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Transcriptions

connie jensen



DAILY IOWAN,
IOWA CITY, IOWA
4/75

Nessening the Point

The briefing was to begin at 11 a.m. Fortunately for us it didn't, since we were marooned at the wrong gate by a wrong-headed taxi driver—in a drenching rain—while a White House guard found forms for us to fill out. He made at least a dozen phone calls to be sure we should be given the dubious honor of listening to The Ron Nessen. And all the while we stood in the rain...

Even when we were admitted to the long tunnel called the press room, the briefing had not yet begun. And it was 11:15.

We peered through the building rows of booths, marked CBS, UPI, AP, Washington Post.... Lines of phones studded the wall. Cameras were everywhere, on necks and on stands. And so were the men—no women, but men.

A poker game raged in the back room. Reporters sauntered from booth to chairs to Nessen's podium. Near the door a group of foreign journalists spoke in another language.

All waited for Ron Nessen—and it was 11:30.

We'd been told not to worry, that the 11 a.m. briefings never began at 11. They'd been progressively getting later and later.

Sure enough, somewhere around 11:45 Nessen appeared. He looked as though we were damn

lucky to see him at all. He nonchalantly clenched a pipe in his teeth. That pipe never left his mouth all the time he spoke. I could have sworn he was speaking with his mouth closed.

But he certainly wasn't speaking with his mind closed. He said nothing, but he said it so many different ways. The President's appointments. The foreign visitors. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger's appointment. The MIA letter.

Schlesinger's visit was the only thing approaching news to come out of that gathering. And the reporters gamely fenced with the press secretary to extract more information.

But Nessen's armor was not to be pierced. No, he didn't know why Schlesinger had not canceled his appearance on the hill until that morning. Nessen had known about the secretary's scheduled meeting with the President "as early as yesterday afternoon."

(The Democratic Caucuses in the House and Senate had voted Thursday against giving more aid to either Cambodia or Vietnam.)

Was the Southeast Asia aid discussed at the secretary's meeting with Ford? Nessen "imagined it had come up."

While Nessen was contemptuous of the scrounging journalists, his adversaries resembled a pack of starving dogs. They

badgered for news that may or may not have been there, diving for any tid bit. Faced with a determined and unwilling source, they persisted with questions about the defense secretary for 30 minutes.

"But Ron, if the secretary knew about the meeting yesterday, is it logical that he would wait until today to cancel his appearance on the Hill?"

"I don't think my word has ever been questioned so directly before, Bob."

"Why wasn't Schlesinger's name on the list of people the President was to see today, Ron?"

"Well, we don't put everyone who sees the President on that list."

"Ron, what determines who gets on the list and who doesn't?"

"Ron, did the President get a copy of the letter the North Vietnamese sent to Sen. Kennedy, offering information on MIA's in exchange for cutting off aid to Saigon?"

"I believe the letter was addressed to Sen. Kennedy. But certainly if they have information they should give it to us under the Paris peace accords."

"That wasn't my question, Ron. Did the President get a copy of the letter?"

"Is the President going to do anything about this information, Ron? The families of the MIA's would certainly be interested."

"The Vietnamese should give us any information they have under the Paris peace accords, Sara."

"Is the President willing to compromise with the Congress on his aid requests for Vietnam and Cambodia, Ron? He said last night that a 'spirit of compromise' was over Washington."

"Well, the President thinks his aid proposals should be adopted. He hopes cooler heads will prevail."

"Ron, why won't you go as far this morning as the President did last night? Is the President willing to compromise?"

"Well, I think the President is capable of speaking for himself. I don't know why I should speak for him when he's already done so."

The sparring wore on. But no information emerged. And I'm told this was a typical White House briefing.

This must be what Joseph Lyford, professor of journalism at Berkeley, would call "super-news"—"news that results from a mixing of censorship, propaganda, and 'public information.'" That is, no news at all, but for how many papers was it a page one story?

Nessen's Job One of Hardest

WASHINGTON — There are in this world some jobs that fall into the no win category. One prime example — job of press secretary to the President of the United States of America.

Picture, if you will, stepping up to a microphone each day about noon and having to answer questions from a horde of reporters who are reputed to be the top of their trade, the White House Press Corps.

The handsome and arrogant former Mayor of New York, John Lindsay, was fond of telling reporters that the President of the United States had the hardest job in the country and that the mayor of New York had the second hardest job in the country.

Not so. Having observed both the President's job, the mayor's job and the job of press secretary to the President, this observer gives a nod hands down to the press secretary for the second hardest job in this country.

The highly visible, if somewhat uncomfortable slot, is currently occupied by 40-year-old former television news correspondent Ron Nessen, who earlier trained in the hard school of wire service reporting.

As a reporter, Nessen covered Johnson's White House, then went to Viet Nam, later covered Nixon in 1968 and finally covered Gerald Ford when he was vice president.

With the abrupt departure of Press Secretary Jerald terHorst six months ago, President Ford asked Nessen to step into the White House slot.

It is quite a cultural shock to go from being the fellow with all the tough questions to being the fellow who has to answer them. There is also quite a cultural shock to go from being a member of a normally congenial group of reporters to being the object of their endless interrogation and indeed, to some, the enemy.

How does it feel? "Like the bull running into the bull ring," Nessen allowed recently in his White House office. "But I think that I have learned a lot since I have been over here. Things are a lot more complicated than I realized when I was reporting the news."

Nessen feels that when

Washington

WITH JAYNE BRUMLEY



Lindsay terHorst

and if he goes back into the media business, he will be a better reporter than he was before.

"I used to think that if I talked with one or two presidential advisers I knew what was going on. Everything looked black or white, or good or bad. I have learned that there are shades of gray," he said.

To put Nessen's situation into perspective, he walked into a very tense post-Watergate situation with a press corps that was much more hostile and suspicious than any of past years.

"I would say," he explained, "that the legacy of the Nixon years is something that goes beyond skepticism. It is distrust."

Nessen firmly believes that reporters properly should have a "healthy skepticism." "I had it," he said.

In changing roles, the press secretary found that the most difficult point of it for him personally was having his word questioned.

Mr. Nessen says that he had a staunch, middleclass upbringing that included the concept that one simply told the truth.

No members of the press have accused Nessen of being untruthful with them. In fact, most make it very clear they believe he has been most straight. But the press secretary admits he had a twinge of sorrow one day when an old buddy responded to one of his answers, "Ron, are you sure?"

With 800 accredited reporters allowed into the briefing, if they choose to attend, the White House press staff has gone from about a dozen

persons 15 years ago to 44 today. This creates administrative problems for the person in the top slot.

"The administrative thing almost overwhelmed me when I came," Nessen admits. He solved that problem by assigning the administrative role to a staffer, thereby freeing himself to spend time with the President and to brief himself to brief the press.

One of Nessen's strong suits has definitely been the amount of time which he spends with the President daily. In many instances it has allowed him to give reporters much more inside into what is going on than they have had in the past.

Among the things Nessen have provided reporters with that they did not get before are live quotes out of the meetings. While Nessen is present he often takes notes as a reporter would and then reports these notes to reporters.

"There have been pieces written about me as arrogant, eager and not as efficient as Ron Zeigler, but I haven't seen a single story that questions my credibility," he said.

Nessen says that in the beginning some of the questions and questioners got to him. "I do have a temper and I displayed it in the beginning, but I haven't done it for months now," he explained.

He does not believe that the conflict in his role as press secretary is as great with the press as some people see it. "We are all trying to do the same thing," he says. "And that is to get information to the American people each day."

That is not always as easy as it would appear on the surface.

For example, when energy problems came to the point of legislation, Nessen spent weeks educating himself on the subject, as the President was doing.

It was a new subject for the White House press corps to take on in depth, and a



Ron Nessen

very serious one and a very complicated one.

Day after day at the briefing, Nessen was asked one, and only one question on energy, "Does the President favor a gasoline tax?"

"It hurts," says Nessen. "No one understood the scope of the problem. I have been there myself. Looking back, I see how ill-prepared I was myself to ask questions on some specific issues."

Nessen spends four or five hours getting ready for the daily briefing and estimates that about 80 per cent of the information that he takes with him to the briefing sessions is not asked about at all.

He believes about 10 good stories a week are missed.

At the time of this interview, he had not been asked, for example, a single question about Portugal.

Why doesn't he volunteer the information? "Then we would be accused of pushing news out that we want out," he responded.

Another challenge that he faces as a spokesman, rather than an interrogator, is the challenge of word games, chiefly played by the syndicated radio services, who need no background information, but do need 40 to 60 words on tape with the presidential press secretary, hopefully sounding very, very newsy.

A typical parry on this beat can go something like this: "Would you rule out the possibility of ever bombing in the Middle East? Yes? or No?"

"No, I can't rule that out." Result on the air waves: "The White House today refused to rule out the possibility of bombing in the Middle East."

It is all there every day for Ron Nessen to work his way through with his former cohorts. No hard feelings. He understands.

Nessen said that he asked someone else in the White House if he had been like that when he was a reporter and was promptly told, "Yes, you were."

But he is optimistic. "I know that things can get better. I don't believe that the press and the press office are natural antagonists. I am not dispirited. I am going to work on it and improve this mood."



TV-radio

Why Nessen keeps TV at arm's length



By Patricia O'Brien
Sun-Times Correspondent

WASHINGTON — In White House press secretary Ron Nessen's office, just over a comfortable overstuffed sofa, there hangs a dour message: "Watergate is harder to wash away than the spray of a skunk." It's one way of capsulizing his frustrations with the working press—particularly television and radio.

Nessen's been on both sides now. He's been out scrambling for stories as a correspondent for NBC, and now he flacks for the President of the United States. He feels misunderstood and harassed, and he stops at saying he likes his job—acknowledging only that it is interesting. "It's a bad time to be a press secretary," says Nessen. "There's just too much suspicion after Watergate."

Nessen has his troubles with the press. And although he's considered a nice guy off the job, he's also considered thin-skinned. He believes the White House press briefings have become less "useful," and he maintains there's a new twist to the classic adversary relationship between press and government:

"It's supposed to be that the press wants the news and the White House wants to withhold the news. But the real problem is that the press always wants something new."

And the biggest problems, according to Nessen, are television and radio.

"It's the time crunch," he says. "A television reporter has got to get something on the news that sounds good and can be said fast. Everything gets simplified. Everybody follows the pack."

and 40 per cent of the questions I get asked are argumentative—they're not to elicit information for stories."

Nessen singles out radio syndication services as being particularly interested in sensational twists. "They're looking for 60 words of copy to read—just to fill a 30-second spot. They don't need a lot of background."

He worries about a particular kind of nightmare question: "It's usually some version of, say, 'Would you rule out the possibility that the President would ever bomb Saudi Arabia?' Now how do I respond to that? They can catch me no matter what I say."



"Lawrence Welk said, 'Ah-one and ah-two,' and something blew up."

TV can change the news

ONE RESULT of Nessen's frustrations is that television is kept at arm's length by the Ford administration. The TV cameras probably will stay turned off in the briefing room because, Nessen says, "Some people here think it would all turn into a circus. They'd just pull the controversy out of it, because that's the way the game is played."

Another angle of the White House resistance is the fear that television will change the news.

"I had a request from a network that wanted to follow the President for a couple of days, so they could show the presidential decision-making process — something similar to the work John Hersey did in print when he went around with the President," Nessen says.

"We wrestled with it. We really did. But we have to ask the questions of what having a television camera at a Cabinet meeting, in the President's office, would do. Would it change what happens?"

"I think so. The President wouldn't say things in the same way. Cabinet officials would advise him differently. And what we'd end up with would be a false picture, not the truth. Now Hersey — he could blend into the woodwork. Sure, it's unfair. But it's an insoluble problem, and I don't have the answer."



Uh, Ron, Was That One English Muffin Or Two? Any Jelly?

Is Daily White House Briefing
News or Just a Waste?
At Times, It's Hard to Tell

By DENNIS FARNEY

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — If this is the White House, then who are those guys playing poker?

Somehow, a table of cigar-chomping gamblers is about the last thing one expects to find a mere 200 feet or so from President Ford's Oval Office. But the card players gather here nearly every weekday morning. They are television and radio technicians, and they are . . . waiting.

The scene is rather bizarre—but then, bizarre things happen nearly every day in this part of the White House. Most mornings, for example, find grown men—more technicians—gathered before a TV set. They are watching something important, no doubt. No, grown men are watching "Hollywood Squares" and . . . waiting.

Most mornings also find 50 or 60 high-powered people milling around in two adjoining rooms—a million or so dollars worth of talent just . . . waiting. They are White House correspondents and, like everybody else, they are waiting for Press Secretary Ron Nessen and his daily press briefing, an institution that may be the most bizarre happening of all.

Arcane, Unpopular, but Important

This daily question-and-answer session isn't nearly as well-known as the presidential news conference. The White House hardly ever allows it to appear on television. (Those technicians are on hand just in case.) Mr. Nessen doesn't enjoy conducting the briefing, and reporters don't enjoy going to it. It has its own arcane rules and, almost like some small village, it has its village notables and its village idiots. And yet, day in and day out, this curious institution may well be the single most important determinant of the news most Americans will get about their President and his policies.

Reporters jokingly call the briefing their "daily feeding." But the briefing is at least as important to the White House as it is to the press. For it is through the information the press secretary chooses to disclose there that the White House attempts to portray itself in the best possible light.

Reporters, of course, try to go beyond the briefing by arranging their own inter-

views. Even so, Mr. Nessen's daily remarks can't be ignored and often figure heavily in their reports. This is particularly true of national television correspondents, who must boil things down into brief summaries, and the major wire services, whose White House coverage is about all that subscribers to scores of smaller newspapers ever read.

Browbeat and Wheedle

A typical briefing is a standing-room-only crowd of reporters trying to browbeat, wheedle and cajole increments of information out of a press secretary who evades, quibbles and obfuscates. A briefing is Ron Nessen, as part of a job that pays \$42,500 a year, informing reporters that Gerald Ford will play golf on Saturday, had an English muffin for breakfast, is building a swimming pool or met with a beauty queen. A briefing is reporter Sarah McClendon heatedly telling Mr. Nessen that "the whole United States" demands an answer to a question she has just asked.

Some briefings have literally put reporters to sleep. But one briefing last fall left Mr. Nessen so angry that, upon going home, he jumped on his motorcycle and roared around town until he felt better. And last Friday's briefing, an unusually acrimonious affair, found angry reporters calling Mr. Nessen "a liar," accusing him of a "coverup" and, after 55 minutes of unproductive questioning, informing him that they didn't want to listen to him any more.

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From "Doonesbury"
©1974 G. B. Trudeau/Distributed
by Universal Press Syndicate



'Uh, Ron, Was That One Muffin This Morning or Two? Any Jelly?'

Continued From Page One

that day. Whereupon Mr. Nessen spun on his heel and left in a huff.

In retrospect, it appears that reporters were roasting the wrong man. Mr. Nessen was only trying to pull Nelson Rockefeller's chestnuts from the fire.

The ebullient Vice President had told the world that his Rockefeller Commission report on Central Intelligence Agency wrongdoing would be given to newsmen last Friday. The only trouble was, he didn't clear this arrangement with the President, who ruled that he would decide when the sensitive study would be released. "Ron was sent out to take the heat," says a sympathetic White House staffer, and to argue that the abrupt change of plans was not a "coverup" of some sort.

The resulting confrontation is one indication of how the very atmosphere of the briefing has changed in recent years, particularly since Watergate.

As late as the Johnson administration, briefings were informal affairs of reporters gathered around the press secretary's desk. Then President Nixon decided to board over the White House swimming pool to create a formal "briefing room," complete with an elevated podium for the press secretary. Almost overnight, the atmosphere subtly shifted into an us-vs.-them confrontation. Also helping, of course, was the man up on the podium, the chronically evasive Ronald Ziegler.

President Ford's Mr. Nessen is friendlier and a good deal more helpful in private. But the role of spokesman has built-in limitations, and in the formal briefing sessions he is often about as guarded as Mr. Ziegler was. Some newsmen think the press is largely wasting its time grilling him each day. Says Richard Dudman, Washington bureau chief of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch: "Both Ziegler and Nessen have been inadequate targets for serious questioning."

But a paradoxical thing seems to be happening: Although press secretaries may be giving out fewer and fewer real answers, reporters are asking them more and more questions. Watergate has left newsmen more skeptical and aggressive than before. White House correspondents are painfully aware that they played little part in unearthing that scandal. They were pinned down listening to Ron Ziegler while non-White House reporters were coming up with the real story outside.

And now, contends Peter Lisagor, the veteran White House correspondent of the Chicago Daily News, "the briefing has taken on a life of its own. It's become a kind of show."

Interviews and War Games

The show begins when a White House loudspeaker summons reporters into the briefing room. Looking rather like a man on his way to a duel, Mr. Nessen enters from the opposite side, accompanied by his first assistant, second assistant, third assistant, several other aides, a secretary and a stenographer.

Mr. Nessen and top White House figures have spent about 40 man-hours this forenoon, just preparing for this moment. Mr. Nessen has interviewed the President, has interviewed the President's key assistants, has even war-gamed possible questions and answers with his staff. In his hand is a loose-leaf binder full of typed-out, prepared-in-advance answers to questions that may not even come up.

Any reporter can ask any question he can think of. That's one unwritten rule. Mr. Nessen can't stop answering questions until the senior wire service correspondent yells, "Thank you!" That's another rule. No reporter may leave the briefing room to file a story until the "thank you!" That's a third rule, designed to give every reporter an equal crack at breaking the news.

There are practical reasons for every rule. But taken together, the rules create an ironic situation where Ron Nessen and a roomful of reporters regularly find themselves trapped—locked together in a big room above an empty swimming pool in an open-ended, who-knows-how-long-this-will-last encounter.

Since there is no time limit, there is no incentive for either Mr. Nessen or his interrogators to be brief. But there is ample incentive—on both sides—for splendid irrelevancies, hair-splitting, sarcasm and verbal grandstanding. The typical briefing runs 45 to 90 minutes, and in that time reporters often manage to irritate not only Mr. Nessen but each other.

White House reporters are periodically accused of practicing "pack journalism"—of blindly following each other to similar

stories with similar conclusions on any given day. The accusers would find supporting evidence in the briefing.

In one briefing in March, for example, Mr. Nessen drew no fewer than 85 questions on whether or not the Central Intelligence Agency is now, or has ever been, in the business of assassinating foreign political leaders. The press secretary, obviously under strict orders to avoid comment on this sensitive matter, replied:

"I am not going to say anything about that, Jim."

"I am just not going to say anything about it, Steve."

"I am just not going to talk about it."

"Walt, I am not going to talk about it."

And so on until it became clear that no matter how this question was phrased, Mr. Nessen really wasn't going to talk about it. "Thank you!" yelled Frank Cormier of the Associated Press—and the White House press corps started its collective dash out of the room to the telephones.

But What About . . . ?

Wait a minute, an exasperated Mr. Nessen called out. He had spent most of his morning, he fumed, preparing himself for questions on Cambodia. How come nobody wants to know about Cambodia? Maybe tomorrow, someone said.

The next day the reporters gave Mr. Nessen his wish—59 questions about Cambodia. This gave him a chance to make the point the White House obviously had wanted him to make: Congress should quit stalling and approve military aid for Cambodia (this, of course, was before the country fell to the Communists).

But no one asked that day about the burning subject of the day before, the CIA. Finally, Mr. Nessen brought it up himself. He had checked, he said, and could now report that Gerald Ford "is opposed" to political assassinations. This reopened the whole subject, and soon Mr. Nessen was saying:

"I am not going to be able to answer any other questions on the CIA matter."

"I am not going to be able to answer . . ."

"I am not . . ."

And so on.

More, Not Fewer?

What such episodes demonstrate to some is that the White House, in any administration, will use the briefing to say only what it wants to say, and no more. If so, some reporters argue, why not stop having regular, scheduled briefings, or at least clamp a time limit on each one?

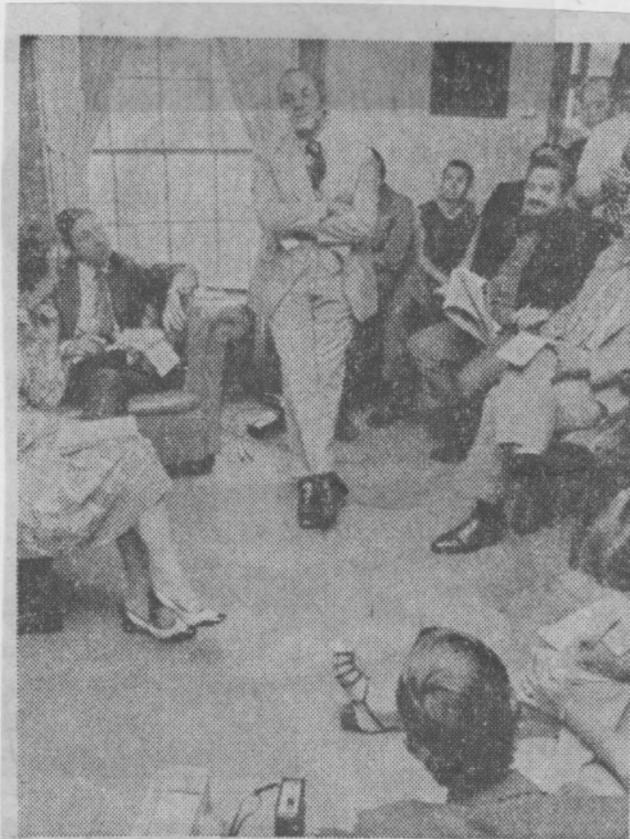
Mr. Nessen rather likes both ideas. "We waste a lot of time at the briefing playing with words," he complains.

Even so, nothing much is likely to come of the ideas for change, because a solid majority of the White House press appears to oppose them. Some reporters, in fact, argue forcefully for more briefings (there once were two a day).

"Our business is to try to get information out, not to acquiesce in anything that would have the potential of cutting information down," says James Deakin of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, a White House reporter since 1954.



July 2, 1975



AP

New briefing format

Ronald H. Nessen (center), the White House press secretary, stood in the midst of reporters yesterday in a change of format at his daily press briefings. Mr. Nessen formerly stood behind a podium on a small stage in the White House Press Room.



From the desk of Pam Conklin

8/27/75

Mr. Nessen:

Per Pam's request, I am enclosing an article from The Vail Trail, August 15, 1975. I am sorry to say, however, that apparently they made a mistake in the printing and it sort of works like a puzzle.

If there's anything else we can do, please don't hesitate to call.

Fran Villa
Secy. to Pam Conklin
Publicity Director



Nessen Speaks to Rotary

By Rusty Pierce

"The most important part of the job is to accurately reflect the President's view."

That's what White House Press Secretary Ron Nessen told the Vail-Eagle Valley Rotary club on Wednesday, Aug. 13.

"No one gives a damn what the press secretary thinks," Nessen said. But, he added, since all reporters could not go to the President every day, it is important that the press secretary reflect what he's thinking. Nessen said he tries to answer questions the way he thinks the President would answer them.

"To do this, I have to be sure I know what the President is thinking," Nessen said.

He said this administration is very good about including him in all the important meetings where opinions and decisions are given.

Other press secretaries have had problems, according to Nessen, when they were cut off and didn't keep up on what the President was thinking.

Nessen said the press secretary's responsibilities are three: to handle the briefing for the press which travels with the President and answer reporters' questions; to handle administrative responsibilities such as the photo operations under David Kennerly, the advance office which makes arrangements for the press advance office which makes arrangements for the press room, given to Ford each morning); and to act as an advisor to the President.

Nessen said the White House is divided into nine operating areas and each is headed by an advisor to the President. One such operating area is the Press Office.

No matter what the topic, the advisors all give their views to the President. This provides a broad range of input from people who are not necessarily experts on the problem.

According to Nessen, Ford reads seven papers daily: the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* in detail, and he scans the *Baltimore Sun*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Daily News*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

In addition he reads the daily news summary which includes

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meeting like greeting a Cottonbowl queen with no change in his outward show of mood.

"He brings the same demeanor to important and to ceremonial meetings," Nessen said.

Henry and Nancy

From - Page 3

the news, editorial cartoons, editorials and columns. Ford works from 7:40 a.m. to about 7:30 p.m. daily after getting up at 5:15 a.m. to exercise and do his reading.

Nessen said the issues appear more complicated from the inside, adding that to a reporter issues are often simplified to black and white, but on the inside, the issues are all shades of gray.

He said Mrs. Ford's interview on *60 Minutes* was typical of the Fords' openness and frankness. "The Fords have been in Washington for 26 or 27 years and that's simply the way they are. It's the way they raise their kids and lead their lives. He would expect her to speak her mind," he said. "This isn't an image. It's simply the way they are."

Nessen, a former reporter, said that after one session with the press corps, he went back to the office in a rage. "I asked someone 'Was I like that?'" They said, "Yes you were."

Nessen said he has tried to learn from the President's even temperament and become thicker-skinned.

He explained the President's even disposition by saying Ford could go from an important top-level meeting to a ceremonial



OCTOBER 9, 1975

DEAR RON:

ENCLOSED: A SKETCH OF YOURSELF ENTITLED:

"RON NESSEN, AT EASE"

IN THE FINNISH MAZAZINE CALLED SUOMEN KUVALEHTI
(FINLAND'S PICTURE MAGAZINE)
DATED AUGUST 8, 1975.

IT SAYS YOU ARE PLANNING A BOOK ON THE PRESIDENT
AS WELL AS ONE ON YOUR YEARS IN VIETNAM. THOUGHT YOU'D
LIKE THE PIECE FOR YOUR SCRAPBOOK. OUTI TRANSLATED,
AND IT WAS "SYMPATHETIC": A GOOD GUY IN A TOUGH JOB.

CLOSE TO ACCURATE, I'D SAY.

Mike Kellerman



Maailman lehtimiehet sormi näppäimellä

RONALD NESSEN, LEPO!

● Turvakokous merkitsi kirjoituskoneiden ja kameroiden sarjatulua.

● Etulinjassa olivat amerikkalaiset lehtimiehet, joita johti Ronald Nessen, Valkoisen talon lehdistösihteeri.

●● Etyk veti Helsinkiin maailman lehdistön terävän pään ja terävimmät kielet. Näkyvimpinä ja kuuluvimpina amerikkalaiset.

NBC-televisioyhtiön edustaja ajoi Mannerheimintietä mustan limousinen takapenkillä aurinkolasit silmillä ja siikaari suupielessä.

»Get away you fatheads», »pois tieltä paksupäät» kiljuivat tikkailla keikkuvat kameramiehet lentokentällä, kun gorillan varjo lankesi kuvauskohteen ylle.

Siinä missä amerikkalainen lehdistö näkyi ja kuului, neuvostoliittolainen ahkeroi hiljaisesti. Kuten Pravdan kirjeenvaihtaja *Juri Kuznetsov*, joka sujuvalla ruotsin kielellä ilmaisi tyytyväisyytensä niin järjestelyjen kuin itse kokouksenkin suhteen.

Fordin kuuma linja lehdistöön

Valkoisen talon lehdistösihteeri *Ronald Nessen*, 41, kaitsi

150-paistä uutisnälkäisten laumaa.

Nessenin epäkiitollinen tehtävä on solmia edeltäjän, Nixonin lehdistösihteerin *Ronald Zieglerin* purkamat hermoherkät langat 1500:aan Valkoiseen taloon akkreditoituun lehtimieheen.

Lehdistösihteeri on kuuma linja presidentin ja lehdistön välillä, ja ylikuumetessaan Ron Nessen kimpaantuu temperamenttikaasti.

Helsingissä kiireiseltä Nesseniltä kuitenkin liikenä aikaa myös rapujen syöntiin ja saunomiseen.

Nessen työskenteli viisi vuotta UPI:n kirjeenvaihtajana ja kaksitoista vuotta NBC-televisioyhtiön toimittajana ennen saapumistaan Valkoiseen taloon.

Fordin varapresidenttikauden aikaisilla matkoilla solmittu henkilökohtainen ystävyys avasi Nessenille uuden uran. Ford ja Nessen jakavat yhteisen mieltymyksen päkinäjäätelöön ja martiniin kahdella oliivilla.

Ronald Nessen, Valkoisen talon lehdistösihteeri.

Ja kumpikin on huolissaan painonnoususta.

Lehdistösihteeri tapaa presidenttiä päivittäin vähintään tunnin ajan.

Työpäivä on rankka, aamun puoli seitsemästä iltayhdeksään. Ron Nessenin apuna on toistakymmentä henkeä käsittävä sihteeristö ja kaksi henkilökohtaista sihteeriä.

– Kaikki presidentin lähimmät miehet joutuvat tekemään valinnan yksityiselämän ja karräärin välillä.

– Entiselle lehtimiehelle on kokemus päästä tarkkailijan asemasta osallistujaksi, Nessen sanoo.

Ronald Nessen tietää, ettei kyseessä ole elinikäinen työ. Hän aikoo myöhemmin kirjoittaa kirjan Gerald Fordista ja Valkoisesta talosta.

Presidentti Kennedyn lehdistösihteeri *Pierre Salinger* löi rahoiksi Valkoisen talon kokeuksillaan.

Nixonin lehdistösihteeri *Ronald Ziegler* taas on häipynyt julkisuudesta tultuaan ulosbuuatuksi luennoilta, joita hän piti yliopistossa 3000 dollarin tuntimaksusta.

Ron Nessenillä on myös kaunokirjallisia suunnitelmia. Hän sanoo kuuluneensa siihen nuorison sukupolveen, jonka haaveena on ollut kirjoittaa suuri amerikkalainen romaanin. Nessen aikoo tilittää elä-

mänsä kymmenen tärkeätä vuotta Vietnamissa.

»Ford tavallinen, Kissinger vaikea»

Nessen tuntee Gerald Fordin sekä presidenttinä että yksityishenkilönä.

– Tavallinen mies, jolla on erittäin paljon persoonallista viehätysvoimaa, sanoo Nessen Fordista.

– Kissinger on henkilönä vaikeampi, hän on Fordin politiikan tekniikko, joka yrittää nähdä historiaa sekä eteen- että taaksepäin.

Ron Nessen viihtyy suomalaisessa saunassa sisäjärven rannalla kaksi tuntia. Ilman kiirettä ja hälyä, mutta piipittävä kutsumalaite kuitenkin käden ulottuvilla.

Myös presidentti Ford on inokas saunoja, hän voi saunoa sekä Valkoisessa talossa että Camp Davidissa ja Coloradosa sijaitsevilla asunnoissaan.

Löyly on tarpeen, kun presidentti Ford, amerikkalainen valtuuskunta ja lehdistö viimein palaavat tiukalta Euroopan kiertueeltaan mielessä muisto myös suomalaisesta helteestä ja jäätelöstä. □



Jack Ford, 23

Isän tueksi politiikkaan

● Presidentti Fordin mukana saapui Suomeen hänen poikansa Jack, 23. Entuudestaan tiedetään, että Jack pitää luonnosta, urheilusta ja kauniista tytöistä. Nyt Jack Ford on astunut politiikkaan. Runsaan vuoden tästä eteenpäin hän työskentelee isänsä vaalikampanjan hyväksi.



Jack Ford

● Myös David Kissinger, 14, seurasi isänsä Suomeen. — David parka, sanovat päätään puistellen ne, jotka seuraavat hänen elämäänsä läheltä.

●● Jack Ford seisoskelee rauhallisena Kalastajatorpan nurmikolla: — Seuraavat viisitoista kuukautta työskentelen isäni vaalikampanjan hyväksi, hän kertoo.

Miten paljon luulet voitavasi auttaa isääsi?
— Paljonkin. Presidentti ei ehdi tarpeeksi kiertää tapamassa ihmisiä. Minä voin matkustaa hänen puolestaan.

Ja pidät puheita?
— Pidän myös puheita, mutta enemmän uskon vaikuttamiseen pienissä ryhmissä, kuin puheisiin suuren yleisön edessä.

● Millä tavoin mielipiteenne eroavat?

— Minä olen jyrkempi. Isä tekee enemmän kompromisseja kuin minä tekisin. Hän on

realistinen, minä olen idealistisempi.

Ja hän tietysti sanoo sinulle, että olet idealistinen, koska olet niin nuori...?

— Juuri niin, Jack Ford virnistää. Ilta-aurinko välähtää hänen piilolaseissaan.

— Itse asiassa väittelemme aika usein poliittisista kysymyksistä, esimerkiksi aterioilla.

Miten suuri on perheen merkitys vaalikampanjassa?

— Amerikassa se on suuri. Sillä perhe on miehen tuki, hänen taustavoimansa.

Uskotko itse tähän perheen voimaan?

— Ehdottomasti. Kun minä rakastun, menen naimisiin ja haluan kunnollisen perheen tueksi.

Mutta vielä et ole rakastunut?

— No, ei tässä oikein ole ollut aikaa...

● *Miten sinun elämäsi muuttui kun isästäsi tuli presidentti?*

— Se muuttui vähän liikaa. Minusta tällainen asema on aika epäoikeudenmukainen nuorille ihmisille. Tunnen olevani liian nuori kantamaan tällaista vastuuta, kaikkialla edustan perhettämme.

— Jos se olisi minusta kiinni isän homma saisi loppua saman tien.

Mutta kuitenkin alat juuri työskennellä isäsi vaalikampanjassa?

— Niin. Mutta äskeinen oli henkilökohtainen ongelmani. Uskon isääni presidenttinä, työskentelen hänen hyväkseen, koska katson, että se on meidän maallemme eduksi.

● *Aiotko heittäytyä politiikkaan vai palaatko omalle alallesi metsätieteen pariin vaalikampanjan jälkeen?*

— Tätä ei sopisi sanoa vaalikampanjan aikana, mutta olen ajatellut muuttaa tänne Suomeen, tämä on mainio maa, Jack kuiskaa.

— Ei, rehellisesti sanottuna en tosiaankaan tiedä vielä mitä teen.

Oletko suuri luonnonystävä niin kuin väitetään?

— Olen. Aion perustaa kotini vuorille ja kesämökin kaupunkiin, jossa käväisen silloin tällöin.

Metsästäkö?

— Kyllä, mutta vain sen minä syön.

● Rouva Fordin lehdistösihteeri, viehättävä tummasilmäinen Sheila Weidenfeld koskettaa kepeästi Jackin hihaa.

— Jack, luulen että meidän pitäisi...

Jack Ford pudistelee päätään.

— Kuule älä kysy minulta minun ohjelmaani, kysy Sheilalta. Minua vain viedään.

Jack lähti hoitamaan PR-tehtävänsä.

Puhutaan, että uutta kritiikkiä on tullut hänen mukanaan Valkoiseen taloon.

Puhutaan myös lehtikuvasta, jossa Jackin käsi oli Bianca Jaggerin ympärillä.

Joka tapauksessa hän on ainoa Fordin lapsista, joka on lähtenyt mukaan politiikkaan. □

David

Kissinger, 14

Pieni aikuinen

●● David Kissinger levähti torstaina Hvitträskin museon puistossa. Tapasimme. Tuikea turvallisuusmies vaihtoi uhkaavasti jalkaa.

— Museo oli hyvin mielenkiintoinen. En ole tehnyt Suomessa mitään erityistä. Olen tutustunut Helsinkiin.

— En ole tavannut suomalaisia nuoria. Olisin kyllä halunnut.

Sanoo David ja hymyilee hiukan vaivautuneesti.

David on vaalea painos isästään Henry Kissingeristä. Voimakkaine piirteinen hän näyttää enemmän pieneltä aikuiselta kuin pikkupojalta. Hän on neljäntoista ja käy koulua.

David oli eri mieltä isänsä Vietnamin politiikasta. Hän on erittäin älykäs, lukijatyyppi, ujo ja sulkeutunut. Harrastaa historiaa ja shakkia.

Ja ETYK:n ajaksi sattuneen syntymäpäivänsä David-parka sai viettää yksin hotellihuoneessa. Turvallisuusmiehen vartioimana. □



David Kissinger



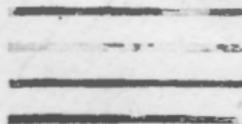
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mutual broadcasting system

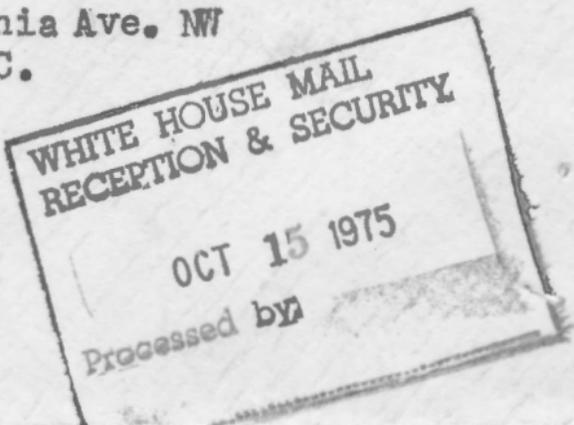
mutual black network

World Center Building, 918 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

c/o Mike Kellerman



Mr. Ron Nessen
Press Secretary
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C.



Ol' Jerry Passes (Our) Buck

He Delays Until Next Week A Decision on Aid to City

Washington, Nov. 19 (News Bureau) — President Ford today put off until next week a decision on supporting federal aid to New York City, but he implied that if the State Legislature approves new tax increases and budget cuts he would give the go-ahead for government aid.

At the same time, however, he said he would veto what he called "bail-out" legislation now before the House.

"I am convinced that if New York continues to move toward fiscal responsibility, all parties concerned can look forward to a satisfactory resolution despite the current obstacles," Ford said.

Ford's eagerly awaited statement, handed out to reporters at the White House shortly before noon, stunned and angered House members who had been working to push through a New York aid bill acceptable to the President.

Pre-Default Aid

Both Democratic and Republican House leaders, who support such a measure, had expected Ford to signal his support of some kind of pre-default federal aid to New York, although it would be strictly conditioned on the State Legislature's action.

Instead, the President — reportedly ignoring the strong recommendations of his top economic advisers — branded the pending House and bill "irrelevant" and called again for enactment of his proposal to revise the federal bankruptcy statute to

Statement by Ford

Washington, Nov. 19 (News Bureau)—Here is the text of President Ford's statement today on New York city's financial problems:

I am gratified that the leaders of New York appear to have accepted primary responsibility for solving the financial problems of the city and are proceeding in the direction of a long-term solution in accordance with the State Constitution and laws. I am impressed with the seriousness of their intentions as described by Gov. Carey in his letter to Secretary Simon and await further concrete actions by the State and the other parties concerned.

The bail-out bill now before the House of Representatives is irrelevant because it does not address the current situation, and I would veto it.

I am convinced that if New York continues to move toward fiscal responsibility, all parties concerned can look forward to a satisfactory resolution despite the current obstacles:

If they continue to make progress, I will review the situation early next week to see if any legislation is appropriate at the federal level.

In the meantime, should New York leaders fail to implement their intentions, New York City could still be forced into legal default. Therefore, I am asking the Congress once again to enact special amendments to the Federal bankruptcy laws which would insure that such a default, if it occurs, would be orderly.

ensure that a New York default, "if it occurs, would be orderly.

Immediately after Ford's statement, Chairman Henry S. Reuss D-Wis. of the House Banking Committee, which drafted the \$3 billion loan guarantee bill that Ford promised today to veto, withdrew the measure from the House floor until after 10-day the Thanksgiving recess. The legislation had been pulled back Temporary Twice before, in anticipation of Ford's statement.

Early December

With the House set to recess Friday, this meant that Congress can pass no aid for New York until early December.

Gov. Carey, who along with Mayor Beame was in Washington today to press for the aid bill, conceded that the city can probably stave off default until Dec. 11. But the governor warned that the city probably will have to endure at least one pay-

less payday, on Thursday, Dec. 4 or even earlier.

Carey said he would return to Albany "and have the Legislature take the further legislative steps which I pledged to make." While Carey said he was "thankful" that Ford's statement took note of austerity measures approved by the state, Carey clearly was angered that Ford did not endorse a specific aid measure today.

"My Word Is Good"

"My pledge, I thought, was enough," Carey told reporters. "He (Ford) knows my word is good."

But Ford wanted more than the governor's word, or so his statement indicated.

Declaring that he was "gratified" that New York officials "appear to have accepted primary responsibility" for solving their financial problems, and that he was "impressed with the seriousness of their intentions,"

(Continued on page 37, col. 1)



Associated Press Wirephoto

Press Secretary Ron Nessen as he briefed reporters on President Ford's statement at the White House yesterday.

Carey, Still Hopeful, Scores Ford's Lack of Decisiveness

By THOMAS POSTER

Albany, Nov. 19 (News Bureau)—Gov. Carey accused President Ford tonight of a lack of decisiveness and leadership in dealing with New York's fiscal crisis, but said he still has not given up hope of help from Washington.

"We had hoped for a go-ahead, but at least the stop sign has changed from red to amber," Carey told reporters on arriving back here after a two-day absence.

Still, the weight of Carey's statement came down negatively on the President. "I'm disappointed in President Ford's statement," he said. "I looked for decisive leadership, and we expected him to take decisive steps. He didn't do it."

He Wants More Taxes

Carey said he would push for a combination city and state tax plan that would include his own \$867 million in proposed state levies. But, unlike State Assembly Speaker, Stanley Steingut (D-Brooklyn) and Lt. Gov. Mary Anne Krupsak, Carey would not rule out a possible one-cent increase in the city sales tax. "It's a last resort," the governor said.

Carey also said that he would dig up \$150 million in state aid for the city, calling it "a commitment," but would not hazard

where he would get the money. He said he would discuss the matter with State Controller Arthur Levitt.

Meanwhile, in Washington, members of New York City's delegation in Congress voiced

dismay at Ford's hands-off-for-now statement on the city's fiscal crisis.

"If the consequence of what he (Ford) has done is to force

(Continued on page 37, col. 2)

Naked Political Act on Almost Naked City

By JAMES WIEGHART

Washington, Nov. 19 — President Ford's decision to leave New York City teetering on the brink of bankruptcy for yet another week is just a further example of the former Grand Rapids congressman's penchant for engaging in small-bore politics.

Never mind that his continued use of New York's fiscal agony as a political ploy is creating dangerous uncertainty

in the nation's stock, money, and state and municipal-bond markets.

Never mind that continued delay is jeopardizing the intricate and complex



\$6.6 billion New York austerity plan so painfully put together by Gov. Carey, and raising the possibility that it will unravel before the State Legislature or Congress can act. Never mind that Ford's own economic advisers, mindful

of these very real dangers, have been urging Ford since last week to go forward with a recommendation for a \$2.5 billion federal loan-guarantee package for New York. Ford is not really looking to his economic counselors for advice on New York. Instead, he is relying on the political instincts that served him so well in the back rooms on Capitol Hill for 25 years, and on the counsel he is receiving from political kibitzers like Robert Hartmann and Richard Cheney.

Ford has used New York as a politi-

(Continued on page 4, col. 2)

George Beveridge

White House and the badgers

The National Press Club's new report on relationships between the Ford White House and the press offers nothing very dramatic: Things are infinitely better than during the dispiriting Nixon days. But there's still rancor and discord at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Especially with presidential spokesman Ron Nessen.

This should rattle no coffee cups anywhere. The Nixon White House was open warfare, an armed camp of mutual distrust and dislike between those who made the news and those who wrote it. On the day Gerald R. Ford took office, to quiet applause, he pledged a new era of "openness and candor." Well, the bloom on that rose predictably has faded. And no newspaper reader needs to be told that Nessen, never really a favorite, has become increasingly insufferable to some of the news people who daily deal with him.

If the NPC report lacks the high drama of startling new revelations, though, it does give readers a worthwhile glimpse of the press consensus on how this immensely intricate power struggle works, or ought to.

Ford gets high marks, for example, for scheduling regular press conferences (23 during his first 16 months in office as against 37 during Nixon's 5½ years), for granting numerous personal interviews and for restoring more "civility" to the conflict.

But for all the gains, the report says, Ford's "openness and candor" still falls short of his promises: He ducks too many tough questions; his top associates



RON NESSEN

share the fault, especially in refusing to provide vital information when the press needs it.

Then there's Nessen. Not entirely all negative here, either. His aides, and from some newsmen Nessen himself, get good grades for trying. According to an assortment of quotes from the White House press regulars, however, the head of the press office too often is ill-prepared with the facts he's supposed to impart, too often irascible, arrogant, preachy, excessively cute with the quips, "weak as a kitten" on foreign affairs — but also, some reporters suspect, simply not sufficiently clued in to the real policy decisions to be able to do the kind of job that a Jim Hagerty, for example, who was a close personal confidante of Eisenhower, could do for the press in the '50s.

The five-page press club report, splendidly brief, suggests some possibly useful ideas to beef up Nes-

sen's operation. It also urges Ford to issue an executive order directing his entire administration to comply with his "openness" pledge.

Whether that proposition has a chance of getting anywhere, and whether any good would result if it did, I have no idea. Perhaps the more realistic hope is that Ford might take the time to think about what's obviously intended to be a thoughtful, conciliatory expression of press concern and to do something about it in his own way.

The concerns aren't frivolous. The White House commodity the NPC is talking about is instant news, and the corps of White House reporters operate under the most competitive deadline pressures in the business. This means that the fuller explanations they can get on complex issues for instant digestion, the better — not only for the reporters and their readers but for the government.

There's another side to the coin, of course, which the report only touches on: The press isn't all-pure in its own need for improvement. NBC's Tom Brokaw suggests in the study that "we need to remind ourselves more often that we're covering a politician, not a monarch."

Observing that while the press office too often is not well informed, the New York Times' James Naughton also wonders whether the reporters are doing a better job. "They are putting up more bluster in the open," he says, "but as far as general enterprise is concerned it is no better and no worse than before."

Nor, for that matter, are the tensions and conflicts abounding in the report all bad. In truth, the criticisms probably reflect something pretty close to what the natural condition at the White House should be.

An adversary relationship does exist between the pressroom and the press office. The reporter's job is to badger, to push for more facts than he ever is likely to get, and to view what he does get with a healthy measure of suspicion. The day to beware of, in that sense, is the day the press club or any other voice of the media reports that everything at the White House is peachy keen. For what that will mean is that the government is serving up pablum on a platter and that the press is accepting it.

There's a lot of room for improvement. Nessen, in a moment of candor some months ago, conceded he was too thin-skinned for his own good in his dealings with the press. There was no better instance of it than his silly complaint this week that the widespread publication of pictures of Ford taking a tumble on the ski slopes tended to depict him as clumsy, to his political detriment.

The ski photo, of course, was perfectly legitimate news. More to the point, the guess here is that its publication carried nothing but political gain for Ford among skiers and non skiers alike.

The President may have an occasional problem with steps.

He doesn't have a thing to worry about on skis

Jan 2 - Wash. Star



The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

F.Y.I.

IN THE WANING days of the Eisenhower administration, a television producer devoted a long program to what was then an unusual subject: White House correspondents, their lives and thoughts. You can measure how far we have come in relations between Presidents and the press merely by savoring for a second the title of the program, "The White House Boswells." Any notion today that the White House press corps is composed of adoring biographers of a President is will-o'-the-wisp. Not only has the relationship of press to President changed substantially, but so has the concomitant relationship between press and press secretary. Once there was a certain civility that governed these relationships. But time, Vietnam, Watergate and myriad modern phenomena appear to have wiped that civility away, possibly for a very long time.

Where once the atmosphere was adversary, it is now frequently acrimonious, hostile for the sake of hostility and mean-spirited for no reason that any of the participants can lucidly and persuasively articulate. We take this topic up—For Your Information, and as a part of our occasional effort to enlighten you about the workings of our business—because both sides appear to believe they are acting in your interests as reader, viewer, citizen, voter. And we have a document that—without exactly solving anything—offers an illuminating case study of the problem.

The document is a study, conducted over an 8-month period by the National Press Club, the second it has conducted in a little less than three years on the quality of the relationship between White House and press. Simply to say the document is at times unfriendly to the White House will not be as persuasive as this sample excerpt: "Press Secretary Ron Nessen, who has consistently had grave problems with foreign affairs, plunged to his nadir on the recent China trip by what many White House reporters believe was the most inept performance in modern times in handling the press relations of a president's mission overseas." To add emphasis, Mr. Nessen was advised to improve on his "disastrous nonperformance." Mr. Ford, although credited with improving relations with the press over what they were under Richard Nixon, is nonetheless chided for lapses of candor.

Disturbingly, at no point does the report provide for a direct White House rebuttal, either from Mr. Nessen or from the President. There is a passage from a Nessen speech but that is not at all the same thing as giving Mr. Nessen an opportunity to explain, for example, what factors—such as the cooperation he had from the President or other officials—may have contributed to his problems in China. But that is not the most serious flaw in this report. The flaw that strikes the reader im-

mediately is that the White House press corps seems in this report to assume a few things that good reporters have no right to assume. One of these is that press secretaries are merely an adjunct to good reporting. In the main, press secretaries, wherever they are found, are dedicated to the business of promoting, or at the very least, protecting, the image of those who pay their wages. They are not, by and large, to be mistaken for dutiful, or even reliable purveyors of news, on the record or off.

At one point in the Press Club report, there is this astonishing statement: "...a press secretary must probe within the White House to learn what is going on and we are not persuaded that Nessen has done all he could in that regard." Well, for our part, you could make that statement read: "...a White House reporter must probe within the White House to learn, etc." Somewhere along the line, the idea seems to have taken hold, in some reporters' minds, that the press office is a service for them, like transportation or hotel accommodations, to be complained about when found lacking as one would lodge a protest with the assistant night manager.

Somewhere between Vietnam and Watergate, that is to say between the Kennedy administration and the Nixon administration, the press office bureaucracy grew by leaps and bounds. People began expecting things of that operation that they could probably have done very well without—reams of statistics on demand, background on this and that, access at times to remote figures in the administration, and the like. There was a time when reporters routinely found those things on their own. They didn't travel in herds, but worked the phones or made connections and developed sources who gave them information not available in open briefings or in clean mimeographed form.

Much is responsible for the creation of the herd. Television, for one. When the networks put a story on the air, the individual newspaper reporter is under great pressure from the home office to duplicate it, or explain why not. The group effort has meant homogenized news and less of the individual reporting that is based on a long afternoon trudging around from source to source. As a result, to quote one White House reporter, "The (daily press) briefings have taken on a life of their own. They have become the source for daily stories that don't reflect what's going on. They have become a dueling exercise..."

Needless to say, a dueling exercise sometimes draws responses that help the reader understand the recession, detente or Angola. But that has never been enough; perhaps the next time the National Press Club sets out to study a local problem in the press, it might want to examine the current state of old fashioned reportorial enterprise.

Countering the Media Image With Ford's Stumble Diplomacy

By Art Buchwald

Ron Nessen has been complaining about the clumsy image the media has been giving President Ford. Angered by the press coverage devoted to Mr. Ford's fall in the snow while skiing, Nessen told reporters it was "the most unconscionable misrepresentation of a President" he'd ever heard of.

He went on to say that President Ford was the "best co-ordinated President in history."

Now any press secretary worth his salt should know you don't get anywhere by complaining about the image the media is presenting of a President. What you do is turn an act of clumsiness into one of

skill and dexterity.

I don't like to tell the White House press secretary how to run his business, but this would have been a much better way to handle the situation.

Capitol Punishment

The afternoon briefing at Vail:

Q—Ron, we have a report that the President fell while skiing today. What do you have on that?

A—Yes, the President fell as planned this afternoon in six inches of snow near a large Aspen tree.

Q—As planned, Ron?

A—That's correct. Before he left

Washington, the President made plans to fall just once so all the photographers would get the only picture they had made the trip for.

Q—You mean the President didn't have to fall?

A—He certainly didn't. As you know, the President is the best skier who ever lived in the White House.

But despite this it took great skill to fall exactly where the photographers were stationed. His Secret Servicemen were against it, but the President overruled them. The President said, "If I don't fall down once while I'm skiing, everyone will think I'm not a nice guy."

Q—Ron, when the President left for his skiing trip from the White House lawn, he tripped over the leashes of his dogs. Was

that planned also?

A—Well, I'll be frank with you. I asked the President to trip over the dogs' leashes because we were trying to give you fellows a story for the afternoon papers. I knew the President wasn't going to make any news going to Vail for Christmas. But I was certain if he tripped over his dogs' leashes it would make the front pages—and I was right.

Q—Ron, are you trying to tell us that everytime the President stumbles, it is thought out in advance?

A—Let's say it's discussed beforehand. As you know, Mr. Ford is the most co-ordinated President we've ever had, so we don't want him to stumble too often. But when the occasion arises where we think a slip or a fall will help his image,

we urge him to do it.

Q—Whose idea was it for the President to fall down the steps getting off the plane in Salzburg last June?

A—Henry Kissinger's. He wanted to show President Sadat that we weren't putting pressure on him.

Q—So you feel President Ford's fall at Salzburg turned President Sadat around?

A—Well, the Suez Canal is now open, isn't it?

Q—Wouldn't you say the President was deceiving the American people by stumbling when he doesn't have to?

A—On the contrary, I think it helps his credibility. The difference between Mr. Ford and former President Nixon is that we

only found out how badly they stumbled after they left office. President Ford has insisted the public know about his stumbling while he's still in the White House. Don't forget the President stumbled into his job, and since it worked then it should help him with his election.

Q—Is that it, Ron?

A—I heard a funny joke about the President the other day. It's really a Polish joke, but we switched it around to fit Mr. Ford. Would you like to hear it? Well, anyhow, there was a power failure at the White House and Mr. Ford was stuck on an escalator for three hours. Ha, ha, ha. I'll pass on any new ones to you as soon as I hear them.

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January 6 - Tuesday





Washington Letter

Ron Nessen on the griddle

By Godfrey Sperling Jr.

Washington

In an informal questioning of some veteran Washington correspondents over the past several weeks this question was asked: "Do you think the White House press corps is operating in a way that would prevent another Watergate — should something like that actually be going on behind the scenes?" The answer was always a "no," with the observer adding that the hard pressure being exerted by the White House press on Ron Nessen at the daily briefings certainly would not uncover anything of the dimensions of Watergate and that, in fact, this continual biting away at the press secretary was probably productive of very little.

The Washington Post, in a lead editorial on the press vs. Nessen, concludes that while such a "dueling exercise" does sometimes draw responses that are helpful to public understanding of issues, there was a question that needed examination: "the current state of old-fashioned reportorial enterprise." It does seem evident that, if reporters really want to help prevent future "Watergates," they need to be investigating other government offices — and not just pressing the White House press secretary for answers.

The man who really lives in the pressure chamber of the daily briefings, sometimes called the "bear pit" by reporters who attend, is Mr. Nessen. He is the one who is almost continually being pushed, nagged, and even insulted as reporters seek to get more information out of him. In many questions there are assumptions: that Nessen is holding out, that he is misinforming, that he hasn't done his homework, and even that he is devious.

There is also the continuing assumption that the President's press secretary is also the reporters' press secretary. And this simply is not true. Mr. Nessen works for Mr. Ford, and his main function is to represent Mr. Ford with the press. He essentially is an "information" officer, which is another way of saying he is a "public-relations" officer for the President — with all the connotations that term may contain.

A good reporter knows that a public-relations officer says what the person he represents wants him to say — and what he has been directed to say. And no more. And he knows the official has to put it in terms as favorable to the person he represents as possible. All this goes with the job. And it has gone with the White House press secretary job from the beginning. Only, before Watergate,

reporters lived more comfortably with this reality.

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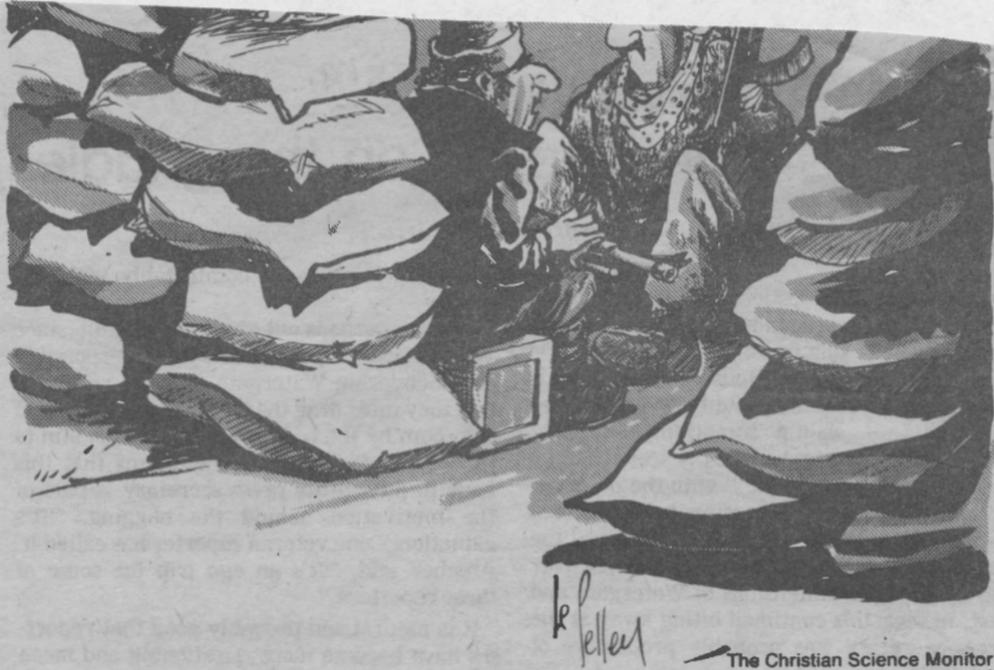
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Mr. Sperling is chief of the Washington bureau of *The Christian Science Monitor*.



The Christian Science Monitor

Mirror of opinion

Decision unfair to Nixon

Even the most virulent critics of Richard Nixon must feel misgivings about a federal court decision denying him control and custody of his presidential tapes and papers.

It is hard to believe the U.S. Supreme Court will uphold a ruling which discriminates so blatantly against one former president among many and which, by the lower court's own admission, constitutes an invasion of privacy.

True, Mr. Nixon played a devious role in Watergate. But Watergate is one issue and the question of the custody of White House papers quite another. It makes no sense to punish Mr. Nixon's sins by passing retributive laws and establishing bad legal precedents that will affect future presidencies.

Mr. Nixon argued, most persuasively, that the law seizing his tapes and papers violated the confidentiality which presidents must enjoy when discussing important issues with advisers. If presidents cannot feel secure against future violation of that confidentiality, the making of public policy will suffer.

Besides invading his presidential privileges, he contended, the act violated his rights of privacy, free speech and free association, amounted to an unconstitutional search and seizure, and denied him equal protection of the laws.

The three-judge federal court shrugged off most of these arguments all too easily. It agreed that the law posed a "not insignificant" invasion of privacy but suggested that such an invasion could be justified on the grounds that Mr. Nixon might distort or destroy the documents if he got his hands on them.

First, if Mr. Nixon were inclined to destroy incriminating documents, he would probably still be sitting in the White House. He could easily have destroyed those Watergate tapes before they destroyed him. He didn't.

Second, a court walks on thin legal ice indeed when it approves the punishment of any person on the vague fear of an offense he may commit at some future time. With dismaying regularity these days, common criminals, demonstrably guilty, are turned loose by the courts on grounds of unreasonable search and seizure. Now we are told that Mr. Nixon's rights may be violated because of possible future misconduct.

Surely the Supreme Court will be able to find a better solution — one which protects the public's interest in key documents but at the same time protects the presidency and Mr. Nixon's rights — or most of them — as a citizen and former president.

We repeat a suggestion made once before in this space. Only about 1 percent of the presidential materials in question are connected with Watergate. Why not order Mr. Nixon to meet with a judicial panel and segregate these materials? He could make copies of the Watergate documents, leave the originals of those documents with the government for public access, and take with him the remaining materials, in which the public has no immediate and compelling interest.

Such a compromise would leave Mr. Nixon's rights largely intact and should satisfy those who want Watergate materials. It would not, of course, satisfy those whose interest in the case is purely vindictive. — **The Detroit News**



Washington Letter

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
MONITOR - 1/19/76

Ron Nessen on the griddle

By Godfrey Sperling Jr.

Washington

In an informal questioning of some veteran Washington correspondents over the past several weeks this question was asked: "Do you think the White House press corps is operating in a way that would prevent another Watergate — should something like that actually be going on behind the scenes?" The answer was always a "no," with the observer adding that the hard pressure being exerted by the White House press on Ron Nessen at the daily briefings certainly would not uncover anything of the dimensions of Watergate and that, in fact, this continual biting away at the press secretary was probably productive of very little.

The Washington Post, in a lead editorial on the press vs. Nessen, concludes that while such a "dueling exercise" does sometimes draw responses that are helpful to public understanding of issues, there was a question that needed examination: "the current state of old-fashioned reportorial enterprise." It does seem evident that, if reporters really want to help prevent future "Watergates," they need to be investigating other government offices — and not just pressing the White House press secretary for answers.

The man who really lives in the pressure chamber of the daily briefings, sometimes called the "bear pit" by reporters who attend, is Mr. Nessen. He is the one who is almost continually being pushed, nagged, and even insulted as reporters seek to get more information out of him. In many questions there are assumptions: that Nessen is holding out, that he is misinforming, that he hasn't done his homework, and even that he is devious.

There is also the continuing assumption that the President's press secretary is also the reporters' press secretary. And this simply is not true. Mr. Nessen works for Mr. Ford, and his main function is to represent Mr. Ford with the press. He essentially is an "information" officer, which is another way of saying he is a "public-relations" officer for the President — with all the connotations that term may contain.

A good reporter knows that a public-relations officer says what the person he represents wants him to say — and what he has been directed to say. And no more. And he knows the official has to put it in terms as favorable to the person he represents as possible. All this goes with the job. And it has gone with the White House press secretary job from the beginning. Only, before Watergate,

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Mr. Sperling is chief of the Washington bureau of The Christian Science Monitor.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

NOTE FOR: *Connie G*

FROM : RON NESSEN

File

R na



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PASSAGE THROUGH INDIAN
WHIP OF THE NEW RAJ

VED P. NANDA

Indira Gandhi and the
Village Bosses JAMES MANOR

Organizing the Military
'The Union Wants to Join You'

DAVID CORTRIGHT

Borges: Literature and Politics / Gene H. Bell



society. From now on Americans in uniform would be professionals, people who had freely chosen to serve the colors and therefore subject to unquestioned discipline. But, as David Cortright points out in this issue (p. 206), things have not developed in the tranquil way the brass foresaw. Instead, unionization of soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen is now a real possibility and the old-time chain of command may soon be tied in bureaucratic knots.

The whole idea of military men as union members is a fantastic one for veterans of past service in war or peace. Unquestioning obedience and no inherent "rights" were the order of the day for what the British call "other ranks." Now it seems that, as an unforeseen consequence of the volunteer force, the allegiance of the men in uniform has been divided between obedience to the hierarchy of command and the prudent self-interest of the ranks as a collectivity. At least two labor unions are working hard to take advantage of this split. They seem to be making progress despite a generally horrified reaction on the part of the military authorities.

The union working most diligently to organize the servicemen, the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is hardly a firebrand organization. It is conservative, "management"-minded and concentrated on material benefits for its members. Its president, Clyde Webber, says his union's aims are "limited to the more pragmatic" ("economic") side of life in the armed services, and Cortright quotes his curious remark that "questions of war and peace 'must be relegated to the aggregate of the American public opinion.'" In this era of Presidential wars, when not even Congress has had much to say about war and peace, that statement will have a certain resonance in the Pentagon's brass section.

An all-volunteer force, it must be said, was not the Pentagon's idea. In fact, the Defense Department fought the notion for years and accepted it reluctantly only when it became politically inevitable. The services' great fear was that, without conscription as a spur to enlistment, they

would never be able to raise enough manpower. As it turned out, a pay scale lavish by any former standard, combined with high unemployment, made military service attractive enough to more than fill the ranks. If the unions succeed in organizing the men in uniform to any great degree, pay and benefits are certain to rise still further. (Can one imagine a strike by, say, members of the Seventh Army in Germany as their union bargains with Gen. Alexander Haig over pay and "working conditions?")

Many opponents of the all-volunteer concept, including ourselves, resisted it in part because they feared the effects of a professional military force isolated from the rest of the society and subject to the orders of an almost unchecked Commander in Chief in the White House. The specter of career soldiers, led by career officers and with interests separate from those of the rest of us, carried the mind back to earlier republics overthrown by military castes. That we ended up with such a military force is largely attributable to the reluctance of the American middle class, as represented in Congress, to do its share of the dull and dirty work of "national security." It was a kind of cop-out in which the educated and affluent chose to leave the task of national defense to the uneducated and relatively poor, and it was a bad bargain, socially and politically.

Nevertheless, the all-volunteer system is in place and it is impossible to imagine the country going back to a conscription system except in the case of a major (and this time constitutionally "declared") war. One of the consequences of the present arrangement is the growing movement to organize the military along labor union lines, to make soldiers and sailors just a part of the federal bureaucracy. The effects of this on the combat efficiency of the American armed forces are still not clear. But, as Cortright notes, one result may be to reconnect the enlisted ranks in the military to the society at large, thus checking a possible dangerous drift toward a kind of praetorian independence.

PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY

THE IMPERIAL FRONT MAN

CARROLL KILPATRICK

Among the agencies of government whose powers and responsibilities have grown far beyond the original expectation or intent, the office of Presidential press secretary is the one that most persistently intrudes itself on the public's attention. Now, as frequently happens to such runaway agencies, it is attracting critical notice. A recent study by the Professional Relations Committee of the National Press Club concluded that the White House should undertake a "re-examination" of the "proper role of the press secretary as an official government 'spokesman.'" The committee said that the press secretary in recent administrations had become the "victim of manipulation" by senior policy officials. The Press Club committee gave no guidance as to how a "re-examination" should be

conducted or where it should lead, except to say that it supported "the principle of direct and sustained access to policy level officials—particularly the President, the assistant to the President for national security affairs and the chief of staff."

Nearly every Washington correspondent—and many high officials—would agree that the White House press secretary's role as government spokesman is in urgent need of re-examination. The Constitution says nothing about a press secretary; indeed, there is nothing in the Constitution to suggest that a President must speak to the press. But in recent years the press secretary has become one of the most important voices in government. As well as being the liaison between the White House and the Washington

Carroll Kilpatrick was for many years the White House correspondent of The Washington Post.

reporters, he often acts as spokesman for the entire government, speaking for agencies about which he has little knowledge. He does not take precedence over a Cabinet officer in the protocol lists, but many White House press secretaries have exercised more power than a Cabinet officer. Today, few members of the Cabinet would challenge the press secretary's authority to tell them how to conduct themselves in public.

In the first 150 years of the Republic there was no such thing as a White House press secretary. Joseph Tumulty, Wilson's lone secretary, might be called the first, for he handled press relations as well as patronage and Presidential appointments. Stephen T. Early was the first press secretary so designated and the first of consequence and influence; under Franklin D. Roosevelt, he ran the office for nearly twelve years with one or two assistants and a few secretaries.

Since then, with the growth of government, the expanded role of the Presidency, the advent of television and the general proliferation of the communications industry, the press office has not only grown in size but in influence and scope. The comparatively small office of the Roosevelt, Truman and even Eisenhower years would no longer be sufficient to meet the constant demands made upon it.

But the issue is the role of the press secretary, not the size of his staff. James C. Hagerty, an extremely efficient press secretary for eight years under Dwight D. Eisenhower, began the process of expanding the press secretary's role—and that of the White House in public relations—when he instructed press secretaries attached to the various government agencies to send any significant announcement to him, so that he could issue it in the President's name if he so chose. That was a signal to Cabinet officers to keep a low profile—a message that has been repeated with increasing emphasis in the last fifteen years. Lyndon Johnson once summoned all the departmental press officers to the White House and personally berated them for not doing more to build him up. He demanded that they send all important statements to the White House in advance of release so that he could grab any that he wanted to make himself. In the Johnson years, even reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics began to be released at the White House. This, of course, was a part of the rapid movement toward centralization of authority in the Executive. Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon all bear a heavy responsibility for the shift.

But even in the FDR days, when much power was exercised by the White House, Cabinet officers still made news. They had authority and they had a degree of independence that no longer exists. Almost every Cabinet officer in the Roosevelt administration held regularly scheduled press conferences. The Secretary of State held a press conference every day of the week except Sunday. Today no Cabinet officer has a regularly scheduled press conference, and most call them only rarely. Each has a press secretary, whose principal job is to fend off reporters, and each of these press officers regularly consults with the White House press secretary to determine what he or his Cabinet officer should say. In none of the administrations of the

past fifteen years has a President encouraged a Cabinet officer to exercise independent judgment in his handling of public relations or to make news without first consulting the White House staff. In the Nixon administration, especially, the Cabinet became little more than an adjunct to the White House staff, and Cabinet officers dealt much more often with a Nixon assistant than with the President himself. Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Ziegler handled these routine contacts, frequently giving the Cabinet members their orders.



Ron Nessen

At the beginning of the Nixon years a new communications office was established in the White House under the direction of Herbert Klein, a long-time Nixon aide. He intervened directly in all agencies of government to establish a clear Nixon line. He established communications with editors throughout the country and with various special-interest groups. The office is now a direct part of the White House press office, with a director who bears the title of deputy press secretary. The office oversees government information policy, works directly with editors and broadcasters outside Washington, and helps arrange state and regional meetings where the President and other high officials explain and defend administration policy.

Vietnam and Watergate, which are blamed for most current ills, also must bear much of the responsibility for the concentration of attention on the White House press secretary as the government spokesman. In the Vietnam

years, when LBJ tried to avoid press conferences, and in the Watergate years, when Nixon did avoid them for months at a time, reporters questioned whom they could. The obvious target was the White House press secretary, who until Watergate was available for briefings twice a day. Now the briefings are held once a day. When a President avoids newsmen someone fills the void, and during the Vietnam and Watergate years of crisis it was the press secretary. His words made the headlines; his face on the evening news shows became familiar to millions. Instead of the President or a responsible Cabinet officer, it was the White House press secretary who most often enunciated official policy, sent up trial balloons or responded to criticism from Congress and the public.

Such a procedure would have been unthinkable even a quarter-century ago. Up to and including the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, the President and the Cabinet officers were the authentic government spokesmen. FDR held press conferences twice a week—Truman once a week. FDR held 998 press conferences in twelve years, or an average of eighty-three a year; Nixon held thirty-seven in five and a half years, an average of fewer than seven a year.

President Ford has made himself regularly available to reporters, and the National Press Club study commended him for restoring regular White House press conferences and for granting dozens of interviews. Yet he has averaged less than one press conference a month in Washington. He has held about one every two months outside the capital. He has, in addition, granted more than fifty interviews to journalists during his brief period in office. But despite this record, far better though it is than Johnson's or Nixon's, reporters who have daily deadlines must go to someone else for their raw material, and they congregate in the White House press room late every morning to bombard Ron Nessen with questions on every conceivable subject, from Angola to SALT, from farm policy to crime in the nation's capital, from whether Mrs. Ford will accompany the President on his next trip, to why the President prefers a House bill on water pollution to the Senate version.

RECIPE FOR THE ECONOMY

THE SALT OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISE

DEREK SHEARER

The economic system does not work. And the reforms required to make it work—to make it work uniformly and for individuals, not the corporations—are far more fundamental than anything contemplated by the cheap and soft and easy-going liberalism of these last years.

John Kenneth Galbraith in
Who Needs the Democrats? (1970)

Two years ago, during the worst period of the inflation and recession, *Business Week* ran a cover story, illustrated with portraits of the great economic thinkers of the past—

There have been widespread complaints in the press about Nessen's performance, but it must be acknowledged that he has an impossible task. Even as late as the Eisenhower administration many press briefings lasted five or ten minutes on normal days and were concerned primarily with scheduling, the timing of releases, travel arrangements, the preparation of messages to Congress. Now substance is the main interest at the press secretary's briefing. Even though he cannot be informed on all matters of policy, reporters keep trying to pin him down, to get him to commit himself, and the briefings normally last at least half an hour and often an hour or more. In addition to preparing for the briefing, the press secretary is supposed to meet informally for background discussions with individuals who regularly cover the White House, to meet and brief visiting editors and broadcasters, to supervise planning for all Presidential travel, to attend as many staff meetings in the White House as time permits and to confer frequently with the President himself.

"I saw two men killed in that job, Charles Ross and Joe Short [in the Truman administration]," columnist Marquis Childs once said. "It is inhuman. One hundred and fifty telephone calls a day that have to be personally attended to, the briefings, and that pack of wolves outside waiting to pounce on you."

Nessen obviously needs all the help he can get—more Presidential news conferences, more by Cabinet members, more by the experts who advise the President. He has recently appointed a deputy press secretary who is well informed on domestic issues. Nessen needs this kind of help so that he can spend more time with reporters and in running his large shop. He should stop trying to be the government's spokesman and should appeal to all the top officials from the President down to resume the responsibility for explaining, defending and advocating official policy that is rightfully theirs. The whole government would function better, and certainly in a more democratic spirit, if they would do so. But how would Mr. Ford, or any President after him, feel about that much free speech and free press? □



Marshall, Marx, Smith, Keynes and others—speculating on when, or whether, a new theorist would appear to unravel the economy's conundrums. But an explanation of current difficulties is not apt to be found in some new, all-embracing theory. To find answers to the basic flaws in the American economy, we must look beyond economics to political economy.

For example, most economists agree that inflation could

Derek Shearer, co-director of the California Public Policy Center, was recently a special consultant to that state's Director of Employment Development. He is currently a policy adviser to Tom Hayden in his race for the U.S. Senate in California.



by LLOYD SHEARER

BECAUSE OF VOLUME OF MAIL RECEIVED, PARADE REGRETS IT CANNOT ANSWER QUERIES ABOUT THIS COLUMN.



PRESIDENT FORD AT A NEWS CONFERENCE

FORD AND THE PRESS

How has President Ford's Administration handled the press?

Some weeks ago the professional relations committee of the National Press Club released its second study of the White House and its approach to the press.

The committee found that "during the 16 months of President Ford's Administration, there is no question that White House press relations have improved.

"However," adds the report, "our interviews with more than 30 Washington reporters, most of them White House regulars, demonstrate that they still have substantial complaints about the quality of the information they are getting despite the clear improvement in the atmosphere.

The report cites "wide-

spread feeling among White House reporters that much information is being withheld from them. As Norman Kempster wrote last March when he was covering the beat for the Washington Star, 'A typical Ford press conference is a predictable series of restatements of the President's already well-known positions, interspersed occasionally with the dismissal of a whole subject as inappropriate for comment.'

Veteran White House press correspondents offer these evaluations of the Ford press operation:

Peter Lisagor-Chicago Daily News: "There's a great improvement between Ford and the press but not between Nessen and the press. For all his [Nessen's] effort to be obliging, he has a certain arrogance and impatience with the kind of niggling that inevitably occurs. So

he runs against the grain of people and creates grain of people and creates grain of unnecessary animosity and antagonism.

"The briefings have taken on a life of their own. They have become the source for daily stories that don't reflect what is going on. They have become a dueling exercise with Nessen being forced into saying things. It has become an institution in and of itself, and Nessen must break that chain.... The only way to break it is not hold a briefing every day."

Robert Pierpoint-CBS:

"You can't rate an office. You rate a press secretary. I think Nessen is doing a better job than Ziegler or several of the LBJ press officers, but not as good as Bill Moyers or Jim Hagerly."

James Deakin-St. Louis Post-Dispatch: "Like the past five administrations, it is still too difficult to get the pros and cons offered to the President on various major decisions. The doctrine of executive infallibility continues to apply.

"The press office under Nessen is weak as a kitten on foreign policy, but I gave it reasonable marks on the domestic side.

"Nessen's complaint about a poisoned atmosphere because of Watergate is special pleading. Reporters were much harder on Lyndon Johnson because of Vietnam than they are now."

WIVES DOMINANT

Excluding the purchase of the family car, life insurance, airline tickets, cigarettes, and alcohol, women now make the majority of decisions on family purchases, says James Dawson, senior vice president of the National City Bank of Cleveland. The reason, says Dawson, is that 43% of all wives now work and the largest percentage of working wives reside in high-income households.

STREET SCIENCE

Panhandlers are smarter than you think.

Four University of Wisconsin professors recently completed a study on panhandling which suggests that panhandlers are more scientific in their approach than one would think.

Panhandlers, the researchers declare, were most likely to receive money from individuals who were eating when accosted. Often the accosted individuals would offer their food as well as spare change to the panhandler.

The most successful combination seemed to be a female panhandler submissively approaching one or two males who were eating. The least successful targets were groups and families. They were generally less willing to come to someone's assistance than individuals.

Roughly one-third to over one-half of all persons approached by the scientific panhandlers did indeed help, suggesting that people share their resources because of a common concern for human survival.

TOUCHY SITUATION

Some months ago, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands was invited to this country to attend the official Bicentennial celebration on July 4th. That was before he was linked with the Lockheed

bribery scandal in which it was alleged that the Prince, known in some quarters as the secret Playboy of the Western World, accepted a million-dollar bribe. The Prince, of course, denies this. It will be interesting to note whether Bern-

hard and his Queen Juliana accept the Bicentennial invitation or diplomatically decline. To face the news media or not? That is the question.

GASOLINE PRICE

A gallon of gasoline in Portugal now sells for \$2.85.

continued

Q: On the antitrust bill pending in the House, what did the President tell John Rhodes yesterday his position was and, related to that, to the extent there was a switch in his position, why did the President switch the administration's stance?

NESSEN: There has been no switch in the President's position because he has never taken a position publicly on that piece of legislation. He has now had an opportunity to review the proposed bill, and later this afternoon he is going to be sending a letter to Congress explaining his position, and we will make that public for you later this afternoon.

Q: You say he never took a position before. However, the Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust testified on behalf of the administration in May of 1975, and he sent a letter to Peter Rodino on behalf of the administration, saying the administration supports the concept in this bill.

So, is that not a switch if he no longer supports—

NESSEN: I said the President has never taken a public position on this legislation before.

Q: Kauper testified on behalf of the Ford administration.

NESSEN: The letter and the testimony by the gentleman from the Justice Department was developed in the White House staff machinery through a process that is used to reconcile differences between agencies. When agencies have differences of opinion on legislation that originates outside of the administration, there is a procedure which brings these people together to reconcile their positions. That was the procedure followed.

Now, in that procedure, it does not call for that legislation or that matter to be brought to the President's attention. The fact is it wasn't. It was not brought to the President's personal attention until either the 10th or the 11th of March, when it appeared that action on the bill in Congress was imminent and at that time it was brought to the President's attention. He has been reviewing it since then, and as I say will send a letter to Congress today explaining his position on it.

Q: Will that letter outline a form of the bill which he would not veto?

NESSEN: I think you ought to wait and see what he says about the bill, first.

Q: Can we assume that when the letter goes from the White House to Congress saying this is the administration's position that henceforth it doesn't really mean that the President in fact himself

is somewhat divorced, as you seem to be suggesting, from the President's position?

NESSEN: I think what I would rather do is explain to you what is the sequence of events relating to this bill. You know in general, sort of philosophical, what the letter means. I think we will put that off to another day.

Q: Does the OMB speak for the President?

NESSEN: I think I outlined what the procedure was on this bill. For a more general philosophical discussion of

Q: Has the President discussed this with the Attorney General?

NESSEN: I don't know.

Q: Will you find out?

NESSEN: Yes.

Q: Are you saying when a member of the administration testifies before the Hill on the administration's view of a bill, he does not speak for the President?

NESSEN: I am saying that in this particular case and with this particular bill, the differences over the bill between agencies of the government

personal attention. Now, that applies to this bill as it went through.

As you know, and some of you probably know, the bill has been in the White House staff system since March of 1974, which is quite a way back, and actually a different administration. It worked its way through the staff system, and the differences between the agencies were resolved within the staff system, but it did not come to the President's attention until either the 10th or the 11th of March.

Q: Is that policy that it doesn't come to the President's attention and is testi-

sure in your own mind what the Attorney General's position is.

Q: You are not, apparently, the President—

NESSEN: That is right.

Q: Does the Attorney General support the head of the Antitrust Division, because the head of the Antitrust Division is clearly for the bill?

Q: That is obvious.

NESSEN: It is not obvious to me that the Attorney General's position is that.

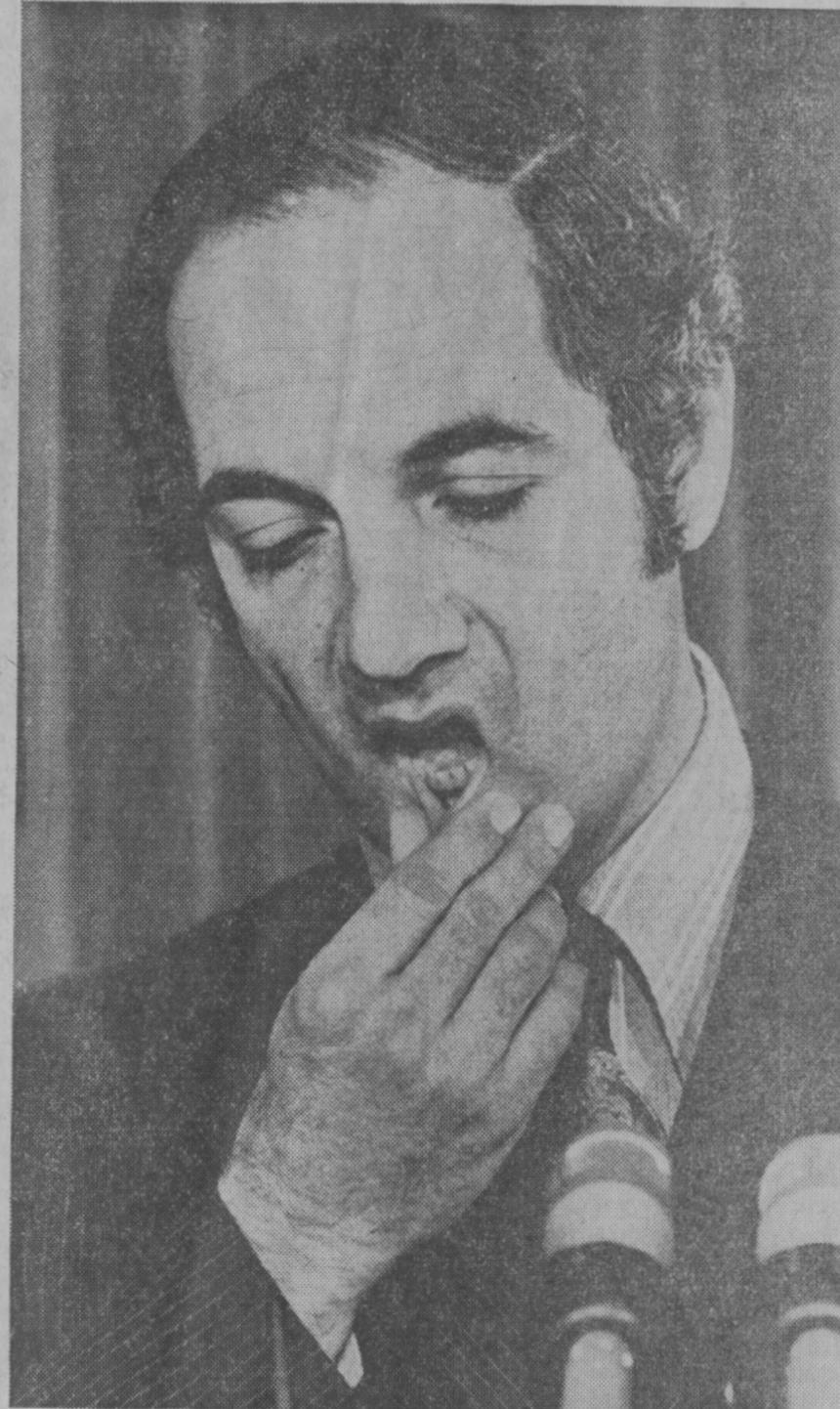
Q: You mean an Assistant Attorney General would go on the Hill and testify not only this was his position, it was

Now, Ron ...

I Have One More

Question for You

This is a partial transcript of a news briefing conducted by Presidential Press Secretary Ron Nessen at the White House on March 17.



By Frank Johnston — The Washington Post

have said that you will have the President's position in a letter to Congress later this afternoon.

Q: When did the President's position change?

NESSEN: The President has not taken a position on the bill, so it couldn't very well change.

Q: Why is the President's position, as you are going to express it in these letters this afternoon, different from the position expressed by the administration spokesman, the Assistant Attorney General?

NESSEN: How do you know it is?

Q: Are you suggesting he is going to change his mind again?

NESSEN: Obviously, the President has not changed his mind because he has never taken a public position before.

Q: So, he disavows responsibility for the position taken by that witness?

NESSEN: I think you should wait and see what his letter says, Jim.

Q: I am basing it on your own words. You say the President has not taken a public position, that someone else has.

NESSEN: That is correct.

Q: You dispute or you deny that previous position was the President's position necessarily, is that correct?

NESSEN: Obviously, the President was not involved in the process until the 10th or the 11th of March.

Q: Ron, are you aware that the minority leader who succeeded Mr. Ford in that position at the House told a reporter yesterday, "The President has changed his position"?

NESSEN: He may very well have said that, Bob, but I am telling you the President had not taken a public position on this before.

Q: So, Mr. Rhodes is wrong?

NESSEN: I am trying to explain to you the sequence of events that have transpired, Bob, and I think I have explained them for you.

Q: Ron, who was the highest ranking official in the government who signed off on a position like this that is represented then to be the position of the administration if it is not the President?

NESSEN: Under this process that was followed in this particular bill?

Q: Yes.

NESSEN: I am not sure who was.

Q: Is this a climb down because of business pressure, Ron?

NESSEN: I don't know what you mean, a climb down, Jim. From what?

A: A change of position.

NESSEN: I told you before it is not possible for it to be a change of position

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ported bill, or is it a breakdown in policy? In other words, are you telling us this is the way it should work or the way it just happened to work in this case, and that was a mistake?
NESSEN: This is the way it happened to work in this case.
Q: Would you explain to us what the procedure is? By the way, which of the agencies in this case disagreed, and if there is a disagreement between two agencies, what is the procedure for resolving it and, routinely, do they not go to the President for resolution?
NESSEN: I need to do more research on that general subject, Mort. I tried to nail down as much as I could the details of this particular case.
Q: Will the President attack this bill, as reported?
NESSEN: This afternoon, when we distribute the letter —
Q: I mean, it is already—
NESSEN: Helen, I think, as some folks here will tell you, this is an extremely complex piece of legislation involving difficult legal concepts, as well as very specific, complicating provisions. It is not a question that you can say yes or not to, frankly.
Q: Did he discuss this with Solicitor Bork at all?
NESSEN: I don't know all the people he discussed it with.
Q: Is the President aware of the Attorney General's position on this bill.
NESSEN: Again, when you say the Attorney General's position on this bill, because of the extremely complex nature of the bill, I am not sure the Attorney General has taken a flat position on the bill.
Q: Isn't it fair to assume that the head of the Antitrust Division testified for the bill, that the Attorney General and the Justice Department as a whole favored it?
NESSEN: This bill, as you know, has been around for a long time, dating, as I say, back to the previous administration, and it is not clear to me yet, you know, at what point various people gave their approval or disapproval.
Q: The reason I ask the question, those of us traveling around the country with the President on his campaign trips are very well aware that every time a question about big business or antitrust or multinationals, he has only one answer; that is, Ed Levi: "I have myself a strong Attorney General who is an expert in antitrust, and he is going full blast ahead." I wonder how he justifies taking this position, which I think is very obviously against Levi's own position—
NESSEN: Wait, I think you really should not say that, Ed, until you are

the position of the Attorney General, and you wouldn't be sure that the Attorney General had agreed with that position?
NESSEN: It is a matter, Jim, as I say, that was resolved at the staff level. I am not sure what the involvement of the Attorney General was, and I haven't had time to track it down...
Q: If the President holds the Attorney General in such high esteem, especially in this area, that he would want to know his position on this bill ahead of time, I am rather surprised you don't know what Levi's position is.

"I told you before it is not possible for it to be a change of position since the President had taken no position."

NESSEN: Well, I don't know, simply because of a number of other things, and trying to track this down as much as I could, I didn't touch all the bases.
Q: Are you saying this didn't come to his attention at all, until March 10, and it has been in the works since?
NESSEN: That is correct.
Q: He never know such a bill was pending?
NESSEN: That is my understanding.
Q: What is a member of Congress or a congressional committee supposed to do when someone comes up and testifies on behalf of the administration and then months later Congress is told this is not really the President's position, it is some White House staff member's position? Is Congress supposed to take seriously any statement of the administration's position?
NESSEN: As I said the three other times you asked the same question, I am not prepared to bite off that big a hunk today and discuss it.
Q: You said you didn't want to have a general philosophical discussion. The fact is, as you well know, that as far back as anyone's memory goes in this town a statement by a witness before a congressional committee that he was giving the administration's view was unanimously and commonly interpreted that that was the view of the President.

The question is, does the President assume the responsibility for the statements made in the name of his administration in this specific case and in other cases?
NESSEN: In this specific case, Jim, I have explained to you the process that the bill went through. It is a process for bills not proposed by the administration. I have explained that to you, and I

since the President had taken no position.
Q: I will rephrase the question in response to your semantics. Is this a change in the administration's position as a result of business pressure?
NESSEN: The President had not taken a position on this bill until today.
Q: I didn't ask that, I asked whether it was a change in the administration's position.
NESSEN: The President has not taken a position until today, and I think what Congress is anxious to hear is what the President's position is. They

have not heard it before, and they will today.
Q: Ron, you referred several times to this process used to straighten out a conflict. Who is in charge of that process? Who are we talking about? Is it OMB or staff people here?
NESSEN: It is White House staff people.
Q: In this specific case, who was in charge of resolving the conflicting between the Justice Department and the other agency, whoever they may be?
NESSEN: It is the OMB that normally directs it.
Q: Who specifically?
NESSEN: I don't know who specifically worked on this case.
Q: Who were the other agencies involved besides the Justice Department? Whose views had to be reconciled?
NESSEN: I will find out for you, Jim.
Q: Is the President unhappy that the administration position has been put forward in the public that he is apparently now going to repudiate? We were told he was opposed to it.
NESSEN: As I said repeatedly, the President has not taken a position until today, so there can be no change or repudiation of what he said before because he hasn't said anything before.
Q: Is he unhappy an administration position has been put forward?
NESSEN: I would not say so. He has had time to study the legislation now that action is imminent, and he will come forward with his position.
Q: Doesn't that make it seem like a contradiction that might make it seem like nobody seems to know, who is running the store?
NESSEN: I know who is running the store.



Associated Press

TAKING A BREAK—White House chief of staff Richard Cheney, right, rests broken foot as he chats with press

secretary Ron Nessen, left, and White House Counsel Philip Buchen. He broke his foot climbing stairs at home.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

NOTE FOR:

Connie G.

FROM

:

RON NESSEN

File

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Associated Press

TAKING A BREAK—White House chief of staff Richard Cheney, right, rests broken foot as he chats with press

secretary Ron Nessen, left, and White House Counsel Philip Buchen. He broke his foot climbing stairs at home.



—UPI Telephoto

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As President Ford addressed a group of Texas GOP party workers in the Rose Garden of the White House, members of his staff listened with serious expressions after the North Carolina primary upset. From left are Rogers Morton, counsel to the President; Larry Speakes, assist-

ant press secretary; Ron Nessen, press secretary; James Cannon, head of the Domestic Council; Richard Chaney, assistant to the President, who broke his foot in an accident at home, and three Secret Service agents.

(Story on Page 1)



Associated Press

Present and former press aides, from left, Nessen, Gerald Warren, Herb Klein, Ziegler, Christian and terHorst, take coffee break at symposium.

Press Secretaries Acknowledge 'Lies'

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

AUSTIN, Tex., April 23.—Presidential press secretaries for three administrations said today they had "lied" to White House reporters. All said they did so inadvertently, usually because they had been given inaccurate information by White House staff members.

These acknowledgements came from George Christian of the Johnson administration, Ronald L. Ziegler of the Nixon administration and Gerald F. terHorst and Ron Nessen of the Ford administration during a symposium on the presidency and the press, sponsored by the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

It was Ziegler's first public appearance except for a pair of television interviews since President Nixon resigned in 1974. Ziegler declined to go into any detail about specific untruths that he told as press secretary but he responded to a question initiated by James Deakin of the St. Louis Post Dispatch by saying, "Obviously things that were said about Watergate turned out to be untrue and we all know that."

terHorst quit the Ford administration after 30 days as press secretary because staff aides withheld information from him about the Nixon pardon and terHorst in turn misled reporters who inquired about it. Nessen, who succeeded him and still holds the job, said he almost resigned recently because White House aides withheld from him the information that Nixon had submitted a report on his China trip to President Ford.

Nessen said later that the President had persuaded him to stay.

In the day-long symposium, which also involved various present and former White House reporters, both the operation of the White House press office and the performance of the White House press corps were repeatedly criticized.

Nessen said that the press does not apply the same standards of criticism to itself that it does to other institutions and is reluctant to admit mistakes. In a spirited exchange with Helen Thomas of United Press International, Nessen accused UPI of being "one of the worst offenders in refusing to admit an error."

Sidey also said that prominent newspaper reporters were oversensitive to criticism. Without giving details, he said that Sally Quinn, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of The Washington Post had been especially critical about references to them in Time's press section.

Sidey and Nessen each made suggestions intended to improve the accessibility of the President and White House officials.

Nessen said he is considering a plan that would allow a "permanent pool" of reporters to cover Cabinet meetings and other White House sessions except those affected by national security. Sidey called for President Ford to make himself directly accessible to White House reporters for 15 minutes each day.

Both Thomas and Frank Cormier of the Associated

Press complained that Nessen is insufficiently accessible himself. Cormier said it has become easier to see other senior White House officials than it is to see the press secretary.

At one point during the discussion Deakin asked the former press secretaries to assess their own responsibility for the accumulated public mistrust of government. Nessen, in response, agreed that the public was alienated but said that distortion in news coverage also had been responsible for this situation.

Rather called Nessen's reply "the classic red herring" of defense in the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Rather accused the Nixon administration of attempting to convince the American people that the fault lay with news organizations who told the American people about Vietnam and

Watergate rather than the administrations that were responsible for these policies.

There seemed to be general agreement between the reporters and the former public officials on only one point—the assertion of W. Thomas Johnson, former assistant press secretary to President Johnson, that "any press secretary is only as effective as the President permits him to be."

Christian advocated greater accountability in the White House by reducing the size of presidential staffs and giving more authority to Cabinet officials, whom he said were subject to the checks and balances of congressional confirmation.

When Christian asked Rather what he would do if he ever became press secretary, the CBS correspondent replied that he also would favor reducing the White House staff, including the press staff, and cutting the size of the budget.

Ziegler interrupted. "He asked you what you would do if you became President," Zie-

Tax Return Proposal Opposed by Churches

By Janis Johnson

Washington Post Staff Writer

American religious groups are fighting a proposed Internal Revenue Service regulation requiring certain church-connected institutions to file informational tax returns.

The 1969 Tax Reform Act said that "churches, their integrated auxiliaries and conventions of churches," which are tax-exempt, are exempted from filing informational returns. Other tax-exempt organizations are not.

In a proposal issued in February, the IRS defined the term "integrated auxiliary" for the first time. That, say the churches, defines the nature of the church, which is a violation of the First Amendment doctrine that the state should be neutral on religion.

The IRS announced yesterday it will hold a public hearing on the proposal June 7 and will defer enforcement of the regulation. Eighty individuals and religious groups wrote the IRS opposing the proposed amendment. The agencies included the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the U.S. Catholic Conference, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Lutheran Council in the United States, and the Seventh-Day Adventist and Mormon churches.

The proposal defines "integrated auxiliary" as an organization "whose primary purpose is to carry out the tenets, functions and principles of faith of the church with which it is affiliated" and whose operations "directly promote religious activity among the members of the church."

Examples of such organizations, which would not have to file the informational returns, are men's and women's clubs, mission societies, Sunday schools, youth groups and some theological seminaries, the IRS said.

But church-related hospitals, parochial schools, orphanages and retirement homes would have to file the returns, the IRS said.

In 1969, the National Council of Churches and the U.S. Catholic Conference in making a concession in tax matters, recommended that Con-



REP. BARBER CONABLE

... introduced bill

gress remove the churches' exemption from paying taxes on unrelated business income, and Congress did.

But the religious groups now argue that Congress in 1969 did not intend to restrict the definition of "church" under the "integrated auxiliaries" section of the code and wanted to protect churches from potentially restrictive IRS regulations.

They also say the blanket definition fails to recognize varying American religious structures and would affect each church differently. They contend the constitution prohibits a government agency from defining what is legitimate religious activity or distinguishing between what a church teaches and what it does.

The proposal "rewrites the Old and New Testaments" and strikes the parable of the Good Samaritan from the Bible, the U.S. Catholic Conference charged in written comments to the IRS.

The Baptist Joint Committee, which represents 23 million Baptists in eight bodies, has urged the IRS to make case-by-case determinations instead of any universal regulation.

The rule is one of two government proposals that religious groups contend are threats to religious freedom.

The other is a bill introduced last year by Rep. Barber Conable (R.-N.Y.) that would permit a public charity to spend 20 per cent of its income up to \$500,000

to influence legislation without losing its tax-exempt status.

Currently, churches are prohibited from spending "substantial" part of the income for lobbying, but the IRS has used various percentages to measure substantiality.

Major denominations who do lobby have formed a coalition to fight the bill as a violation of the First Amendment. The government should not define the scope of the church's mission, says coalition's chairman Dr. J. Baker of the Baptist Joint Committee.

The National Council of Churches has charged that the "substantial" clause has been used against the National Council of Churches and others to attempt to limit their social action programs.

Billy James Hargis' Christian Echoes National Ministry, Inc., a right-wing group, lost its tax-exemption under the substantiality test in 1973. Recently, the National Organization for Women called on the IRS to revoke the U.S. Catholic Conference's involvement in an abortion activities on the grounds.

Under a compromise being negotiated, according to Capitol Hill sources, the per cent rule would not apply to churches and the bill would state that neither affirms nor denies the Hargis decision.

U.S. Debt Manager Will Resign May

Associated Press

Ralph M. Forbes, the man responsible for running the federal government's massive debt, is signing as special assistant to the secretary of management, Treasury Secretary William E. Brock said yesterday.

Forbes has served in the post since last April, a period when the government was borrowing nearly \$2 billion each week to help finance its debt. The resignation is effective May 8.

Ford College Proposals Said Threatening Blacks

Rep. Shirley Chisholm (D.)

Chisholm said she would

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... was never asked to... before the press corps and tell a lie," Ziegler added.

Christian said he had "lied" to Dan Rather of CBS and wire-service reporters after he had been given inaccurate information by Pentagon officials and White House staff aides on various issues.

... newspapers, like doctors, bury their mistakes."

Hugh Sidey of Time agreed with this criticism. He singled out the "sneaky" practice of news magazines, including his own, in refusing to correct errors except in letters-to-the-editor columns.

N.Y.) yesterday accused the Ford administration of trying to undermine federal affirmative action regulations for white colleges and universities and of threatening the existence of predominantly black colleges.

In a luncheon address to 500 delegates attending a conference here on blacks and higher education, Chisholm said administration legislative proposals and certain higher education trends threaten to erode gains in education blacks made during the last decade.

Chisholm said President Ford wants to exempt institutions of higher education from the requirement that, as federal contractors, they comply with laws governing equal employment opportunity.

"[Mr. Ford's] 'game plan' is to exempt institutions from having to institute goals and timetables in their affirmative action program" Chisholm said.

She said the proposed exemptions would seriously weaken the "already inadequate" enforcement effort of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Office for Civil Rights.

that Mr. Ford's request to reduce by \$10 million federal funds for developing educational institutions' resources would indirectly eventually cripple black colleges.

Chisholm said Mr. Ford also wants to reduce funding for three Office of Education programs for poor and black youths. The programs are Upward Bound, Talent Search and Special Services to Students.

There was no immediate reaction from the White House.

The two-day conference was sponsored by the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, a Washington-based organization representing the nation's 107 older black colleges.

Noting that the percentage difference between the number of whites and the number of blacks aged 25 to 34 who are college educated has increased in the last 15 years, the organization's president, Charles A. Lyons Jr., said:

"These days if we (blacks) move ahead too slowly, we fall behind much more rapidly."

The Washington Post

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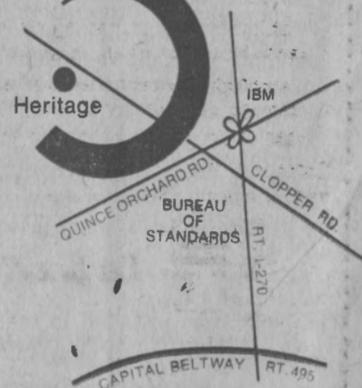
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FORD BUCHEN NESSEN

Q. One of President Ford's most trusted advisers is his old law partner, Phil Buchen—sweet, kind Phil Buchen of Grand Rapids. I understand Buchen is responsible for the resignation of President Ford's first press secretary, Jerald terHorst, and the near resignation of Ford's second press secretary, Ron Nessen. What's the story?—M.P., Alexandria, Va.

A. Buchen is President Ford's lawyer. It was he who helped arrange during the summer of 1974 President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon. President Ford, of course, knew all about the pardon, as did Gen. Alexander Haig; Jack Marsh, a Ford counselor; Benton Becker, an attorney who was helping Buchen, and of course Jack Miller, Nixon's attorney.

Buchen claims he was under Presidential mandate to tell no one, including Jerald terHorst, about the Nixon pardon negotiations. When terHorst told Buchen he had received press inquiries concerning Benton Becker's presence in San Clemente and asked Buchen what he knew about it, Buchen revealed nothing about the pardon. He said Becker had been to San Clemente to negotiate the return of Nixon's Presidential papers. Buchen admits now that he was guilty of a "half lie."

The truth is that President Ford did not trust his own press secretary of the time, Jerald terHorst, with the truth about the Nixon pardon negotiations, and neither did Buchen. Which is why terHorst resigned.

TerHorst was replaced by Ron Nessen, who this past March threatened to resign—again because the Ford team refused to take the press secretary into their confidence. On March 13, Richard Nixon sent a report to President Ford about his February, 1976, trip to China. When the press asked Nessen about the report, Nessen denied that any such report had been received at the White House. Nessen did not know that he was telling a falsehood, because neither Buchen nor Gen. Brent Scowcroft, Ford's national security adviser, Ford nor Kissinger—all of whom

knew about the report—had told him the truth. The fact was that they had received such a report from Nixon, read it, then returned it to San Clemente. Buchen and Scowcroft did not tell Nessen about the Nixon report because they were fearful that, under the Freedom of Information Act, some journalist might apply for it and that, under the act, the Nixon report would have had to be made available.

The fairy tale that the Ford Administration is an "open one" is exactly that, a fairy tale. Gerald Ford did not completely trust his first press secretary, and there is evidence that neither he nor members of his staff completely trust his second.

Q. Does actress Lauren Bacall have a secret British lover who flies to this country every month to see her?—Kay Sardella, Atlantic City, N. J.

A. Lauren Bacall, 51, and English actor Basil Hoskins, 46, are "good friends." They worked together in "Applause" in London 3½ years ago and were attracted to each other. But Hoskins does not fly to the U.S. each month to see Miss Bacall. They see each other when they can—no definite schedule.

Q. Does Fidel Castro have a son?—Raphael Gonzalez, Miami, Fla.

A. Castro's son, Fidel, is in his late 20's, works as an engineer in Cuba.

Q. Omar Sharif and Barbra Streisand—were they ever lovers?—B. B. Holdridge, San Diego, Cal.

A. Yes, tempestuous ones.



SHARIF AND STREISAND IN 'FUNNY GIRL'

Q. In your opinion, how good are Jimmy Carter's chances of winning the Democratic Presidential nomination? And if not Jimmy, who?—Ralph Lanier, Atlanta, Ga.

A. Unless Carter arrives at the Democratic National Convention in New York with 1505 delegate votes sewed up, the convention will probably be brokered. Under those circumstances, a Humphrey-Carter ticket, a Humphrey-Kennedy ticket, a Humphrey-Brown ticket are all possibilities. A recent Gallup Poll shows Hubert Humphrey the favorite choice of veteran Democrats. But much can happen to alter the situation between now and July. Carter will surely be a candidate to contend with, as will "Scoop" Jackson of Washington and Jerry Brown of California, all of whom will have votes to trade.



JIMMY CARTER AND WIFE ROSALYNN

Q. Wasn't Howard Hughes secretly backing "1600 Pennsylvania Ave.," the musical show written by Alan Jay Lerner and Leonard Bernstein? Isn't the show a big, fat bomb?—T.S., Philadelphia.

A. "1600 Pennsylvania Ave." was financed by the Coca-Cola Co., which provided \$900,000 and may have to provide more. When the show, which is scheduled to open on Broadway on May 4, tried out in Philadelphia, it received poor reviews. When it moved on to Washington, D.C., it still received poor reviews. Variety, the show business trade paper, panned it as a "Bicentennial bore." The show deals with 100 years of White House history as seen by four generations of a black family whose members have worked as domestics in the White House. The show has been rewritten and cut on the road, hopefully may make it by the time it opens in New York. It offers no big names to help carry the production.

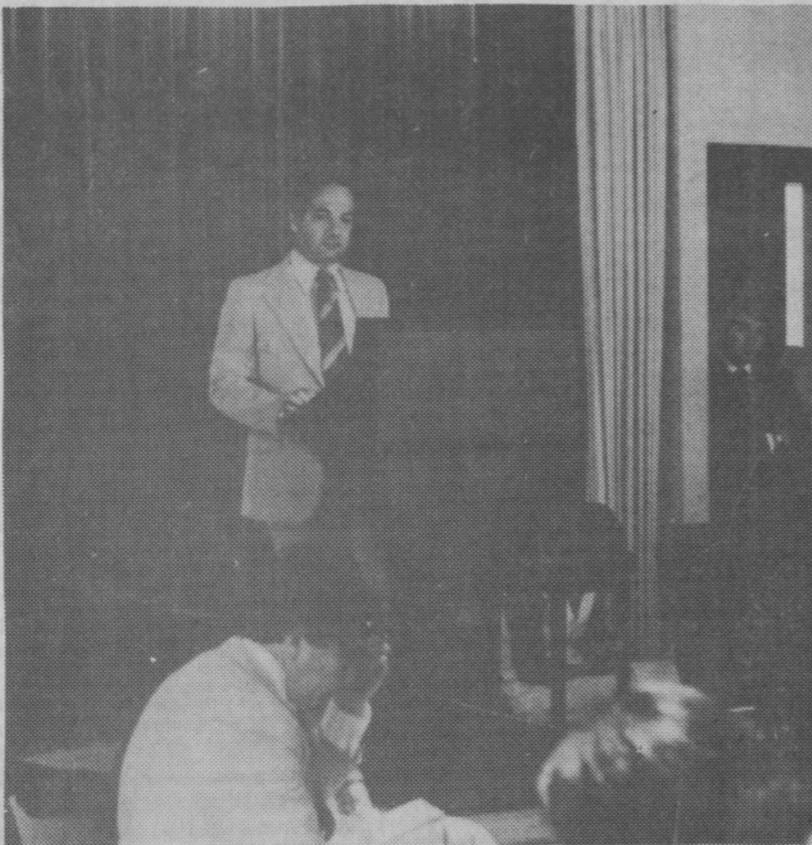
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Presidential Press Secretary Ron Nessen fields questions from White House press corps at a daily briefing.

photo by John Sanders

Daily charade annoys Nessen, press

by Linda Drucker
Oceanside, N.Y.

That legendary public relations vehicle, the White House press briefing, has become a source of frustration to Press Secretary Ron Nessen and the White House press corps alike.

In fact, the press corps has christened the briefing "Nessen's Daily Circus," not only because the atmosphere is feisty, cantankerous and free-wheeling, but also because many of the questions and answers are "inane," said Richard Growald of United Press International.

"Some days the sessions are worse than others," commented Nessen. "The press and I often play games with each other."

Nessen announced that the President was scheduled to play golf on Sunday afternoon, a piece of news which elicited a chorus of jeering hurrahs from the press corps.

"Sunday morning church is possible," Nessen said. "As you know, the President doesn't usually make up his mind about

church until Saturday night."

"Why is that, Ron?" a reporter asked. "Why can he make up his mind about golf and not about church?"

"He likes to keep his options open," Nessen said in mock seriousness.

This is fairly typical for a briefing," remarked Dan Skartvedt, who writes for a daily newspaper, The Journal of Commerce.

"Not a hell of a lot happened today; they just went around and around in circles; it was a non-productive session," Skartvedt said.

UPI's Growald believes White House briefings are "inadequate," and "worthless." Growald boasts that he holds the record for falling asleep at more briefings than any other reporter.

Although the White House would like its public relations machinery to be the only point of contact for reporters, journalists must dig deeper if they are to report and not merely repeat, said Fred Barnes, White House

correspondent for The Washington Star.

Nessen was queried about a letter President Ford sent to his campaign officials advising them to reject any "solicitations," from delegates who desired jobs or pork-barrel projects in return for convention votes. The memo did not state, however, whether the campaign directors should take further action when confronted with a solicitation.

"Does the President wish that these solicitations be reported to the law enforcement process?" the reporter questioned.

"I don't know that there is any law against solicitation. Moreover, I think it is wrong to impugn the integrity of 2,200 delegates representing their states and communities. To sit here and cast this kind of blanket accusation over them and imply that all they want is jobs and sewer projects is simply unfair," Nessen said.

Nessen reiterated that he was not aware solicitation was illegal and that "the memo reflects the tone of honesty of the entire Ford administration." He repeated, "I feel it is wrong for us to sit here as we have done every day this week and continue to besmirch, if you will, the motives of these people who are playing a role in the great American political process."

The exchange continued in a similar vein until one reporter chastised Nessen for not determining if solicitations were illegal "when the identical question was brought up yesterday." Nessen retorted by alleging that

the press dwells over "insignificant issues."

After the conference, Nessen added, "The press would rather spend its time covering who's sleeping with whom on Capitol Hill than covering what really matters to people."

Criticism did not flow in only one direction. Sara McClendon, who owns a news service in Texas, said that all of Nessen's briefings, she pointed to the solicitation incident as an example, are campaign speeches.

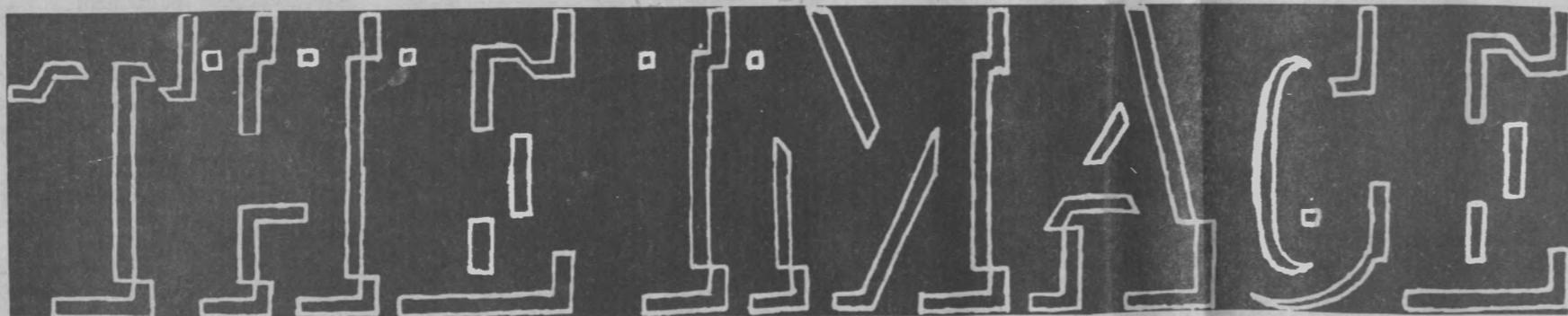
"Nessen avoids questions and is pathetic as a press secretary. I think that this thing is a disgrace, how you keep asking the same questions over and over again without ever getting an answer," she said.

Among the press, there was not consensus with McClendon's condemnation of Nessen's performance. Nessen is a definite improvement over his predecessor Ron Ziegler because while "Ziegler was incredibly arrogant, at least Nessen has a sense of humor," Skartvedt said.

Reporters who attack Ford are not ostracized, said Wright. "Ford's aides might raise an eyebrow or not return a phone call, but they realize that from time to time any public official is going to be nicked by the press," added.

As the room emptied Ron Nessen sat in an armchair and sighed.

"Some people wish press conferences would be longer and cover more issues," he said. "I wish they would be shorter and cover less."



Blair Summer School for Journalism

Sunday, August 1, 1976

Blairstown, N.J. 07825

Dietz criticizes jails

by Peggy Oliver
Moorestown, N.J.

New Jersey State Police Board Chairman Christopher Dietz urged total revamping of the criminal justice system to alleviate poor prison conditions and institute an effective rehabilitation program at a recent Blair Summer School for Journalism press conference.

Homosexuality and drugs are two commonplace problems that plague the prisons, Dietz said.

"These men are in need of counseling," Dietz added, but there are no full-time psychiatrists or psychologists available to the inmates. According to Dietz, these programs were terminated due to recent budget cuts.

"Army of zombies"

"Drugs are a heavy problem.

humanity," Dietz added.

According to Dietz, "the prison rehabilitation programs are achieving 100% recidivism" as they "don't prepare them (the prisoners) for jobs."

"For \$1.35 a day, inmates make license plates, trash cans, road signs or perform other menial labor," Dietz said. "The prisoners," he added, "are a 'slave labor' force."

Dietz advocated the re-introduction of academic programs in the system in order for a prisoner to obtain a "decent means of employment" upon release.

"Use the resources of society"

Dietz claimed that we must "use the resources of society" to alleviate the weaknesses in the New Jersey prison system. Student teachers, medical

