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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12 NOON EST

DECEMBER 4, 1974

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Good morning.

The President will be leaving the White House at 12:40 for the Mayflower Hotel where he will present the Rockefeller Public Service Awards during a luncheon in the Grand Ballroom at the Mayflower.

The President will have brief remarks and we are getting those prepared now, I believe, for the pool. They are very brief. I will give you the winners in a moment.

These are for five career public servants who have distinguished themselves through outstanding accomplishments in Federal Government service. This program is administered by Princeton University and was established in 1951 by John D. Rockefeller, III.

I will give you the recipients. Here are the awards. The award in the area of outstanding public service in the area of human resources, development and protection goes to J. Bruce Cardwell, the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration.

Where is he from?

MR. NESSEN: I think you are going to have to get that up there because we simply don't have it here.

Q Is it a cash award, and if so, how much?

MR. HUSHEN: Last year it was \$10,000 tax free.

MR. NESSEN: I really think you have to wait and get the press kits.

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The award in the area of professional accomplishment or leadership goes to George Jaszi, who is Director of Economic Analysis at the Department of Commerce.

The award in the area of administration goes to George M. Low, the Deputy Administrator of NASA.

In the area of physical resources, development and protection, it goes to Robert M. White, the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the Department of Commerce.

The award in the area of intergovernmental operations goes to Maurice Williams, the Chairman of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The details, like what the award is and so forth, will be available, I am sure, in a press kit over at the luncheon.

The President will be coming back to the White House at about 1:15. At 1:50 he will meet with Secretaries Morton and Butz prior to transmitting to Congress a wilderness message and proposed new wilderness areas.

We will have quite a bit of material here for you on these wilderness proposals at about 1:30, and Secretary Morton will come out here and talk to you about the wilderness message at about 2 o'clock, and that will be available for filming.

Q Why no Butz?

MR. NESSEN: It is about the wilderness areas, and he is the expert on wilderness areas.

As you know, Prime Minister Trudeau is arriving today and we have posted the press schedule.

There will be a 2:45 arrival at the South Portico, which can be covered in full by the press. I guess Secretary Morton will be over by 2:45.

Q On that point, Hartman is briefing at the State Department at 12:30 today.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, Arthur Hartman is briefing on the Trudeau visit. I am going to hurry and finish so you can get there.

Q I wonder why it isn't possible on those occasions to have him brief here as well or to make the same material available here. We are tied fairly closely over here today.

Q Will you have a briefing here at 5 o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: Let me work my way through, Ralph.

At 3 o'clock he meets with the President in the Oval Office. There will be a writing pool, hand-held silent cameras and still photographers for that. Then he will leave from the Oval Office down the South Drive at 4 o'clock, full coverage of that.

The working dinner, we will have the Prime Minister arriving at the North Portico at 7:15, again full press coverage. At 7:45 a black tie working dinner in the Blue Room.

At the beginning of the dinner there will be an opportunity for hand-held cameras, still photographers and the writing pool to go in and I think the writing pool has been posted. The folks attending that should wear dark suits.

At 9 o'clock the toasts in the Blue Room. There will be no coverage of that, but the remarks will be piped both into here and the Family Theatre.

At 5 o'clock we will have a read-out here, Ralph, on what happened at the one-hour meeting from 3 to 4. The guest list will be put up sometime this afternoon.

Q Can you have it before if he is going to leave for the Capitol Hill Club at 5?

MR. NESSEN: I tell you, the Capitol Hill Club isn't going to be much. It is a drop-by at a Capitol Hill Club reception for new Congressional Republicans and their wives. From the time he leaves here until the time he gets back is going to be 45 minutes. You have to use your own judgment.

There will be a traveling pool taken along, and I suspect that nobody else will get into the Capitol Hill Club if I remember regulations correctly, from when I tried to get in.

Q Will the pool get in?

MR. NESSEN: So far as I know, that is the thought.

One other announcement today, and that is, as advertised, the President has sent to Congress today a supplemental appropriation request for the current fiscal year in the amount of \$813,700,000 to pay for the Veterans Benefits bill, which Congress approved yesterday over the President's veto.

You should have the President's letter of transmittal and a document from Roy Ash giving some additional details.

That, basically, concludes my announcements. We will try to get you that Arthur Hartman transcript. We may be able to get Arthur Hartman piped over here.

Q Ron, the original schedule for Trudeau was a two-hour meeting. The Trudeau Government assumes that, State said that, NSC said that. At what time was it changed to a one-hour meeting and why?

MR. NESSEN: I wasn't aware there had been that kind of a change. I heard that it lasts an hour. There is no additional meeting tomorrow. There is the working meeting tonight. I wasn't aware there was any change in the schedule either. I am not sure there has been. I don't have an explanation, but we can certainly check it.

Q It would be useful to find out why it was slashed in half. Does this mean that there is absolutely nothing that the Americans and Canadians can say to each other?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't make that assumption if I were you.

Q Ron, yesterday I think you said that a message might accompany the President's supplemental request. What happened to that message?

MR. NESSEN: I said that there was some consideration being given. I think the covering letter is all the President will be saying on that.

Q What was the Schlesinger meeting all about?

MR. NESSEN: Just routine defense matters, as far as I know.

Q Like what?

MR. NESSEN: They have a lot of routine defense matters to discuss. Frankly, I don't know what the specific subjects were, but I know it was a periodic meeting that he has with the President. This was one of them.

Q Are Morton, Butz, or Schlesinger going to talk to the President about any Canadian-American matters, given the fact that all three of their departments have special concerns at this time with Canada?

MR. NESSEN: It is possible. The President has been spending time preparing himself for the meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau. I do know that the agenda of the Morton and Butz meeting is the wilderness legislation.

Q Did the Trudeau meeting come up in your meeting with the President this morning?

MR. NESSEN: It did not.

Q Does the President expect wilderness legislation to pass in this session of Congress?

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean in this lame duck session of Congress?

Q I wonder why he is sending it up now.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it will pass this session, but we hope it will be taken up after the first of the year.

Q Last night the President declared in his Trade Conference speech that the trade bill in the lame duck session was his highest priority. Does that represent any shift in priorities for his economic program? Why did he have to state it that way?

MR. NESSEN: Did he say it was his highest priority?

Q I believe so. When he turned to his Cabinet he said this is a matter of the highest priority for the lame duck session.

MR. NESSEN: A matter of highest priority? Well, it certainly is. And I think he gave a very forceful speech in explaining why it did have such a high priority on it.

Q Does the President believe the trade bill is in trouble on the Hill?

MR. NESSEN: So far as I have been able to determine the President expects it to be passed promptly. I mean, you are aware of what has gone before in terms of delay in the trade bill.

Now, the President expects it to move ahead promptly without the unrelated amendments attached to it that he spoke of last night.

Q When is Kissinger going to testify on the bill again? I understand that was the hold-up, that they wanted to --

MR. NESSEN: You know he went back last evening at about 6 o'clock to have a second session with the Senators who had expressed interest in continuing their discussion.

Aldo?

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Q Ron, do you know anything about a ban on long-range, air mobile, ballistic missiles that was reached at Vladivostock?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think you would call it a ban, Aldo. I think, as Dr. Kissinger told you in that second briefing at Vladivostock, there were some definitions agreed to in the meeting there, and, after all, if you are going to set a limit of twenty-four hundred delivery vehicles, you have to decide what is going to be counted in the twenty-four hundred.

And, as you know, the United States was able to prevail in its view that you shouldn't count the forward bases, you shouldn't count the French and British forces, which the Russians at one time had insisted on.

And then, on the question of airborne ballistic missiles -- which is your question -- there was an agreement that missiles which had a range of less than 600 kilometers -- which translates to 400 miles -- would not be counted within the twenty-four hundred ceiling on delivery systems.

Q Wait a minute, missiles with less than 400 miles --

MR. NESSEN: Ballistic missiles.

Q Ballistic missiles would not be counted?

MR. NESSEN: Airborne.

Q Airborne ballistic missiles with less than 400?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q What about over 400? What about long-range ballistic missiles fired from airplanes?

MR. NESSEN: That is right; if you are going to have those, then you have to count those as part of your twenty-four hundred.

Q So, there is no ban on them?

MR. NESSEN: No. Who said there was a ban on them?

Q There was a published report that there was a ban.

MR. NESSEN: You have to count them against your total is what I am saying.

Q How would that be counted? For example, if you had a thousand mile ballistic missile dropped out of, let's say, a C-5A, is that two carriers, the airplane plus the missile itself?

MR. NESSEN: No, just one delivery system.

Q Ron, I have another question. My question regards the President's statement that General Park of South Korea is more lenient today and that the United States is committed to the independence of South Korea in which connection I find that Bishop Daniel Sheehe, as well as a number of Presbyterian clergymen, are still in prison.

Now, the question is, how can the President say that Park is lenient under these circumstances, or was the imprisonment of a Catholic Bishop regarded as not important enough for him to discuss with Park or with you as his Press Secretary?

MR. NESSEN: When you asked me the same question the other day, Les, I invited you to ask the President at his news conference the other night, and I notice you didn't attempt to be recognized.

Q I did; I stood 14 times. I did. I tried to get recognized.

Now, Ron, could you give us some guidance on how Korea has grown lenient since the President has advocated this?

MR. NESSEN: Advocated what?

Q I mean contended that President Park is more lenient and made the effort to go there and guarantee the alleged independence of this country?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to certainly be able to tell you why the President feels that Park has become more lenient in recent months -- which is what he told the Congressional leaders. And I do suggest, since that is a question that involves the President's assessments and views, I think it properly is a question you should address to him.

Q By mail?

MR. NESSEN: Well, in his frequent news conferences, which is where he answers questions.

On the other matter, I believe Phil Habib told you -- were you on the trip?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: Phil Habib told the people who did make the trip that the matter of Korean internal affairs had come up at the meeting and, just more generally speaking, the President's support of human rights and civil liberties around the world in every country is well-known and is known to the Korean Government.

Phil?

Q Ron, has President Ford made the decision to abandon any effort to get reconstruction funds for North Vietnam? Was the decision made to abandon that?

MR. NESSEN: That is a matter that I haven't asked about, Phil, but I can.

Q Secretary Kissinger indicated in some of his testimony yesterday that at least it was on the back burner?

MR. NESSEN: It is something I haven't discussed, but I could look into it for you.

Q Are there any telephone calls that the President has made that you could disclose to us -- I will just guess -- whether it be with President Nixon, or a head of government or anybody that you can tell us? Sometimes there are interesting calls that he makes that are not disclosed.

MR. NESSEN: Cliff is wondering whether the President has made any interesting phone calls. I can tell you that he has not talked to former President Nixon since whenever the last phone call was that we talked about out here. And then there was the visit, as you know -- no phone calls to the former President.

I don't know what you mean by interesting, undisclosed phone calls.

Q Has he contacted Wilbur Mills or sent any greetings to Wilbur Mills?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard of any, Phil.

Q Ron, after the President's press conference, Secretary Simon met with a group of reporters and said publicly that despite what the President had said at the Press Conference, he, Secretary Simon, was going to propose a 20 cent increase in the Federal gasoline tax, and he said further, with respect to the poll that the President cited in his Press Conference, the 81 percent poll, his comment on that was, "Well, if you ask people whether they want their taxes increased, they will always say no."

He said other things about the poll, indicating that he didn't think too much of that poll. What is your comment on those two comments by Secretary Simon?

MR. NESSEN: Secretary Simon had a briefing over here this morning that concluded about a half an hour ago and said at that time that there were going to be a number of options presented to the President and -- as I mentioned yesterday -- he has asked for -- he continually reassesses the economy and he has asked his advisers for options for various contingencies, and Simon indicated that he might very well present an increased gas tax as an option.

But the fact is that the President believes precisely what he said Monday night, which is that he has not been persuaded of the need for an increase in gas taxes.

Q Ron, was that a less strong statement than "never" in his Administration?

MR. NESSEN: Those are the words the President used. I don't know that he ever said "never" in his Administration.

Q Yes, I believe he did.

MR. NESSEN: Let's keep straight what we are talking about. I believe the President said at some point, I believe it was out in the Midwest somewhere, that there would never be a gasoline rationing in his Administration.

Q He said a gas tax.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so, Norm.

Q Yes, he did.

MR. NESSEN: In any case, he says he is opposed; he says he is opposed. And he said himself the other night he is not persuaded of the need for it.

I would say this, Jim, just to keep the record somewhat straight, that the last time he spoke at some length on this -- which was in his economic message to Congress -- his explanation of his opposition was not primarily that it was unpopular, but rather that it was unfair, and that still forms the foundation of his opposition to it.

Q Ron, the other night, the President precisely said he was not persuaded of the need for a 20 cent increase in the gasoline tax. Does that leave open the possibility that there might be a 19 cent increase or a 21 cent increase?

MR. NESSEN: No, I talked about that very matter with some people. Don't put too fine a point on him saying "I am not persuaded to a 20 cent tax." He means "I'm not persuaded on a gas tax."

Q Ron, do you interpret that as he is now saying he is open to persuasion, that, just up to this point he has not been persuaded, but he is open to persuasion?

MR. NESSEN: I don't interpret it at all, Jim. It speaks for itself. He is opposed to it and he has not been persuaded of the need for it.

Q May I phrase the same question differently? Has the President painted himself into an inextricable corner on that gas tax. That is, is he in such a corner that he can't get out sometime and change his mind?

MR. NESSEN: Inextricably?

You know, we always analyze the President's words so finely when I really am not sure of the need to go into this textual analysis. He is opposed to the gas tax, and he is not persuaded of the need for the gas tax. I don't know that an exploration of the shadings of language is going to add anything to this.

Q Let me try one that would put the onus on us. Would those of us who have interpreted his remarks as absolutely ruling out a gasoline tax at any time during his Administration be wrong?

MR. NESSEN: Jack, I just told them he was opposed to it. (Laughter.)

Let's have this for tomorrow and say that he thought about it overnight and was persuaded. (Laughter.)

I must say, Norm is right. The President said at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on October 16, "A gasoline tax would unfairly, in my judgment, penalize certain people" -- which is the point I was making to Jim -- "and for that reason, among many others, I reject it, and we are not going to have it as long as I am in the White House."

Now, I have heard nothing myself to indicate to me --

Q Would you repeat that, some of us want to take that down?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard anything that leads me to believe he has changed.

Let me say one thing, just sort of in passing, without any particular reference to anything. I think, you know, the energy situation is a complicated one, like most of the situations we have here, and you know, I think we tend to oversimplify it when we dwell on gas tax and gas rationing to the exclusion of all else.

You know there is a whole side of the equation that we never really explore out here, which is the supply side of the equation. As I say, I just offer that in passing.

Q Speaking of the supply side, have you had any new figures on his review of oil imports; you know, they were going to sort of monitor that because he was monitoring it and see whether or not there has been a decrease?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I have gotten a hold of some figures since I talked to you last. However, I am told that the old reporting method is unsatisfactory and inaccurate and that we are in the process of putting together a new and more accurate reporting method.

I must say, based on the old method, which is not entirely reliable, the progress towards reducing oil imports is probably not as satisfactory as the President had hoped it would be.

Q Can you give us any figures?

MR. NESSEN: Well, because nobody really quite trusts the old method, I think I would rather not, Jim.

Q Ron, can you tell us to whom Mr. Simon was speaking at this briefing you mentioned this morning?

MR. NESSEN: I believe it was a briefing for economic writers, was it not?

Q Ron, on this whole oil question, today, at his meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau, is the President going to thank Mr. Trudeau for decreasing oil exports to the United States because it is in line with the United States' policy of reducing imports, or is he going to express the view of those Congressmen who have been writing him in recent days urging him to pressure Mr. Trudeau to modify his policy and continue a higher level of oil exports to the United States than announced?

MR. NESSEN: Well, let me make a couple of points on that if I could rather than answering just the specific question.

The United States has known for some time -- as a matter of fact, for more than a year -- that there was the likelihood that Canada's oil shipments to the United States would be phased out sometime around the end of the 1970's. And as some of you who follow this know, some areas of the Middle West do rely rather heavily on Canadian crude oil, and so we have hoped and expected that any reduction in the Canadian exports would be phased out rather than cut off, phased out over a period of years so that there could be a readjustment in the refining and distribution systems in the Midwest, which does rely on Canadian crude oil.

We have been told that the Canadians will give consideration -- are giving consideration, as a matter of fact, to this reliance by the Middle Western refineries, and it pleases us that they are.

I must say, at the same time, that the United States is disappointed somewhat to learn that the Canadian government does plan to shut down the production of some of the oil and reduce its exports to the United States more rapidly than was recommended by the Canadian National Energy Board.

We hope that the Canadian government, after consultations it is planning with its provincial governments, will decide not to look at the production just of Canada's own current requirements and will continue to make the oil available for export.

And I would certainly think -- although we will have a more complete readout at 5:00 o'clock -- I would be fairly confident that this would be one of the subjects discussed by the President and the Prime Minister this afternoon.

I wonder if anybody -- rather than shift subjects quite so radically -- Tom?

Q Ron, do you think there will be any discussion this afternoon about the embargo on American beef?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I would.

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: What else would they be talking about?

Q And you said they will be discussing the two-way embargo on beef and live cattle?

MR. NESSEN: Arthur Hartman will be starting shortly. Let me see if I can finish up quickly here.

Trade and economic matters and a general overall review of issues of mutual interest -- and as I say, we will have a more complete readout later, but you are talking about trade and economic matters. I think you know what some of the leading trade and economic issues are between the United States and Canada.

Q Has there been any progress in those negotiations on the beef and veal quotas?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't we wait and see what the President and the Prime Minister come up with later in the afternoon.

Q On what grounds will the President make his appeal on oil, strictly on the need in the Midwest, or is he going to go further in terms of international --

MR. NESSEN: I am not a participant in the meeting, Helen; I would rather wait until we can explain in more detail what did indeed happen this afternoon.

Q Do you have a barrel import figure per day from Canada?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have it here, but I know we could get it easily for you, Walt.

John tells me it is roughly 938,000 barrels a day.

Q That is authorized, Ron, the actual is running below that.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:30 P.M. EST)