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NEWS CONFERENCE

#441

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:21 P.M. EST

FEBRUARY 19, 1976

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: You have the schedule for today and some of you saw part of the Cabinet meeting. Then some of you saw part of the Proclamation which terminated the Executive Order that established the Japanese-American detention camps and I think you have the text of the Proclamation and some of the background material on that.

You know that Rabbi Goren is coming or is here. He is one of the two chief Rabbis in Israel. He is in the United States to consult with the American-Jewish community here, religious leaders, and there will be an opportunity for him to discuss American relations with Israel.

There are going to be some city officials coming here from Los Angeles, including the mayor, Mayor Bradley. They are here to meet with their Congressional delegation and they asked for an opportunity to come in and see the President while they are here to discuss some of their views on revenue sharing and some other programs.

Anne Armstrong will be sworn in at 2 o'clock in the Cabinet Room, as you know, and then the trip to New Hampshire, beginning at 3:40. The bible is not quite ready yet but we will have it for you, hopefully, before we go.

Q No change in press arrangements -- check-in?

MR. NESSEN: On the press arrangements?

Q No change? I just want to make certain -- 2:45, right?

MR. NESSEN: No change.

I hope you all understand the problem we had and why most of the press has to go over and spend the night at Portsmouth. It was simply a question of there were simply not enough rooms in Keene. We tried to line up enough rooms but just could not do it.

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Q Is the President going to stay at a private home in Keene tonight?

MR. NESSEN: Is the President going to stay at a private home in Keene?

Yes, that is a private residence.

Q May we ask whose?

MR. NESSEN: Mr. and Mrs. Jim Masiello. I will have to get some background on who they are because I don't have any.

Q In case we don't get the bible before we leave, what is the schedule for tonight, roughly?

MR. NESSEN: I can do that without any problem. We arrive at the Dillant-Hopkins Airport in Keene, arriving at 5:10. The mayor and his wife will meet the President along with the Executive Board Chairman of the Jaycees of Keene.

Q Mr. Masiello is the mayor of Keene?

MR. NESSEN: Well, that explains that.

Is that right?

Q And Justice of the Peace and the Judge.

MR. NESSEN: Not according to my rundown.

Mr. Rossiter? Isn't Mr. George Rossiter the mayor?

Q There was a coup. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Bloodless, I hope.

Then the President will go by motorcade to this house that he is borrowing and have some nearly two hours of time there to do some staff work and then at 7:10 he will ---

Q Where does the press go?

MR. NESSEN: I'm sorry.

Q The high school?

MR. NESSEN: Where does the press go? To the high school.

Q Will the Air Force One pool be with him, essentially, during that two hours?

MR. NESSEN: You mean hanging around outside the house?

Q If he decides to go out on impulse campaigning or shakes hands along the way, will we be covered on that?

MR. NESSEN: You will be covered up to and including the time that he goes in the house and then it is not expected that he will come out of the house.

Q Where is Bob Hope today?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask Bob Hope's press secretary.

Q He is not in New Hampshire, is he?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I've heard of.

Q Ron, why does the President go up there and the first thing he does is spend two hours staff time? Why does he not spend the two hours here and then go up?

MR. NESSEN: Well, a good question, Ann, but I also have a good answer which happens to be the right answer. The weather is bad up there and they have had some snow and the idea was to get the President there before dark because of the weather, so if you remember, we were originally talking about leaving at 5:40 and we are leaving at 3:40 so he can get there before dark and then take some business with him and some paperwork to do with him in the residence.

Q Can the press plane take off in the dark tonight?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean?

Q Seriously.

MR. NESSEN: I hope so. We will find out. (Laughter)

Q That is a dinky, little airport and the last time we went there we could not land until the ground fog lifted and I'm wondering how we can get out of there at 10 o'clock at night.

MR. NESSEN: Better you than me, Walt. (Laughter)

What time are you supposed to take off?

Q I don't know, whenever he finished this thing.

MR. NESSEN: I think I will come down to the airport. I have never seen a big plane crash before. (Laughter)

Then the President goes to the Keene High School at 7:10. They have a few moments there and then he goes out into the gymnasium and they go up to the platform, and he is introduced briefly and then the President speaks very briefly, five or ten minutes, and takes questions from the audience for about a half hour or 45 minutes.

Then if there is not enough room in the gymnasium to accommodate all the people who want to get in, some of the people will go to the girls' gymnasium and hear the thing by loud speaker and then the President will go over to the girls' gymnasium afterwards to see them in person.

Then the President is going to the Harper's Acres Retirement Home, arriving there about 8:45 -- 9 o'clock -- and will go to the Recreation Room where he will greet people who live there and talk to them briefly and then --

Q Pool coverage?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Then he will go on home for the evening, arriving at approximately 9:30 or so.

Q Where will the pool stay?

MR. NESSEN: The pool will stay in Keene, of course.

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Q Where, I mean?

MR. NESSEN: The Winding Brook Motel.

Q Ron, on the first Friday morning speech to the Dover Chamber of Commerce, can you tell us what the theme is and will you have an advance test?

MR. NESSEN: We hope to have an advance text.

Q Tonight?

MR. NESSEN: Hopefully tonight.

Q What is the theme?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the draft of it yet.

Q That is at 9 o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: I think that is right.

Q What is the theme of his talk tonight and brief remarks?

MR. NESSEN: Tonight is the economy and tomorrow morning's speech is on intelligence.

Now I have some good news for you. All these years you have been asking why there can't be any press room out at Andrews Air Force Base. Well, Ray Zook and Bob Manning have been working with the people at Andrews and we now have a press room at Andrews located at the south end of the Base Operations Building. That is the building adjacent to the terminal.

The press room will be opened by March 1. They will have writing space. You can put in your own telephones. There will be a briefing platform there and coffee and drink machines.

Now let me give you the phone number to arrange to set up your own telephones out there. It is Captain Al Alderford. He is the base Public Information Officer. The phone number is 981-4511. Your requests for telephones if you want them in by opening day should be to Captain Alderford by February 25.

One telephone booth for each organization, and these telephones will be fixed up so that you can plug your recorders in them without screwing off the mouthpiece. There will also be two public pay phones for those who do not want to have your own telephone out there. So that is a little progress.

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Q Ron, is that because it is going to be difficult to get into the main terminal where there are lots of phones, or what?

MR. NESSEN: No. I think there have been a lot of requests for working space out there.

Q They have changed the thing there were that security arrangement and the doors open only one way. I wondered whether that had anything to do with it?

MR. NESSEN: Ray and Bob can probably talk to you about that. They worked on this project.

I don't have anything else to volunteer. We owe you a bible and a speech for tomorrow morning.

Q Ron, what was the President's own reaction to Governor Gregg's suggestion that he either tell the truth or keep quiet? We know what the local reaction was but what was the President's reaction?

MR. NESSEN: Could you give me a little more background on it? I had not heard of it.

Q There is a page 1 story in the Post this morning that Governor Hugh Gregg, who is Governor Reagan's campaign manager, said that the President should either tell the truth or keep quiet, that he has been distorting Mr. Reagan's position.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know that the President has any reaction to that.

Q Ron, Vice President Rockefeller delivered a speech over at the National Press Club and there were some interesting things in there. I wondered, was that speech cleared here?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Did the President or anybody see the copy in order to make a comment on it and get some comment on a couple things; for instance, where he says that there were special pressure groups at work within the Administration and Executive against the President's anti-inflation program?

MR. NESSEN: I just saw that on the wires about two minutes before I came out here, Dick, and I have not had any chance to check.

Q Ron, has the Vice President had to cancel any of his campaign appearances, campaigning for the President, in connection with his tour he is going to make around the world?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Howard. You will have to ask him. I have not kept up with his schedule.

Q All the economic stuff which we got a pool report on from the Cabinet meeting, is there anything from the Cabinet meeting you would like to tell us about which you think is newsworthy?

MR. NESSEN: I had to leave and go to another meeting but let me look at what was on the agenda.

Q We got the Greenspan stuff in the pool report, courtesy of Peter Lisagor.

MR. NESSEN: That was the first item on the agenda.

Don Rumsfeld gave a briefing on the defense budget, and, as I told you, I am working on getting declassified versions of the charts that he has been using in these briefings and I hope to have them here for you shortly.

Bill Coleman gave a report on the Concorde decision.

Q Do you have anything you can tell us about that?

MR. NESSEN: I left to go to another meeting.

Q Did Mr. Kleppe, our Secretary of the Interior, have anything to say about the Concorde decision?

MR. NESSEN: John, I think, sat through the meeting.

Did Kleppe comment on the Concorde decision?

MR. CARLSON: I don't believe so.

MR. NESSEN: Then Jack Marsh brought everybody up to date on the status of legislation.

Q Ron, can you ask John whether Coleman said anything on the Concorde that he has not said before or in public, anything about the flack that he is getting on the Concorde?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean "flack"? Everything I have read is almost universally complimentary.

Q You are not being serious, are you?

MR. NESSEN: Absolutely.

Q Well, have you read newspapers in New York, for example?

MR. NESSEN: Everything I have read compliments him on a very judicious and wise, very balanced decision.

Q How about Capitol Hill, what the Congressmen are saying about the Concorde coming in?

MR. NESSEN: You asked me has he read, and I mentioned that is what I read.

Q Anything new in that intelligence speech tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I think he will probably reiterate some of the points made in his reorganization.

Q Ron, what did Marsh tell the President about the prospects for sustaining the veto today?

MR. NESSEN: I left, obviously, at a bad time. John stayed through.

MR. CARLSON: That was not discussed.

MR. NESSEN: It was not?

MR. CARLSON: No.

MR. NESSEN: Okay.

Q Ron, did the Justice Department tell the White House that former CIA Director Richard Helms would not be prosecuted or the Grand Jury would not return any indictments in the investigation?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of. I have not heard anything one way or the other.

Q Ron, does the President plan to talk --

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you let me finish the Cabinet meeting in response to somebody's question over here.

John, correct me if they deviated from the agenda.

After Jack Marsh's Congressional report, Jim Lynn talked about the schedule of various hearings on the budget over the next few months, and the President reminded people of the savings bond campaign now going on throughout the Government. That is it, as far as I know.

Q He didn't discuss New Hampshire at all?

MR. NESSEN: Did he, John? Not while I was in there.

MR. CARLSON: I left before it was over also.

Q On the pool report here I don't quite understand, and Ralph was not absolutely sure either, at the bottom of the first page, if you have it there, Lynn is quoted as saying that the public works bill would add \$2.5 billion to the budget but the combined effect would add \$7 billion to the budget before Congress adopts its first concurrent resolution.

The combined effect of what?

MR. CARLSON: What he said was the effect of the public works bill is \$2.5 billion. The effect of another public works bill, public service jobs bill, plus some rescissions and deferrals if they are not approved -- the combined effect of these three different actions would be about \$7 billion.

Q Does that make the increase in the deficit that much?

MR. CARLSON: Yes. It might not all be in 1977. Some of it would be in 1978.

Q Ron, do you have any reaction to the vote in the House Judiciary Committee, I believe it was, on their decision 4 to 3 against reopening the investigation of the Nixon pardon?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't even know they had voted, Tom, but I don't have any reaction. I mean, the President has said over and over again that he told what happened completely and accurately in his previous appearance up there.

Q Does the President plan to talk to the former President before his departure to China on Saturday, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: He does not.

Q Ron, can John tell us on Coleman and the Concorde and also did anything come up about continuing Government loans to Lockheed at the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Well, as you know, the Government does not make loans to Lockheed, Cliff.

Q Then how does the President feel about continuing loans to Lockheed?

MR. NESSEN: I said the Government does not make loans to Lockheed.

Q Simon has said that it appears that there will be an extension of loans to Lockheed.

MR. NESSEN: The Government guarantees loans to Lockheed.

Q How does the President feel about guaranteeing a loan to Lockheed?

MR. NESSEN: It didn't come up.

Q Because this is essentially the last briefing we will have this week --

MR. NESSEN: Forever?

Q This week. Can you tell us what the travel plans are for next week?

MR. NESSEN: I can't at this point.

Q Does the Florida trip look likely?

MR. NESSEN: I would say it is a very definite possibility but when -- you mean next week?

Q Week or weekend.

MR. NESSEN: No, I am saying a trip to Florida, I think, is a real possibility but whether it is next week or weekend has not been decided.

Q What is the status of the U.S. Ambassadorship to the UN?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have one to announce today.

Q What about the UPI report that former Pennsylvania Governor Scranton has been offered and accepted this?

MR. NESSEN: Well, we just don't have a new Ambassador to announce today.

Q Do you expect one during the trip?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Soon? This week? Next week?

MR. NESSEN: Probably not this week; perhaps not next week.

Q Will the President be going to North Carolina next week?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans that I know of to go to North Carolina.

Q Was the President instrumental in having the Chinese plane land at the L.A. Airport rather than a military airport?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, the President has not had a single thing to do with that in any way.

Q What plans does the President have in for election night next Tuesday?

MR. NESSEN: None that I know of.

Q So he will watch the returns in the Residence presumably on television?

MR. NESSEN: I guess. Maybe until it is bedtime -- I don't know of any special plans.

Q He does not care, right?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he is sort of interested but --
(Laughter)

Q Ron, will you be here?

MR. NESSEN: I think probably not. I think we will probably close down at the regular time.

Q Why is it considered so unnewsworthy -- the President's reaction of what is happening that night?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, I didn't hear the first part of the question.

Q I think we would all be interested in the President's reaction to how the vote goes and presumably it will be a trend established by a very early hour in the evening.

MR. NESSEN: You know, there are no plans to have anything here at all that night. I suppose if there is any reaction it could come the next morning.

Q You mean to put a lid on that night, is that what you are saying?

MR. NESSEN: I fully expect to.

Q Will you respond to telephone requests for reaction if the vote is definite, sir, by 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we will have anything that night at all.

Q Why? This is ridiculous.

MR. NESSEN: Why do you feel that way?

Q Because the President's reaction to the first primary is very important. We don't want to wait eight hours for the reaction and it is not necessary.

MR. NESSEN: Well, Helen, there have been caucuses. He has been accumulating delegates. This is a primary. There will be other primaries -- 31 of them in all -- and it is just not that --

Q This one is a little different. I think you will guarantee that.

MR. NESSEN: Well, it may be to you, but I am trying to give you an idea of how it seems to -- you know what the general feeling is here at the White House.

Q Ron, isn't there a chance that the President would talk by phone or in some communication with Bo Callaway or Rogers Morton or with someone up in New Hampshire?

MR. NESSEN: Possibly he could call someone up in New Hampshire.

Q What time do the polls close?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Does he fear some results of the primary?

MR. NESSEN: Fear the results of the primary?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: It is one primary out of 31.

Q No it isn't.

MR. NESSEN: It comes after a number of other caucuses and conventions where he has begun to pick up his delegates and so forth.

Q If he wins will you have a call-out?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't think so.

Q I don't mean to make light of this except that this is the first time that Gerald Ford has faced any voters outside of the Fifth District of Michigan.

MR. NESSEN: It is a long way from now to August and we are going to get there and the President thinks he is going to win in Kansas City and whatever may happen in this particular State after we have had some results so far -- and we get some more next Tuesday, some more the Tuesday after that -- there is a lot of time between now and August.

Q Is it fair to say you are downgrading the significance of the New Hampshire primary?

MR. NESSEN: I would say that some others have upgraded the significance of the primary.

Q You think the trip today has no significance?

MR. NESSEN: It certainly does. He is anxious to go up there and appeal for votes.

Q Ron, has the White House sought -- on another issue -- to locate any place where the President can play golf without the statement as cited by Fran at Burning Tree?

MR. NESSEN: Let me talk just a bit about that, if I could, because I think it is a serious issue and in the minds of some. You know that the President voted for the Equal Rights Amendment in the House when he was a Member; not only did he vote for it, he was instrumental in lining up enough Republican signatures on a discharge petition to get the thing out of committee and on to the Floor for a vote. Incidentally, during his own confirmation hearings as Vice President, Martha Griffiths testified in some detail about how the Vice President lined up 17 Republicans to put their signatures on the discharge petition to get the Equal Rights Amendment out of the Judiciary Committee, and she credits him largely in saving that from dying within the Judiciary Committee.

So that, plus the fact that he has appointed a woman to his Cabinet, that he has appointed a woman as Ambassador to the Court of St. James, that he has appointed women to other top positions in the Government, that he supports ratification of the Equal Rights Amendments -- these, I think, give you an accurate picture of his dedication to equality for women.

Now I believe his feeling is that with this very substantial record in areas where his support has meant something in terms of real advances for women in the top Government jobs and the legal protections of the Equal Rights Amendment, those are the substantive results of his support and whether he occasionally, once every few months, or in the warm weather perhaps more often, has a Sunday of playing golf with the boys, I think, does not distract from his very, very good record on equal rights for women.

Q I would like to follow that up, Ron. The President of the University of Virginia, after a long controversy, resigned from the Farmington Country Club because they exclude blacks. I am wondering what was the President's reaction to that? You could also apply the same things because the President, Jerry Ford, never had any record of discriminating against blacks at the University of Virginia. What was the President's reaction to this?

MR. NESSEN: I have not asked him for his opinion on that.

Q What is his position on segregated clubs?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, again, I would like to go back to the things I said earlier. In very substantial ways the President has made clear his total support for equal rights for women, and I think in your own case you know that he declined to attend the Gridiron dinner, for instance, until membership for a woman was assured that year, if you recall, so I think his record is quite good in substantial ways.

Q Will he discontinue playing golf at Burning Tree because women are not allowed?

MR. NESSEN: He is not.

Q He is going to continue?

MR. NESSEN: He is.

Q In answer to her specific and clear question, which was, what is the President's position on segregated clubs --

MR. NESSEN: Well, I would rather simply refer to his very good record on equal rights for women.

Q In other words, you will not answer that specific question?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't think it is a question I can answer.

Q Why not?

Q Would you draw the distinction in his mind between the segregated Gridiron Club and the segregated Burning Tree?

MR. NESSEN: Would I draw the distinction?

Q Yes, what is the distinction? I don't understand --

Q Helen and Fran don't belong.

Q Wait a minute. Let him answer.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an answer to the question but I suggest that it might be something that you would want to explore with the President.

Q Can you say whether it is racially segregated?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any idea.

Q Ron, because you are Jewish they won't let you in there either.

MR. NESSEN: So you do understand his status at Burning Tree -- there are a number of top Government officials -- Larry looked it up this morning -- who are honorary members of Burning Tree -- non-dues-paying members of Burning Tree. I believe the President, Vice President and Chief Justice and maybe one or two others are honorary members of Burning Tree. That is his category at Burning Tree.

Q What is his category?

MR. NESSEN: He previously -- before he became Vice President -- was a dues-paying member at Burning Tree.

Q Ron, does the President believe that a private club has the right to make its own rules?

MR. NESSEN: Howard, I have not sat down and gone into this in great detail with him into some of these questions and I don't have the answer for you. Obviously, he expects all clubs to live up to the law.

Q Isn't it a restricted club, Ron? In other words, do they discriminate against Jews?

Q I understood Senator Goldwater once said he could play nine holes there. (Laughter)

Q He is half Episcopalian. (Laughter)

Q Ron, does the President feel that the exclusion of women is less offensive, for example, than the exclusion of blacks or other racial minorities? Does he draw a distinction there at all?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly not.

Q We missed the beginning of that question, Ron.

Q The question was whether the President somehow felt that exclusion of women at a club like this is less offensive than exclusion of blacks or other racial or ethnic minorities. And you say he does not?

MR. NESSEN: No, he does not.

Q As a long-time member, does he have any plans to try to open the doors to make it less segregated on all scores?

MR. NESSEN: At the moment he is an honorary member; he does not serve on the board.

Q Well, didn't he have any input as a member?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, I didn't go back that far with him.

Q Ron, would you say again why he didn't go to the Gridiron Club for years until there was a woman membership assured?

MR. NESSEN: My only experience in dealing with the Gridiron problem was the last dinner, and as Helen and others in the room know, that the President held back on accepting his invitation until Helen had been inaugurated into the Gridiron Club.

Q Why had he held back -- on principle because there were no women in the organization?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q And yet that principle does not apply to Burning Tree? Is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: Was that a question?

Q I am asking --

MR. NESSEN: What is the question?

Q -- does that same principle apply to Burning Tree?

MR. NESSEN: The President does not intend to resign from Burning Tree.

Q Ron, getting back to the UN for just a minute, should we anticipate a formal, official announcement from here prior to Moynihan's actually leaving that post?

MR. NESSEN: When does he go?

Q At the end of the month.

MR. NESSEN: I don't expect an announcement of the new Ambassador's nomination this week or perhaps next week. Now I don't know what date that takes you up to, but it will be, I would think, about the time that Pat --

Q Does the President expect to see former Governor Scranton next week or so?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any plans for him to.

Q Have you heard anything from Judge Carter?

MR. NESSEN: Not lately.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:51 P.M. EST)