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N E W S   C O N F E R E N C E

#103

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:25 P.M.   EST

DECEMBER 17, 1974

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The first event of the day for the President was his meeting with the bipartisan Congressional leaders, and you have a list of the participants who were there.

The President began that meeting by summarizing the communique that was issued in Martinique, and he said he did not see that there was any need to describe the results of that meeting -- this is paraphrased -- as we got what we wanted, and they gave up what they wanted, or anything like that, or vice-versa.

He did say it was a "good negotiation." "That is a quote. "Beneficial to both parties, and in fact to all industrial nations."

He said, "It is not a question of we won and they lost. In this area -- and he was then talking about the international oil conferences -- "it went extremely well for everyone."

Then, he said ---

Q     How are you defining "in this area" again?

MR. NESSEN: The central part of the communique, Jim, referring to the timetable of preparation for international meetings on oil.

The President also said that this was no pleasure jaunt, that he had added it up and found he had spent between 16 and 18 hours in actual negotiations with Giscard d'Estaing.

Q     How come we do not get that figure? How did he figure that?

MR. NESSEN: Well he figured that he had all the public meetings that you know about, plus time that he spent talking at the working lunch, plus time that he spent talking in less formal settings at dinner and so forth.

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Q How long was that again?

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Q They spent that whole time on substantive discussions of the oil issue, discussion of the Middle East, SALT, and so on?

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Q That would count the entire dinner?

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Q But seriously ---

MR. NESSEN: This is a figure he gave, Steve. He went through quickly what he was counting. I did not get each hour of each category. By adding together the official meeting, the working lunch, and other conversations in less formal settings he came up with 16 to 18 hours.

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Q Ron, a question on that.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Does that include the military assistance, that bill that he thinks is good, the Military Assistance Bill, which has an extensive amount to some of our allies?

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It has not been decided whether it would be four hours or eight hours of debate. Whenever he is confirmed, Governor Rockefeller would come here and have a brief chat with the President. They would ride together to the Capitol, and the inauguration will be in the Senate Chamber and hour or so after the final confirmation. And that now, from what the President was told this morning, looks like Thursday.

Then, the President, if it is indeed Thursday, planned to have Governor and Mrs. Rockefeller and other members of their families over to the residence for a little private reception in the White House residence.

The leadership meeting lasted, altogether, an hour and twenty minutes. This afternoon, the President is going to be having lunch with Joseph Alsop. I think you know, Mr. Alsop has announced that he is retiring from his column at the end of this month.

The President read Mr. Alsop's column announcing his retirement and sent Mr. Alsop a letter. He said, "I hope we will get a chance to get together before you retire," and today's lunch is the result of that. It will be about 1:00 o'clock.

At 2:00 o'clock, the President is having another meeting with Roy Ash and his staff, to continue making decisions on the 1976 budget, and at 3:30, a meeting with Ken Cole of the Domestic Council and his staff to discuss the issues that will be included in the State of the Union Speech.

We had announced that there would be an economic meeting this afternoon at 3:30, I believe, and that has been postponed because Secretary Simon is up on the Hill testifying.

Then, at 5:30, the President is going to go to the Pagent of Peace on the Ellipse, to light the National Christmas Tree. That is open coverage, and it would be available for television if anybody cared to carry it. He will have remarks, and we will have a text of his remarks for you a bit later in the afternoon.

This evening, the President and Mrs. Ford will be having the Christmas Ball for Members of Congress, the Cabinet and a few members of the senior White House staff. Sheila Weidenfeld is handling the coverage arrangements.

We have posted a pretty self-explanatory rundown on the coverage for tonight. Did you want me to go through it verbally or not?

Q No; it is not necessary.

MR. NESSEN: Okay.

We have handed out a fair amount of stuff, which includes the retirement of the Chief Judge of the District Court for the Southern District of Texas, and we have announced the designation of Alfred J. Eggers, Jr., as Chairman of the Geothermal Energy Coordination and Management Project.

You also have the President and Mrs. Ford's Christmas message, do you not?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: This is the annual Christmas message to the Nation, and copies are available in the Press Office.

Q Back on the Mahon thing -- what was the sense of the Congressional leadership about the possibility of a continuing resolution?

MR. NESSEN: There was a fair discussion of that, Tom, and it was left unresolved.

Q When would the funds expire, then?

MR. NESSEN: The continuing resolution would run out on December 31st. Isn't that right, or is it wrong? I don't know the date it runs out either.

The continuing resolution runs out when Congress adjourns. It only goes as long as Congress is in session.

Q Ron, were you present for the entire Congressional briefing this morning?

MR. NESSEN: For the meeting? Yes.

Q Yes.

Q I have a question. Outside, Senator Scott was asked if at any point during the meeting he or any Member of Congress echoed to the President Senator Goldwater's remarks that Mr. Ford should park Air Force One in the hangar and stay home.

Senator Scott's response was, "We think he got the message that he has got to do something pretty fast about our problems." Now was something said about the President doing less traveling at this meeting by Congressional leaders? Did he receive any advice to that effect?

MR. NESSEN: No, he did not.

Q How about cutting off aid?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean?

Q Time on the Turkish aid.

MR. NESSEN: There was some little discussion of that. It was not in any great depth because I think the President's views on that are known.

Q Senator Scott said the President had much praise for Congress for coming up with this February 5 compromise.

MR. NESSEN: Well, as I say, he did compliment Congress and say he was grateful for the bill which includes that. And he elaborated somewhat by saying that -- generally what you have heard him say before -- that he believes that continued military assistance to Turkey is important because Turkey is a member of NATO and occupies an important position in the NATO defense line and, therefore, he did feel that continued military aid to Turkey was important from that point of view, as well as the other points which he has mentioned before, which is cutting off the aid to Turkey really does nothing to help Greece, and it undermines the negotiations for a Cyprus agreement.

He said he was hopeful that the Congressional action would support America's efforts to assist in the Cyprus negotiations. By that he meant by not cutting off the aid to Turkey.

Q Ron, was he satisfied with the February 5 date?

MR. NESSEN: He said that if he had written the bill he would have written it somewhat differently, but that it was a good bill and he appreciated that effort.

Q Did the leaders tell the President Congress might wind up its work by Thursday and adjourn Thursday night, and if so, would that affect the President's weekend plans?

MR. NESSEN: It did not come up at the Congressional meeting, although the President was told that this morning by someone else. It will not affect his weekend plans.

Q What are his weekend plans?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know to be here and working on Saturday.

Q And Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen any schedule for Sunday yet.

Q Ron, did Secretary Kissinger weigh in about Martinique with the leaders?

MR. NESSEN: No, the President did the briefing on Martinique.

Q Ron, U.S. Steel put its prices up---

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you let me finish my announcements.

We talked about tonight's ball. And for tomorrow at 3:30 in the afternoon former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir will pay a visit on the President. I understand that she is here in the United States on a private visit.

We have also announced that on Thursday the President is going to Alexandria to participate in ceremonies inaugurating the American Freedom Train at the railway station in Alexandria, which is a Bicentennial Project. He will speak there at 11:00.

We have posted some information on the American Freedom Train, so I won't go through that.

Q This economic meeting, you said, has been postponed --

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Postponed until when?

MR. NESSEN: I do not have a specific time or date.

The President is sending the Congress today, as he is required to do annually, the 1974 National Growth Report, which we have for you in the Press Office after this briefing. This is prepared by the Domestic Council Committee on Community Development with Secretary Lynn in charge, and both Secretary Lynn and Assistant HUD Secretary David Meeker will be available to discuss the report at 2:00 o'clock tomorrow at the HUD Departmental Conference Room.

This is a report which deals with things like regional growth and metropolitan growth, the population figures and that kind of thing.

Q You don't mean economic growth?

MR. NESSEN: No. I thought, when I first saw it, it meant that too, and that is why I got this thing, to see what it was all about.

The President asked me to announce that he has accepted the resignation of Roy Ash as Director -- here comes the exchange of letters -- that he is accepting the resignation of Roy Ash as Director of the Office of Management and Budget and, also, Assistant to the President.

I think the letters are self-explanatory.

Q Do you know what Mr. Ash will be doing after this?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, who will be replacing Roy Ash?

MR. NESSEN: I had a question here about what Roy is going to do. He is going to stay here, actually, until late January or early February, because he will work on completing the 1976 budget. I do not know what he will do beyond that.

I hope that we will have a successor to announce very soon, but I do not have one today.

Q Is there any reason why you cannot confirm what has become virtually common knowledge, that Secretary Lynn is going to replace Mr. Ash?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot confirm that for you, Jim.

Q You are practically the only official of the American Government that can't. (Laughter.)

MR. NESSEN: At least I have some distinction.

Q Why are you so isolated from these other things here?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, my feeling is that, we ought to deal here with official announcements of things and not with what may happen, or knocking down, or confirming speculation and that kind of thing. I just think we ought to really stick --

Q Is it speculation?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I think what we need to do here is let me make the President's official announcements when he is ready to make them.

Q I think we also have to deal with facts at times.

MR. NESSEN: The fact is that nobody has been nominated to succeed Roy Ash. That is a fact.

Q Are you saying it is also a fact that no decision has been made?

MR. NESSEN: No, I do not say that.

Q Ron, you did not say what Roy Ash would be doing after he leaves.

MR. NESSEN: That is because I do not know what Roy Ash will be doing, but he will probably be available, if you wanted to call him up.

Q This says "will take effect at your convenience," in Ash's letter.

MR. NESSEN: It is left a little loose, Steve, because the date of his leaving depends on when the budget is completed and sent to Congress.

Q Ron, a press conference has been called this afternoon at 2:00 o'clock by Rabbi Korff. I would just like to know, has the President, (a), talked to Rabbi Korff, and does he approve, or is he sponsoring or behind any of Rabbi Korff's work, to your knowledge?

MR. NESSEN: No to all of your questions.



Q Could we get back to what I asked you earlier?

MR. NESSEN: I forgot what you asked me, which was the steel price increases.

Q Does the President feel this is inflationary?

MR. NESSEN: The President is concerned and very disappointed by the price increase by United States Steel. As a matter of fact, he is disappointed in any price increase at this time and under the current economic situation.

Q Has he let U. S. Steel know this?

MR. NESSEN: The White House was notified by U. S. Steel at the time of its public announcement, and the President today asked the Council on Wage and Price Stability to request from United Steel in writing a justification for its price increase.

Q Does that stay the effective date of the increase?

MR. NESSEN: That is up to United States Steel.

Q I thought there was a mechanism built into this Council to stay --

MR. NESSEN: I checked this morning, and my understanding is that, the Council does not have the power to stay a price increase.

Q There was no prior notification?

MR. NESSEN: There was notification at the time of the announcement.

Q Ron, that came simultaneously?

MR. NESSEN: I think, virtually, simultaneously.

Q Ron, does the President have any plans to meet or to talk to U.S. Steel people personally?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard any at the moment.

Q Ron, is there a timetable on the justification and in what form does he expect it to be delivered?

MR. NESSEN: I am told there is no deadline, but that it was made clear to United States Steel that the White House wanted this justification immediately.

Q Ron, does the President plan to make any effort --

MR. NESSEN: He asked the Council this morning to request the justification. Whether they have had time to send the telegram or the letter I am not clear, but he gave his instructions this morning.

Q Ron, what value does the justification serve?

MR. NESSEN: This procedure has been followed in a couple of other cases, including a price increase by the Ford Motor Company, and also by the sugar industry, and also the beef industry.

Q Will a public hearing be called?

MR. NESSEN: I was going to say, there could be, and it depends really on what the information looks like that the President has requested. I think when the Wage and Price Stability Council was announced it was clear that its power to affect increases depended on enlisting public opinion.

Q Ron, isn't the White House normally notified in advance of these price increases?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am not aware that the White House is notified routinely of every price increase by every industry.

Q A basic industry such as U. S. Steel?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that there is a standard procedure. They certainly were on this one.

Q Are you disappointed that you were not notified in this case?

MR. NESSEN: The White House was notified in this case.

Q I mean prior to the public announcement, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard disappointment expressed on that point. There is certainly disappointment with the increase itself.

Q Ron, did the Wage and Price Stabilization Council get explanations for the sugar increase, and if they did what happened to those explanations?

MR. NESSEN: I did not explore that deeply what their record has been in the past. This is Mr. Rees' Council, and I understand Mr. Rees has a fairly efficient press office there, and they could fill you in on it. I wanted to find out what they had done in the past just to give myself an idea what their record was.

Q You said Ford Motor, sugar, and what else?

MR. NESSEN: Beef. But, Peter, frankly I did not follow up enough to find out what the outcome of previous requests for information were.

Q The fact is that nothing happened in those three instances. Is that not correct.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I think there have been hearings held on some of these. Sugar, I know.

Q Ron, does the President plan to take any action or direct any body within the Government to take any action to try to prevent the other steel companies from putting into effect similar price increases?

MR. NESSEN: The President has expressed his concern and great disappointment with this, Jim.

Q That is not what I asked.

MR. NESSEN: I know you did not.

Q I asked whether he was going to take any action or direct anyone to take any action to try to persuade or prevent either way any other steel companies from putting into effect similar price increases.

MR. NESSEN: First of all, there have been no other increases by other companies in the steel industry, but I would think also that other companies in the steel industry are now aware of his attitude toward price increases and might take that under consideration before doing it.

Q Let me spell it out a little more. In 1962 I believe the year was, the White House engaged in an actual physical effort of telephone calls, personal contacts with steel companies to try to persuade them not to put into effect the steel increases that I think have been put in by either U. S. Steel or Bethlehem. They finally persuaded Inland Steel not to and it broke the steel increase. Do you plan to do anything along that line at this time?

MR. NESSEN: At this moment I have not heard any plans to do that. I did talk to Mr. Seidman just before I came out here and I got the feeling that the book is not closed on this, Jim. As I say, I have not heard of any specific plans to do that, but I will check further though.

Q Ron, did Mr. Seidman indicate or has anyone indicated they had some indication, although not a formal letter or notification from U. S. Steel, but they had some indication that might occur?

MR. NESSEN: I did not get that feeling from talking to him that they did.

Q Ron, does the President definitely plan to veto the Strip Mining Bill? Is there any further development on that?

MR. NESSEN: It is not here yet, but I have not heard anything that leads me to believe that the decision that was relayed to you by myself and Frank Zarb the other day has been changed any.

Q I had another question. Ron, when was the White House notified of the steel price increase? What day was that?

MR. NESSEN: When was the steel price increase announced?

Q I assume the same day.

MR. NESSEN: I was away. When was it?

Q Yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: Then the White House was notified at the time the announcement was made public.

Q My other question is, does the President intend to veto the Strip Mining bill by an outright veto, or by a pocket veto?

MR. NESSEN: That really has not been decided yet, Fred. It was discussed this morning, but no decision was made -- not discussed at the Congressional leadership meeting, but discussed this morning.

Q The President is aware, I assume, a number of people on the Hill want him to veto the bill quickly --

MR. NESSEN: Yes; I know.

Q -- in order that they may try to override it?

MR. NESSEN: He does know that.

Q Ron, when will a decision be made on that?

MR. NESSEN: We have to wait until the bill gets here before you can make a decision.

Q Ron, has the President learned personally, or through Congressional liaison, of Senators Eastland and Hruska being upset about the possible nomination of Mr. Levi?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he is aware of the -- I believe their feelings toward Mr. Levi have been made known on the Hill, and the President is also aware of them.

Q Didn't you confirm that Eastland had come here the other day and had a half hour or more meeting with the President?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, sir.

Q I don't know if Hruska was along, but didn't Eastland tell him at this time that he was opposed to the Levi nomination?

MR. NESSEN: I did not sit in on that meeting, Jim, and I do not know what they discussed.

Q You did not hear since then?

MR. NESSEN: I know they discussed some legislative matters, but I do not know if they discussed Mr. Levi.

Q Is Mr. Levi going to be Attorney General?

MR. NESSEN: When we have an Attorney General nominee to announce, we will, Helen.

Q Is he under consideration?

MR. NESSEN: I think Mr. Levi -- we are not going to talk about who is under consideration for any of the jobs in the Administration.

Q Would you answer whether he was here yesterday talking to White House officials?

MR. NESSEN: I was not here yesterday, and I did not hear this morning that he was here yesterday.

Tom.

Q If I could just clear up the strip mining veto. Why is it necessary for you to wait until the bill arrives here to make the decision about an outright veto or a pocket veto -- when you announced before the bill in fact has passed the Congress -- if you are going to veto it?

MR. NESSEN: If the bill does come here the decision would be made. The fact of the matter is it has not been made, Tom. The decision has not been made regardless of whether the bill is here or not. It is under discussion.

Q Ron, was there any discussion with the leaders of the progress on the energy work?

MR. NESSEN: No, energy did not come up at the leaders meeting this morning.

Q Ron, when will the President be receiving the recommendations that have come out of the Camp David meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Of the energy meeting?

Q Yes. Anytime soon?

MR. NESSEN: I am told that Frank Zarb and Secretary Morton will give the President a report on the Camp David meeting on Thursday. It may be that they will go in to see him a little earlier to give him kind of a brief summation of what went on there.

Q Early that day?

MR. NESSEN: The full report will be on Thursday.

Q Will they brief us afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: That has not been worked out yet. I know there is interest in a briefing though.

Q Ron, did the Secretary of State participate in the report to the leadership on the Martinique meeting?

MR. NESSEN: He was there, and I believe he may have. He elaborated on one or two technical points. He also gave a very brief report on his meeting in Brussels, and that was basically his participation.

Q Ron, has the President decided to sign or veto a bill that Congress sent him yesterday, requiring 30 percent of oil imports to be carried in American tankers?

MR. NESSEN: No, there has not been a decision made on that.

Q Ron, do you know the status now of the offer of the previous Administration to give nuclear reactors to Egypt and Israel?

MR. NESSEN: I am told the State Department has pulled together some information on that subject, and we will give it out today.

Q Ron, when the President nominated Nelson Rockefeller for Vice-Presidency, it is my understanding the first thing they did together was to put in a call to San Clemente. Does the President still do this, and when was the last time he talked to San Clemente by phone?

MR. NESSEN: The last time he talked to San Clemente by phone, as far as I know, was whenever we discussed it out here. There have not been any since.

Q None since?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q In other words, that was the last one to the best of your knowledge?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q How long ago was that.

MR. NESSEN: I lost track of all that. We used to go through it every week.

Q That long, nothing recently?

MR. NESSEN: No.. Remember when we went through -- I think there were three phone calls, and we talked about who called who and we had the dates.

Q Ron, is Dr. Lukash still keeping President Ford informed on former President Nixon's health?

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe -- as you remember, the procedure there was that Dr. Lundgren would call Dr. Lukash if he had anything to say. As far as I know, there have not been any phone calls since we were out there for that visit before the election.

Q Are the security reports still being made to the former President, or the briefings?

MR. NESSEN: I have not checked that for a long time. The last one I know was that verbal one on the SALT Agreement, but if there have been any since, I will check and find out. I am not aware of any.

Q Ron, can we find out the details on this thing in Alexandria? Who would I ask? Just a few minutes for details and things -- you know, Thursday morning in Alexandria.

MR. NESSEN: Here is a description of what it is all about. I will give you my very own copy.

At 11:00 o'clock he speaks, so he would have to leave here, I suppose, in the 10:30 area.

Q And it will be at the --

MR. NESSEN: -- railway station in Alexandria, and we will have a text, I suppose, either that morning or the night before.

Q Thank you very much; I will bring this back.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 1:05 P.M. EST) #103



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MR. NESSEN: Okay.

We have handed out a fair amount of stuff, which includes the retirement of the Chief Judge of the District Court for the Southern District of Texas, and we have announced the designation of Alfred J. Eggers, Jr., as Chairman of the Geothermal Energy Coordination and Management Project.

You also have the President and Mrs. Ford's Christmas message, do you not?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: This is the annual Christmas message to the Nation, and copies are available in the Press Office.

Q Back on the Mahon thing -- what was the sense of the Congressional leadership about the possibility of a continuing resolution?

MR. NESSEN: There was a fair discussion of that, Tom, and it was left unresolved.

Q When would the funds expire, then?

MR. NESSEN: The continuing resolution would run out on December 31st. Isn't that right, or is it wrong? I don't know the date it runs out either.

The continuing resolution runs out when Congress adjourns. It only goes as long as Congress is in session.

Q Ron, were you present for the entire Congressional briefing this morning?

MR. NESSEN: For the meeting? Yes.

Q Yes.

Q I have a question. Outside, Senator Scott was asked if at any point during the meeting he or any Member of Congress echoed to the President Senator Goldwater's remarks that Mr. Ford should park Air Force One in the hangar and stay home.

Senator Scott's response was, "We think he got the message that he has got to do something pretty fast about our problems." Now was something said about the President doing less traveling at this meeting by Congressional leaders? Did he receive any advice to that effect?

MR. NESSEN: No, he did not.

Q How about cutting off aid?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean?

Q Time on the Turkish aid.

MR. NESSEN: There was some little discussion of that. It was not in any great depth because I think the President's views on that are known.

Q Senator Scott said the President had much praise for Congress for coming up with this February 5 compromise.

MR. NESSEN: Well, as I say, he did compliment Congress and say he was grateful for the bill which includes that. And he elaborated somewhat by saying that -- generally what you have heard him say before -- that he believes that continued military assistance to Turkey is important because Turkey is a member of NATO and occupies an important position in the NATO defense line and, therefore, he did feel that continued military aid to Turkey was important from that point of view, as well as the other points which he has mentioned before, which is cutting off the aid to Turkey really does nothing to help Greece, and it undermines the negotiations for a Cyprus agreement.

He said he was hopeful that the Congressional action would support America's efforts to assist in the Cyprus negotiations. By that he meant by not cutting off the aid to Turkey.

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Q Ron, was he satisfied with the February 5 date?

MR. NESSEN: He said that if he had written the bill he would have written it somewhat differently, but that it was a good bill and he appreciated that effort.

Q Did the leaders tell the President Congress might wind up its work by Thursday and adjourn Thursday night, and if so, would that affect the President's weekend plans?

MR. NESSEN: It did not come up at the Congressional meeting, although the President was told that this morning by someone else. It will not affect his weekend plans.

Q What are his weekend plans?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know to be here and working on Saturday.

Q And Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen any schedule for Sunday yet.

Q Ron, did Secretary Kissinger weigh in about Martinique with the leaders?

MR. NESSEN: No, the President did the briefing on Martinique.

Q Ron, U.S. Steel put its prices up---

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you let me finish my announcements.

We talked about tonight's ball. And for tomorrow at 3:30 in the afternoon former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir will pay a visit on the President. I understand that she is here in the United States on a private visit.

We have also announced that on Thursday the President is going to Alexandria to participate in ceremonies inaugurating the American Freedom Train at the railway station in Alexandria, which is a Bicentennial Project. He will speak there at 11:00.

We have posted some information on the American Freedom Train, so I won't go through that.

Q This economic meeting, you said, has been postponed --

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Postponed until when?

MR. NESSEN: I do not have a specific time or date.

The President is sending the Congress today, as he is required to do annually, the 1974 National Growth Report, which we have for you in the Press Office after this briefing. This is prepared by the Domestic Council Committee on Community Development with Secretary Lynn in charge, and both Secretary Lynn and Assistant HUD Secretary David Meeker will be available to discuss the report at 2:00 o'clock tomorrow at the HUD Departmental Conference Room.

This is a report which deals with things like regional growth and metropolitan growth, the population figures and that kind of thing.

Q You don't mean economic growth?

MR. NESSEN: No. I thought, when I first saw it, it meant that too, and that is why I got this thing, to see what it was all about.

The President asked me to announce that he has accepted the resignation of Roy Ash as Director -- here comes the exchange of letters -- that he is accepting the resignation of Roy Ash as Director of the Office of Management and Budget and, also, Assistant to the President.

I think the letters are self-explanatory.

Q Do you know what Mr. Ash will be doing after this?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, who will be replacing Roy Ash?

MR. NESSEN: I had a question here about what Roy is going to do. He is going to stay here, actually, until late January or early February, because he will work on completing the 1976 budget. I do not know what he will do beyond that.

I hope that we will have a successor to announce very soon, but I do not have one today.

Q Is there any reason why you cannot confirm what has become virtually common knowledge, that Secretary Lynn is going to replace Mr. Ash?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot confirm that for you, Jim.

Q You are practically the only official of the American Government that can't. (Laughter.)

MR. NESSEN: At least I have some distinction.

Q Why are you so isolated from these other things here?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, my feeling is that, we ought to deal here with official announcements of things and not with what may happen, or knocking down, or confirming speculation and that kind of thing. I just think we ought to really stick --

Q Is it speculation?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I think what we need to do here is let me make the President's official announcements when he is ready to make them.

Q I think we also have to deal with facts at times.

MR. NESSEN: The fact is that nobody has been nominated to succeed Roy Ash. That is a fact.

Q Are you saying it is also a fact that no decision has been made?

MR. NESSEN: No, I do not say that.

Q Ron, you did not say what Roy Ash would be doing after he leaves.

MR. NESSEN: That is because I do not know what Roy Ash will be doing, but he will probably be available, if you wanted to call him up.

Q This says "will take effect at your convenience," in Ash's letter.

MR. NESSEN: It is left a little loose, Steve, because the date of his leaving depends on when the budget is completed and sent to Congress.

Q Ron, a press conference has been called this afternoon at 2:00 o'clock by Rabbi Korff. I would just like to know, has the President, (a), talked to Rabbi Korff, and does he approve, or is he sponsoring or behind any of Rabbi Korff's work, to your knowledge?

MR. NESSEN: No to all of your questions.



Q Could we get back to what I asked you earlier?

MR. NESSEN: I forgot what you asked me, which was the steel price increases.

Q Does the President feel this is inflationary?

MR. NESSEN: The President is concerned and very disappointed by the price increase by United States Steel. As a matter of fact, he is disappointed in any price increase at this time and under the current economic situation.

Q Has he let U. S. Steel know this?

MR. NESSEN: The White House was notified by U. S. Steel at the time of its public announcement, and the President today asked the Council on Wage and Price Stability to request from United Steel in writing a justification for its price increase.

Q Does that stay the effective date of the increase?

MR. NESSEN: That is up to United States Steel.

Q I thought there was a mechanism built into this Council to stay --

MR. NESSEN: I checked this morning, and my understanding is that, the Council does not have the power to stay a price increase.

Q There was no prior notification?

MR. NESSEN: There was notification at the time of the announcement.

Q Ron, that came simultaneously?

MR. NESSEN: I think, virtually, simultaneously.

Q Ron, does the President have any plans to meet or to talk to U.S. Steel people personally?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard any at the moment.

Q Ron, is there a timetable on the justification and in what form does he expect it to be delivered?

MR. NESSEN: I am told there is no deadline, but that it was made clear to United States Steel that the White House wanted this justification immediately.

Q Ron, does the President plan to make any effort --

MR. NESSEN: He asked the Council this morning to request the justification. Whether they have had time to send the telegram or the letter I am not clear, but he gave his instructions this morning.

Q Ron, what value does the justification serve?

MR. NESSEN: This procedure has been followed in a couple of other cases, including a price increase by the Ford Motor Company, and also by the sugar industry, and also the beef industry.

Q Will a public hearing be called?

MR. NESSEN: I was going to say, there could be, and it depends really on what the information looks like that the President has requested. I think when the Wage and Price Stability Council was announced it was clear that its power to affect increases depended on enlisting public opinion.

Q Ron, isn't the White House normally notified in advance of these price increases?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am not aware that the White House is notified routinely of every price increase by every industry.

Q A basic industry such as U. S. Steel?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that there is a standard procedure. They certainly were on this one.

Q Are you disappointed that you were not notified in this case?

MR. NESSEN: The White House was notified in this case.

Q I mean prior to the public announcement, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard disappointment expressed on that point. There is certainly disappointment with the increase itself.

Q Ron, did the Wage and Price Stabilization Council get explanations for the sugar increase, and if they did what happened to those explanations?

MR. NESSEN: I did not explore that deeply what their record has been in the past. This is Mr. Rees' Council, and I understand Mr. Rees has a fairly efficient press office there, and they could fill you in on it. I wanted to find out what they had done in the past just to give myself an idea what their record was.

Q You said Ford Motor, sugar, and what else?

MR. NESSEN: Beef. But, Peter, frankly I did not follow up enough to find out what the outcome of previous requests for information were.

Q The fact is that nothing happened in those three instances. Is that not correct.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I think there have been hearings held on some of these. Sugar, I know.

Q Ron, does the President plan to take any action or direct any body within the Government to take any action to try to prevent the other steel companies from putting into effect similar price increases?

MR. NESSEN: The President has expressed his concern and great disappointment with this, Jim.

Q That is not what I asked.

MR. NESSEN: I know you did not.

Q I asked whether he was going to take any action or direct anyone to take any action to try to persuade or prevent either way any other steel companies from putting into effect similar price increases.

MR. NESSEN: First of all, there have been no other increases by other companies in the steel industry, but I would think also that other companies in the steel industry are now aware of his attitude toward price increases and might take that under consideration before doing it.

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Q Let me spell it out a little more. In 1962 I believe the year was, the White House engaged in an actual physical effort of telephone calls, personal contacts with steel companies to try to persuade them not to put into effect the steel increases that I think have been put in by either U. S. Steel or Bethlehem. They finally persuaded Inland Steel not to and it broke the steel increase. Do you plan to do anything along that line at this time?

MR. NESSEN: At this moment I have not heard any plans to do that. I did talk to Mr. Seidman just before I came out here and I got the feeling that the book is not closed on this, Jim. As I say, I have not heard of any specific plans to do that, but I will check further though.

Q Ron, did Mr. Seidman indicate or has anyone indicated they had some indication, although not a formal letter or notification from U. S. Steel, but they had some indication that might occur?

MR. NESSEN: I did not get that feeling from talking to him that they did.

Q Ron, does the President definitely plan to veto the Strip Mining Bill? Is there any further development on that?

MR. NESSEN: It is not here yet, but I have not heard anything that leads me to believe that the decision that was relayed to you by myself and Frank Zarb the other day has been changed any.

Q I had another question. Ron, when was the White House notified of the steel price increase? What day was that?

MR. NESSEN: When was the steel price increase announced?

Q I assume the same day.

MR. NESSEN: I was away. When was it?

Q Yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: Then the White House was notified at the time the announcement was made public.

Q My other question is, does the President intend to veto the Strip Mining bill by an outright veto, or by a pocket veto?

MR. NESSEN: That really has not been decided yet, Fred. It was discussed this morning, but no decision was made -- not discussed at the Congressional leadership meeting, but discussed this morning.

Q The President is aware, I assume, a number of people on the Hill want him to veto the bill quickly --

MR. NESSEN: Yes; I know.

Q -- in order that they may try to override it?

MR. NESSEN: He does know that.

Q Ron, when will a decision be made on that?

MR. NESSEN: We have to wait until the bill gets here before you can make a decision.

Q Ron, has the President learned personally, or through Congressional liaison, of Senators Eastland and Hruska being upset about the possible nomination of Mr. Levi?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he is aware of the -- I believe their feelings toward Mr. Levi have been made known on the Hill, and the President is also aware of them.

Q Didn't you confirm that Eastland had come here the other day and had a half hour or more meeting with the President?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, sir.

Q I don't know if Hruska was along, but didn't Eastland tell him at this time that he was opposed to the Levi nomination?

MR. NESSEN: I did not sit in on that meeting, Jim, and I do not know what they discussed.

Q You did not hear since then?

MR. NESSEN: I know they discussed some legislative matters, but I do not know if they discussed Mr. Levi.

Q Is Mr. Levi going to be Attorney General?

MR. NESSEN: When we have an Attorney General nominee to announce, we will, Helen.

Q Is he under consideration?

MR. NESSEN: I think Mr. Levi -- we are not going to talk about who is under consideration for any of the jobs in the Administration.

Q Would you answer whether he was here yesterday talking to White House officials?

MR. NESSEN: I was not here yesterday, and I did not hear this morning that he was here yesterday.

Tom.

Q If I could just clear up the strip mining veto. Why is it necessary for you to wait until the bill arrives here to make the decision about an outright veto or a pocket veto -- when you announced before the bill in fact has passed the Congress -- if you are going to veto it?

MR. NESSEN: If the bill does come here the decision would be made. The fact of the matter is it has not been made, Tom. The decision has not been made regardless of whether the bill is here or not. It is under discussion.

Q Ron, was there any discussion with the leaders of the progress on the energy work?

MR. NESSEN: No, energy did not come up at the leaders meeting this morning.

Q Ron, when will the President be receiving the recommendations that have come out of the Camp David meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Of the energy meeting?

Q Yes. Anytime soon?

MR. NESSEN: I am told that Frank Zarb and Secretary Morton will give the President a report on the Camp David meeting on Thursday. It may be that they will go in to see him a little earlier to give him kind of a brief summation of what went on there.

Q Early that day?

MR. NESSEN: The full report will be on Thursday.

Q Will they brief us afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: That has not been worked out yet. I know there is interest in a briefing though.

Q Ron, did the Secretary of State participate in the report to the leadership on the Martinique meeting?

MR. NESSEN: He was there, and I believe he may have. He elaborated on one or two technical points. He also gave a very brief report on his meeting in Brussels, and that was basically his participation.

Q Ron, has the President decided to sign or veto a bill that Congress sent him yesterday, requiring 30 percent of oil imports to be carried in American tankers?

MR. NESSEN: No, there has not been a decision made on that.

Q Ron, do you know the status now of the offer of the previous Administration to give nuclear reactors to Egypt and Israel?

MR. NESSEN: I am told the State Department has pulled together some information on that subject, and we will give it out today.

Q Ron, when the President nominated Nelson Rockefeller for Vice-Presidency, it is my understanding the first thing they did together was to put in a call to San Clemente. Does the President still do this, and when was the last time he talked to San Clemente by phone?

MR. NESSEN: The last time he talked to San Clemente by phone, as far as I know, was whenever we discussed it out here. There have not been any since.

Q None since?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q In other words, that was the last one to the best of your knowledge?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q How long ago was that.

MR. NESSEN: I lost track of all that. We used to go through it every week.

Q That long, nothing recently?

MR. NESSEN: No.. Remember when we went through -- I think there were three phone calls, and we talked about who called who and we had the dates.

Q Ron, is Dr. Lukash still keeping President Ford informed on former President Nixon's health?

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe -- as you remember, the procedure there was that Dr. Lundgren would call Dr. Lukash if he had anything to say. As far as I know, there have not been any phone calls since we were out there for that visit before the election.

Q Are the security reports still being made to the former President, or the briefings?

MR. NESSEN: I have not checked that for a long time. The last one I know was that verbal one on the SALT Agreement, but if there have been any since, I will check and find out. I am not aware of any.

Q Ron, can we find out the details on this thing in Alexandria? Who would I ask? Just a few minutes for details and things -- you know, Thursday morning in Alexandria.

MR. NESSEN: Here is a description of what it is all about. I will give you my very own copy.

At 11:00 o'clock he speaks, so he would have to leave here, I suppose, in the 10:30 area.

Q And it will be at the --

MR. NESSEN: -- railway station in Alexandria, and we will have a text, I suppose, either that morning or the night before.

Q Thank you very much; I will bring this back.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 1:05 P.M. EST) #104