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

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH JOHN G. CARLSON

AT 12:14 P.M. EDT

APRIL 26, 1976

MONDAY

MR. CARLSON: Good afternoon.

The President attended the senior staff meeting this morning, and I think many of you were present at the Chamber of Commerce speech. Then he dropped by a briefing in the State Dining Room, which a pool was to cover, of women in Presidential appointed or super grade positions.

At 2:00 this afternoon the President will be interviewed by Station KMOL-TV in San Antonio, and they will be using this Wednesday night at 10:00 p.m., so we will make a transcript of that, available Thursday morning.

Q We have an arrangement at NBC with that station if there is something we would like to use tonight we can use it tonight.

MR. CARLSON: Does that mean we can release the whole thing, then?

O It is fine with us. We are going to use it at that time, if there is something in it we want. If we decide not to use it, I don't know what arrangements --

MR. CARLSON: Let me check when I meet with them at 2:00 and we will make it available as soon as we can.

As you all know, we are going to Louisiana and Texas tomorrow. The bibles will probably be out late this afternoon for the first two days of the Louisiana-Texas trip. Thursday and Friday we will have to put out on the road.

But, we have a summary schedule that the Press Office has prepared, and we will make this available right after the briefing without going into all the details right now.

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O What about a check-in time?

MR. CARLSON: Check-in time is 11:30 tomorrow with a 12:15 departure.

Q For whom?

MR. CARLSON: The press.

Q What time does the President leave?

MR. CARLSON: The President leaves the White House lawn at 12:40.

I think many of you know we announced on the trip the President will be going to Indiana on Sunday, May 2. Departure time is roughly 4:30ish, roughly that time, in the late afternoon. We are going to Fort Wayne and will probably hit one other city in Indiana and Monday return by way of Birmingham, Alabama.

O Where will we overnight?

MR. CARLSON: Probably Fort Wayne. The details are still being worked out.

Q Does it look like Birmingham in the late afternoon or midday on Monday?

MR. CARLSON: Late afternoon.

Q Will he do something that morning in Indiana?

MR. CARLSON: Yes, he will.

Q What will be the other city?

MR. CARLSON: We are not sure yet, Phil. We are still working on it.

I would like to bring up one point. There has been a great deal of comment and concern about the lack of press conferences. We have gone back and I have tried to do a little bit of a survey. In the last couple of months in Washington the President has had about 24 interviews with about 198 members of the press corps, not the White House press corps.

Outside of Washington he has had six interviews with 13 members of the press corps.

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Q In what time frame is that?

MR. CARLSON: Since the middle of February.

Q Since the last East Room press conference?

MR. CARLSON: Yes, February 17. In other words, he has had a total of 30 interviews and met with about 206 members of the press corps.

I think there is a concern about not having press conferences with the White House press corps, and the President himself is concerned. It is probably really our scheduling problems here, and what I am going to say has no way of detracting or changing any upcoming White House press conferences, but we thought because of time constraints here in the next two, three or four weeks especially, that when we arrive at a local airport and when the President comes off the plane and takes questions from the local press corps, that if we could have an opportunity for the local press corps to take the first two, three or four questions and then if you would just feel free to take questions and ask questions yourselves, if there is something pressing that way you don't have to wait for weeks and weeks.

I see the next two or three weeks especially it is really jam-packed and that way at least if you have some pressing questions you can get them in. Just use restraint and let the locals always have the first two or three questions and go from there.

Q Does this little list you put out here include the airport press conferences?

MR. CARLSON: No, it does not include Q and A sessions and public forums.

Q Does it include regional press conferences?

MR. CARLSON: I believe it does.

Q Can you explain why the President has avoided the White House press corps?

MR. CARLSON: He hasn't really avoided them, Helen.

Q He has. We have been chided on the campaign trail, "You are not local press." We have not had a news conference since February 17. That is not a good track record for an open Administration.

MR. CARLSON: If you look at the statistics, we just mentioned, he has had --

Q But we are here manning the barricades every day.

MR. CARLSON: You are absolutely right. We want to make sure the White House press corps has the opportunity to talk with the President. Looking ahead, the schedule is going to be very, very hectic.

Q Is he going to extend his time at these airport appearances to where we will have enough time to ask him questions?

MR. CARLSON: I don't think in the first airport stop you could have a full half hour press conference and make up for what you may think you need. But, I think over the course of of four days in Texas at the various stops we will try to accommodate as many questions as we can within realism.

Q What about the regional press conferences? Are the White House press allowed to participate?

MR. CARLSON: I think we do have one or two regional press conferences down there. Those will be as they have been.

Q Meaning we are not allowed?

MR. CARLSON: You are not allowed to ask questions at those.

Q He has been spending about five minutes at these airport appearances. If the locals take up the first two or three questions, that leaves about 30 seconds for us to ask questions. I would appreciate it if you would pass on to him if he will stay there a little longer?

MR. CARLSON: Sure. Let's be flexible and see how it works.

Q Under the present procedure we could probably ask one or two questions and he wouldn't have any time to answer them before the press conference is over. Is that the way it is going to work out?

MR. CARLSON: I don't understand your question.

Q The time is so short we might get one question in but there probably wouldn't be time to answer.

MR. CARLSON: Jim, if you ask a question, he certainly will answer it.

Q John, you know the President has said he is going to do the Presidential business, and that is part of the Presidential business. Is there no way that he can't change his schedule somewhat so that he can provide for the White House press to have more than just one shot in a two-second interview?

MR. CARLSON: Fran, we plan to have regular White House press conferences. I am just saying in looking ahead and trying to find a place to put in a White House press conference, it will not happen in the next eight to ten days --

Q Not tonight?

MR. CARLSON: Not tonight. -- so we thought this might be a way of at least getting some questions in.

Q There is a problem here. There was a bulletin story, the wire services are lucky because we have the telephone cars, but the rest of the press who have to wait a half hour to get into town to get telephones because we have to move with the motorcade so that isn't exactly the greatest thing that could happen to us.

MR. CARLSON: We recognize that, Helen, but hope it is a chance to give you an opportunity.

Q For most of the traveling press, the opportunity to ask a question at the regional press conference would be far more helpful since those are held in a place, in a hotel with a room nearby, a press room nearby with Telex and so forth. Helen is quite right for specials, if he says anything newsworthy it is going to be long gone for us by the time we get to the press room.

Q Another point I would like to bring up is that unless you are right next to the President you can't hear the question and you can't hear the answer. There is a question of waiting until you get to a telephone. You have to find somebody who is good enough to run the tape for you. You have to make notes, and then you have to get to a telephone. By that time, you are doing something else.

MR. CARLSON: We are trying to be able to set up a portable amplifying system, a small thing for the press corps.

Q You could do that off the car.

MR. CARLSON: We are having problems trying to work that thing out for some reason, but that is what we are trying to do.

Q You can do that on the parade route.

MR. CARLSON: But when you have a mult there and you go through a mult they tell me you need some kind of mixer and so forth and they tell me there is some kind of problem.

O May I ask a question. Inasmuch as the President has had one news conference this year, and he has had only one meeting at that news conference with the reporters who have covered him through better than 50 percent of the primaries this year, has this been a deliberate attempt to gag the right of inquiry of the White House press corps, inasmuch as he has suppressed our right to ask any questions?

MR. CARLSON: Walt, it certainly isn't, and I think the record of him having so many press conferences during the last few weeks --

Q The record shows Gerald Rudolph Ford is the only candidate in this darned primary year who has avoided any questions of the reporters who travel with him. That is a travesty.

MR. CARLSON: That is why we are trying to change that now, Walt. He would like to have a White House press conference. I think it will not happen in the next eight to ten days, and we hope this will give you a chance to ask the major questions on your mind.

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Q Have you considered going back to the original format of local press conferences where the White House and the local press alternate?

MR. CARLSON: Alternate -- we have thought of that, also.

Q Where?

MR. CARLSON: At airports.

Q Have you rejected the idea of alternating in the regional news conferences--

Q --as we started with this Administration?

MR. CARLSON: Let me check and see what we can do, what the time frames are and so forth.

Q Do you have any reason you can share with us about why you have rejected the concept of alternating at the regional news conferences which is an environment with some discipline where we can hear what is going on and follow up with other questions?

MR. CARLSON: The only problem has been up to now, when we go out on one of these regional type press conference situations, the demand for the President's time, the demand to ask him questions from the local press, the letters we get for interviews and so forth, is really almost overwhelming at times.

Q I seem to remember one day Mr. Nessen asked us if we please wouldn't jump in with more questions because when they start asking about the local sewer authority, he thought the President should be subjected to something different.

Q This is what we would like, to reinstate that --

MR. CARLSON: I understand the questions on your minds and I appreciate your thoughts.

Q We feel we should have free participation in all Presidential news conferences and when we travel with him we should have the right to ask questions, everywhere.

Q What would happen if any other candidate in this Presidential campaign said, I am sorry, I am not going to answer your questions because you are traveling White House and I only talk to local No other candidate has the right to suppress the right of inquiry the way we have been suppressed.

Q Is there any real reason why the President can't put five minutes in his schedule to come to a briefing room along this trip somewhere and answer questions from the White House press who are there?

MR. CARLSON: That is what we are trying to work out right now, Fran, exactly something like that.

Q He has got time during the day, he could pull an FDR and invite the pad and pencil people into the office.

MR. CARLSON: Okay, that is all I have. Any additional questions?

Q While we are on this subject, it may be that Mr. Nessen will fill you in when you see him next, on a suggestion that was made at the symposium in Texas, but in the event that he doesn't, let me relay to you a suggestion that was made at the symposium in Texas on the Presidency and the Press. I relay it to you for one reason and only one reason; that is, that it was endorsed by all the former press secretaries who were there. That was the interesting part.

The suggestion was made that the President meet with reporters, the President himself meet with reporters every single day for at least 15 minutes. I am not talking about a campaign year. I am talking about in a general sense the suggestion was made that he meet with reporters in some kind of format once a day at least for 15 minutes, and the interesting thing to me about it was it was endorsed by six former press secretaries who were at this meeting.

So I would appreciate it if you would relay that in the event it might slip Mr. Nessen's mind, because he didn't take any position on it and it could be relayed to the President.

MR. CARLSON: I am sure it will be.

Q Mr. Carlson, I would like to point out something here while we are discussing it. When we Texas correspondents had our press conference with the President, the President told us things on subjects that had been brought up at the briefings here where we had not been told and not been filled in. He gave us information on several subjects there that I had not heard before and they were on subjects that had come up from time to time in these briefings. They were excellent, they were good, and some were anywhere from a month to a year almost too old. That should not be. They are important subjects and this should not be that we are not getting enough full fill-in from the Press Secretary, or we are not getting enough press conferences with the President, but these subjects have been brought up from time to time at the briefings and we were not being given full information.

MR. CARLSON: Okay.

Q I would like to turn to something else. Over the weekend, news reporters said several American oil companies had been quietly negotiating with the new government in Vietnam about resuming offshore exploration for oil in the South China Sea. I was wondering, does the White House have a reaction to this in view of what the President has been saying the past couple of weeks about not normalizing relations with Vietnam?

MR. CARLSON: I have not discussed that with him, Dan, and I don't know.

Q Are you familiar with the Assad story this morning? Would you like to say anything about that?

MR. CARLSON: What is the question?

Q The question is, President Assad is reported to have said that he is willing to meet with the President some time before the end of May. We had been led to believe there was no reason to meet with any Mideast parties because there was nothing substantive to be discussed.

Does the President now feel a meeting with President Assad would be useful?

MR. CARLSON: The President has always expressed interest in meeting with the leaders of the parties to the Arab-Israeli negotiations, but there are no specific plans for a meeting at this time.

Q There was a White House desire some months ago to meet with Assad and I understand Assad was then reluctant. Now, is there any greater inclination on the part of the President to meet with Assad, or is the possibility of a Ford-Assad meeting at all likely at any time before the Republican National Convention?

MR. CARLSON: All I can say, Walt, at this time, is, there are no specific plans.

Q If there are no specific plans at this time, that definitely leaves open a high possibility. Is there talk --

MR. CARLSON: I would say it leaves open the possibility, but I don't know that I would characterize it as a high possibility.

Q Is there talk with the President about a possible meeting with Middle East leaders in the next three or four months?

MR. CARLSON: I have heard no such talk.

Q John, can you tell us about the new microwaves or whatever they call them over at --

Q Bob, could I follow up the Assad thing one step further? I know you talked with General Scowcroft this morning. Did you discuss the possibility of a Ford-Assad meeting with General Scowcroft this morning?

MR. CARLSON: I didn't Walt.

Q When you say "leaves open the possibility," do you mean in May when this business of the UN forces is going to be very pertinent?

MR. CARLSON: I have no time frame, Helen. Apparently Mr. Assad said or made some comments, but there is nothing further I can give you on that.

Q Is the President's schedule too busy with political activities between now and the Presidential primary for him to even consider a Middle East trip?

MR. CARLSON: I have heard no discussion of a Middle East trip for many, many months.

Q We are talking of Assad coming to Washington, aren't we?

MR. CARLSON: Yes.

Q When you say you are leaving open the possibility, you are leaving open the possibility of President Assad being invited here or President Ford going to Damascus?

MR. CARLSON: There is nothing further I have to say.

Q Which possibility are you leaving open?

MR. CARLSON: There were some reports, as I understand it, that President Ford might meet with President Assad.

Q Here, there or on neutral ground, like Tel Aviv? (Laughter) Which are you leaving open the possibility of?

MR. CARLSON: What I am doing is not closing off the possibility of any meeting. As far as the time of the meeting or even the possibility of a meeting, there is nothing further I can give you at this time.

Q You mean it could be outside of Washington?

MR. CARLSON: There is nothing further on it, Helen.

Q If you are leaving open the possibility, which you did in reply to my question, there must be some talk about it.

MR. CARLSON: I would not close off the option, Ralph. The President expressed a willingness to meet.

Q Are there negotiations on this?

MR. CARLSON: No, not to my knowledge, Helen. The President has always expressed an interest in meeting with the leaders of the Arab-Israeli negotiations, but there is nothing further beyond that.

Q We are just trying to find out if you are giving us a general response in that context, that the President is always willing to meet with the parties of the Middle East or whether there is something specific?

MR. CARLSON: To my knowledge, there is nothing specific, Jim, that you should leave here and say the President is considering a meeting with President Assad.

Q Did you discuss this with the President?

MR. CARLSON: I did not.

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Q May I ask why? You know it is on the wires. I would expect that you would expect this to come up.

MR. CARLSON: I did not.

Q John, is there anything on this thing, this spate of stories from one place or another --

MR. CARLSON: About the microwaves?

Q Yes.

MR. CARLSON: As we have done here before, we have had little or nothing to say on the subject. I would refer you to the State Department. I guess there were some reports in the newspapers over the weekend that emanated from the State Department. I refer you back to those.

Q There were also some stories on television that didn't come from the State Department. Is the Ambassador suffering from pernicious anemia and personality change and disorder in extreme cases?

MR. CARLSON: I have no information on that.

Q Could you tell us whether or not high level State Department officials are now convinced microwaves are being directed at the Embassy as a harrassment against Embassy personnel, and that is the real purpose of the exercise?

MR. CARLSON: Bob, you should ask the State Department.

Q They won't give us any answers. Dr. Kissinger has already said it was a very sensitive matter.

MR. CARLSON: It is very sensitive, and there is nothing further I can give you from this podium.

Q Did you raise that with the President this morning?

Q Did he tell you to call the State Department?

MR. CARLSON: I talked with General Scowcroft about the subject this morning.

Q He didn't tell you anything, did he?
(Laughter)

Q Is the State Department prepared to speak on it?

MR. CARLSON: I would contact the State Department, if I were you.

Q Does the State Department have an answer?

Q Did you discuss it with the President?

MR. CARLSON: I did not discuss it with the President.

Q Is there any particular reason this wasn't brought up?

MR. CARLSON: I discussed it beforehand and as we have said here before many times, it is a very sensitive issue and there is nothing further I can give you from here.

Q I don't understand you discussed it beforehand. There were some requests prior to your meeting with the President, that you ask him what his feeling was on this. Now, are you saying that these types of questions are screened before you see the President and you decide what you are going to ask him?

MR. CARLSON: Phil, what I do with the President I think should be personal between he and I.

Q Why can't we make a request that you ask him a question and you follow through with it?

MR. CARLSON: Because I know the answer sometime before I get to the Oval Office.

Q Why is it too sensitive for the White House but it is not too sensitive for the State Department.

MR. CARLSON: Helen, there is nothing further I can say on the subject.

Q Can you get an answer on the question of the oil companies and dealing with Vietnam?

MR. CARLSON: I will.

Q Can you tell us whether the President has changed his viewpoint of his likelihood of success in the two States he just came back from in the primaries?

MR. CARLSON: Indiana and Georgia?

Q Question?

Q Has the President's assessment of Indiana and Georgia changed now that he has been there?

MR. CARLSON: The President said in Indiana that he thought he would do well. He said, "I am optimistic." He said, "I think we will win Indiana." I think the President feels we will get our share of delegates down there but we are an underdog definitely in Georgia, but we will get our share.

Q In Georgia he said, "I think we have a good chance of winning" at the first PFC reception he talked to. It is in the transcript.

Q John, are there any plans for the President to meet with Governor Connally in Texas or will Governor Connally appear with the President at any point?

MR. CARLSON: At this point, I know of no plans.

Q May I make an official request that you ask the President of the United States what his opinion is on the current situation in Moscow and not General Scowcroft? We really don't care what he has to say about it.

Q We do care about what General Scowcroft has to say, but let's say we want Ford first and Scowcroft second. (Laughter)

Q That has become a big question brought up by the foreign policy association in the State Department now, they can't dodge this anymore. This is put right down in among the civilian population. It is not going to be just the State Department anymore.

Q Are there any plans to remove the Ambassador from Moscow, the current Ambassador?

MR. CARLSON: I know of no plans like that.

Q May I ask you another question --

Q John, there was an editorial in the Washington Post that Rockefeller has not apologized to the Senator, or clarified his remarks about the staff of Senator Jackson and the President should do it for him. Does the President have a reaction to the Post editorial, and does the President have any view on what Rockefeller allegedly said about Jackson's staff being tinged with red?

MR. CARLSON: As I understand it, Vice President Rockefeller sent a telegram to Senator Jackson which he said clarified the whole matter.

Q Not in Senator Jackson's mind, it didn't.
(Laughter)

Q You have nothing to say about it?

MR. CARLSON: No.

Q Can you tell us whether the President and Vice President discussed this matter at their meeting last week?

MR. CARLSON: As I mentioned on the road, I think the President and the Vice President did have a meeting last week prior to his departure for Indiana and in the midst of going through a long agenda, the Vice President did give the President a copy of the telegram he had sent to Senator Jackson.

Q Did you read a copy of the telegram he sent to Senator Jackson? Did you read it?

MR. CARLSON: I didn't, Sarah.

Q It was a negative thing. It said I haven't said anything bad about you, that is why I don't have to apologize.

MR. CARLSON: I suggest you ask the Vice President.

Q Senator Jackson said this was not satisfactory. Now we find out Rockefeller has been saying this for months. Is this the type of thing Ford condones?

MR. CARLSON: I suggest you talk to the Vice President if you want a fuller explanation of his answers.

Q We can't get the Vice President to talk on this. He is not going to say anything to anybody on that?

Q Sarah is asking a question that goes not to Vice President Rockefeller or could not be legitimately directed to the Vice President or his staff; that is, whether the President, whose spokesman you are, condones the type of statement that the Vice President allegedly has made about Senator Jackson. That is a question we should direct to you and do direct to you.

MR. CARLSON: On the trip the President was asked about this exact point two or three times, and the President says he has to assume that the staffs of the Senate and House members up there are responsible individuals.

Q That indicates Rockefeller wasn't telling the truth then, doesn't it?

Q Presumably the President read the telegram that the Vice President sent to Jackson. Did he find it a satisfactory explanation for what happened in Georgia?

MR. CARLSON: This was a private conversation between the President and Vice President, Ed, and I don't have the details.

Q He read the telegram?

MR. CARLSON: I assume he read the telegram.

Q Has he read it?

MR. CARLSON: I assume he has.

Q Mr. Carlson, can we straighten this thing out by being direct? Would you be kind enough to ask President Ford if he condones blaming people by insinuation like Rockefeller did and come back and give us the answer?

Q On the same topic, yesterday Jackson was sort of responding to the Rockefeller thing and suggested one reason the Administration has been against the Jackson amendment on emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union was because the Chase Manhattan Bank had a lot of contact with Arabs and did a lot of business with Arabs. Of course, Chase Manhattan is Rockefeller's brother. Do you have any comment on that?

MR. CARLSON: It is completely untrue.

Q You mean it is untrue the Chase Manhattan Bank has something to do with the Arabs? That is true, isn't it?

MR. CARLSON: It could well be.

Q What is the President's reading on Texas? Has he gotten any late polls? Tower said he was going to try to take a poll about a week ago. What does the President see as his future in Texas now?

MR. CARLSON: I think he has said that several times, Helen, that he is the underdog --

Q He is still saying the same thing?

MR. CARLSON: Yes, he is behind, he thinks the last trip to Texas was very profitable, very encouraging and he is looking forward to this upcoming three-day trip to Texas.

Q I would like to ask another political question; that is, the President's reaction to the outcome of the delegate selection process in Arizona and I believe South Carolina. I don't want to make a mistake about the other State -- all right, Missouri. It is Arizona I am particularly concerned with. I am asking the question because the President Ford Committee has been predicting the President will get six or eight out of the 20 delegates in Arizona. He only got one out of the 20. Two questions about it.

First of all, is the President disappointed by the outcome in Arizona and, secondly, what went wrong with your predictions?

MR. CARLSON: I am not sure what the PFC predicted. I know in talking to some of the political experts around here, Rog Morton and so forth, we expected pretty much what happened in Arizona.

Q That doesn't jibe. Rog Morton is head of the PFC and that doesn't jibe with what the PFC was putting out as far as Arizona.

MR. CARLSON: In South Carolina I think the President is pleased we did as well as we did. We actually did better than expected in South Carolina.

Q I would like to stay on Arizona. Are you saying Rog Morton predicted one or virtually no Ford delegates in Arizona?

MR. CARLSON: I think we expect to get very little out of Arizona.

Q Why then was Rog Morton's own PFC putting out a six to eight count?

MR. CARLSON: I don't know, Jim.

Q Can you tell us what the President and Mr. Rumsfeld talked about for about three and a half hours here Thursday? I presume they discussed the B-1 bomber, but did they discuss anything coming up very vital?

MR. CARLSON: Are you sure they were here together for three and a half hours, Sarah?

Q I think that is right, with probably one or two more people in on the conference. Is something big in the world we don't know about yet coming up, or what?

MR. CARLSON: Let me check the schedule afterwards, Sarah.

Q I have several questions on the B-1. The President categorically promised one questioner that we will build the B-1 bomber. I would like to know how he can make that promise when, one, the plane has not completed its flight test and, number two, the President has not approved it.

MR. CARLSON: The President has said all along we need the B-1 bomber. The B-52 is obsolete.

Q Is the B-52 obsolete?

MR. CARLSON: It is not obsolete, but the B-52 in ten, 15 or 20 years will be 40 to 50 years old. What the President has said and proposed in his FY 1977 budget he proposed \$1 billion for production beginning November and \$400 million to continue R and D provided the tests are concluded successfully.

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Q I was wondering, he really sort of misstated himself when he promised this guy we would built it, didn't he?

MR. CARLSON: You are correct in saying the Congress will have to appropriate the funds. That is correct.

Q My next question is, we have had a lot of slogans in this campaign about our defense unsurpassed by anyone, and that sort of thing. I was wondering if, at any point, the President would be willing to discuss, when asked about the B-1, the merits of building a new strategic bomber; that is, you know, of it being in terms of the manned bomber fleet itself being obsolete as a strategic bomber? There will be considerable debate in Congress. Will the President address himself to the very concept of building manned bombers in this day and age of missiles?

MR. CARLSON: First of all, I am sure he will and has already on several opportunities.

Q I don't think he ever discussed the wisdom of building a B-1 fleet.

MR. CARLSON: I would like to refer you to Secretary Rumsfeld's appearance yesterday on Meet the Press. We have a transcript of that available. He went into this quite thoroughly.

Q Now that Congress is back, has the President discussed the FEC legislation with anyone on the Hill?

MR. CARLSON: As you are aware, the Conference Committee has not yet approved a final bill or report. And the President's final decision will be made only after the conferees, the House and Senate, have passed a bill and it is sent down here for his signature or veto. In the meantime, we have reviewed the legislation, and this is still draft legislation, and we have some reservations with respect to the draft bill, but no final decision will be made until it gets down here.

Q Let me ask you a question which I don't expect you to answer now --

Q Submit it in writing, Walt. (Laughter)

Q What can the B-1 bomber do that a cruise missile with a 2,000-mile range can't do, and why should the B-1 bomber be built?

Q Because it makes jobs for the boys.

Q That is precisely the answer I am wondering about.

MR. CARLSON: Let me refer you to the Rumsfeld transcript from yesterday and it has a great deal of information on there.

Q Why can't you answer his question? (Laughter)

Q Does the President intend, as he has been asked, I think, by some of the candidates, to act on this legislation one way or the other as rapidly as possible after it gets here?

MR. CARLSON: I am certain he will, Ed. Once he has a chance to see the final language down in black and white --

Q If that bill is passed while he is on the road --

MR. CARLSON: It makes no difference whether he is traveling or not. It looks like the House and Senate may pass the legislation this week. We could have it by the end of the week.

Q John, what is the White House doing about the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission which has had another chairman in a succession of chairmen named there, probably for political reasons, quit his post before his four years are up?

MR. CARLSON: We are diligently looking for a replacement for Mr. Lowell Perry at this time.

Q Have you ever been asked or has it ever come out what is going to happen to Mr. Perry? Is he resigning because he is angry about something, or is he resigning in order to take a position as Assistant Secretary of Defense? What is going to happen to Lowell Perry? Does he have a future? Is he going to be Assistant Secretary of Defense?

MR. CARLSON: Mr. Perry, who I did talk to, resigned for personal reasons. I don't think I should get into why he resigned. I think he would be happy to talk to members of the press corps as he always has.

Q Oh, come on, John. He has been dodging the press for weeks, you know it. It has all been in the paper. Don't say that. He is not resigning for personal reasons. He is resigning because of the corruption and the mismanagement in his office.

MR. CARLSON: Sarah, I had a couple of people call me and say they wanted information on the Perry situation. I talked to Mr. Perry. He, in turn, called them.

Q Listen, John, there are 500 people he hasn't called.

Q There are two other Commissioners. Why haven't they acted in any way relative to all of this trouble they have had over the years?

MR. CARLSON: It is my understanding there is a GAO investigation going on right now.

Q Isn't it true, John, the reason the other Commissioners haven't acted is because the way the law is set up, only the chairman can be responsible for the Administration?

MR. CARLSON: I am not that closely familiar with the details.

Q When the President talked to these federally appointed women this morning, did he say anything about the fact the EEOC has between 115,000 and 150,000 backlog of cases, mostly involving women who have been discriminated against in the Federal Government?

MR. CARLSON: The pool was there for part of that presentation. There was a pool report.

Q Was there a transcript?

MR. CARLSON: We can have a transcript. We will have a transcript definitely, but it might be another hour or two until we get it.

Q You don't know whether he said anything about that or not?

MR. CARLSON: I don't know. I wasn't there, Sarah. But we will have a transcript for you.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:50 P.M. EDT)

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