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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH BILL GREENER

AT 11:35 A.M. EST

DECEMBER 15, 1975

MONDAY

MR. GREENER: Let me make one announcement on Vail. The dates are now firm and they will be December 23 to December 30.

Q 30th?

MR. GREENER: Returning on the 30th.

The Press Center will be in Manor Vail Lodge. All the places that we have contracted with are attempting to re-rent any of our space for the New Year's weekend and any space that actually will be re-rented for this period, obviously, the results of their efforts will be refunded to you.

The rates can be gotten from Ray Zook and any of you that plan to stay over on a vacation of your own and, therefore, do not want your space re-rented should contact the Transportation Office today or tomorrow.

All of that with one caveat -- and that is if Congress is in session.

Q Is out of session?

MR. GREENER: I said if it is in session, we will not be going. Excuse me.

Q Bill, this may not be the proper place to bring this up but are you saying that if we go out there, we have to pay two weeks rental for one week unless this outfit or these outfits can rent them?

MR. GREENER: I don't know exactly the length of time, Bob. Ray has all that information for you and will have it to discuss with you today if you wish to.

Q Bill, can you tell us why the President has now decided to stay through the 30th?

MR. GREENER: No, I can't. They were planning on leaving late on the 29th and now I think they are leaving early on the 30th.

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Q Bill, can you say whether there are any stops going out or returning?

MR. GREENER: There are no stops planned in either direction.

Q Are there any events during?

MR. GREENER: No events planned during the time.

Q Do you know which staff members are going with him?

MR. GREENER: I do not.

Q Is he anticipating having major staff meetings out there such as he had last year on energy and economics; that is, is he going to have some mini economic summits with his people out there, flying them all in from Washington, or is this going to essentially be a vacation?

MR. GREENER: It is possible he will. Those decisions have not been made yet, Walt.

Q Do you expect him to leave early on the 23rd?

MR. GREENER: Yes, early in the morning on the 23rd.

Q Do you have the time?

MR. GREENER: I do not have the time.

Q Are you going?

MR. GREENER: I do not know. I would like to know myself, as would my wife.

Q Are you characterizing this again as a working vacation as the last one was billed?

MR. GREENER: I havenot put any characterization on it at all, Ann, and I don't think I can until I know the answer to Walt's question and that is whether there will be some staff meetings out there.

Q Is there anything you can say about the family? Are the three sons going to go out?

MR. GREENER: The only other announcement I have is that the President again conducted the senior staff meeting this morning and, as usual, I do not plan to discuss the subjects of the senior staff meeting.

Q Bill, did the President make any comment to you on Bo Callaway's remarks on Ronald Reagan's record as Governor of California?

MR. GREENER: The President did talk to Bo about the meeting in Houston and Bo gave him a report on it. Bo assured the President that he was discussing the Governor's record, it was not a personal matter.

Second of all, the President plans to run, as he said before --

Q He assured the President he was discussing the Governor's record and it was not a personal --

MR. GREENER: A discussion of anything personal?

The President repeated to me this morning that he plans to run on his record as President, as Vice President, ten years as his party's leader in the House of Representatives and 25 years as a Congressman. He assumes that the voters will make their decision based on his record and the records of anyone that is running against him.

Q Is the manner in which Mr. Callaway is presenting the President's campaign in the manner in which he wants to be presented?

MR. GREENER: As I said, the President discussed that with him and only minimally did that particular subject come up, and the President repeated that he wanted to be judged on his record, just as I just stated.

Q Is he still quite happy with Callaway's handling of it?

MR. GREENER: I would not characterize it at all.

Q Bill, is it fair to say the President had no objection to Callaway's remarks about Reagan?

MR. GREENER: Well, John, as I said, the President simply discussed this with Bo --

Q There were no objections, however?

MR. GREENER: -- and that he repeated that he would like the campaign to be conducted on his own record.

Q As opposed to on Reagan's record, right? You said that the --

Q What did you say to that question?

MR. GREENER: To Don's question?

Q Yes.

MR. GREENER: I don't believe the subject came up that much, Don, except to say that Bo did repeat that he was discussing the Governor's record and that it was not meant in any personal way.

Q You said assured first, Bill. You said assured.

Q Does that mean that the President asked for some sort of assurance that he was not straying from the path the President had laid out for him?

MR. GREENER: The President did not ask for any assurance. This is what Bo said that he said to him. I talked to both Bo and the President.

At any rate, I talked to both Bo and the President and those were the words they used.

Q Bill, a minute ago you said that he assumes the voters will make their decision based on comparison of his record with the record of others. So what we would like to find out is which does he want in the campaign, does he want the campaign based only on his record or does he object to comparisons of his record with the record of others or citation of the records of others?

MR. GREENER: Well, he would like his record to be presented by the -- and he plans to do that himself and he made no comment as to whether or not he objected or did not object to the statements made by Mr. Callaway.

Q He expressed confidence in Mr. Callaway. Does he still have that full confidence.

MR. GREENER: Yes.

Q Would he prefer that his Campaign Manager, Mr. Callaway, talk about the Ford record instead of the Reagan record?

MR. GREENER: I didn't put the question to him that way, Ted. I just put it to him in a positive way.

Q I understand, but you talked to both of them and I think you have a perception of what the message was.

MR. GREENER: Well, the message was as I stated, that he plans to run on his record.

Q Bill, how about Mr. Callaway's reference to offering the Vice President's or the running mate position to Mr. Reagan despite Mr. Reagan's record? This we understood that he made references to Reagan as a possible running mate. Did he do this with the President's consent or did that just come up on his own, Bill?

MR. GREENER: I didn't discuss that with the President specifically and neither did Bo.

Q I see.

Q Was the President upset with what Mr. Callaway had to say or the way he said it?

MR. GREENER: He didn't appear to be upset to me, no, nor did he comment on it in any way, Walt.

Q Bill, when did this conversation take place between the President and Bo Callaway? Was it at the senior staff meeting? Was Callaway at the senior staff meeting?

MR. GREENER: No, the President talked to Bo yesterday by phone.

Q They met personally?

MR. GREENER: I don't know. I will check on that.

Q Who called who?

MR. GREENER: And also who called who.

Q Bill, I want to try this in a different way. You leave me with the impression that the President was in effect chastising Mr. Callaway and suggesting that from now on he not be critical of Reagan. Is my impression correct?

MR. GREENER: I didn't mean to leave you with that impression, Bob. I meant to leave you with the impression that the President intends to campaign on his own record and that Bo assured him that it was in answer to a question that he simply referred to the Governor's record. He did not tell him that he blessed it.

Q But is he wanting to do it in the future -- refer to Reagan's record in the future?

MR. GREENER: It was not a subject that came up in their conversation.

Q How is Callaway supposed to know how he is supposed to run the campaign if this subject is not discussed?

MR. GREENER: Well, I think the President has made crystal clear how he wants his campaign run to him and that is discuss his record.

Q Does that mean he does not think Reagan's record is an issue?

MR. GREENER: Pardon me?

Q Does that mean the President does not think that Bo Callaway nor he should discuss Ronald Reagan's record? Answer that question first. Is Reagan's record an issue as far as the President is concerned, and should Callaway discuss it?

MR. GREENER: Well, the President feels that the record of any candidate is an issue.

Q Well, then, he wants all records discussed?

Q So he does believe Reagan's record is an issue discussed in the nomination?

MR. GREENER: The President said that he plans to run on his record and he assumes that the voters will make their choice based on that record and the record of any other candidate that is running against him. Consequently, I assume that all records of all candidates will be issues.

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Q Has the President in any way indicated any disagreement with Bo Callaway's description of Reagan's record?

MR. GREENER: No, not to me he didn't.

In answer to a previous question on the Bo Callaway call, it was Sunday from 5:41 to 5:54 and the President placed the call.

Q A.M. or P.M.? (Laughter)

MR. GREENER: P.M.

Q Bill, you talked to Bo Callaway. Will he continue to attack Reagan's record?

MR. GREENER: He didn't indicate to me that he would.

Q Did he indicate that he would not?

MR. GREENER: No.

Q In the conversation between the President and Callaway, was the so-called 11th Commandment mentioned?

MR. GREENER: Not to my knowledge, it was not, Russ.

Q Do you know the President's views on that? We have asked Ron that and I never did get an answer on that.

MR. GREENER: The President's views on what?

Q On the 11th Commandment.

MR. GREENER: The President himself has already answered that.

Q The last news conference.

Q Bill, you said that the President wants to have his record brought to the American people and plans to do that himself. Does this mean he is going to leave the Oval Office and go out and campaign on his own in contravention of what has been said recently that he is going to stay here and do his job?

MR. GREENER: Obviously, the President from time to time will go out and campaign; he has already stated that.

Q There is not going to be any regular schedule?

MR. GREENER: No, there is none planned.

Q Bill, what about where the President's record disagrees with -- in other words, he is taking positions as President that disagree with positions as in Congress? I can think of three right off the bat. Now which one of these records does he want to go on, the most recent or what?

MR. GREENER: I think the President will make his views plainly known, Les, on where there are disagreements.

Yes, Ted?

Q Bill, to what extent, if any, was there advance knowledge by the White House of Mr. Callaway's approach of discussing or attacking Reagan's record? Did the President know he was going to do that? Was there any advance consultation with the White House at all?

MR. GREENER: I don't believe the President did discuss it with him, Ted.

Q How about with anyone else? Did Bo, when he talked to you, say, "Well, I had talked to so and so at the White House about this," or what?

MR. GREENER: He didn't indicate that, no. I would have to check all the way around, I don't know.

Q Was the President surprised at the approach that Callaway had taken?

MR. GREENER: Well, as I said, I don't believe that the President characterized -- I would not like to characterize any reaction of the President beyond what I have done and that is that he discussed it with Mr. Callaway.

Q Bill, the Republicans in Houston voted a resolution recommending that the President veto three measures -- tax measure, energy measure and the common situs picketing measure. Now, the latter two are bills on which the President has made no decision.

Can you tell us whether he will take this resolution into account as he makes his decision?

MR. GREENER: Well, the President will base his decision on the bills dependent upon how he views the bills for the American people as a whole.

Q So he will ignore the resolution?

MR. GREENER: Well, I would not think that you could say they weren't part of the American people.

Q Did you happen to have, Bill, any discussion with the President about any --

MR. GREENER: Wait a minute. I didn't answer John's question to his satisfaction.

John, he plans to look at the legislation as it comes down and base his decision on what he feels is best for the American people as a whole. Then the question you gave me was whether or not he intends to disregard the resolution itself, and my answer was that obviously their feelings are part of the American people and he will certainly consider them.

Q Did you happen to have any conversation with the President with regard to Vice President Rockefeller's reported sharp remarks to Republican leaders in the South?

MR. GREENER: I did not.

Q Or with Vice President Rockefeller?

MR. GREENER: I have not seen the Vice President.

Q Bill, you mean you did not discuss this very vital and salty statement when you talked to the President?

MR. GREENER: That is right, Les. I did not.
(Laughter)

Q He does not consider it salty.

MR. GREENER: Yes, Bob.

Q Another subject has broken onto the front pages of the newspapers, normally a subject kept more or less in-house. Is the President aware of and what is his reaction to the strong criticisms of the Press Secretary?

MR. GREENER: The President is aware of the articles obviously since they are in the news summary. They have been on television and on radio. The President retains his full confidence in the Press Secretary and indicated the same to me this morning.

Q Why? (Laughter)

Q Does he not feel --

Q Excuse me. There is a question on the floor.

Why does he retain full confidence in the Press Secretary?

Bill, I am not being unreasonable. That confidence has been called into question quite seriously.

MR. GREENER: Because he feels that he is fully professionally qualified to do the job and that he is -- period.

Q Why did this subject come up this morning, Bill?

MR. GREENER: Pardon me?

Q Why did the subject come up? In what context?

MR. GREENER: My imminent departure.

Q Bill, has the President been in touch with Nessen since he went on vacation?

MR. GREENER: Pardon me?

Q Has the President been in touch with Nessen since Ron went out of town on vacation?

MR. GREENER: Not to my knowledge, no.

Q Is the President concerned about the reported inability to find a successor to you and to others who are leaving the Press Office staff?

MR. GREENER: It is not a subject I have discussed with him, Jim. And, as for inability to find any successor to me, this is something that in a conversation with Ron just a very few minutes ago he indicated to me he would like to discuss this afternoon. I don't believe it is a matter of being unable to find someone to replace me.

Q Nessen was due to take the full month of December off. Is he coming back early?

MR. GREENER: He didn't indicate to me that he was, no.

Q You are going to talk to him this afternoon by phone on the question of replacements on the Press Office staff?

MR. GREENER: Yes, some recommendations that I have.

Q How did the issue come up with the President? You just said it had to do with your imminent departure. Did you raise the question with the President?

MR. GREENER: Well, I simply told the President after the meeting how much I had enjoyed working with him and that I would continue to serve him as best I could wherever I might be.

Q Is this your last day?

MR. GREENER: No. Tomorrow, supposedly, I am going up for my confirmation hearings and I just wanted to say that before I did, and then the President said some nice things about me and then after that he pointed out the article in this morning's news summary and then we discussed how I would answer the very question that you have raised.

Q Bill, is there anyone in the Press Corps who has disagreed with the Post's contention that you have the full confidence or that -- you have the confidence of the Press Corps, Bill, and is there any chance that you might not leave us? I mean that --

MR. GREENER: Les, if there is anyone that does not agree that I have the full confidence of the Press Corps, I am not going looking for it and, secondly, -- (Laughter)

Q No one has disagreed with that. Isn't that right, Bill?

MR. GREENER: Not to my face, no.

Q There was not a dry eye in the house.
(Laughter)

MR. GREENER: Thank you, Sol.

Q Can we go back to your other point, your discussion with Nessen this afternoon?

MR. GREENER: Yes.

Q Publicly, at least, the only announcement that has been made is your departure. The story suggests that others are about to leave or have been told to leave. Can you expand on that in any way?

MR. GREENER: No, I have no other announcements to make other than my departure, and that depending upon the confirmation of the Senate.

Q And your discussion with Ron would be confined to a replacement for you, is that right?

MR. GREENER: Well, I would not like to confine my conversation with Ron to anything, but that is the subject that we set a few minutes ago that he wanted to talk to me about.

Q What was Ron's reaction to that Washington Post article and some of the others that have come out?

MR. GREENER: Ron had not seen the Washington Post article. I mentioned it to him.

Q What about Marty Schram?

MR. GREENER: He has not commented.

Q Has the President expressed concern about these articles critical of the Press Office?

MR. GREENER: I just would like to stand on what I said about what the President said -- he expressed full confidence in the Press Secretary.

Q Are there any other people that are planning to be leaving?

MR. GREENER: I have no announcements to make on any other departures other than my own.

Q Then in effect the President's only concern at this point, if there is any, is getting a successor for you; is that right?

MR. GREENER: Well, I would not like to say that the President's concern is to get a successor for me. That was a matter between Ron and myself.

Q I say if there is any.

MR. GREENER: If there is a concern, that would be it, yes.

Q Bill, in line with your new job, the President has been seeing Secretary Rumsfeld quite a bit. Can you confirm that the President has restored one-third of the Defense cuts which had earlier been ordered?

MR. GREENER: No, those were discussions on appeals of the budget. The President's budget will go up in January and I believe any other mention of it would just be inappropriate.

Q In line with those appeals, has he restored some cuts which were previously made?

MR. GREENER: As I said, the President's budget will go up in January and what has been the final decisions on those will be shown in the budget, and I don't believe any discussion of that before then would be appropriate.

Q Bill, has the President sent a message to Prime Minister Rabin last week?

MR. GREENER: The President has been in communication with Prime Minister Rabin on several subjects and on a continual basis.

Q Did it deal with the raid in Lebanon?

MR. GREENER: I don't believe I will discuss the contents of those letters.

Q Was Ambassador Moynihan speaking for the American Government when he confirmed the \$50 million expenditure in Angola?

MR. GREENER: I am not going to accept your premise on that, Bob. I can only say the only confirmation of the \$50 million in Angola was done by the interviewer, not the interviewee. His comment was that he had read the stories in the New York Times.

Q Bill, could you please give us the White House view of current U.S.-Soviet relations in view of the slowdown at least in SALT II negotiations and, two, the Angola conflict? Has there been a cooling off?

MR. GREENER: Well, as for the SALT negotiations, as you know there are some differences and they are continuing to work on them.

As far as Angola, we have stated before that we do not feel that the intervention by the Soviet Union is conducive to improved relations or to detente and that we favor a solution in which all the parties in Angola can negotiate with each other free of outside interference and the United States will support any solution in this direction.

Q Bill, Senator Long suggested the other day, and Senator Mansfield is quoted on the wires this morning as offering a similar suggestion -- that Congress in an attempt to reach a compromise with the President on this tax cut spending ceiling controversy pass a sense of the Congress resolution that they intend to cut spending by an equal amount of whatever tax cut they might pass.

Would a sense of the Congress resolution of this sort be acceptable to the President?

MR. GREENER: Well, the exact meaning of what Senator Mansfield and Senator Long meant and how they planned to phrase it was not exactly clear and for that reason several members of the White House senior staff are meeting with Members of Congress this morning to ascertain exactly what was meant, and until that is done it would be impossible to comment.

Q So you are rejecting the notion out of hand?

MR. GREENER: Simply waiting to find out exactly what was said.

Q The meeting with who?

MR. GREENER: Senator Long.

Q Who is meeting with Senator Long?

MR. GREENER: I don't know all the members. Director of the Budget Lynn is one that is meeting with him.

Q And anyone besides Long?

MR. GREENER: I don't know that whole thing.

Q I would like to go back to this Press Office matter for one minute. I think we need to try to pin you down a little bit more.

The Washington Post story made reference to two people about whom there has been a lot of speculation that they were leaving and it said flatly that they were leaving, and you have said earlier today and at other times that the only publicly announced departure from the Press Office staff is your own.

Now, since these two names have been brought out, I would like to ask you flatly whether you are denying here to us that Mr. Hushen is leaving and that Mr. Rosenberger is leaving?

MR. GREENER: I have spoken to both of the gentlemen and Eric's answer to me was that he had no definite plans, and the same answer came from Mr. Hushen. Now whether or not that means that they are leaving or what they are working on, I don't know, Jim.

Q What has Ron Nessen said to you about the definite plans of those two individuals to go?

MR. GREENER: I don't think I am going to discuss the inner meetings I had with Ron, Walt.

Q You have been told by both of them that their plans are indefinite. Are you in a position to state to us, to deny to us, that they have been asked by anyone to leave? Do you deny that?

MR. GREENER: To my knowledge, neither of them has been asked to leave.

Q On another subject, Bill, the Jewish leaders from the United States which went down and had a meeting with the President of Mexico on the American tourist boycott of Mexico because of Mexico's vote on the Zionist resolution in the United Nations, was this in coordination, supported or objected to by the U.S. Government in an effort -- movement by the Jewish leaders from New York and the United States going down to see the President of Mexico?

MR. GREENER: I have nothing on that, Dick, and I will be glad to check with State and others to find out.

Q Bill, do you have any comment on an Evans and Novak column this morning that the White House is refusing to make public testimony by Colby that the Soviet Union has cheated on the SALT agreement?

MR. GREENER: The only thing I have on the SALT agreement, not on the column, is just what the President and the Secretary of State have already said and that is that any and all indications of such violations have been reported to the appropriate monitoring agents and that there is no concrete evidence that they have violated the SALT agreements at this time.

Walt, let me go back to your question so that I don't mislead anyone. What I answered to Walt was -- the question he asked me was whether I knew of anyone being asked to leave, and I answered that I had no personal knowledge of anyone being asked to leave and that is the truth. I have heard hearsay from both in the Press Room and in the office, but I have not personally been involved in any of it.

Q Now that amounts to a confirmation, Bill.

MR. GREENER: A confirmation of what?

Q It amounts to a confirmation that you have heard something involving -- (Laughter)

MR. GREENER: I would agree with that. I confirm I have heard it all over this building.

Q Why don't you just come out and tell us what the status of these two people is?

MR. GREENER: Well, the status is just as I said. I have no announcement of anybody departing other than myself and, again, that being dependent upon Senate confirmation.

Q Is there a difference between this? I mean, you are not giving us a code word now, Bill, because sometimes from that -- this is evasion number 13 where you say, "I have no announcements on this," does not say it is not happening. Now you are being absolutely straight, you have no knowledge that either Eric or Jack is leaving? There is no knowledge of that on your part whatsoever, Bill?

MR. GREENER: No, Jim, no one has and I repeat the same thing that both of them have told me -- they have no plans. Now whether or not they will be departing, I don't know. I talked to Eric both on the trip and as late as Friday. I talked to Jack just this morning to ask him if there was a departure. Both answers were that they have no plans, and I am repeating them right here now.

Q No plans for what?

Q You said they have no definite plans. Does that mean they have no definite plans to stay or to go?

MR. GREENER: I don't know any other way to put it beyond that, Dick.

Q No definite plans for what? To leave or to say?

MR. GREENER: I don't know. I am not going to interpret their statements and that is just what they said.

Q Your statement of the President's confidence in the Press Secretary's professional qualifications, does that indicate that the President discards, disbelieves and has no faith in the stories that were written following the China trip? Did the President not take into view those stories at all?

MR. GREENER: I did not discuss that particular subject with him, Walt.

Q Bill, have there been any meetings in the White House discussing the Gallup Poll and its impact and meaning on the President since it came out Friday?

MR. GREENER: No formal meetings on that, Ted, but I did sit down with Dick Cheney and Bob Hartmann myself informally.

Q When was this?

MR. GREENER: On Friday. No, as a matter of fact, on Thursday afternoon -- late. Excuse me.

Q Is there any change in either the tactics or conduct of the Presidency as a result of this latest poll showing the decline in public support?

MR. GREENER: The conduct of the Presidency?

Q Yes.

MR. GREENER: No.

Q How about in political tactics or strategy?

MR. GREENER: That would be more appropriately addressed to Peter Kay than me.

Q Bill, can you say whether the President plans to make any trips to New Hampshire prior to the primary?

MR. GREENER: Those decisions have not been made as yet, Russ.

Q Is the President planning a press conference this week, Bill?

MR. GREENER: There are no press conferences planned at this time. It is possible there may be one.

Q Bill, does the President plan to meet with Congressional leaders before the recess to see what is possible and achievable and what is not?

MR. GREENER: There is a meeting contemplated with Congressional leaders and I don't know the date on it.

Q Any meeting planned with Callaway this week face-to-face?

MR. GREENER: No. Mr. Callaway left about 15 minutes ago for New Hampshire. (Laughter)

Q Did the President discuss with Mr. Callaway the Gallup Poll situation?

MR. GREENER: I do not know that, Fran.

Q Bill, three days after this Reagan surge came out, at the Houston Conference they distributed a packet, the President Ford campaign, and it had a newsletter with great big, huge headlines referring to the Gallup Poll. I was wondering if the President thought that this was good strategy.

MR. GREENER: This was not a subject I discussed with him as to what was handed out down there.

Q Bill, what will Rogers Morton's role be in the campaign and when will he start doing whatever he is going to do?

MR. GREENER: After the first of the year, and exactly what he will be doing has not been decided. He has offered to help and exactly how much time --

Q Reorganizing local and State organizations?

MR. GREENER: He has not said. As I said, he plans to look and see what can be done and what he will be able to do and the time that he plans and he just has not --

Q Has he done any work yet?

MR. GREENER: Not to my knowledge, no.

Q In pursuing that, according to the Washington Post, at least, Morton gave a rather different point of view as far as the Callaway criticism of Reagan. In view of the fact that the President depended on Morton for a long time as a political adviser, you still can't give us any indication whether he had any objections to what Callaway --

MR. GREENER: Not beyond what I have said, Dick.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:09 P.M. EST)