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NEWS CONFERENCE

#573

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:05 P.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 1, 1976

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me mention a couple of things to you before I take any questions you might have.

Some of you saw, or heard at least, the President's speech to the National Guard Association. So, I guess there are no further questions on that.

Q Yes, there are. Has the President ever reduced any troops abroad since he has been in the Presidency?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check. I don't know of any. I think all American troops were out of Vietnam aside from the Embassy staff.

Q Is he including Carter among the voices of retreat?

MR. NESSEN: I think the Democratic platform and Carter's statements speak for themselves.

Q Ron, I think the greatest question in many people's minds is that the President said that those who speak of phased withdrawals are voices of retreat. It is my understanding that working for phased withdrawals has been U.S. policy for about the last eight or nine years. That is the mutual and balanced force reduction --

MR. NESSEN: Mutual and balanced force reductions in Europe is a goal of the United States, certainly.

Q Then, is he talking about himself?

MR. NESSEN: No.

I think the record -- the Democratic platform and Governor Carter's statements on reductions of troops -- I think he is talking about unilateral reductions of troops, certainly, is clear.

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Q Is that what he is talking about?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, of course.

Q He just stated "phased withdrawal."

MR. NESSEN: Perhaps the word "unilateral" should have been in there.

Q What is the President's position on the 42,000 American troops in South Korea? Is it his desire they stay there?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans right now to reduce that number of troops.

Q Carter's withdrawal plan, as I understand it, is a phased withdrawal over something like five years. Does the Administration look for no phased withdrawal of American troops from South Korea?

MR. NESSEN: At present, there are no plans to.

Q How about Taiwan?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean, how about Taiwan?

Q That is what I mean. Have we withdrawn any troops in the past two years?

MR. NESSEN: Whatever there has been, it has been reported rather extensively over the period, I think.

Q Meaning there has been?

MR. NESSEN: I would have to check the record for you, Helen.

At about 12:30 this afternoon, the President is going to tape his Labor Day message to the country. Some of you have asked about the availability of this. NBC is the video and the audio pool for the Labor Day message, and those of you who have any desire to get a copy of it for your networks should contact NBC. I understand the video tape dubs will be available late in the afternoon and the audio tape will be played through the mult system right here at 1:30 for those who want to make your own audio tapes right here on the spot.

Obviously, the writers have expressed an interest in having a transcript of the message, and that will be available here in written form this afternoon. All of the material -- that is, the audio tape, video tape and written version -- is embargoed for 6:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Sunday.

Q Is the message very long?

MR. NESSEN: Not very long, no.

Q What is it? Is it a commemorative thing or a speech, or what?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not a speech. It is a traditional Labor Day message from the President to the country.

Q What is traditional? Is it a one-minute sum-up or what?

MR. NESSEN: I will check the time for you, Bob.

Q Is it something like he does for the Easter Seals or something like that?

MR. NESSEN: No, not Easter Seals. It is traditional for Presidents to issue statements to the country on certain national occasions, including Labor Day and Memorial Day. I guess he had a New Year's statement to the country, and I believe he may have had a Christmas statement to the country.

Q It's not too lengthy, then?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not. I will get the exact time, but I would be very surprised if it ran more than a minute.

Q Where will he be on Labor Day?

MR. NESSEN: That has not been decided yet.

Q Ron, is there an announcement ready to be made on how the President will kick off the campaign?

MR. NESSEN: It is not ready to be made because the decision has not been made.

Q Ron, what are the President's expectations for Kissinger's trip to Europe and the possibility he is going to Africa? What does he expect the Secretary to achieve?

MR. NESSEN: I think the Secretary, in enunciating or speaking for the President's foreign policy and specifically African policy, has probably laid out pretty well the President's hopes and aspirations for the trip.

Some of you have asked about the possibility of taking some pictures of the President and his campaign Steering Committee as they gather tonight for dinner. If there is any interest in that, any requests, I think we can probably arrange that for you.

Q You mean pool coverage?

MR. NESSEN: Of the dinner?

Q No --

MR. NESSEN: Of the gathering? Sure, I don't see any problem with that.

Q It would be just a silent pool?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Will you have anything to say after the committee meets, I think at 2:00 p.m. today?

MR. NESSEN: I won't have anything to say but perhaps Greener might.

Q What about after the dinner tonight?

MR. NESSEN: I don't anticipate anything. I will be there and keep my eyes open and ears open. I suspect there will not be a report after the meeting.

Q Is this a working dinner where campaign strategy will be discussed?

MR. NESSEN: Discussed, that is correct.

Q Who is paying for this?

MR. NESSEN: Either the President personally or the PFC.

Q Did you say there would be a pool at the dinner?

MR. NESSEN: I said there will be just a photo. There have been requests for a photo and I think we can arrange a pool photo at the beginning either when they sit down to eat or as they gather. We have not worked out details.

Q The Soviet Union has purchased 275,000 tons of grain, and this apparently is to be the beginning of a number of such purchases.

What guarantee is the Administration giving that there will be no hike in grain prices for the American consumer? The Agriculture Department says it is not expected, but the word "expected" is a pretty big word. What steps is the Administration taking to see there is no increase in grain prices?

MR. NESSEN: They are the experts on the subject, Bob. I would merely refer you back to them for all the information you need on that.

Q Let me pursue this just for another 20 seconds. Inasmuch as this received a lot of attention in Kansas City and inasmuch as embargoes was a very strong subject and the President declared himself on it, I would think we could get an answer here rather than being shunted back to the Agriculture Department.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, they are the experts. They know the size of the crop, the demand, how much is left under the trade agreement, and so forth. So, I would merely have to call them up and relay the information back to you, Bob, so it would be best to go directly to them.

Q I would like to pursue that just a moment. You mean to say the President made no inquiries before the Administration approved these sales as to whether or not these sales would affect domestic prices? There was no interest in it?

MR. NESSEN: Look, it is silly for me to deal with the grain, the size of the crop, the agreement and the contracts, and so forth. The people who have all the information are those at the Agriculture Department.

There has been, it seems to me, perhaps a little bit of confusion on what exactly is involved in the parks program that the President announced on Sunday, and I indicated to you yesterday that indeed, in response to a question, a lot of the land acquired in the first year or so of the program would be in Alaska, that it was already there under Federal ownership, and that it would be transferred over to the park system and money would be spent to turn it into the facilities for recreation and park services.

I didn't mean to suggest by that that there would be no land in the lower 48 States in the first year that would go into parks under this proposal. I have a list, and some of these may be in areas of interest to your local papers. Rather than read you a very detailed list of places and acreage numbers, I will run through it quickly and tell you you can get ahold of a copy of it after the briefing.

For instance, the Appalachian Trail, which runs from Maine to Georgia, \$627,000 would be spent the first year; Big Cyprus in Florida, \$30 million; Big Thicket in Texas, \$37 million; Canaveral in Florida, \$1-1/2 million; Cuyahoga Valley, Ohio, \$18 million; the Delaware Water Gap in New Jersey and Pennsylvania; Indiana Dunes; one relatively small tract in Alaska would be acquired for cash, that is, the Klondike Historical Park -- that is the only tract in Alaska really in the first year; Lake Mead in Arizona and Nevada; lower St. Croix in Minnesota and Wisconsin; Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and a lot of small bits and pieces that will be added to existing parks, totaling over two million acres, as a matter of fact.

I just wanted to indicate that all the land even in the first year will not be in Alaska, by any means. A total of 199,000 acres will be acquired from this list. This is the priority list for acquisition in the first year.

The prices for acquiring those tracts total \$110 million. The remaining \$31 million is in wildlife refuge areas to acquire those, and we can get you a list of where those are located, also. So, this is available after the briefing.

Q Were you in error when you originally said a substantial portion of the original acquisitions would be in Alaska?

MR. NESSEN: Not at all. That is indeed the case. There is something like 64 million acres, I believe, which is, as you see, quite a bit larger than the amount in the State, that would be transferred from existing Federal ownership into the park system and fixed up and turned into parks. I perhaps left the impression that that was it, that everything was in Alaska, whereas there is quite an extensive list in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, Florida, Texas, et cetera.

Q Did Nat give these out in his briefing yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: I have not had a chance to read Nat Reed's briefing, frankly.

Q That 199,000 acres, is that all in the lower 48?

MR. NESSEN: Except for a very tiny portion of 824 acres, which is the Klondike Historical Park in Alaska. All the rest are in the lower 48. That is the first year -- that is, fiscal 1977.

Q Why didn't the President ask for that \$141 million? As I understand, it is already over there in the Interior Department. That is what they tell us. It is already over there. It is what is left of the \$300 million fund and all the President had to do was ask Congress to appropriate it for that purpose. Why didn't he ask for that earlier in the year?

MR. NESSEN: There was an authorization, Bob, you are quite right about that, and this is asking for money to carry out --

Q This is what is left.

MR. NESSEN: This is a supplemental appropriation on top of what has been appropriated and spent before.

Q There is \$141 million in that fund that has already been appropriated.

MR. NESSEN: That is not my understanding.

Q That is what they are saying -- Mr. Layton over there.

MR. NESSEN: That is not my understanding.

Q The Congress has to designate what it can be used for but the money has already been appropriated. It was \$300 million to start with; \$141 million left.

MR. NESSEN: I had not heard there was \$141 million left.

Q Otherwise, it goes in block grants to the States.

Q Ron, on this park plan, there have been quite a few reports and comments that it is an excellent plan but, in effect, it is a reversal of the President's past policy. Do you have any comment on that?

MR. NESSEN: I would disagree with that, and some of you who were here the other day will probably yell and scream if I try to go through what the President's record is on national parks again. Bill maybe wasn't here the other day, but the President did fund completely the Land and Water Conservation Fund of the Interior Department in his 1977 budget request. It was one of the very few capital acquisition programs that was fully funded in that budget. Most of the others were cut back.

The President increased the national park service budget by \$40 million -- a 6 percent increase.

Q Is that adjusted for inflation? You know, if it is just a 6 percent increase it doesn't even keep pace with inflation.

MR. NESSEN: I would have to check for you, Walt, to see, but I doubt it.

Q Did you check on that Big Bear thing in Michigan that we asked you about?

MR. NESSEN: The which?

Q The one the President had reportedly opposed as a Member of Congress. You were going to check on that.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if we have that or not.

Q Is the President going to fire the FBI Director?

MR. NESSEN: Let me just finish answering Bill's question.

Q I second Helen's motion.

MR. NESSEN: I think it would be fair to respond to Bill's question. He probably would like to hear the rest of the answer.

Bill asked me whether I felt it was fair to say that the President was reversing his record on national parks, and I think it would be fair to give Bill his answer.

Q Sorry, I thought you were onto the next subject.

MR. NESSEN: The full funding for acquisition, the 6 percent or \$40 million increase in the Park Service budget, an increase of 400 new full-time, permanent Park Service rangers and other employees, whereas most other Government agencies and, in fact, overall Government employment was being reduced -- the President ordered a management improvement program in the Park Service to assure that the resources were used as efficiently as possible.

He approved the following wilderness areas: Flattop, Alpine Lakes, Eagle's Nest, as well as the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation area and the Valley Forge National Historic Park.

Incidentally, many of these actions, or perhaps most of them, were ordered by the President over the opposition of the OMB and other people who keep an eye on the budget.

The President has proposed 100 additional wilderness areas which Congress has failed to act on. And, as you know and have written about, I guess, the proposal to add this land in Alaska to the National Park System, that proposal has been pending in Congress for quite a long time without any action on it.

Since 1970, the funding for the Park Service has increased by 197 percent, which is way ahead of inflation and even way ahead of the increase in the number of visitors. On personnel since 1970, the Park Service employment has gone up 17 percent whereas overall Federal employment has gone down 5 percent.

So I think perhaps that answers Bill's question as to whether the President has had previously a bad record on parks and so forth, and is now changing.

Q Has the President decided where the belt-tightening will have to come to pay for the parks? He mentioned that on Sunday.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I know, and he has not decided specifically where it will come from.

Q Now, Helen's question.

MR. NESSEN: The President telephoned Attorney General Levi this morning at about 10:25 and directed him to submit a report concerning FBI Director Kelley within the next few days and, pending arrival of that report, I think it would be improper to say anything further.

Q To report what?

MR. NESSEN: A report on FBI Director Kelley.

Q On the allegations appearing in the Washington Post?

MR. NESSEN: On the allegations, yes, but not limited to --

Q Including the allegations in the Washington Post?

MR. NESSEN: The phone conversation was not specific. There seemed to be an understanding that the Attorney General -- in other words, the President didn't say "I want a report on the following matters." He just said, "I want a report."

Q How does Mr. Levi know what to report on?

MR. NESSEN: As you know yourself, there have been published allegations and there has been an internal investigation at the FBI.

Q What I am trying to get at is, did the President have the Washington Post allegations in mind when he called, and other reports in mind?

MR. NESSEN: I think that would be fair to say, yes.

Q Did the President ask the Attorney General why he hadn't let him know about this earlier? I think it has been laying around over there a week or so.

MR. NESSEN: That didn't come up in the phone conversation.

Q Did he know about it or read about it in the papers?

MR. NESSEN: What is that, Helen?

Q The President of the United States.

MR. NESSEN: Know about what?

Q About the allegations?

MR. NESSEN: He obviously couldn't know about the allegations until the allegations were made.

Q Is this the first he learned of it, when it was in the paper?

MR. NESSEN: Of the allegations?

Q Of the internal investigation.

Q Not allegations. The man admitted it.

MR. NESSEN: The President has not received any internal report from the FBI yet or the Justice Department. That is why he directed the Attorney General to submit one in the next few days.

Q Is there a deadline for the report?

MR. NESSEN: Not a firm deadline but he made it clear he wanted it in a day or so.

Q I don't understand the answer to Schieffer's question.

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure I do either.

Q Did the President find out about this by reading the newspaper, or did he have some advance word on it?

MR. NESSEN: I would say the allegation, and then I guess the FBI Director made some statements himself. As far as I know, the President did learn of that from news accounts.

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Q Has there been any contact with Kelley?
He can go directly to the FBI.

MR. NESSEN: Between the President and Kelley?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: There has not.

Q Why not?

MR. NESSEN: Attorney General Levi is his immediate superior.

Q Ron, you said there was also an internal FBI report.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Was this available before the news accounts and did the President have any word of that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know anything about it. My knowledge of the fact there is one comes from reading the newspapers.

Q So, the President did not know about the internal report?

MR. NESSEN: I said he had not received any report from the FBI.

Q So there is no misunderstanding, what the President wants is a report from the Attorney General on possible improper actions by Director Kelley?

What does the President want a report on?

MR. NESSEN: That was not spelled out in the telephone call because there seemed to be an understanding of what the report would contain.

Q Do you understand what that understanding is?

MR. NESSEN: I understand your question and I want to word the answer in such a way that would not imply any judgments have been made in advance of the submission of the Attorney General's report.

Q Had they both read the newspapers?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean, "both"?

Q The President and the Attorney General.

MR. NESSEN: I just don't think it is fair to any of the parties involved to not be very careful, but I think it would be fair to say that the President asked the Attorney General, or directed him, to submit a report within a few days on public allegations about the FBI Director.

Q Does the President consider the allegations, including the one about window valances and cabinets, serious, if true?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it would be fair to comment any further since the President has asked for a report and has not received it yet.

Q All we are trying to get are the terms of reference.

MR. NESSEN: I think not, Ralph. I think you are trying to get a little more than that and I don't think it is fair to the man to go beyond what I have said.

Q Phil and I are simply trying to get the terms of reference.

MR. NESSEN: I think I gave the terms very carefully, so as not to imply or suggest any more than --

Q I don't think you implied anything.

MR. NESSEN: If you read the transcript in response to Phil's question, you will see what my answer was.

Q Ron, did the President tell the Attorney General he wanted Kelley's resignation?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly did not.

Q Does the President still have complete confidence in the FBI Director after the published allegations this morning?

MR. NESSEN: I will rearrange your question and say that the President has complete faith in the FBI Director.

Q Does the President want any report from Director Kelley himself and Wells?

MR. NESSEN: The President has asked for a report from the Attorney General, who is Mr. Kelley's immediate superior.

Q Then, why did the President ask for the report from the Attorney General if he has complete confidence in the FBI Director?

MR. NESSEN: Do you know of any reason why he shouldn't?

Q I would think the reason applies here to maybe he really does not have complete confidence in Kelley.

MR. NESSEN: We have a system in this country where we don't condemn people until --

Q Don't tell me that, I know what you are going to say. That doesn't apply to this question. Please answer the question.

MR. NESSEN: I answered Tom's question, which is that the President has complete faith in Clarence Kelley, period.

Q If he does have this, why did he ask for an investigation and a report to be made on Kelley?

MR. NESSEN: I think I answered that in response to Phil's question and we can have the transcript on it read back if you want to hear it.

Q I heard it, but I am still mystified because what you say is a contradiction here.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so.

Q Do you want to finish your sentence you started when we asked the question of whether there was a coverup within the FBI to try to keep this from the President?

MR. NESSEN: Tom, would you repeat that?

Q The Attorney General's report goes to the issue of whether there was a coverup within the FBI in an attempt to keep this from the President.

MR. NESSEN: I have never heard of that as an issue.

Q He didn't learn of it until he read about it in the newspapers?

MR. NESSEN: Learn of what, Tom?

Q Learn of the allegations against Kelley.

MR. NESSEN: I think I won't say anything further until the Attorney General submits his report as directed by the President.

Q Does the fact he asked for the report suggest in the final analysis it will be the President rather than the Attorney General who will decide what, if anything, to do about Director Kelley?

MR. NESSEN: Frank, I think I am merely today going to announce that the President has directed a report be filed and not go any further.

Q He is a Presidential appointee, is he not?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q You were interrupted when you said, "There is a principle in this country.--." Would you like to repeat that?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think everybody knows the trend of my thought.

Q Did he ask that this report include any recommendations from Levi as to disposition of it or how it should be handled?

MR. NESSEN: He said a report, that is all he said, a report.

Q Ron, were you going to say that we have a system in this country that presumes a man is innocent until proven guilty? Is that what you were going to say?

MR. NESSEN: I lost my train of thought there, Bob, and I forget what I was going to say.

Q You got as far as, "We have a system in this country, " and that should jog your memory enough to tell you --

MR. NESSEN: I think I will leave it where it is.

Q Will you tell us whether in the conversation this morning the Attorney General confirmed that he had received two recommendations, one that Kelley be ousted and the other that he be reprimanded?

MR. NESSEN: I was not in on the conversation, so I don't know what the Attorney General said.

Q Did the President ask him whether he had received such recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: Say that again?

Q Did the President ask the Attorney General whether he had received recommendations as to what to do about Kelley, either to fire him or to reprimand him?

MR. NESSEN: The President did not ask that question.

Q Did the President chide the Attorney General for not bringing this to his attention sooner since it has become a national incident, in fact?

MR. NESSEN: I pretty much told you what the telephone conversation consisted of.

Q How long was it?

MR. NESSEN: Five minutes.

Q Ron, yesterday a Catholic Bishop said that Ford had asked him for an opportunity to discuss his views on abortion.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do you have any dates set for that?

MR. NESSEN: I think it will be either next Wednesday or Thursday, it is not pinned down precisely.

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: A meeting between the President and the Catholic Bishops.

Q At the White House?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, it will be, yes.

Q Speaking of religion, the President has asked to have his appearance before the B'Nai B'Rith International Convention switched from Tuesday night to Thursday and they, of course, have gone along. Can you tell us why this request was made? Does the President plan to be out of Washington on Tuesday?

MR. NESSEN: It is not decided yet what the President's travel schedule, if any, will be next week.

Q Was there any other reason why he would forego an opportunity to address --

MR. NESSEN: I was not aware that we had moved as far along on that invitation request as you indicate.

Q The White House called the B'Nai B'Rith at 1:30 yesterday morning and asked if it could be switched.

MR. NESSEN: I knew the invitation was here, but I didn't know we had moved that far on it.

Q Is the President still against the Constitutional amendment on abortion, still against it?

MR. NESSEN: The President's position has not changed from what he has stated previously.

Q Could I get back to Clarence Kelley? You said the President has not asked for Kelley's resignation?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Can you say whether Kelley has submitted his resignation even without being asked?

MR. NESSEN: You ought to ask the Justice Department.

Q He should submit it to the President.

MR. NESSEN: It certainly has not been submitted here. I think you are getting awfully far ahead of yourself with a man who --

Q Who what?

MR. NESSEN: I am musing to myself, Helen. I am just thinking out loud.

Q Would you say maybe we are all concerned about something that does not really amount to very much?

MR. NESSEN: What I am doing today, Bob, is announcing that the President has asked the Attorney General for a report, period.

Q There is no real concern here, is that it?

MR. NESSEN: The President has asked the Attorney General for a report within a few days.

Q Ron, you said that Mr. Kelley and the President have had no direct contact. Is there any plan for Mr. Kelley to see the President in the near future?

MR. NESSEN: There is no appointment schedule that I know of.

Q Do you know if Director Kelley is back in Washington following his operation in Kansas City?

MR. NESSEN: You should check the FBI on that.

Q Yesterday, Carter made several charges in his speech at the AFL-CIO. I wonder does the President, the White House or you have any comment or reaction to that speech today?

MR. NESSEN: Only the same answer I always give, which is, I am not going to react every day for the next 60 days to campaign speeches.

Q How about some of the specific proposals he touched on, such as making the term of the Federal Reserve Board Director contiguous, or co-terminus with that of the President?

MR. NESSEN: I think Bill Simon, the President's Secretary of the Treasury, spoke on that yesterday.

Q Ron, I believe you said, if you check the record, I think you said somebody asked you here if the President has received a resignation from Clarence Kelley and you said his resignation was not submitted yet.

MR. NESSEN: I hope I didn't say "yet."

Q I think you did.

MR. NESSEN: I want to scratch it, if I did.

Q Do you want to elaborate on that?

MR. NESSEN: Clarence Kelley has not submitted a resignation, period.

Q Is the President planning to hold a news conference this week?

MR. NESSEN: We have no plans to announce.

Q Do you have Senator Dole's medical and financial records ready to give to us?

MR. NESSEN: Check with Larry Speakes. He is working away on that project, but I don't know what his timing is going to be.

Q Could you be more specific on the President's request for the meeting with the Catholic Bishops? When did that occur and could you give me a little more background on that?

MR. NESSEN: I was not in on the initial stages.

Q What does he do, submit that request to the Bishop's Conference and then they send in representatives here, and, I assume, this is talked about to make the President's views on abortion better known to them, is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is to discuss various issues of interest to the Bishops, not just that.

Q This was on his own initiative and was it post-Eucharistic Congress?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, it was post-Eucharistic Congress, but it was on the President's initiative to invite the Bishops.

Q Was it made in Philadelphia?

MR. NESSEN: I think it was made after that period.

Q I would like to follow this further. Why did the President go to the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference and say I want to talk to you people about my views?

MR. NESSEN: So he can make his views known on a variety of issues of interest to the Bishops and their parishes.

Q Would you expect him to do this to other religious groups in the country?

MR. NESSEN: He not only will, but has.

Q Request to speak with them?

MR. NESSEN: I would think so.

Q Is this primarily on the issue of abortion?

MR. NESSEN: That is certainly, as I understand it, an issue of concern to the Bishops and their parishes.

Q Didn't the Bishops invite both candidates to avail themselves of the privilege of meeting with them and since Carter has done so and President Ford has availed himself and they will be in here next week?

MR. NESSEN: If you are really interested in the whole scenario of scheduling -- and I would have to sit down -- I just didn't follow it that closely.

Q Ron, you said there are no plans to announce a press conference. Are you ruling out the possibility of a press conference?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have anything to announce, John.

Q Is it possibly tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to announce, Helen.

Q You rule out today?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to announce, but I will rule out today.

Q Ron, on that same thing, there has been talk that the President has been planning to hold weekly press conferences in prime time, televised and all that, for the first five weeks of the campaign. Can you enlighten that?

MR. NESSEN: Don't believe anything until you hear it from me, then it is nailed down and sure.

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Q Ron, I want to ask one question about this abortion thing. I have never seen what the President's view is of the platform plank on the Constitutional amendment item. When he campaigned, of course, he was not for it as a candidate. What is his attitude?

MR. NESSEN: We haven't gone through the platform line-by-line and said the President agrees with this or disagrees with that. He said before he can run on the platform.

Q What is he going to do? What is he going to tell them about the platform?

MR. NESSEN: His position on the abortion thing is clear, I think, and unchanged, and has been stated a lot of times, and I can dig it out for you.

Q I know that, but I don't know what his attitude is toward that platform.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know your impression of what the platform says, but I think you should read what the platform says.

Q The President is not clear on one point. His stated position strongly implies that he favors a Constitutional amendment on abortion to permit the States to adopt their own procedures on the problem. Now he has never point blank said, yes, I favor a Constitutional amendment.

Does the President --

MR. NESSEN: I think if you read the transcript of the Walter Cronkite interview, which I will dig out of the files for you, your question is answered there. I will dig it out of the files for you.

Q What is his view of the antitrust bill coming out of the Senate?

MR. NESSEN: You say coming out of the Senate -- there is a pretty big difference between the Senate bill and the House bill, and it has to go through conference. It is a little premature. There are some features in there that actually carry out the recommendations the President made. Other sections in there, in particular the *parens patriae* section, I think you know the President's feelings on that. He is opposed to that particular concept and there are some other parts of it he is opposed to. But it is a little early, since it hasn't gotten to conference yet.

Q Ron, could you find a quote from the President, either in the Cronkite interview or elsewhere, in which he speaks on whether he feels the entire matter of abortion is suitable as a political issue?

MR. NESSEN: I am sure he has been asked that before, and I will find the answer for you.

Q Would you be good enough to dig it out?

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q What are the President's personal plans for Labor Day?

MR. NESSEN: He hasn't decided yet.

Q A lot of time yesterday and again today was set aside for staff meetings, and presumably on politics. What are they working on? His schedule?

MR. NESSEN: No, and I don't know why you say presumably on politics.

Q All afternoon today and a big part of the day yesterday --

Q Jim Baker said this morning he spent four hours on politics here yesterday afternoon.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know where the four hours were. I know the President spent some time, as we announced, discussing and giving instructions to his representatives on the debates. If that is considered part of the four hours, sure, that was part of the time.

I think he probably read over -- I don't know if he read over today's speech yesterday. I know he read it over this morning. There is a very constant flow of paper-work around this place and especially in the closing days of a Congressional session. When the bills flow up here he does have to read them, he has to study the reports from the Counsel's Office, and the Domestic Council. I am not aware of any heavy concentration on politics.

Q This morning over at the Christian Science Monitor I got the impression that an awful, awful lot of decisions on basic things like where he is going to campaign and when and stuff that we thought was settled last week in Vail is still very much up in the air.

MR. NESSEN: I have said in response to questions over and over again, Rudy, that the President has not decided where he will be on Labor Day, where he will make his sort of traditional kick-off speech of his campaign. He has not made that decision.

Q Has he set a theme for his campaign yet?

MR. NESSEN: I think he announced that at Vail.

Q Do you know when he will make up his mind?

MR. NESSEN: I can't pinpoint the exact date for you.

Q Will the people who were in negotiating on the debates this morning come back and report to him this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: This afternoon or whenever they get out of their meeting.

Q But they will get to him?

MR. NESSEN: I would expect they will tell him today or at least very soon how the meeting went, sure.

Q Why is it the President is having such a difficult time making up his mind on what he is going to do Labor Day and where he will kick-off his campaign?

MR. NESSEN: Where do you get the impression he is having a difficult time making up his mind?

Q We ask every day what he is going to be doing and you say he hasn't made up his mind. You say there are some alternatives before him. Maybe he hasn't been too wild with any of those alternatives?

MR. NESSEN: That is right, he hasn't.

Q He has not?

MR. NESSEN: He may have today, but he hasn't until today.

Q Isn't it a little bit hard to get a forum for next Monday this late in the game?

MR. NESSEN: Maybe he is not going to speak next Monday.

Q That is what we would like to know.

MR. NESSEN: As soon as he decides, we will let you know.

Q Just for personal planning, would you say a prudent person should have a suitcase packed for this weekend?

MR. NESSEN: Let's see, would a prudent person have a suitcase packed this weekend? I don't plan to, and I am pretty prudent.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:42 P.M. EDT) #573