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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:00 A.M. EST

DECEMBER 10, 1976

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any announcements to make today, so we will just start right in with the questions.

Q Have you any timing on the trip next week?

MR. NESSEN: Which trip?

Q To Vail.

MR. NESSEN: No. It is the 19th, pretty firmly, and I think, as you know, Mrs. Ford is receiving an honorary degree from the University of Michigan that same day, so the trip will require going from here to Ann Arbor to be presented with the honorary degree, and then fly from there to Vail.

Q What is the honorary degree? Can you tell us something about it, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: It was announced two weeks ago. I will put a statement out for you, Les.

Q Do you know when he is coming back?

MR. NESSEN: The President will return tentatively on the 2nd.

Q What time is the award going to be given; do you know?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the details of it yet, but given the fact that, as I understand it, there is the need to get from Grand Junction into Vail before darkness, I would say it would have to be relatively early, or mid-morning, let's say.

Q Are you planning to just hold us at the airport at Ann Arbor or are you going to ferry us out to cover the story, too?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Yes which?

MR. NESSEN: Ferry you out to cover the story. Ray is trying to work something out where families who are aboard the press plane will have some kind of entertainment laid on at the airport for them.

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Q At Ann Arbor Airport?

Q They will have a taboggon run.

MR. NESSEN: It will be exciting.

Q Ron, can you comment on Jack Anderson's column this morning regarding an appeal that an attorney for Spiro Agnew allegedly made to the office of Phil Buchen, and can you say if such an appeal was made for a pardon? Was the President aware of it and what was his reaction?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I did see the story, and Phil Buchen is out of the building. I have not been able to ask him whether he received any such call yet.

Q Do you have any knowledge of it?

MR. NESSEN: I do not, no, other than I read the column. But I have to wait until I can get in touch with Phil.

Q Did you by chance discuss that same thing with the President?

MR. NESSEN: No. I am going to wait and see where it stands, if it stands anywhere, when Phil gets back.

Q Ron, Reagan was quoted yesterday in a broadcast saying he was not offered the Vice Presidential nomination by President Ford in Kansas City. Is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is what we said that week, Phil, in Kansas City, if I recall. There were some news conferences and backgrounders and stuff held at the time that Bob Dole was chosen, and if I recall correctly that was one of the questions that came up and that was one of the answers that was given at the time. I think both Reagan and the President said that in Kansas City. That is what my memory is.

Q That he was not offered?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q I thought what you said was that that was a private conversation and either of the two people involved were the only ones who could talk about it.

MR. NESSEN: I think I would have to go back and check what everybody said, Muriel, but I am almost positive that somebody said that that week, whether it was on a background basis or what. But I know that the fact that Reagan was not offered the Vice Presidential nomination did come out that week in Kansas City one way or the other.

Q Last evening, just before the President came out here, Secretary Simon left the West Wing. Was he in any way involved in the meeting on the Republican National Committee?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q What are the weekend plans, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: There are no special weekend plans. The President will be here. He has some meetings tomorrow. We will post a schedule later, but nothing now.

Q Any evening events?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so. I don't recall any.

Q The weather forecast is decent and mild. Is there any chance of golf?

MR. NESSEN: Golf? I haven't heard of any golf.

Q Ron, what is the status of the State of the Union message? And has a decision been made for the President to deliver it in person?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the status is that various drafts are being worked on or there is a draft and it is being worked on. But I don't have any other details yet of whether he will deliver it in person. I just don't have anything on it.

Q Has a decision been made on a farewell address?

MR. NESSEN: Not yet.

Q Or a State of the World address?

MR. NESSEN: No, not a definite decision.

Q Ron, there is a proposal on the Hill, as you know, that curbs be put on lame duck travel, clip their wings. How does the President feel about this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I am not familiar with the legislation, Les.

Q Well, I am just wondering, does the President feel that it helps the possible comeback of the Republican Party when a Secretary of the Navy takes a \$62,000 trip?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with Secretary Middendorf's trip either.

Q It has been in the public prints, Ron, \$62,500, Secretary Middendorf has gone all the way to the Antarctic and to Pearl Harbor. I just am wondering does the President feel this will help the Republican Party's image of economy and so forth with lame ducks flying round like this?

Q Lame ducks don't fly, Les, to mix a metaphor.

Q They do. They go on jet travel. They are on jet planes, Ron. You can be lame and ride jets.

MR. NESSEN: Les, I don't know. As far as I know, any official travel that has been taken by officials of the Administration is travel required by their duties.

Q Required by their duties? You would apply that to Mr. Middendorf?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q Okay.

Q The Soviet Union has announced in New York that 200-mile fishing zone in which nations can only operate with the Russians' approval. Is there any action on that?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't seen that, but I will check after the briefing.

Q Ron, has the President been in communication with the President-elect across the street since he has been in Washington?

MR. NESSEN: He has not, no.

Q What was the purpose of the visit by the Japanese Ambassador today?

MR. NESSEN: To deliver a message from Prime Minister Miki to the President.

Q Do you know what the message was?

MR. NESSEN: It was a private message, so I don't know what the contents were.

Q On Bernie's question on the 200-mile fishing, I assume that that is perceived to be only a fishing zone or a total ban from waters because it would have an impact on US submarines operating within that 200-mile zone.

MR. NESSEN: I will get back to you on that.

Q And also how it would affect reciprocity of Soviet fishing in our waters?

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q Ron, why is it, as I understand it, you said you are going to have briefings on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, when you cut to three a week. But there has only been two this week.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Is there any indication that you are going to cut still further or what is the arrangement?

MR. NESSEN: After January 20th I am going to cut them out entirely.

Q Ron, you are not going back to Saturday night live, are you, by any chance? Well, are you going to continue Monday, Wednesday and Friday?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will hold them on an irregular schedule based on need.

Q What is the President going to do in Vail by way of work -- more budget stuff, State of the Union -- can you give us some guidance there?

MR. NESSEN: The budget will be pretty well wrapped up at least in terms of his role in it, Walt. As I understand it, the printers need to have all but the absolute last minute changes by somewhere around December 24th or 25th. So the appeals process is virtually finished, with the exception of a few odds and ends.

Q So what will he do workwise in Vail, anything? Not that he has to.

MR. NESSEN: I would say on the State of the Union, perhaps some work on the State of the Union. But other than that, I don't know any major projects he has to work on. There is the day-to-day routine business which will flow out to him.

Q Who is going staff-wise, that is to say, are people like Scowcroft going out with him?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't got the full staff listed at this time. We will announce it though.

Q Do you have a schedule?

Q What is the estimated budget figure?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have it for you.

Q Well, more or less?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to even guess at it.

Q At Vail do you have a schedule of Carter people who are coming out, or do you have a schedule for visits by senior staffers while the President is out there?

MR. NESSEN: If there are any, I will let you know when I get them developed.

Q Has the President been in any contact with Mr. Carter?

MR. NESSEN: Since he came up to Washington?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Not any direct contact.

Q How about since Carter was in here to see the President?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of, no.

Q Also, I may have missed this while I was in Georgia, but can you tell us approximately what date the President will deliver the State of the Union and send up the budget?

MR. NESSEN: The State of the Union I think is a date that Congress traditionally sets. But January 12th is a good possibility.

Q How about the budget, Ron? Can you give us some idea when that is going up?

MR. NESSEN: That, I think, is set by law if I am not mistaken. It looks like, I believe, January 17.

Q Does the President have any reaction to the business of the tax cut proposal put forth yesterday by executives?

MR. NESSEN: No. As you know, the President has been committed for quite a long time to sending a tax cut proposal to Congress and, in fact, having it there on the opening day -- and he will.

Q That was \$10 billion, though; right?

MR. NESSEN: That is what he is publicly committed to. He is going to make some decisions shortly, as a matter of fact, concerning his tax cut proposal and, until he has decided exactly what form it will take, I would rather not go into the details. I can't.

Q Does he have any other economic stimulus, other than a tax cut?

MR. NESSEN: As I said before, any budget always takes into account a tax cut.

Q Do you have anything further?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything further to say beyond what I said then.

Q Does the President have any reaction to Mr. Lance's position that the Carter budget will ask for a \$15 billion cut in the deficit over what the President will propose?

MR. NESSEN: Do I have any comment on Mr. Lance saying that?

Q Does the President have any comment?

MR. NESSEN: No. I think I am going to stick to the rule of not commenting on actions or statements by the Carter group.

Q Ron, while we are on this, I think Paul O'Neill it was last week who made remarks to the effect that on this \$10 billion cut Mr. Ford no longer is going to insist that that be tied to a comparable cut in spending so that the whole \$10 billion would be net stimulus. Can you comment on that at all?

MR. NESSEN: Only to say that the President still feels that he is still committed to his principle of restraining Government spending, and he is also committed to proposing a tax cut. Beyond that, I think I would rather wait until he makes his decisions.

Q As he weighs these economic decisions, is he factoring into that the fact that a \$10 billion tax cut is fine for the people who are working or for the 8 million people who are out of work? They get no tax cut and consequently no relief. Is he going to do anything for them?

MR. NESSEN: The budget is always an economic blueprint for the coming year, and this one will be, too. I know you have heard the President talk about the need to restrain inflation because it is really the cruelest tax and it hits the unemployed, the elderly, the low income as heavily or more heavily than any other group. So certainly his activities to restrain inflation are helpful to the unemployed and the low paid and the elderly, and I can sympathize with the unemployed, I think, especially.

Q Ron, what do you mean by that?

Q Ron, you still have nothing?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing to announce yet, Les.

Q You will let us know as soon as you can?

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q He is going to a monastery.

MR. NESSEN: That is right. I understand the Episcopal Church is in the market for a public relations man.

Q Can you talk about the chronology? It seems it was put together in a hurry. One of the participants arrived late and another participant had to leave early. When was this set up?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't make too much of those individual travel problems. After all, all four of those men lead very busy lives and very full schedules which are planned far ahead of time. I think you know that Governor Connally was coming from Chicago where he had a speech to make at noon and Governor Reagan had a plane to catch out of Dulles, I think, at 5:40 or 5:30 or something like that. So that doesn't necessarily mean the meeting was arranged in a hurry. I would say that I think it would be accurate to say that the final arrangements for the meeting were made over this past weekend. But it is something the President has been thinking about and exploring with staff people for a while.

Q When did the initial invitations go out to Connally and Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: That was last weekend.

Q Any chance we will have an opportunity to ask the President questions on other subjects? I mean he fared reasonably well yesterday. Nobody clobbered him. He appeared to enjoy himself. Is there any chance we will see him in the near future before Vail for a simple give and take?

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

Q You are in extremely good spirits today, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: Well, thank God it is Friday.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 11:15 A.M. EST)