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NEWS CONFERENCE

#96

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:58 A.M. EST

DECEMBER 13, 1974

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: I notice today is a sort of a strange confluence of events, including a Friday the 13th, an eclipse of the sun, a meteor shower and my briefing.

Q You left George Harrison out.

MR. NESSEN: I am getting to that.

You notice how carefully I was walking when I came up here? That is because the Wall Street Journal quotes somebody as saying, "The name of the game is still how we can trip him up." So, I am walking carefully.

Mr. Kilpatrick, we welcome you to our little home away from home. We are honored by your presence.

The President had breakfast this morning with the Republican Congressional Delegation and I think you have a list of who attended. It was posted.

This is a group that has been meeting on a fairly regular basis for five or six years and the President attended the breakfast when he was a Member of the House and this was his turn to be the host, so he had them here.

Then, the President had another one of his Congressional hours in which he has Members of Congress who have requested appointments come in to see him and talk about whatever they want to talk about. I think you have seen the list of who attended this morning.

Q Goldwater requested a meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What was that about, putting Air Force One in the hangar?

MR. NESSEN: No, it was about the SALT agreement, Helen.

MORE

#96

Q Was he for it or against it?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't attend the meeting.

Has he spoken publicly about it? I think he probably has.

At noon -- or it will be a little later -- the President will meet with Housing Secretary Lynn and representatives of the National Association of Home Builders to discuss current problems in the housing industry. There will be a picture of that and it is delayed a little bit, I think, by another appointment the President had. When it is time to go for the picture, Bill will alert you.

At 12:30, the President will meet with officers of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Do you have those names, incidentally?

The President wanted them to come in so he could thank them for their support of the Administration's efforts to deal with the economic problems and also to discuss with them their ideas for what might be done in the future.

At one o'clock, the President will have a brief meeting in his office, or a brief greeting in his office, really, with George Harrison and Ravi Shankar and some other performers who are here with them. The genesis of this is that Jack Ford, the President's son, met them at a concert in Salt Lake City and invited them to lunch at the White House, so they are having lunch at the White House with Jack, not with the President, but Jack is going to bring them over to the office to meet the President. If anybody cares to, you can take some pictures of that.

Then, this afternoon, the President will have another meeting with Roy Ash and his staff to continue making his decisions on the 1976 budget.

For tomorrow, you have probably seen the schedule for take-off and so forth, check in, in your press books. I am sorry to tell you that because Secretary Kissinger and almost all the other officials who deal with French affairs are in Brussels, we are not going to be able to have a briefing on the trip to Martinique. What I hope for is that on the way down to Martinique, Secretary Kissinger, or somebody else on the plane will talk to the pool and you will have a pool report and we also hope to be able to record the briefing on the plane and then we will try to play the tape in the press room when we get there tomorrow evening.

I realize that it is very tight for Sunday deadlines but that is really the best we can do and I apologize for not being able to get the briefing. The problem is that everybody who knows anything about French affairs at a high level is in Brussels.

Q With all these people gone, who is helping the President prepare?

MR. NESSEN: He has considerable reading material that he is going over and he will have a chance to talk to Secretary Kissinger at some length before he goes.

Q Ron, will there be any departure ceremony with the Presidential remarks either here or at Andrews tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I am still checking that out, Ralph, and I hopefully will be able to post an answer this afternoon.

Q Will his arrival statement be available on the press plane?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, yes. It is written already.

Q Is there a public departure ceremony, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: That is what Ralph asked about and I will know for sure this afternoon and will post it.

Q Could you give us that statement today, the arrival statement, and embargo the statement?

MR. NESSEN: Would that help out for Sunday papers?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Let's say we will have it for sure.

Q Can we have the communique, as well? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Well, that really is not written, Tom.

Q What does the President hope to achieve in Martinique?

MR. NESSEN: Well, for one thing, it is going to be an occasion to get together and meet the President of France who he has not had an opportunity to meet since he has been President. I think you know yourself, Helen, the range of issues that they are going to discuss -- international, economic and fuel matters. There will certainly be some of those things discussed.

Let me correct something I told you, Helen, before. The President requested that Senator Goldwater come in to discuss the SALT II agreement.

The President today is accepting Ken Cole's resignation and we have an exchange of letters which is just about up to you and I think they are sort of self-explanatory in terms of Ken's reasons for leaving and the President's acceptance of that.

Q Have you a successor to announce, a replacement?

MR. NESSEN: No, we don't.

Q Is that choice being held up in order that the person selected be acceptable to Governor Rockefeller, someone that Vice President Rockefeller, when he is wholly confirmed, will be able to work with?

MR. NESSEN: I have never heard that, Jim.

Also, the President has accepted the resignation of Patrick Moynihan as Ambassador to India and he intends to nominate William B. Saxbe to be the Ambassador to India. We will have some letters on that.

The President, when I chatted with him this morning, pointed out that Mr. Saxbe has, for a long time, been extremely interested in being the Ambassador to India.

Shall I hold up until you have had a chance to look at the letters?

Q Please.

Q Ron, while they are passing those out, what about this thing with Lynn? Is he going to be available afterward for a briefing or do we have to catch him on the --

MR. NESSEN: We didn't have any plans to bring him out here, Bob.

Q Is there a discussion going to take place about housing problems or is this simply to meet the new President of this organization?

MR. NESSEN: It is to discuss the current conditions in the housing industry, Bob.

Q Can they do that in 30 minutes?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know. The President's meetings have a way of running over the deadline, too.

Q Can you make Lynn available after the meeting? You said you didn't have plans to. Can you?

MR. NESSEN: Let me see him after he gets out from seeing the President.

Q Ron, on the President's schedule this morning, did he see Transportation Secretary Brinegar?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that he did.

Q Did he have a successor to Saxbe?

Q Brinegar cancelled a news conference on the basis that he was supposed to come to the White House to see Ford.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I have not seen him here and I have not seen it on the President's schedule.

Is everybody ready to go on with Saxbe?

The President pointed out that Mr. Saxbe has been interested for a long time in being Ambassador to India.

Q Why, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: He believes that Mr. Saxbe came to the position of Attorney General at a most difficult period and under very difficult circumstances and that Mr. Saxbe did a good job in that position.

Mr. Saxbe's interest in India, in case you are interested, goes back to 1969 when he was a Senator and first went to India for a parliamentary meeting. He is generally considered to know more about India and be acquainted with more of her leaders than anyone in Congress or the Executive Branch. He has had four meetings with Indira Gandhi over the past five years and has visited India five times.

He is well known to members of the Indian Parliament, as well as to the Indian press corps. He has met with Indian newsmen on his trips to India.

In 1970, he had seven members of the Indian Legislature visit at his home in Mechanicsburg, Ohio, while they were in the United States studying political campaigns. Saxbe, incidentally, was not running that year.

In December of 1971, while he was a Senator, he and Senator Church went to both India and Pakistan. The then Senator Saxbe wanted to use his good offices in an attempt to convince India and Pakistan not to go to war.

He visited India most recently in August of 1973 in connection with a trip to Bangladesh and he met with Ambassador Moynihan and Indian officials at that time, and he is a frequent visitor to the Indian Embassy here in Washington.

We don't have a successor to announce today. I think probably you will see the letters are self-explanatory.

Q What is Moynihan going to do?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that.

Q Is Mr. Levy under consideration?

MR. NESSEN: Let me say something about the President's views on Ambassador Moynihan, if I may.

The President, in announcing the resignation of Mr. Moynihan, in accepting it, wants to express his highest regard and appreciation for the Ambassador's services, not only in India but previously as a dedicated public servant for a decade, including his period as Counsellor to the President in 1969 and 1970.

Ambassador Moynihan's unusual records of achievements in both the academic and Governmental fields is one for which we remain deeply grateful and which made him an outstanding emissary of the President in India.

His creative and thoughtful approach there has contributed in large measure to developing a mature and durable basis for the American-Indian relationship for the longer term future in support of the President's objectives.

The President remains deeply appreciative of Ambassador Moynihan's fine efforts in India helping to forge a relationship which serves the common aspirations of the world's two largest democracies.

The President wishes Ambassador Moynihan and his family the very best for the future.

Q Are we going to get any letters on that?

MR. NESSEN: Let's check on that.

The President also is accepting with sincere regret the resignation of Charles M. Lichenstein as Special Assistant to the President, effective December 31st. He has served as Dean Burch's assistant while Dean has been in the White House.

Now, we have the letters between the President and Ken Cole here for you.

Q Does that give a date for Cole's departure, the letters?

MR. NESSEN: March 2nd.

Q Who is Saxbe's successor?

MR. NESSEN: I said we don't have a successor, Helen, to announce.

Q Did you discuss reports about Mr. Levy, of Chicago, as the successor?

MR. NESSEN: No, I won't discuss any speculation about any appointees until we announce them.

Q It is more than speculation, Ron; it is all over the Hill.

MR. NESSEN: My position, as I said yesterday, is going to be that we will announce appointees as they are appointed.

Q Ron, can you tell us if the appointment is subject to an FBI investigation?

Q Ron, can you tell us if he promised not to try to appoint Levy when he met with Senator Eastland yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: I beg your pardon?

Q Did you pull off of Dr. Levy after the meeting with Senator Eastland yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Aldo, I am just not going to discuss nominations until they are officially made.

Q When is Mr. Saxbe's resignation effective? The letter does not say.

MR. NESSEN: The letter says it will take effect either when a successor has been confirmed by the Senate for Attorney General or -- the end of the first paragraph, John, says that, "It is effective upon the appointment and qualification of your successor or your appointment and confirmation as Ambassador, whichever occurs first."

Q I am sorry.

Q The Domestic Council post, Ron, has a choice been made, subject to an FBI investigation?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going to say anything about appointees until we announce them officially.

Q Does the White House have any views on the 7.4 percent increase in oil prices announced at the Vienna meeting of OPEC this morning?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that there was no final decision made by the OPEC countries.

My understanding is that it is a proposal that they are talking about but that there has been no final action by the oil-producing countries.

Q When did you get that understanding? I mean, how recently? Since the bulletins have come through?

MR. NESSEN: About an hour ago. If there has been something in the past 45 minutes or so, I have not seen it.

Q Ron, in the Martinique summit, would you anticipate that in the bilateral talks the subject of the F-15, 16 and 17 will come up, and if so, why is not Secretary Schlesinger going down, or is he? I don't believe I saw his name in the book.

MORE

Q Question.

MR. NESSEN: The question was will the subject of the F-15, 16 and 17 come up at the Martinique meeting and, if so, why isn't Secretary Schlesinger going?

I frankly have not had time to sit down and carefully go through the agenda for Martinique, Walt, and I just cannot give you an enlightened answer about that.

Q When do you expect the President to decide which food aid option he will take and will he do it today or can you predict a day?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it will be today but it should be soon.

Q About how soon? Upon his return or announced while he is gone?

MR. NESSEN: FOR YOUR GUIDANCE I think next week.

Q What was that?

MR. NESSEN: The question of when will the food assistance increase be announced.

Q Next week in Washington?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q You are not counting Monday?

MR. NESSEN: No. That is for GUIDANCE though.

Q Ron, what would be the President's policy on -- not referring to any specific appointee, but if he had a negative reaction from an important Senator, would he then reconsider?

MR. NESSEN: Well, speaking generally and not with relation to any specific appointment, I think it would be done on a case by case basis, Bonnie. I don't think there is any general policy that I am aware of on dealing with that situation should it come up.

No more questions? You can think of more than that. I have wasted the whole morning preparing and --

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Attn of :

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After searching through several collections including the Ron Nessen Files, the Nessen Papers, the White House Press Release Unit Files, and the News Conference Files, it can be assumed that News Conference #97 is not in our possession and quite possibly does not exist at all.

Kenneth S. Hafeli

Q Have you finished your announcements yet, by the way?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q You have more to announce.

MR. NESSEN: Do I? Well, let me check, maybe I do.

I will give you the answers and you make up the questions, right?

Q Look for that Lynn-Ash announcement.

Q You sort of killed the gas tax once and for all and that has been the subject of many questions.

MR. NESSEN: I can't believe it.

No, I think it is only wounded.

I don't have any other announcements.

Don't you have any other questions? I feel like I have wasted my whole morning.

Q Are there any talks going on about what might happen to Transportation Secretary Brinegar? I heard he might be here discussing future plans.

MR. NESSEN: I will go back and check.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:23 P.M. EST)