

This Copy For _____

NEWS CONFERENCE #41

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:04 P.M. EDT

OCTOBER 1, 1974

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President began working in his Oval Office this morning about 7:30. At 8:30 he went downstairs to attend part of the White House Prayer Breakfast. The speaker this morning was the Reverend Zeoli. You probably know that he is a long-time friend of the Ford family.

Q What church?

MR. NESSEN: I think a number of people talked to Reverend Zeoli at the hospital the other day and I think he explained to you his church affiliation. I was not able to go to the meeting, so I cannot tell you what happened. There were about 25 people attending.

Q What is his church affiliation?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you wait for the White House to get you an answer on that, although Helen is an excellent reporter.

MR. NESSEN: The President met with several staff members this morning, including General Scowcroft, Don Rumsfeld, Bob Hartmann, Bill Timmons and myself.

Just to keep you up-do-date on the follow-up activities from the summit meeting on inflation, the Executive Committee of the Economic Policy Board met this morning at 8:30 to continue reviewing and analyzing the recommendations of the conference.

At 11:30, the full Economic Policy Board met and the Executive Committee will meet this afternoon at 2:00 with the President.

I mentioned to you yesterday that there were Executive Orders spelling out the economic reorganization and those Executive Orders either are ready or are almost ready.

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Q Ron, what is the board he meets with this afternoon again?

MR. NESSEN: The Executive Committee.

Q The full Executive Committee?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do you expect any statements or news after the meeting this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: I do not.

Q Who chaired those meetings today, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Secretary Simon was there.

You probably have seen on your schedule that the President is meeting this afternoon at 3:00 with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The Prime Minister has been in New York in connection with the United Nations General Assembly and is coming to Washington to meet with the President today.

As you will recall, Bangladesh was admitted to the United Nations this month. Today's meeting will be the first Presidential meeting with the leadership of Bangladesh since U.S. relations were established with that country in 1972.

It will give the President and the Prime Minister an opportunity to review U.S.-Bangladesh relations and the situation in South Asia.

You have seen a statement that we issued this morning from the President concerning the Eagleton Amendment. Let me call that to your attention.

You have a copy of the President's statement in which he concludes that the increase for Federal pay should be 5.25 percent this year. Within the next few days the President will be sending a message to Congress outlining his decision, along with the Executive Order implementing the pay increase, and also copies of a report by the Civil Service Commission and OMB, and also a report of the Advisory Committee on Federal Pay.

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We have announced that at 4:30 this afternoon the President will meet with the mayor of New York, Mr. Abraham Beame, and a group of mayors and business leaders.

Q What is that about, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: This meeting was requested by Mayor Beame. A request was made for a meeting with a delegation of mayors and others to discuss pending mass transit legislation. There will be about 31 people at the meeting including, I think, most of the mayors of the large cities.

Q Ron, will you have a list of the mayors?

MR. NESSEN: We can get that for you. In fact, I understand we are going to post a list later in the afternoon.

Q How long does the President have before he has to act on this mass transit bill, Ron, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean about "on the mass transit bill"?

Q I thought it was here.

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Is that incorrect?

MR. NESSEN: That is incorrect.

Q Will you produce a mayor after the meeting or a fill on the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure we will produce them out here, but I think you will be able to catch plenty of them outside.

Q Are there other people other than mayors in that meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I am told there will be people involved in mass transit who are not necessarily mayors. That would be, for instance, leaders of industries which deal with mass transit equipment and labor leaders whose workers work in the mass transit area.

Q When is that meeting going to break up, Ron, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: I would think it might last a half hour or more.

I think those are all of my announcements this morning.

I will be happy to take your questions.

Q Ron, Secretary Simon said today that the President will propose to the Congress ways of reducing U.S. consumption of energy. Can you give us specific details on what the President will ask Congress and the second part of the question is, what is the President's position on gasoline rationing this morning?

MR. NESSEN: I can't give you what the President will propose to Congress. I can give you the kind of things that I think Mr. Simon had in mind. He is talking about conservation of energy, as you know, and he is talking about incentives to encourage people to form carpools, which would be one example of what is in his mind when he talks about this.

Another idea to conserve fuel would be increasing parking fees, for instance, downtown. Those are a couple of ideas.

I do want to make clear, though, that Mr. Simon has said before and still is opposed to mandatory gasoline rationing, and that is not being considered by the White House.

Q Ron, are you talking about positive incentives for carpools or negative ones, like increasing parking rates downtown?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that it has been refined down that far. I think incentives to form carpools is one of the ideas that Simon is talking about.

Q Will the increase in carpool money go to the parking lot operator or part of it go to the Treasury?

MR. NESSEN: Sarah, these are ideas that are on Mr. Simon's mind that led him to talk about the idea of fuel conservation. I don't think we have reached the point yet where this is even put into effect much less where the money is going to go.

Q Did the President go over this with him before it was approved?

MR. NESSEN: He goes over everything before it is approved.

Q Ron, how will these recommendations differ from the list of voluntary recommendations that President Nixon made last winter? Does it include speed limits?

MR. NESSEN: As I said before, we are not talking here about what is going to be sent to Congress. The question was, what did Mr. Simon have in mind, could you give us some examples? I am giving you some examples of what he had in mind.

Q Ron, does the White House anticipate a gasoline shortage this winter or fuel shortages of other types of fuel, such as home heating oil, similar to the shortages that were experienced last winter?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I have not checked out that question, but I will if Mr. Simon has not spoken to it publicly before. I don't know if he has, but I will check it for you.

Q Ron, is the President, as well as Mr. Simon, opposed to mandatory gas rationing?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q Do you have a reading on the President's attitude towards the new standard time bill for five months of the year? That was a conservation measure last winter. Will the President sign this bill?

MR. NESSEN: We talked about that briefly this morning. I think the answer is yes.

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: It was the Administration bill, so I assume he will sign it.

Q Will you tell us once more what the question was?

MR. NESSEN: It is the daylight saving bill.

Let me clear up something while we are right here. You asked about Reverend Zeoli's affiliation. He was ordained in the Independent Presbyterian Church; however, he is a worldwide evangelist and his association is with Gospel Films, Inc.

What was your question, Jerry?

Q The question is, the President has been talking a great deal and making appearances in the name of international cooperation on the high costs of energy, imported crude, and yet according to the French Finance Minister, after the Sunday meeting at Camp David the U.S. had not a single recommendation or program to put forward on how the industrialized nations of the world could formulate a cooperative basis to deal with it.

Why was Mr. Kissinger's Administration not prepared to put forward a positive action program at that time?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to have to refer your questions on that meeting to the State Department, where it was organized and arranged, and they obviously are Dr. Kissinger's spokesmen, and I will have to ask you to ask them.

Q Ron, can you give us more specifics about the measures which are under consideration for conservation of energy?

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute, and let's get it straight now. The question was, what kind of things did Simon have in mind when he made this statement, and I gave you a couple of examples.

Q Two.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, two examples.

Q Can you give us more?

MR. NESSEN: I can't.

Q Ron, to set the record straight, the question was, I think, what was the President going to propose, and you said you could not answer that.

MR. NESSEN: Right, but I can say what was on Mr. Simon's mind. After all, the speech was only given a short time ago.

Q If Mr. Simon knows about it, presumably it is under study by the White House.

MR. NESSEN: I would not make that assumption.

Q Ron, getting back to the gas thing of yesterday --

MR. NESSEN: I thought you would never get back to the gas thing of yesterday. (Laughter)

Q -- about Mr. Simon, is that one of the things that he also has on his mind? Do you have anything more to tell us about that?

MR. NESSEN: I reviewed the situation with the President, and the situation is as I told you yesterday. I did look up the statement that Jerry terHorst had made to you, and it was as I tried to correct it to you yesterday that he said that he was authorized to say that the President does not favor a 10 cent tax on gasoline. The President has that same position today as when Jerry terHorst told it to you.

Q Well, is he considering the tax, though?

MR. NESSEN: This is right back where we were yesterday, and I have nothing to add to what I told you yesterday except that John, I believe you asked me to ask the President whether he still felt the same, and he does still feel the same.

Q Does that mean Mr. Seidman and Mr. Ford are in disagreement over the matter?

MR. NESSEN: It certainly does not. The other part of what I said yesterday also remains true, which is that many, many ideas which came out of the economic summit meeting are under study.

I think there is a great jump from saying that they are under study to saying this proposal is on the President's desk for a decision.

Q Ron, can you say whether the White House is understood to be considering a weekend ban on gasoline sales as a means of conserving gasoline?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot say one way or the other on that, Ross.

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Q Is the President considering curtailing his own campaign travel as a means of conserving energy?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of or for any other reason. As I think I told you yesterday, the plans are going ahead for all the appearances that have been announced.

Q Ron, I would like to put an earlier question another way to see if you can give me some kind of an answer.

Does the President of the United States or his advisers have any kind of proposals in mind for international cooperation to deal with this oil situation?

MR. NESSEN: With the oil situation?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Is this a follow-up to Jerry's question about the meeting at Camp David?

Q The fact that no idea seemed to come out of there.

MR. NESSEN: I would like the question about the meeting to be referred over to the State Department.

Q Could you answer it without reference to the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: The question was do they have any --

Q Does the President or his advisers have any ideas as to a proposal for international cooperation in dealing with this?

MR. NESSEN: I think I am going to have to ask you to refer that over there, Phil, because after all the meeting was run by them and Secretary Kissinger.

Q Ron, is it Secretary Kissinger who is deciding on U.S. foreign policy, or is it the President?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he certainly is the one who makes recommendations on foreign policy.

Q In addition to which, Ron, when the New Economic Policy Board was set up, it was stated in the announcement by the President and elsewhere that the new Economic Policy Board would coordinate all economic activities with the Government, domestic and foreign.

MR. NESSEN: That is true.

Q And therefore I think there are several in the room, including myself, who think these are legitimate questions to direct to you since this Economic Policy Board is a White House board chaired not by the Secretary of State but by the Secretary of the Treasury since the announcements were made here and since that jurisdiction includes foreign affairs.

So I would like to repeat Phil Shabecoff's question: Does the Economic Policy Board, if you will, have any proposals in its mind, any suggestions in its mind, for international cooperation on conservation of fuel?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you are right that the Economic Policy Board is dealing with international as well as domestic problems involving the economy. I would simply say that I don't know and we have not talked about here the whole range of proposals that they are considering. I don't know all the things they are considering. I don't mean to suggest by that that they may be considering something that I don't know about. They simply have a lot of proposals in the domestic and international area and I think really, since the President is hoping to make public or has promised to make public his specific proposals next week, that probably we ought to wait and see what they come out.

Q Will those be in the foreign as well as the domestic area?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that, but I will find it out for you.

Q Ron, what is the format going to be?

MR. NESSEN: It has not been decided yet.

Q It was mentioned on the wire today that Mrs. Ford's illness might force the President to cancel or postpone this foreign visit to Japan. Is there any decision on that?

MR. NESSEN: That trip falls into the same category of all the other trips, that plans are going ahead for all the scheduled trips that have been announced.

Q Has the President set a definite date yet to appear before the Hungate committee?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think, as the letter said, it will be a mutually agreeable date within the next ten days.

Q Has he talked to Mr. Hungate personally?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that, Maggie.

Q Will it be an open hearing?

MR. NESSEN: The President expects the hearing to be open.

Q Do you expect televised coverage?

MR. NESSEN: Whether television is allowed is something that the committee will have to decide.

Q He would not oppose it?

MR. NESSEN: The answer to that is no.

Q On the same subject, there are indications that some of the committee Members would like to ask him about transitional questions of funds and so forth. Will the President be willing to answer questions beyond the specific subject of the pardon?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President's understanding is that the hearing is limited in its scope to the questions and points of information as stated in the resolutions and obviously also limited to the matters that are within the scope of his knowledge.

Q Ron, just on those two resolutions -- now there are other resolutions before this committee that deal with transition. Are you saying just these two resolutions that deal with the pardon?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q In that framework, will he submit to cross-examination or would he just give a statement in answer to those questions?

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe cross-examination is a term used in Congressional hearings. The President does plan to answer all the questions and points of information that are in those resolutions, and he is prepared to respond to each question and each point of information in the resolutions.

Now, if there were committee Members who had questions on those specific points that they wanted some further elaboration on, I believe he is prepared to answer their questions.

Q Ron, there was a time when we used to hear that an appearance by a President before a Congressional hearing would be setting a bad precedent as far as Executive or Congressional relations or at least adding to a foundation of bad precedent.

Does President Ford feel any concern for this, or is he convinced that this would in no way damage the President's Executive or Congressional relations?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am not a great Congressional or constitutional lawyer, but let me say this: That for the limited purpose of making his own personal response to the questions and points of information in the resolutions, it is obvious that he has decided not to invoke Executive privilege.

Q Ron, can we assume then that he would order General Haig not to invoke the Executive privilege if called before the Armed Services Committee?

MR. NESSEN: I would not assume that. I don't exactly see the connection, but I certainly would not assume that.

Q Ron, if the President showed testimony before Congress one of his subordinates likewise should be --

MR. NESSEN: I think we will have to cross that point when we get to it.

Q Ron, does that mean that if he should be asked about something outside this resolution that he would just say, well, I decline to answer?

MR. NESSEN: That is obviously hypothetical, Bob, but I just would like to stick to the idea that he does understand that the hearing is limited in its scope to the questions and points of information in the resolutions. He is prepared to answer all the questions and points of information in the resolution.

Q Ron, to follow up, did you talk with him today about how he decided to do this or what led him to do it this way?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I did a little bit. I don't think it is any great mystery. A lot of you have known him for a lot longer than I have, and he is a great believer in the direct approach. He feels that he is the one who has the best information about all the circumstances surrounding the exercise of his pardon power, and the pardon power is exclusively the President's under the Constitution, and because of that he concluded that he is the best person to supply the information that was requested.

Again, your question seems to go to his personality and aside from being a man who does believe in the direct approach, he feels that he has nothing to hide and wants to tell the truth.

Q Did he give any indication that this is the sort of thing that he would do on other issues?

Q Just one more question. Is he going to tell us something about this that we don't know? (Laughter)

Q Do you expect any bombshells? Do you expect any startling new information or will it be a restatement of his reasons?

MR. NESSEN: I really think the best thing to do -- this, after all, is a matter between the subcommittee of Congress and the President, and I really think that the President is prepared to go up there and answer all the questions and we ought to wait and find out what he says.

Q Did he give any indication that this is a course that he would follow on any other issues? I mean, did he talk about Executive privilege and how he was not going to be invoking it? Can you give us some of his thoughts on that?

MR. NESSEN: I have not talked about that subject, and I just don't feel qualified to answer that.

Q Do you consider this a matter of Executive privilege or separation of powers?

MR. NESSEN: Well, these are my words, and as I told you before, I am not a lawyer. But I think what I said was fairly obvious for the reasons I gave, he did not decide to invoke Executive privilege or to cite separation of powers, if you would like to add that.

Q Ron, do you know from your discussion with the President that whether before he made the decision to respond to the Hungate letter the way he did, whether he met with Buchen and his counsel, and they looked at the legal ramifications of this, or was this a personal decision based on his knowledge that he was the one who had the information? In other words, is this a big deal? Has he looked into the legal ramifications?

MR. NESSEN: He met extensively with Mr. Buchen and Mr. Marsh before sending the letter to Congressman Hungate.

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Q Ron, can we assume, because of the campaign trips next week, I think starting with one a week from today --

MR. NESSEN: When?

Q The 7th, I believe.

MR. NESSEN: Vermont.

Q Yes.

Q -- that this thing will follow the Vermont trip immediately.

MR. NESSEN: I would not try to make up your own schedule of when this is going to occur. I am sure you have seen the letter and it has said at a mutually agreeable time. Frankly, we don't know when the mutually agreeable time will be.

Q On a related subject, I would like to get back to the famous telephone call from former President Nixon. You told us yesterday that the former President mentioned in passing that he would be willing to send the pardon back.

I would like to ask a further question about that. In that conversation, did the former President make any reference of any sort to pardons for the Watergate defendants or other figures in the Watergate case?

MR. NESSEN: As the conversation has been described to me on several occasions, there was no mention of that.

Q How does the President feel about the legislation pending in Congress to hold up the tapes deal?

MR. NESSEN: To hold up the tapes deal?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: The President has not taken any position on that and he has not given any instructions to his Congressional Liaison Office. I do want to call your attention to something he said at his last news conference which was that he has turned over all of his Congressional and Vice Presidential papers to the University of Michigan archives, and he can see a legitimate reason for Presidential papers remaining the property of the Government.

But as far as he personally is concerned, he does not see much difference or does not have any strong feelings one way or the other between the Government retaining them or having them turned over to an archives such as the University of Michigan library.

Q How does he feel about the burning of documents at a given date, or destruction?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know the answer to that question, Helen, because I didn't ask him how he feels about the burning of them.

Q I mean it was presented by the White House.

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Unveiled at the White House.

Q Ron, are Mr. Ford's papers open to the public?

MR. NESSEN: The ones that are at the University of Michigan?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I don't know the answer to that. I think it would be simple to call the library out there and ask.

Q It seems to me there is a considerable difference between this arrangement that Mr. Ford and Mr. Nixon has made about Mr. Nixon's papers and the turning over of papers to a library.

As I understand it, Mr. Ford agreed that none of Mr. Nixon's papers were to be available to anybody except the courts, and I assume that that is not the arrangement Mr. Ford made about his own papers.

MR. NESSEN: I would assume the same thing, but I do suggest that the simplest way to get it is to call the library.

Q Ron, are you trying to slide away from the agreement that the President --

MR. NESSEN: I am certainly not trying to slide away from it. I was asked a question by Helen about what is his position on the legislation.

Q Don't you know what the answer would be from the University of Michigan? I can tell you right now it would be, "Call the White House." (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: If that is the answer, then you call me and I will get you an answer here.

Q I think the best thing is for you to ask Mr. Ford right here and right now.

Q Where are the tapes now?

MR. NESSEN: Which tapes?

Q The Nixon tapes. All the tapes and documents.

MR. NESSEN: This pre-dates my arrival here, but my understanding is that they are locked in a vault in the EOB, if I am correct about that.

Q Is the negotiation still going on with Jaworski's office or whatever to hold them here, or are they going to be sent to San Clemente?

MR. NESSEN: I believe the last thing that was said from this podium, and again it was before I came here, was that the White House had decided that nothing was going to be done with them until some of these issues that have been raised have been resolved.

Q Ron, on that fact, are the negotiations still going on, and whether there has been any change in the White House position on that?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly not.

Q Ron, when those questions about the legislation affecting the Nixon documents was originally posted, there was also another question posted at the same time about whether the President has given any instructions to his Congressional liaison staff concerning Congressional efforts to cut back the original \$850,000 request.

MR. NESSEN: I remember those questions.

Q Has he given any instructions to the staff on that?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q In other words, he has not asked them to go out and support this original request made by the Administration?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't see why I need to sharpen the answer. You asked me has he given any instructions, and the answer is no.

Q Ron, back to the Hungate hearing, you said he had met extensively with Marsh before sending the letter. Are you talking about the second letter or are you talking about his initial response?

MR. NESSEN: I think the question was did he have any discussions before he made this decision to go up there, or did he just sit and make it by himself. And I said he had discussions with Marsh and Buchen before making this decision.

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Q To follow through on that, what prompted the White House to respond as they did initially just by sending up the transcript and people? Whose idea was that? It seems so out of character for a man who is so closely related to Congress to try to irritate them.

MR. NESSEN: Well, there was no desire or wish to irritate, and the President and his legal advisers believe that they were responding fully and courteously to the request for information. When it turned out that the subcommittee Members didn't feel that was a full enough answer to their questions and sent further letters, then further discussions were held, which resulted in last night's decision.

Q Ron, what is unusual about this situation? I have a two-part question. One, will the President always respond like this, going to the Hill if Congress so requests, a Congressional committee or subcommittee, and number two, if the answer to that question is no, what is so unusual about this situation?

Does the fact that his credibility has been called into account by opinion polls and by people on the Hill and elsewhere, is this situation considered unique and a situation whereby the President is looking for a forum to further explain his action?

MR. NESSEN: John, as I said, if you want to use the word unique, I think the use of the word unique would have to be that the power of the pardon under the Constitution belongs only to the President, and he is the one who has the best and most complete information to answer the questions that have been raised.

Now, on matters in the future, I would not draw any conclusions one way or the other from this episode.

Q Ron, it would be awfully hard for him to say no in the future. Isn't that the core of the precedent?

MR. NESSEN: You understand Congress a lot better than I do, Bill. I believe the practice has been that when questions arise that need to be answered by the Executive Branch, the department head or agency head the most knowledgeable on that subject goes to answer the questions.

The President feels that he is the most knowledgeable person on these questions.

Q Ron, I wonder if you want to open that up. The President is often the man who knows the most about a given decision or a given action. Is this a precedent for that kind of future appearances before committees?

MR. NESSEN: I would not call this a precedent for that kind of appearance.

Q Ron, does the President intend to go up there by himself or will he be accompanied by legal advisers?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that specifically, but I just have to assume that he would go with legal advisers.

Sarah?

Q Ron, all over this Government -- I don't know all of it, but I know in different agencies women in the last two or three days have been detailed by their bosses to go to the White House to a stenographic pool to answer the letters that are coming in to the President on pardon, and some of these women are very incensed by this because downgrading them to a stenographic pool back at the White House, even if it is the White House, is below the work they have been doing in responsible jobs, and they are pretty made about it.

I wonder if you can tell us how many of these women have been put on the White House detail, how long they will be there, if they have any chance of getting off of it and if you will tell us how many letters you are receiving on pardon and did the number of these letters have a reason to make the President arrive at this decision to go to the Hill?

MR. NESSEN: I think I can answer the last part by simply saying no.

Q How do you know?

Q What is the question?

MR. NESSEN: Did the letters affect the President's decision to go to the Hill, and I can tell you no to that.

The women being detailed to answer the letters is something I have not heard of until you just mentioned it, but we will check it and get you an answer to that, and we will also get you an up-to-date count on the public response to the pardon.

Q I would like to know how long the women have to serve in Siberia over here in the EOB.

MR. NESSEN: Well, let's find out if they are in Siberia in the EOB, and if they are, how long they will stay there.

Q Ron, what is to prevent Mr. Jaworski's needs --

MR. NESSEN: Mr. Jaworski's what?

Q Mr. Jaworski's needs on tape evidence.

Mr. Ford's position on the disposition of Presidential papers and Mr. Nixon's desires by simply making dub copies of all of the taped material, of all the documentary material, retaining copies for the Government, sending the originals to Mr. Nixon for whatever disposition he chooses to make of them?

MR. NESSEN: Are you suggesting that that is a course that ought to be followed at this time?

Q I am asking if it has been considered and what problems there would be involved in it and would it not be one answer to the dilemma of the President?

MR. NESSEN: I promised that I would get an update for you. We do know that the tapes and documents are locked up in the EOB under Secret Service protection. As for the status of the agreement that was signed and whether the papers and tapes, whether that arrangement might be one, I would like to get a new, fresh fill on the status and give it to you tomorrow, if I could.

Q Ron, were you able to determine in answer to questions yesterday which members of the senior staff are able to see the President without going through Rumsfeld?

MR. NESSEN: Well, let me go about it this way, if I may, because I think this will give you the most information about the system here.

I found something I think will give you a little guidance. As Don Rumsfeld mentioned yesterday, the President came in at the beginning of the senior staff meeting to welcome Don and to make some comments about how the White House will operate under Don.

In looking through those notes, I found some things that I think might guide you on this matter.

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The President said at that time that he wants Don to organize and coordinate the activities of the White House, and in doing that it includes organizing and coordinating access to the Oval Office.

At the same time, the President said it was the responsibility of the senior staff members to work through Don on matters in their area of responsibility that need Presidential attention, and he said that on any significant matters, his door is always open to them.

Now I think you probably have seen how this President operates. The White House, as I found out in my short time here, is a very complex organization, and the President, incidentally, used the expression at that meeting that the White House is an "intricate and complex organization" and that the job that he wants Don to do is to coordinate and organize that organization, and he wants Don to be aware of what is going on in this building so that he can be aware of the times when it will be necessary to take things up directly with the President.

He does, I think you have seen, like to have personal contact with the people who work for him, and a word he used at that meeting was that he likes to "find out first hand what is going on."

I, in my short time here, have heard the President say words to the effect of let's get this guy in here so I can hear what he has to say. So I think in summary you can look for a lot of access to the President by his senior aides, and they will be working in coordination with Don Rumsfeld.

Q Ron, what if a senior staff member thinks he has a matter of significance that he wants to talk to the President about and Don Rumsfeld disagrees, thinks it is not a matter of significance. Who is it that gets the word to the President that the staff member would like to take advantage of the open door?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you are posing questions about episodes that I have not seen arise in the day-to-day operation of the White House. The procedure as it has operated and I have seen it is this -- and it is the one I follow and it is the one the other senior staff members follow: If I have something I feel I need to talk to the President about right way, I would tell Don or the member of his staff who is dealing with the scheduling that I need to see the President, and Don or his staff member doing the specific job knows what the President is doing at that particular moment and he could judge whether to say yes, go right on in, or he could say we will schedule you for such and such a time.

Q The question admittedly is hypothetical now, but not hypothetical in the previous Administration is what happens if Don says no you should not go in?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I really don't think I should deal with those hypothetical cases. I have told you how the procedure works.

Q Ron, the President a few days ago appointed an appointment secretary. Will he be under Mr. Rumsfeld?

MR. NESSEN: He is the member of the Rumsfeld staff who I referred to.

Q Under that procedure that you just outlined, would you, when you wanted to see Mr. Rumsfeld, tell him specifically why you wanted to see the President?

MR. NESSEN: Sure.

Q Ron, why does the White House have to be an intricate and complex organization? It is right straight up and down, one man at the top of it, so why does it have to be intricate and complex?

MR. NESSEN: Well, let me give you an answer from my personal experience, Sarah, from being here only a short time. It looks a lot different from the inside than it does from the outside.

Q I'll bet it does, but give us more of an answer than that.

MR. NESSEN: I can't give you a better answer than that, Sarah, because that is the way I found it when I came here, and that is the way it is today. One of Don's jobs -- I believe the President or Don himself have used the words -- are bringing order to the White House.

I think as coordinator and administrator one of Don's jobs is to simplify the complexity.

Q Ron, there were three advisers before who considered their status to be peaking status.

MR. NESSEN: What is that status?

Q Peaking status, they can look in the door.

MR. NESSEN: Peaking status; I see.

Q That includes Marsh and Hartmann and Buchen. Now Rumsfeld is the top. Does this change that? Are they still able to look in the door or do they have to go through Mr. Rumsfeld?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously, I am not in the peaking level. I guess there is a sort of a "rap lightly" level below that one, right?

Phil, this is the way the system works, and you know I am not aware of who is on the peaking status, but this is the way the system works.

Q One other question on this procedure, if I might. Is there any regularly scheduled meeting between the President and senior staff other than Mr. Rumsfeld?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes. I think your schedule reflects that, if I am not mistaken.

Q Will he meet daily with his senior staff meetings, the President?

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean as he did yesterday to welcome Don?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No. I will tell you what happened yesterday was that he came obviously to welcome Don and give some of these general guidelines to the senior staff as to what he wanted Don to do.

At the end of the meeting, the President said -- well, I may not have the exact quote. Basically, what he said was, I may drop by again, and Don said you are invited. So, he will not attend as a --

Q So, there are no regular staff meetings the President attends?

MR. NESSEN: The President does not attend --

Q Anything on a daily basis?

MR. NESSEN: The President does not come to the daily senior staff meeting on a daily basis, but I thought the question was do some staff members have regularly scheduled appointments with the President, and they do because you see them on your list.

Q I mean, is there a regular routine meeting between the President and his senior staff?

MR. NESSEN: You mean all of them at one time?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, any plans as yet for the next press conference?

MR. NESSEN: No, not any plans.

Q I simply asked none? Does that mean none this week?

MR. NESSEN: By way of guidance, I would not look for one this week. That is for your guidance.

Q You still hope to keep the schedule of fairly regular and fairly frequent press conferences? I think you had outlined something on the order of two a month. Do you still plan to do that?

MR. NESSEN: We do absolutely plan to stick to frequent press conferences.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

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