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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH JERRY TER HORST

AT 11:25 A.M. EDT

AUGUST 27, 1974

TUESDAY

MR. TER HORST: We posted today's schedule, as you know. I should point out also that yesterday afternoon the President met briefly with Max Fisher of Detroit. They had a chance to discuss the summit conference on inflation and also Mr. Fisher's upcoming visit to Israel. He is departing for Israel later this week, and the President asked Mr. Fisher to convey his greetings to his and Mr. Fisher's mutual friends in Israel.

I really don't have any further report on the meeting, but wanted you to know about it because I don't think we posted the fact that they met yesterday.

Yesterday afternoon, the President met with Governor Scranton of Pennsylvania, and as some press reports have indicated, the President asked Governor Scranton to remain in Washington for a period of time to lend further assistance to the transition process; specifically, the Governor has been asked to involve himself in implementing recommendations of the transition team, which the President may choose to proceed with.

This morning, the President met with several staff members, including General Haig, General Scowcroft, Secretary Kissinger, myself and some others.

As we have announced, at about 8:30 he also attended part of the White House prayer group breakfast in the White House staff dining room downstairs. This group, as you may know, has been meeting fairly regularly for about five years and Senator Harold Hughes of Iowa was the speaker this morning.

The President met for about 25 minutes this morning with the emissary of the President of Romania. The emissary's name is Vasile P. Ungan, who is Counsellor to the Romanian President, Nicolae Ceausescu. The meeting gave the President an opportunity to convey his great interest in maintaining and building further the close Romanian-American ties we have established in recent years.

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The President specifically underlined his intention to pursue these relations along the guidelines established by the American-Romanian joint statement signed during President Ceausescu's visit to Washington last December. Secretary Kissinger and Romanian Ambassador Bogdon also attended this meeting.

The President currently is meeting with his economic advisers in the Cabinet Room. The group this morning includes Counsellor Kenneth Rush, Treasury Secretary William Simon, HUD Secretary James Lynn, OMB Director Roy Ash, Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns, Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan Greenspan, and Bill Seidman, the coordinator for the economic summit.

This meeting is to discuss the housing situation, as you might expect, with Secretary Lynn present, and also a continuing discussion on plans for the summit conference on inflation.

We will try, if we can, to provide you with some sort of fill from this meeting when it concludes. We may be able to do it by talking to you rather than by bringing someone out. I am not sure, but we will try to provide something for you from that meeting.

This afternoon and tomorrow morning the President will be meeting essentially with members of his staff. I have no formal schedule to give you for the afternoon or tomorrow morning. A good part of that time obviously will be devoted to preparation for the President's first press conference, which will be held in the East Room tomorrow afternoon at 2:30.

I don't have any other announcements, really, this morning, but I did want to take the time to dispel some reports that former Senator Kuchel from California is to replace Ambassador Scali at the United Nations.

The President has asked Ambassador Scali to remain as head of our United Nations delegation, and he plans to do so.

On BACKGROUND, I might tell you that Senator Kuchel is one of five persons being considered for appointment to the American delegation to the General Assembly meeting which begins in mid-September and it is customary at that time for those persons under consideration to receive a current FBI investigation. That is on BACKGROUND. I presume that is possibly why his name happened to surface.

Q In the Romanian photo session this morning we heard the President seem to accept an invitation from the Romanian President to come to Romania at some unspecified date and schedule to be worked out.

MR TER HORST: And your question is?

Q The question is, did that happen? Was he invited to come to Romania and did he in fact accept that invitation?

MR. TER HORST: Prime Minister Ceausescu extended to the President an invitation to visit Romania, and the President has accepted in principal but no dates were discussed and no trip is planned at this time.

I also have one other announcement. This is not really an announcement but an advisory to you which concerns the President's statement yesterday upon the death of Charles Lindbergh.

Last Friday the President was advised that Mr. Lindbergh was released from the hospital and was in Hawaii. The President sent him a wire expressing his deep affection and hope for recovery of Mr. Lindbergh and told him that Mr. Lindbergh would always be one of America's great heroes.

The same day Mr. Lindbergh responded with a wire to the President thanking him for his good wishes and extending the same to the President in his position as the new President of the United States.

I think that pretty much covers our announcements. I have one more announcement to make here.

President Ford has invited President Giovanni Leone of Italy to visit the United States beginning September 25. President Leone has accepted the President's invitation with pleasure. The two leaders look forward to this opportunity which the visit will afford for a review of issues of current interest between Italy and the United States. President Leone will be accompanied by his wife, Signora Vittoria Leone.

Q Is this to demonstrate the President does give a damn about the lira? (Laughter.)

MR. TER HORST: You said that.

Q Jerry, what prompts this visit?

MR. TER HORST: As you know, President Ford has been looking forward to meeting with the Italian President and reviewing the issues I have identified in the announcement. I could add it is in keeping with the invitation extended earlier by former President Nixon last year. That was originally announced, I believe, on July 26, 1973; however, the exact dates were to be announced later when a mutually agreeable time could be arranged, and because of schedule difficulties here and in Rome that visit just never was able to be consummated.

Q Will the Prime Minister who is the head of government come as well?

MR. TER HORST: The Prime Minister is not coming at this time. As you know, the President of Italy is constitutionally not the policy maker for the country.

Q How long will he stay in Washington?

MR. TER HORST: I cannot give you that, but I think probably the State Department can give you guidance on that.

Q Can you tell us a little bit more about Scranton's role and what is the President aiming for in the transition now, and can you tell us how many Nixon hold-overs are still here and who will be leaving; any kind of figure breakdown?

MR. TER HORST: The President, as you know, has received the recommendations of his transition team's staff, those recommendations which he requested to deal with ways in which the White House organizationally could be restructured into a form, if necessary, to adjust to the President's own personal working habits, and provide a mechanism that would be comfortable for him to operate within.

He has those recommendations and options before him. He has not made any decisions yet on that aspect of it. In terms of Governor Scranton, it is as I said. He has been asked to stay in Washington and be available for additional consultation with the President. During the transition period one of his particular functions was to serve as the talent scout or the recruiting officer for the transition team.

Q Has Scranton taken himself out of consideration for any permanent appointment?

MR. TER HORST: That is my understanding, that he is not seeking an appointment for himself in a particular role.

Q What jobs is he trying to fill?

MR. TER HORST: We will have to wait and see what the President does with his recommendations from his transition team, Helen.

Q One of those recommendations was for the Secretary of the Treasury to become the chief economic spokesman for the Administration. In the last month of the Nixon Administration, Ken Rush assumed that role. Until the President decides whether or not to accept the Treasury Secretary's idea, is Mr. Rush remaining the chief economic spokesman to President Ford?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, he is still serving as the economic coordinator for President Ford as he had done under President Nixon, and to pick up Helen's question which I didn't fully answer, he, along with other members of the former President's staff, have been asked to remain on during this transition period to provide both continuity and stability, to use the President's words, and that process continues. If there is a change we will obviously announce it.

Q Does that include Leonard Garment?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, that includes Leonard Garment.

Q Will we ever know when the transition is over? I mean, is there a time span?

MR. TER HORST: I am trying to figure that out in my own mind.

Q Did he ask Governor Scranton to stay on for a particular length of time or just indefinitely?

MR. TER HORST: I think it is indefinite. There was no specific time span. He asked the Governor if he would remain to assist him and the Governor said, "Mr. President, I will be at your service as long as you want me to help," and that is the basis on which it was left.

Q When the President asked the staff and the Cabinet and others to stay on, did he mean stay on indefinitely, for the transition, or does it vary from spot to spot?

MR. TER HORST: Well, it varies from spot to spot. As the President said initially in his first meeting with the Cabinet when he asked them all to stay on and said he did not want any pro forma resignations from anyone, that he preferred to deal with them and deal with this matter also on a one-to-one basis.

We will just have to let time pass and see how it goes along. But the President has asked them all to remain in place. They are all functioning, working and meeting with him, and if there are changes, we will announce them as they occur.

Q But Jerry, the President does intend to put his own footprint upon his Administration in fairly short order, does he not?

MR. TER HORST: As fast as he can and as fast as would be good for the country; yes, sir, Pete.

Q Has the President given Nelson Rockefeller any guidance on the scope of the response and disclosure that Rockefeller should make to the Congressional committee that is considering his nomination? Have they talked about how much he should tell the committee?

MR. TER HORST: He has told Nelson Rockefeller to be as forthcoming as the committee requests and I am positive that is Governor Rockefeller's intention.

As you probably are aware, the President asked Richard Burress, who was his Counsellor as Vice President, to assist Governor Rockefeller and Governor Rockefeller's staff in preparing for the confirmation hearing since that is a function that Mr. Burress performed for President Ford when he went through the process on the Hill as Vice Presidential nominee.

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Q Jerry, within place of being the number one issue, I call to your attention so you will call it to the attention of President Ford, that H.R. 15842, which raises the firemen, policemen and teachers salaries in the District of Columbia, 16 percent, the Government employees are supposed to get a 5.5 percent increase.

Do you think the President will pay attention to this and veto because of the 16 percent increase?

MR. TER HORST: I know the President has very keenly on his mind the problems of this nature. Anything that tends to expand or increase the Federal budget at a time when he is hoping to keep the budget, as we said, under \$300 billion this year is a matter of great concern to him. But he has not taken any position on this yet, and when he does, it will be obvious to all of us.

Q Jerry, do you have any further clarification of your statement on the extent to which the Joint Chiefs and Mr. Schlesinger watched the military chain of command during the transition period? Efforts to get any more information out of the Pentagon yesterday were hopeless. Can you say any more?

MR. TER HORST: I really cannot. I addressed it yesterday to the best of my ability and the Defense Department seems to have done some similar work yesterday afternoon, judging by the wire accounts today in the papers, and I just am unable to address that story any further.

Q Jerry, Newsweek Magazine said that William Ruckelshaus is under consideration as a replacement for William Saxbe as Attorney General? Is that true?

MR. TER HORST: When Attorney General Saxbe met with the President last week, the President asked him to remain on and Mr. Saxbe agreed to do so. Obviously, the President thinks very highly of Bill Ruckelshaus, and I am certain that his talents and abilities will not be forgotten in the future. There are so many spots in the Government where a man of his talents can be used, as has been used in the past.

Q Jerry, September 1 was the deadline for the amnesty survey. Is that likely to come up before September 1, September 1 being Sunday? Will it be before or after?

MR. TER HORST: It is my understanding that the recommendations that the President asked on the amnesty issue that were to be prepared by the Secretary of Defense and the Attorney General and other Federal agencies and outside groups covering the amnesty issue or with an interest in it, are to be presented to him on Saturday.

Q Where?

MR. TER HORST: I think we will have to face that when I find out a little more about the President's schedule at that time.

Q I believe SANE and some other peace groups have written to President Ford asking for a meeting on defense spending and other matters. Has the President responded to this letter, and if so, how?

MR. TER HORST: I can't tell you if he has responded specifically to that one, but I do know he has had requests from many groups both of that caliber and also from other groups dealing not only with amnesty but with the economy and legislation and the President, as you have noticed from his schedule, is trying to meet with each of these groups in turn. So, it is a strong possibility, but I can't give you firm guidance on it at this point.

Q Does the President have any travel plans after Columbus?

MR. TER HORST: On BACKGROUND it is possible that the President may go to Camp David this weekend for his first opportunity to look at Camp David. That is on BACKGROUND, and as I get more details, I will be able to go on the record.

Q He wouldn't stay overnight? He would just look at it?

MR. TER HORST: On BACKGROUND it is possible he may spend the Labor Day weekend at Camp David.

Q But the Columbus trip is up and back?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, up and back. He will return to the White House Friday evening.

Q Do you have anything on timing?

MR. TER HORST: I don't have that yet, Carroll. When we do, we will announce it.

Q What will he be doing with the recommendations on amnesty when he gets them? Will the President make them public or is he going to sit on them?

MR. TER HORST: I imagine the President will consider them and then make up his mind or advise his conferees of what he would like them to do in pursuit of the recommendations he makes. I imagine we may not know on Saturday precisely what was recommended or what the President's decision is on the recommendations.

Q Jerry, is the President going to sign the pension bill on Labor Day and, if so, where?

MR. TER HORST: Yes, the President does plan to sign the pension reform bill here at the White House on Labor Day.

Q Another question. Can you tell us what message, if any, the Romanian emissary brought to the President?

MR. TER HORST: I am not aware that he brought a specific message in the nature of a formal communication, but he did bring with him the invitation to the President to visit Romania.

Q In addition to that invitation, there was supposed to be some other message.

MR. TER HORST: Yes, he did deliver a personal message from President Ceausescu to the President, but as is customary, we are not able to release to you the contents of that message.

Q How soon can we expect a Presidential working visit with the working heads of the NATO allies either in Europe or here?

MR. TER HORST: I can't give you a date on that, Jerry. As you know, the President is very interested in meeting and in conferring with the NATO allies individually as well as collectively. He has already been in touch with them on an individual basis, but as to when or where they might meet together, I can't give you any date or guidance.

Q Jerry, the housing is supposed to be one of these emergency areas where he might take action before the summit meeting. Should we expect something today or soon on the housing?

MR. TER HORST: I wouldn't expect anything today on a dramatic move on the housing front. It is a matter of great concern to the President and to his economic advisers, as obviously it is to Secretary Lynn. It is one of several areas that are hurting, economically, but it is only one of those that are hurting, and it is possible there may be something that will emerge from this meeting that we can give you a better report on the precise status of the discussion on the housing thing, but I do not look for any major policy announcements today on that.

Q Jerry, former President Nixon has been calling various Members of Congress complaining to them about the treatment he apparently is getting from the Special Prosecutor's Office, saying they are picking the carcass and that kind of thing. Has he called President Ford or has President Ford called him on the matter of the possible immunity from prosecution?

MR. TER HORST: I am not aware of the contacts that may have taken place on the Hill, if indeed they did. As for communication between the President and the former President, I am only aware of the courtesy call that the President extended to former President Nixon in San Clemente the day he announced that he was naming Governor Rockefeller as his Vice Presidential nominee.

Q You are not aware of any other calls?

MR. TER HORST: I am not.

Q That personal message that came from the President of Romania, could that involve the POWs in North Vietnam since they are in touch with them and a Senator had asked that they do use their influence to get our graves and make accounting for them?

MR. TER HORST: I am not sure. I have no way of knowing. As I say, those messages are personal as they have always been, so we will respect the confidence.

Q Will Scranton continue to be a talent scout and will he have a role in economic matters?

MR. TER HORST: To my knowledge, Governor Scranton's role is essentially that as I described it, that of a talent scout, to assist the President in finding and locating the people he may want to bring into the Administration at such time as he decides which recommendations of the transition team he wishes to accept.

I have one addition to the schedule just handed me.

Following the meeting with the economic advisers, the President will meet with the newly elected President of the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce, David L. Hale, 33, of Little Rock, Arkansas.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Press Secretary.

END (AT 12 NOON EDT)