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NEWS CONFERENCE

#159

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 1:40 P.M. EDT

MARCH 5, 1975

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: To begin at the beginning of the day, the President held a meeting at 7:30 this morning with the National Security Council, which lasted an hour. The last previous meeting with the National Security Council was on January 29.

At 10 o'clock the President met with Senators Tower and Church to discuss matters involving the Senate select committee to study government operations with respect to intelligence activities. The two Senators requested the meeting. They requested the meeting to discuss the committee's views on the purposes and objectives of its inquiries into the intelligence activities of the U.S. government.

Later, at 11:15, the President met with Members of Congress who visited Cambodia and South Vietnam to hear their report and to discuss their ideas and their views on the Administration's request for additional aid to South Vietnam and Cambodia.

I suppose you have had ample opportunity to talk to the Members, so I don't really have anything to add to what they may have told you.

At 2:15 this afternoon the President is meeting with the Senate Steering Committee, which, as you know, is a group of Senate Republicans. The purpose of this is to go over about 25 areas of legislation and discuss their views and the President's views.

This same group, you perhaps remember, had dinner with the President on February 17, and at that time, the discussion was limited to the energy program. So, this is an opportunity to talk about a lot of other additional pieces of legislation.

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Tonight, the President will be dropping by the 23rd Annual Congressional Dinner of the University of Michigan Club. The President will drop by the Washington Hilton after the dinner portion of the program is complete.

The motorcade will leave the White House at about 7:55. We will have a travel pool going along, and the names will be posted later. The travel pool should be here at about 7:45.

Q Will there be remarks?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, but I would say the substance of them will not be weighty. He will get to the Washington Hilton about 8 o'clock, leaving here at 7:55, and the pool should be here at 7:45.

Those of you who want to go over and cover it directly, there is open coverage of the dinner and the after dinner activities, Although it is a black tie dinner, the press may wear business suits, if they care to.

There will be informal remarks by the President at 8:40. The President will also stay to watch what is described as a multi-media presentation entitled, "This is Your University, Mr. President." He will return to the White House at about 10:10.

Tomorrow at 7:30 in the evening the President will hold a news conference. This will take place in the auditorium at the Executive Office Building. It will be available if anybody cares to carry it on television or radio.

I think the format will be just a regular White House news conference format, with follow-up questions and the regular method of recognition.

There are two personnel announcements today.

The President is announcing his intention to nominate Major General Harold R. Parfitt of Coaldale, Pennsylvania, to be Governor of the Panama Canal Zone, succeeding Major General David S. Parker, who is retiring. General Parifft, at the present time, is Commanding General of the U.S. Army Engineer Center/Commandant of the Engineering School at Fort Belvoir.

Q Are these things on paper?

MR. NESSEN: They passed these out at 11:30, in that area.

The President also announces his intention to nominate Donald B. Easum of Alexandria to be Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He succeeds John E. Reinhardt, who has been nominated to be an Assistant Secretary of State.

Ambassador Easum has been an Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs since December of 1973. He is a Career Foreign Service Officer. You have biographies of those.

For your information, the State Department will be having a briefing at 3 p.m. today, giving you some history of Cambodian negotiations.

Q Can I ask you something there? Going back to the meeting with the Congressional delegation, were you in there, possibly, or Jack?

MR. NESSEN: Jack was in there for part of the time.

Q Can you tell us what Kissinger said to them on Cambodian negotiations? We were told by Senator Bartlett and we were told by Congresswoman Fenwick, and if we can get it from you, maybe it might clear it up.

MR. NESSEN: Jack will check his notes.

I have two other announcements.

The President will drop by the Republican National Committee leadership Conference dinner Friday evening about nine o'clock. That dinner also is at the Washington Hilton.

I would expect some remarks to be made by the President there. I have not seen the remarks, and I can't tell you what they will be. We will have plenty of time between now and then to give you additional details concerning both his role and the press coverage.

Judy will pass out a statement here, and while she does it, I will read it to you. It deals with economic matters.

The President met yesterday with his senior economic and energy advisers. We reviewed with the President general economic subjects and discussed programs proposed and in place to deal with the current economic conditions.

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At the conclusion of that meeting, the President made a number of observations and decisions. First of all, he noted that the budget he transmitted to Congress last month included \$32 billion for aid to the unemployed during 1975 and 1976 fiscal years. That is both unemployment compensation and jobs programs.

The President noted that \$5 billion of that aid depended on Congressional action, which has not been taken yet, and he has asked his staff to work with the appropriate committees of Congress to see that the money needed is available in time to meet with benefit payments as they become due.

The President also observed that his budget recommendations provided funding for 310,000 public service jobs through the end of this calendar year.

He has decided now that it would be appropriate and desirable to provide the funds necessary to continue those jobs for another six months through July of 1976.

Therefore, he has decided to recommend to Congress that they provide supplemental funding in the total of \$1 billion 625 million to carry out that purpose, and that would be in addition to the \$2.5 billion already contained in the budget for public service jobs and other manpower programs. That was one decision.

Under the provisions of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act enacted in December 1973, the state and local governments are given the authority to make decisions on how to allocate their manpower funds between institutional jobs, on-the-job training, summer youth employment and so forth.

The President was advised at this meeting that preliminary plans indicate that state and local governments are not allocating sufficient funds to meet this summer's needs for job opportunities for young people.

Therefore, the President decided to seek supplemental funding specifically aimed at summer job programs in the amount of \$412 million. This money will provide an additional 760,000 summer youth job opportunities and that would be on top of whatever portion of the previously requested funds the state and local governments decide to allocate for summer job programs.

Q Is that in addition to the \$1 billion 600 million?

MR. NESSEN: The \$1 billion 625 million is something entirely separate. That is the second decision.

The third is that the President indicated a concern about the possibility that unemployed workers may exhaust their unemployment compensation benefits. The President asked that a study of this problem be completed promptly so that he could review it.

Q Ron, on that last paragraph, an additional figure of \$412 million; that is on top of what, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: Incidentally, I have asked Paul O'Neill of the OMB to be here to answer some of these technical questions.

Paul, the original CETA amount was what?

MR. O'NEILL: The total amount for 1976 was \$2.4 billion.

MR. NESSEN: In other words, \$2.4 billion was asked for various manpower programs, and it was up to the states and cities to allocate a portion of that which they wanted to put into summer jobs.

The President felt that not enough was being put in, so he is asking \$412 million specifically for summer jobs, plus whatever portion of the \$2.4 billion they want to put into summer jobs.

Q Is there any estimate of how much they have allocated for summer jobs?

MR. NESSEN: I think \$380 million.

MR. O'NEILL: They were only going to put in half of the amount that they put in last year.

MR. NESSEN: They put in \$380 million last summer. It appeared they were going to put in only about half that much this year. That was for last summer, the summer of 1974.

Q That was because adults needed employment so bad this year, was that the reason?

MR. NESSEN: It is really hard. It is an allocation decision or state decision.

Q Is this prompted by any move in Congress right now to make up the public service figure by \$5 billion?

MR. NESSEN: Paul and I both attended a meeting last Thursday or Friday. Actually, the planning for this goes back two or three weeks. There was a specific meeting to consider these things last Thursday and Friday, and the President made the final decision yesterday afternoon about 2:00. This has been in the works for some time.

Q Ron, is this prompted by any change in the unemployment forecasts, and does it look worse or look like it is going to get worse than he thought it was going to be?

MR. NESSEN: No. As you can see by the specific things he has done, these are not the kinds of things that would be prompted. What you are doing is you are continuing 310,000 public service jobs for another six months into 1976.

You are asking the Congress to put up the money that already had been requested previously for unemployment compensation. You are zeroing in on a very specific area with summer jobs.

These are not the kinds of things that you do if unemployment began to appear to be a worse problem than you anticipated.

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Q Doesn't this indicate, though, that he thinks the problem is going to have a longer term nature than he originally thought?

MR. NESSEN: Not really. The Labor Department felt it would have had to begin tapering this program off about July 1 in order to phase it out by December 31. So, it is not an indication that the unemployment problem is going to be a longer-range problem than previously expected.

Q Ron, how many more public service jobs would be created by this?

MR. NESSEN: It is not a question of creating more jobs, it is a question of providing money to continue the 310,000 jobs for another six months.

Q Have all of these slots been filled, the 310,000?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, as I think Peter Brennan pointed out at one point, the states and cities have been a bit slow on filling all of these slots.

Q Are any new steps being taken to alleviate that problem? That is, the states and localities lagging on filling the jobs?

MR. O'NEILL: This step, in and of itself, will help because it will assure those state and local principal sponsors there is going to be money out there beyond what had already been proposed.

MR. NESSEN: Instead of having to think about phasing out in July, they now know that the program will be going until July 1 of 1976.

Q Is that an acceptable supplement in 1975 to this year's budget?

MR. O'NEILL: Yes.

Q Is the \$412 million included in that \$1.6 billion?

MR. O'NEILL: No.

MR. NESSEN: Those are two separate items. The \$1 billion 625 million is for the public service jobs. The \$412 million is earmarked for summer jobs.

Q So, the total figure is over \$2 billion.

MR. NESSEN: The additional money being asked for today is \$1 billion 625 million plus \$412 million.

Q This is not in response to the Democratic proposal of about \$6 billion for public service jobs yesterday? Does the White House have a response to that proposal?

MR. NESSEN: Actually, when I checked this morning there was no piece of paper down here that you could look at and decide what it was that they had proposed. I think the only thing we have seen was a newspaper account. There just hasn't been a program here that could be analyzed. I will keep after it because I know you are interested in it.

Q Is the President's intention to hold a news conference tomorrow night prompted by anything that he has in mind; any particular situation in the country, or foreign?

MR. NESSEN: Just to hold them regularly. I think I told you after one news conference -- I guess after we got back from Vail -- he hadn't had one for a number of weeks because of the Vail trip plus the preparation of his program and he felt there had been too long a period of time between news conferences, and he wanted to hold them more frequently.

Q Will there be an opening statement?

MR. NESSEN: At this moment I don't know of one.

Q Do you know off-hand how many he has held in the White House and how many all together?

MR. NESSEN: He has held ten all together. Let me see, Phoenix, Atlanta, Florida and Topeka -- four of those out of Washington and six of them in Washington.

Q Ron, a number of the Members of the Congressional delegation back from Indochina indicated that they thought the time was right for a negotiation effort and that there would be an announcement to that effect today. Do you expect we will hear it from the White House or do you have anything new in the way of negotiations?

MR. NESSEN: Actually, Tom, I think what the announcement was that they had in mind was the 3 o'clock briefing at the State Department to review the previous efforts at negotiation.

Q Is that a review only or does it envision moving on to something in the future?

MR. NESSEN: Frankly, I don't know, but I anticipate it is a review of the past.

Q Ron, what are the latest White House predictions on when the economy will turn around?

MR. NESSEN: That prediction has not changed, Dick. Around the middle of the year it should begin to bottom out.

Q Ron, did the President assure Church and Tower that he would instruct Federal agencies to cooperate with the Senate Select Committee's investigation in all respects?

MR. NESSEN: Well, let me give you some thoughts about the meeting which will answer that question, I think.

The President considers it to have been a very worthwhile and constructive meeting. Let me say it was a worthwhile and constructive meeting and that there was a very cooperative attitude by both sides.

The President hopes that this meeting will lay the groundwork for achieving any changes in the law which might be needed to strengthen the intelligence community, to correct any procedures that may have led to abuses in the past and to prevent any abuses in the future.

As for your specific question, I think you would have to characterize this meeting as a preliminary meeting to establish lines of communication and for Senator Church to tell the President how he is going to proceed with this investigation.

The purpose of the meeting was not to make any specific request for specific information.

Q That is not what Senator Church told some reporters a couple of weeks ago, that this was the principal purpose for the meeting.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think you have to look at Senator Church's own words when he came out of here and in which he indicated -- I am sure you have seen the wire copy -- but Senator Church told newsmen after the meeting that the President expressed the desire to aid the investigation and would weigh their request for information on a case-by-case basis. That is really all that was requested at this meeting.

Q Ron, what is the White House view on whether getting this aid will help in some way to negotiate a settlement in Cambodia?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President feels that the need is urgent for this aid. There is a danger that the Cambodians are going to run out of ammunition and the President really believes that Congress will act expeditiously on this request.

The President feels that the Cambodians are running out of time and with the ammunition they have a chance to survive, and the United States should not pull the plug on Cambodia by denying the ammunition to defend itself.

Q But the question was about the negotiations. Are you pretty pessimistic that there can be a negotiated settlement? Is it just to get that ammunition to save the people from getting killed?

MR. NESSEN: I think the State Department briefing is going to help a lot in that area today.

Let me say, prior to that briefing over there, that the aim in Cambodia and also in South Vietnam for that matter, is not for the governments of those countries to win a military victory but to persuade their attackers that they are able to hang on and survive in hopes that the attackers will then recognize that neither side can win a military victory and will agree to a negotiated settlement.

That is the aim of this additional ammunition -- not to win a victory but persuade the other side that they need to negotiate a settlement.

Q If it becomes necessary to pull U.S. people out of Phnom Penh and so forth, how far would we go? Would you send in Marines and would the President have authority to do that? How would that be done?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it is any great secret, Bob, that there are contingency plans to evacuate American civilians in Cambodia. The plan is solely to evacuate American civilians, and there would be no other purpose for the program. I am sure that having covered the Pentagon you know that this plan is not a new one. It has been on the books for a long time.

You know that the details of a contingency plan cannot be discussed, but I do want to emphasize that the purpose of it, if it ever went into operation, would be solely to evacuate Americans safely.

Q What would trigger it?

MR. NESSEN: I beg your pardon?

Q You are not ruling out the use of U.S. troops to accomplish that?

MR. NESSEN: You know, I think it is routine practice not to give details of the plan. But as I say, I don't think there is any secret that there is such a plan.

Q The further troop lift has stopped but an American man was hurt as it was coming in to land. What is the future status of that?

MR. NESSEN: Frankly, that situation was sort of fluid when I got out here and I don't have an answer to that question.

Q Is there any thought being given to giving armed escort to those transport planes?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I have heard of, Bob.

Q I understand you can't discuss the gist of the contingency plan, but if it became necessary to do something like that, would you rule out the use of, say, air power or air support to hold back those people, or would it simply be a case where the Marines would go in and get them out?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't think I can go that far, Bob.

Q Ron, what about third country nationals that worked for American agencies -- like camera crews and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't seen the plan in that much detail, frankly, Steve. I think perhaps the Defense Department might be able to. I know what your specific concern is.

Q We have also heard approaches, and I just wondered if they had reached the White House, what the President's reaction would be. These are people who have been with American countries for a long time through a lot of wars.

Q What would trigger the plan?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it would be to evacuate and save American citizens.

Q At what point?

Q Is it in effect now?

MR. NESSEN: No, of course not.

Q We do have that carrier out there.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, sir.

Q You can confirm that, can't you?

MR. NESSEN: I can't confirm it, Bob.

Q You can or can't? I didn't hear you.

MR. NESSEN: I cannot simply because we don't confirm the location of ships.

Q Is that what the NSC meeting was about?

Q Bob said, "Do you have that carrier out there." And you said, "Yes."

MR. NESSEN: I am not confirming the presence of the carrier out there, Bob. I can't.

Q Helen asked about the NSC this morning.

Q There are some Marines afloat in that area, aren't there? There normally are.

MR. NESSEN: I just can't do that, Bob. Helen asked about the NSC meeting, and we don't discuss what is discussed at NSC meetings.

Q Was the White House involved in the tentative decision by the CAB to permit the Concorde to come to Dulles and Kennedy airports?

MR. NESSEN: That is one I don't know about at all. I am sorry, Carroll, I didn't think that one was coming and I didn't check on it.

Q Did the President discuss a deadline by which this ammunition must be supplied to the Cambodian military or Phnom Penh would be lost?

MR. NESSEN: At this meeting with the delegation this morning, he did not. He just believes it is urgent and needs to be done very quickly.

Q Has there been any discussion, Ron, of what these Congressmen think? Does the President have any position on making further aid to the Lon Nol government contingent on some things like troops being better paid with American funds, which they don't get, which leads to lack of food for their families, which we seem to be concerned with? That is, things like the draft-age young people who are in the night clubs in Phnom Penh even yet? In other words, is there any attempt to make this an "either/or,"; either shape up or we ship out?

MR. NESSEN: Well, how did that question start?

Q I apologize. Specifically, the most obvious thing has been that funds provided by the U.S. to pay Cambodian troops are not getting to Cambodian troops resulting in starvation problems for their troops.

This is one example of the constant stories of corruption, and otherwise, that comes out of there.

Are we considering an "either/or,"--either you stop messing around or we back out--that our commitment will have been fulfilled?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't know enough from here about the allegations you make, Steve, to answer that question intelligently.

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Q Would a lower level of aid below \$222 million for Cambodia be acceptable to the President? The Congressional delegation seems to feel that less than that just to get Cambodia through the rainy season might be appropriate.

MR. NESSEN: The President feels that that is the amount of money that is needed to provide them the ammunition to defend themselves.

Q Ron, let me ask my question another way. Does the President feel that the Lon Nol government is doing all it can and should be doing to make good use of American aid?

MR. NESSEN: Steve, I just haven't put that question to him specifically. I just don't know the answer.

Q Could you clarify something, Ron? When you expressed the President's feeling about saying he feels aid is urgent -- and then you went on to say, as I have it -- that the Cambodians are running out of time, do you mean the Cambodian government is running out of time?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Congressman McCloskey indicated the President does not have a realistic view of the opposition and/or apathy in this country to the plight of the Cambodians.

MR. NESSEN: In the United States or Cambodia?

Q In this country. McCloskey was saying he doesn't believe the President realizes that this exists also among Congressmen, and Congressmen are getting just no support for aid to Cambodia among their constituents. It is awfully difficult for a Congressman at a time when we are cutting back on food stamps.

MR. NESSEN: We are expanding food stamps from \$2.8 billion to \$3.7 billion, but go ahead.

Q When people are worried about food stamps, and it is awfully difficult to spend this kind of money on Cambodia, does the President realize the problems that Congressmen have? Does he have a realistic view?

MR. NESSEN: One of the reasons that the President suggested the delegation go there was so it could get its own view of the situation on the ground, which it apparently has. As you know, he has gone around the country, and he has tried to explain his views on Cambodia to the people.

Q What initiatives does he have besides military aid? This is a holding pattern if the rainy season comes, but the outlook is so bleak. What specifically is the President doing besides thinking in terms of military strength?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, that really is a question that probably ought to be asked of the people who are attacking the legitimate Cambodian government. Cambodians have indicated -- and I guess Lon Nol indicated clearly the other day -- that he was ready and has been ready for a long time for a negotiated settlement.

The Cambodian government is not attacking anybody; it is being attacked.

Q If U.S. Marines went in to evacuate American civilians, what would their rules of engagement be? When would they be able to use their firearms? Only in self-defense, or would they be able to assist the Cambodian forces in any engagement?

MR. NESSEN: I can't acknowledge that there would be circumstances in which Marines would go into Cambodia, Walt.

Q Ron, to follow up on Tom's question on the \$222 million, many of these Congressmen who were out there this morning were talking about getting through the rainy season.

MR. NESSEN: You mean the dry season?

Q Yes, that is right. Will the President compromise on this to give some money now but argue about the total \$222 million later after July?

MR. NESSEN: You know, I guess the talk about pulling the plug sort of gives you the idea of the President's views, that Cambodians ought to be able to have the means to defend themselves, then, as you know, guarantee that the ammunition will enable them to. But they certainly won't be able to survive without the ammunition.

On the other point, there is a feeling here as to both Vietnam and Cambodia, that if you want to talk about wasting money, it seems that it would be a waste of money to give inadequate aid, to give money that is not adequate to help the countries survive. That would actually be wasted money.

If you want to help the countries survive, you need to give them what is adequate to survive and not what is inadequate to survive because then you have wasted the money.

Q Do they need \$222 million between now and the end of July?

MR. NESSEN: That is the judgment.

Q And more after that?

MR. NESSEN: The President has already send a budget request up for 1976, which I understood Congressman Ullman to say on television a couple of weeks ago he thought would go pretty much as requested.

Q Ron, the President on at least one occasion has expressed great confidence in Graham Martin, and now some of these Members of Congress seemed to be critical of him when they come back. Does the President have any change in thought about that?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of any, Aldo, at all.

Q Has the President, in his efforts to achieve a solution in Cambodia, been in contact either directly or indirectly with the government in Peking or through whoever the Ambassador is? There isn't an Ambassador, but whoever its diplomatic functionary is.

Is the U.S. government in contact with the People's Republic of China on Cambodian negotiations?

MR. NESSEN: I frankly don't know, but I suspect that that will be something that you could easily discuss at the State Department's three o'clock review of Cambodian negotiations.

Q Is Jack going to give us a fill on that, on what he heard?

MR. NESSEN: Jack will answer some questions on the meeting today, if you are finished with me.

Q Ron, if we could turn from Cambodia for a second to the economic situation, I have a couple of questions.

First, does the President have a reaction to the Senate Finance Committee's tentative decision to separate the tax cut from repealing the depletion allowance.

The other part of my question is: Was the White House involved in this decision yesterday by the Democratic Senate Policy Committee to send the President's veto to the Finance Committee, thereby effectively shelving it?

MR. NESSEN: On the first part of your question, I think it has been clear from everything that he said since the House took this action -- quite aside from whatever his views are of the depletion allowance--he feels it should not be tacked on to this bill because it is simply going to slow down what he considers to be a very important, or, as he said yesterday, the most important action Congress could take.

Tax reform is something that he believes in and thinks it should be done, but this kind of legislation ought to be on that reform bill and not slow down the anti-recession tax cut.

Q Does he think that this depletion allowance should be killed eventually?

MR. NESSEN: As I mentioned the other day, depletion allowance by itself really can't be judged. It depends on what is done with phasing out controls and it depends on what kind of windfall profits tax you have.

These three items are a package, and you can't make a comment on one without knowing what the other two are.

As for the Senate putting off the veto, I did considerable research on it because I thought there would be a fair amount of interest in it. There was simply no White House involvement in that at any stage. The White House was not involved in any way in the Senate's decision to not take a vote on the veto.

The President had been told by his advisers that they thought he had the votes to sustain the veto in the Senate, and he is told now that he is gaining considerable strength in the House.

Just to give you a very quick chronology of what happened, the first proposal to delay the second and third dollar came from Senator Roth of Delaware, who called the President last Tuesday and suggested this, and the President did have that in mind.

As far as I can determine, Senator Roth was the first one who suggested that to the President. As you know, on Friday Senator Pastore and the other Democratic leaders raised it again. Meanwhile, it did appear that the Democrats were beginning to put together some serious energy proposals that might be the basis of a meshing of the two programs.

Let me see what else happened in the chronology that you might be interested in.

The President's final decision to put off the second and third dollar for 60 days was made finally yesterday morning.

Q What was the date of the Roth call?

MR. NESSEN: I think a week ago Tuesday. Today is Wednesday. I think it was the 25th of February.

Q If that was under consideration the 25th of February, why did you tell us on the 28th that there had been no compromising on the \$1, \$2 and \$3 basis?

I don't mean to put you on the spot here, but I went over the last month's briefings and you really boxed yourself in on the 5th, 12th and 18th, and many times on the 19th, 20th, 24th and 28th. These are verbatim, and I will spare you the agony. You said that was never going to happen.

MR. NESSEN: Until yesterday morning at approximately 11 o'clock it was not going to happen because that is when he made his decision.

Q Ron, you said when Roth called the President did have that in his mind, so he was in fact considering in February -- whatever the date was -- withholding or deferring those two dollars.

MR. NESSEN: It was a suggestion from a Senator, Gaylord, and at that point his policy was -- and, in fact, his policy up until yesterday morning was -- to go ahead and put the second and third dollar on as scheduled.

Q You said there was no consideration or no thought to it prior to then.

MR. NESSEN: Bill, I am not aware of every phone call he gets or how serious his consideration was of that phone call until the Democratic leaders came in on Friday and made a similar proposal, and he said many times that he was then considering it.

Q Did the President suggest that you pass that on to us?

MR. NESSEN: What is that?

Q This information?

MR. NESSEN: No, I received a lot of queries yesterday from people who are putting together chronologies of how we got to yesterday afternoon.

Q Did Rumsfeld suggest that you pass that on to us?

MR. NESSEN: No, sir.

Q Marsh or Hartmann?

MR. NESSEN: I have been trying to give you a chronology of how it happened, and that is when it began, with the phone call from Roth.

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Q A lot of us put out stories in early February outlining a compromise exactly as the President unveiled it yesterday. You may quarrel with the word "compromise," but throughout the month of February -- and it is your records -- you denied that anything like that was going to happen happened yesterday.

I am not accusing you of misleading us deliberately, but we were certainly misled on that.

Q Well, Walt, I can't agree with that.

Q You denied the story.

MR. NESSEN: Wait a second, folks. Until yesterday morning at 11 o'clock the President's policy was to put on the second and third dollar. People do change their plans and the President clearly changed his plans.

Q How come Senator Roth called everybody on Sunday night and said it was all set?

Q Senators Talmadge and McClellan came out on February 20 and told us that that was essentially the way it was going to come out and we asked that in the briefing. You said, after reading carefully what they said in the Washington Post and on television, you didn't see anyone who said they got the impression the President was going to back away from the one, two and three.

MR. NESSEN: Indeed he didn't, Walt, until yesterday morning.

Q Ron, when did you first become aware of the way things were developing? Was it Friday or earlier?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you heard the President, himself, say on Friday that he had heard the Democrats suggest this and he was going to consider it.

Q That is the first time that you became aware of this whole thing?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly have been aware of the questions raised here in the briefing and every time it was raised, I told you precisely what the President's position was at that moment.

Q Except on the 28th, as I read the briefing, you left yourself a hedge because at that point you said there has been no plan to change that yet.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I ever used the word "yet" because I would have no reason to.

Q I went through these, the whole thing, this morning. On the 20th of February there was a shift in your responses from up there. That was before the President met with the leaders.

MR. NESSEN: Well, in terms of keeping my own credibility intact, such as it is, I did, on every occasion that this question was asked, accurately reflect to you what the President's views were at the moment and I really feel that is probably the primary job of a press secretary, to tell you what the President's feeling is at that particular moment.

Although, I haven't reviewed the record carefully as Walt has, I feel safe in my own mind that I did that job at each step, weighing what the President was feeling at each particular moment that I was asked that question.

I gave you an accurate report on his thinking at that moment. But for you now to say retroactively that because he did it yesterday that I was wrong in February or January, or the other dates, really isn't fair because this plan did not take shape until the past couple of days.

Q Will we get any briefing on this 2:15 meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I have forgotten what that meeting is, we have had so many today. Let me look into it and find out.

Q Is there any plan for travel next week, and where?

MR. NESSEN: Well, what is next week? I would not look for South Bend, Indiana next week.

Q Will you look for any travel next week?

MR. NESSEN: I don't look for any travel next week, at the moment.

Jack is going to answer whatever questions you may have on the meeting he attended.

Q I think we are basically interested in, did Kissinger say anything about negotiation or anything about Sihanouk?

MR. HUSHEN: No, and I think that you ought to see what comes out at 3 o'clock on that.

Basically, what Secretary of State Kissinger said in the meeting had to do with aid, and if we are going to give them aid, to give them enough so that it is useful to them. There is no sense giving them so little that will just keep them alive just a little bit longer and actually work to their detriment.

Q McCloskey quoted the Secretary as saying something to the effect that there really wasn't much hope for any negotiations at all in Cambodia. Did the Secretary say anything like that?

MR. HUSHEN: He said as long as the Khmer Rouge think they are winning, they are not going to be interested in negotiating and that is the principal need for the aid to continue, to get them into the rainy season and to convince them that there is a chance that the negotiated settlement is the best way to resolve the problem.

Q You have nothing else to add on that?

MR. HUSHEN: I was going to say further that the Communists are the ones who are posing the obstacle to any negotiations.

Q Senator Bartlett and Mrs. Fenwick mentioned Kissinger as talking about negotiations with Sihanouk and with China. Do you recall hearing anything about that?

MR. HUSHEN: I think you ought to see what comes out at 3 o'clock on that. I think your question will be answered then.

Q Jack, was "pull the plug on Cambodia" a direct quote from the President, and can you expand on that a little bit?

MR. HUSHEN: Well, I think both the President and the Secretary of State used words to that effect and even "pulling the plug on Cambodia." I will have to check through my notes to see which one said that in reference to not supplying them with the military aid.

Q Was that in reference to the \$222 million?

MR. HUSHEN: Yes.

Q Jack, did they also use any "end of the line" type of thing: Ron's words, "end of the line" and "pull the plug" or whatever it was?

MR. HUSHEN: I am not sure what you mean by "end of the line."

MR. NESSEN: You mean "time was running out."

MR. HUSHEN: There was no question about that. I think everyone in the room saw that time was running out for Cambodia and that Congress should get on and get this assistance enacted.

Q I have a couple of things. McCloskey said that Kissinger indicated that the North Vietnamese were not interested in negotiating with South Vietnam and that they wanted a military confrontation.

Did you hear the Secretary say those words, or something to that effect?

MR. HUSHEN: The Secretary did say he had been negotiating with the North Vietnamese representatives for about four years. He said there would be no political settlement until they are convinced they have run out of military options. Again, all through the Secretary's remarks he was underscoring the need to make the aid that we supplied sufficient to do the job.

Q Was this in reference to Cambodia?

MR. HUSHEN: And Vietnam. He said we have no legal commitment to give aid to South Vietnam, but a very strong moral commitment.

Q Do you have more to say on that?

MR. HUSHEN: No, go ahead.

Q I am not really asking a question, but McCloskey did say the President did not have a real view on the apathy. Did the President at any time say anything on the order of, "I know the people at home don't like this, but you have got to act responsibly," or did he at any time acknowledge that this might be an unpopular thing for a Congressman to do, to vote for this money, but to go ahead and do it anyway?

MR. HUSHEN: I didn't hear anything quite like that. There was a kind of general consensus by the Congressmen who made the trip that the situation in Vietnam was much better than they had suspected militarily and that Vietnamization had really worked.

The President ended up by saying, "All of you know my deep personal conviction that we should have a strong worldwide policy of helping those who want to help themselves."

Q You quoted Kissinger as talking about the negotiations with Vietnam for four years. Are you relating that to Cambodia?

MR. HUSHEN: No, that was on Vietnam.

MR. NESSEN: Those were the Paris talks he was talking about.

MR. HUSHEN: Those were talks leading up to the Paris accords.

MR. NESSEN: I have just one encore. One of the reasons Jack's quotes and mine don't jibe exactly is I did talk to Dr. Kissinger and the President outside of this meeting today, where some of my quotes came from.

I have just one other word: Without meaning to be overly defensive as to my credibility gap, someone has reminded me that during this period of -- I forget how far back your dates go ---\$1, \$2 and \$3 was indeed the President's plan, and he intended to go through with it.

It was also put in terms of, sure, he is going to go through with it because there is nothing to compromise with. Indeed, there wasn't until Friday when the Pastore and Wright plan was presented to him.

The final decision on the \$1, \$2 and \$3, as I said, was made yesterday when the Ullman plan, a much more comprehensive plan, was presented.

So, in my own defense I would like to get that on the record.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 2:30 P.M. EDT)