Walt.

I know the question was raised in Washington and Kissinger talked about it. I have seen some stuff on the wires about it.

Q It raises the problem of whether the President had Dr. Kissinger investigate it himself.

MR. NESSEN: Bob Anderson, I think, straightened out -- maybe I wasn't as precise as I should have been yesterday in this -- but the fact is the CIA, Colby, has been asked to investigate these allegations and they are to be passed through the NSC, of which Dr. Kissinger is the Chairman, or Director -- whatever his title is -- and then on to the President.

I don't know if I said that Kissinger had been ordered to do the investigation, but the fact is that Colby has been told to do the investigation through the NSC.

Q Is there an NSC meeting today, or anything that would pass through this report before it gets to the President?

MR. NESSEN: It is passing through Dr. Kissinger. Whether he has gathered his staff around to deal with it, you will have to check in Washington.

Q Can we have a report on that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:42 P.M. MST)