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N E W S C O N F E R E N C E

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:10 P.M. EST

DECEMBER 18, 1974

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry to be late, but there is a lot of stuff today. I still don't have it all in hand, but we'll pass it out as we get it. That is why I delayed, but then I thought we had better go ahead.

Don Rumsfeld will brief at 2:30 this afternoon on the White House organization. There will be quite a bundle of announcements, and other written material, which will be put out at 2:00 to give yourself a half-hour to read it, but no filing on the organization until the briefing is completed.

Don's briefing will be available for filming and taping, if anybody cares to do it.

At 11:00 the President had meetings with several Congressmen and Senators, including Senator Sparkman, Congressman Barry Goldwater, Jr., Representative Paul Cronin, Representative George Goodling, Senator Norris Cotton, and Representative Robert Steele. These are very brief meetings that the Members requested to discuss various subjects.

The President is going to have lunch at 12:45 with executives of the three television networks in the residence. The President has had contacts with newsmen over the years in various settings, and this is part of that.

Q Who are they? Can you name them?

MR. NESSEN: Do we have a posting? We will have a posting.

Basically, that is the Board Chairman and President of each of the networks, the President of the news division of each network, and the executive producer of the nightly news program for each network.

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Q Do you consider them newsmen, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Well, they are in the news business.

At 12:15 this afternoon, the President will have another meeting with Roy Ash and his staff to discuss the budget decisions for 1976.

Mrs. Meir is coming in at 3:30 for a visit with the President.

At 3:45, the President will meet with George Shultz. George Shultz is coming here for a 4:00 meeting of the Labor-Management Committee, and the President decided to see him for a few minutes earlier to get his views on the economy privately before meeting with the full committee.

Did you post the meeting of the Apostolic Delegate?

It is, but it is not going to take place because of a schedule conflict.

Q What kind of schedule would keep the Apostolic Delegate from seeing the President?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure whose schedule is in conflict, the Apostolic Delegate's or the President's, but if you are interested, you can check with the Press Office after the meeting and they could look into it for you.

Q What were they going to discuss?

MR. NESSEN: It is the Apostolic Delegate's schedule which does not permit him to --

Q Has it been rescheduled?

MR. NESSEN: It will be, but we don't have a date.

Q What was the purpose of this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I am told there is an annual visit just before Christmas each year by the Apostolic Delegate.

Q Do you know why he wanted to do it?

MR. NESSEN: I think you will have to ask the Secretary; I don't know.

Q So, you were aware he was going to resign?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

The President, today, announced the appointment of Richard B. Cheney as Deputy Assistant to the President and the appointment of Ken Lazarus as Associate Counsel to the President.

Q What is Cheney's title?

MR. NESSEN: Cheney's title is Deputy Assistant to the President.

Q In what field?

MR. NESSEN: He is Don Rumsfeld's Deputy.

We are also going to have an announcement on Pat Lindh.

Q Is she leaving?

MR. NESSEN: No. She is getting a new position.

You will also have an announcement on Pat Lindh. She has been working for Anne Armstrong and will continue working here with a new title.

Q Haven't these people been serving in these capacities, actually?

MR. NESSEN: Under the White House plan of operation, they officially serve as consultants until they are cleared and announced.

Q Will you give us salaries on these as we go along?

MR. NESSEN: Pat Lindh will be here in a moment. Meanwhile, the President has accepted with deep regret the decision of Tom Korologos and Eugene Ainsworth to leave government service and enter the private sector. Both of these men have worked with Bill Timmons in the White House Office of Legislative Affairs and have served with distinction.

Q Are we going to get an announcement on that?

MR. NESSEN: I am reading it to you now.

Q Who is Gene Ainsworth?

MR. NESSEN: I said they both work in the Bill Timmons' Legislative Affairs Office.

There will be an exchange of letters posted after the briefing. As I said, they have served with distinction in a very difficult assignment, and they have worked closely with the President when he was Minority Leader and also when he was Vice-President. He knows both of them and knows firsthand the valuable contributions they have made, and he feels that they will be solely missed at the White House after their departure.

Q When do they leave?

MR. NESSEN: They will be staying until this session of Congress is completed.

Although this is not a Presidential appointment, we are also announcing that Stan Ebner, the General Counsel of the Office of Management and Budget, is resigning, and the President acknowledges with appreciation his outstanding service at the OMB.

As I say, it is not a Presidential appointment, and he submitted his resignation to Roy Ash.

Does that do it on the personnel?

You are missing a Pat Lindh announcement and so forth.

It will be up here in a moment, Steve.

Q Ron, can you tell us where, in the private sector, Mr. Korologos and Mr. Ainsworth are going to go?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot tell you where they are going, but I would think they would be available to tell you themselves.

I just don't know, Don.

Q May I ask a question about your reshuffling here? Is this in any way an attempt to accomplish, by the first of the year, what we had heard speculated on that the President would replace all the Nixon people he inherited with his own people?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I suggest that, Walt, that question might more properly be raised after you have seen the organization chart and so forth this afternoon, and

I think Don can talk to you about that with more background information to go with it after you have seen what he has got this afternoon.

Do you want me to give you the salaries now?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Dick Cheney will earn in the range of \$39,000 to \$41,000 a year. Pat Lindh, who is being appointed today by the President as Special Assistant to the President for Women's Affairs -- her salary will be in the range of \$22,000 to \$24,000. And Ken Lazarus will be in the range of \$35,000 to \$37,000.

Should we go on to Vail? Do you have enough thoughts on personnel?

Q One question; is this a new title for Lindh? Is that a new name, Special Assistant for Women's Affairs?

MR. NESSEN: Have we had anybody by that title before?

Larry will look it up for us.

Well, the President made his own announcement of Vail yesterday, as you probably noticed.

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Q What was that?

MR. NESSEN: You did not hear.

The President will be leaving for Vail at about 8:00 Sunday morning. That is the good news. The bad news is that the press plane will leave Andrews at 6:00 a.m.

Q Why is he going that early?

MR. NESSEN: The answer to that is -- and it is a serious question -- that due to the flying time and where he will be landing, and the need to get from where he will be landing, which is Grand Junction, Colorado, and then by helicopter to Vail, he has got to do that flight in daylight, and this is the starting time you need to start off with in order to get to Vail by dark.

Q Did the Sunday football schedule have anything to do with his travel?

MR. NESSEN: No, it did not.

Q What time does he arrive in Grand Junction?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't we go through it in an orderly way?

Do we need to talk about the baggage thing here? Baggage for the Vail trip may be deposited outside of the Transportation Office on Saturday up until 2:00.

Q 2:00 p.m.?

MR. NESSEN: 2:00 p.m., yes.

The baggage check-in at Andrews is 5:00 a.m., Sunday. If you have no baggage to check -- that means if you left it on Saturday -- you can get to Andrews as late as 5:30.

The flight to Grand Junction is 3 hours and 50 minutes.

Q Would it be fair to ask, Ron, why the press plane has to leave two hours ahead?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to get to that, John. There is also a reason for that, as you will plainly see.

The reason for the early press departure is so that you can be in Vail to cover his arrival there. The pool that will be on helicopters carrying the President and his staff will probably be only a two-man pool. We are trying to get that expanded, but if we do it won't be a big expansion.

Air Force One and the press plane -- and the press plane will be a Lockheed 1011 Air Bus -- the press plane and Air Force One will land at Grand Junction. The President then will go by helicopter to the town of Avon where he will get in a small motorcade and drive to Vail. The chopper and the motorcade together will take about an hour and a half, and that will get him to Vail at 11:30 Vail time.

Q At night, obviously.

MR. NESSEN: No, that is in the morning.

Q He wanted to get there before dark. That is why we are all leaving so early.

MR. NESSEN: Fran, the Air Force has done these times and it is to leave themselves spare time.

Q I am only commenting on what you said. It seems like the football schedule makes more sense.

MR. NESSEN: I am telling you the reason I was told.

Q How do we get from Grand Junction to Vail?

MR. NESSEN: That is the next paragraph.

The press will go in buses from Grand Junction to Vail, arriving in Vail at about 11:00 a.m. So that means you would be there about a half-hour before he is so you can see his arrival.

Q Where does he arrive?

MR. NESSEN: I guess he arrives at the house. He will drive up and get out at his house.

The Transportation Office says you should plan to dress casually for the plane trip and wear warm clothes because you may be in a blizzard when you arrive. You are advised to pack only one suit. I guess that means there won't be many formal occasions to dress up.

This morning we found the temperature there was 15 degrees. It goes down to near zero at night, and goes up to about 20 degrees by mid-afternoon, although it is colder up on the mountain.

Q Ron, this question will smack of something that was asked previously, but is the press plane prepared to handle skis?

MR. NESSEN: The answer is yes.

Q Answer to what?

MR. NESSEN: Is there enough room on the plane to carry skis aboard, and the answer is yes.

That ends the formal announcement of the Vail trip. Actually in the next couple of days obviously we will have a lot more details and timetables.

Q What access will we have in the region, in the area of the President, on a day-by-day basis when he is skiing?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think the President said to the pool the other day that it would be great if he had a day or so to get his ski legs. Our plan was to have some pictures Sunday afternoon, kind of maybe at the bottom of the slope, or getting on the lift, or something like that, and give him a day or so to get his ski legs, and then do the big coverage on the slopes on the 24th, which is Christmas Eve, Tuesday. So that is the basic plan that we had thought of doing.

Q Are these slopes going to be closed off when he is on them?

MR. NESSEN: No. Oh, no.

Q Can you give us the name of this gentleman's house the President is going to stay at instead of staying at his own apartment?

MR. NESSEN: The President is renting a house from a gentleman named Richard Bass. Mr. Bass is a skiing enthusiast and a geologist engaged in mineral exploration and production, a cattle rancher, and a ski area investor, developer and operator.

Q What was the last one?

MR. NESSEN: Ski area investor, developer, and operator. He was one of the original limited partners in Vail, and was formerly on the Board of Directors. He also has an interest in skiing operations at Aspen and Alta, Utah.

His main occupation now is a general partner of Snowbird Limited, a ski area in Utah which has just started its fourth season of operation. And he met the President -- I don't have how many years ago -- but he met the President while skiing at Aspen and Vail.

Q You say he is a general partner in that Snowbird?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, who will be staying in the President's condominium?

MR. NESSEN: The President and his family is what I am told.

Q No, in the one he owns.

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry. Dick Bass is going to use the President's condominium, and the President is going to pay Dick Bass \$100 a day rent to make up the difference because the President's condominium is a three bedroom, and Dick Bass's house is a seven bedroom, and so the President will pay \$100 a day difference to make up for the size of the houses.

Q Is his house sort of outside the main street where the President's condominium is? In other words, is it down the way a little bit?

MR. NESSEN: I saw a map here the other day.

It is the east end of Vail.

There is a ten-minute walk from the condominium the President owns to the Manor Vail Lodge, and the Dick Bass house is about five minutes, about halfway between, so it is closer.

Q Ron, did anything have to be done to Mr. Bass's house about security?

MR. NESSEN: I am told we don't have anything on that.

Q One million dollars?

MR. NESSEN: Well, if it is it did not cost the Government \$1 million.

Q It will before you are finished. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: You are all so cynical.

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Q What about the houses on either side of the Bass house?

MR. NESSEN: What about them?

Q Will they be housing aides or Secret Service people?

MR. NESSEN: There are only two aides going with the President, Don Rumsfeld and myself.

Q Would you expect, inasmuch as he will be preparing energy messages and the State of the Union, that some White House people will be ferrying back and forth?

MR. NESSEN: If they are needed, or as they are needed, they could come out there.

Q Could we please be informed every time he leaves the house and where he goes and when he goes skiing and so forth and when he comes back?

MR. NESSEN: How about his movements within the house?

Q Ron, I have an interest in --

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I know that interest and that is why we are taking a few people from my office.

Q What I mean is, are we going to be informed whenever he goes skiing?

MR. NESSEN: I assume so. We have not worked out our exact plans for the week, but we are going to have briefing out there. It is not a ski vacation. It is a working holiday.

He expects to -- well, you know, you can disbelieve that or not -- the fact is, I have talked to him about it and Don has talked to him about it, and he plans to work three or four hours in the morning until about 11:30. And I will keep you informed on precisely what the work is for those few disbelievers in the crowd.

Then, he plans to ski for awhile from 11:30 or 11:00 to 2:30, and then he expects to do more work in the afternoon.

Q Has he set a firm date for his return to Washington?

MR. NESSEN: He has not, Ralph. FOR GUIDANCE, I would think somewhere around the second of January.

Let me answer this question here about the two houses on either side. I saw a story about that. The Secret Service has rented a house in the vicinity of the Bass house as a headquarters and for some of the agents to sleep in, and the Military Assistance Office has rented a house behind the Bass house.

The house on one side of the President's has been rented by NBC, which is unconnected in any way with the White House.

The house on the other side is occupied by the people who own it.

Q Who are?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q How much is it costing you to rent these two houses?

MR. NESSEN: The Scott family of Vail, Colorado do.

Q Do you have any first name?

MR. NESSEN: No. That is the first time I heard the last name.

Q Can we come down off the slopes for a minute?

MR. NESSEN: Do you want the name of the street he will be on?

Q How about my question on how much it will be costing to rent these two houses?

MR. NESSEN: Do we have anything on how much it is costing to rent the two houses?

We don't.

He is on Mill Creek Circle.

Q This is the Bass house?

MR. NESSEN: The Bass house is on Mill Creek Circle. The house he owns is on Gore Creek Drive at the corner of Willow Bridge Road.

Q Where is the CBS house?

MR. NESSEN: The CBS house is on Willow Circle, right alongside Gore Creek. UPI is on the other side of the bridge from CBS.

Q On Sunday does the President plan to watch the football game, Sunday afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: I did not ask him, Phil, but I will.

Q Do you plan regular briefings out there, and if so, what time and so on?

MR. NESSEN: We have not worked out the precise schedule, but I suspect the fact that he will be doing work everyday and the fact that there will be a lot of bills piled up from the last days of Congress and preparation for budget and State of the Union and stuff, I just feel fairly sure we are going to have to have a daily briefing.

Do you have any preference as to time? It will take me a little time in the morning to sit down with him and find out the answers to some of your questions.

Q I was thinking of the East deadlines.

MR. NESSEN: I know we will be in a little trouble with the East deadlines.

What would you say if he does work in the morning for a couple of hours and then leaves to ski 11:00 or 11:30, having our briefing in that 11:00 to 11:30 area?

Q Great.

Q After he has gone out?

Q Then we would not be able to cover him.

MR. NESSEN: After the first couple of days, and then, the 24th, when we have the big photographic thing on the slopes, is everybody interested in going up all day with him?

Q Yes, sir.

MR. NESSEN: I think we will have a protective pool up there everyday with him; isn't that our plan?

Q That would be good.

MR. NESSEN: That is what we had planned on.

Q When you say briefings everyday, is that a five-day briefing, or seven-day week?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously, we are going to be available all the time.

Tom?

Q Is the protective pool going to include people that will be able to ski?

MR. NESSEN: Eric is going out there tomorrow and see what the facilities are and the lift situation and all the rest.

Q He will be very briefly at the top of the mountain and in the chair very briefly?

MR. NESSEN: Do we have a skiing protective pool? The White House Ski Patrol.

Q Do we have a ski press secretary?

MR. NESSEN: No, you don't, and you are not going to get one either.

Q Will Cabinet members and White House officials be coming down during the period?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, as they are needed they would come out if they are needed.

Q Would you expect there will be some?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know at this moment.

Q Ron, what was your answer about the extent of security costs and so on?

MR. NESSEN: I said I did not know.

Q Will you find out?

MR. NESSEN: The question was what about the rental of those two houses, right, how much was that, and you want to know about the cost of the security.

Q The cost of special security for the Bass house and anything else.

Q Also how does the President rank as a skier, beginner, intermediate, advanced, or headwall or expert?

MR. NESSEN: He is a hot dog, I think.

Q What is that?

MR. NESSEN: That is a joke.

Q Is he a downhill racer? Honestly, where does he rank?

MR. NESSEN: I have never been out skiing with him. Phil was there last year. Maybe Phil knows.

Q His skiing instructor says he is an intermediate skier.

MR. NESSEN: And the President said last night his kids are better than he is. He said this morning in the office that he was going to have trouble keeping up with his kids.

Q Who is going with him besides his family?

MR. NESSEN: Mrs. Ford and Susan will go from here, and I guess Jack and Steve will join up there.

Sheila Weidenfeld is going, and I hope will provide a lot of the answers that Helen and others have about social activities if there are any.

Q One suggestion. You are talking about the number of briefings. I would like to suggest we have two a day. One after the morning, and one late in the late evening after he has done whatever he is going to do.

MR. NESSEN: Let's wait and get out there and see if there is enough to justify that. That is a thought. As I said, Sheila Weidenfeld even now can begin to help you with the family and that kind of thing.

Q Given all this good news about weather and logistics, has the President heard there are two houses likely to come up for sale in Key Biscayne?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what that exactly means. (Laughter)

Q Bebe lost his bid yesterday to have those drives declared private for perpetuity. He said he is going to sell, and I just like the weather better.

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you buy them?

Q Could you tell me what the Labor-Management meeting is? Is that a regular meeting, or a special meeting?

MR. NESSEN: This afternoon's Labor-Management meeting. The President asked the members of the Labor-Management Committee to come in to get their views on any economic proposals that he might make after the first of the year.

He has met with them on October 3rd at their first meeting, and on November 8 at their second meeting. It was at that November 8th meeting that he told them that he would like them to come back with some ideas on the economy, and prior to the meeting this afternoon with the President, the Labor-Management Committee has been meeting with the President's other economic advisors.

Does that fill in what you needed to know?

Phil has been waiting so patiently.

Q Thank you, Ron.

The emergency employment legislation that got through committee yesterday, what is the President's response? Is he prepared to sign that legislation without further ado?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, the whole concept of unemployment compensation and the jobs program was his, so obviously he is for the concept. The President's total was \$4 billion: \$1 billion of that for the jobs, and \$3 billion for the unemployment compensation expansion.

The President would prefer a bill that would not be excessive, and would be responsible in its dollar figure, but I think he will just wait and see what the legislation looks like when it gets here and make a decision then. It is his basic program. At the same time he is concerned about excessive Federal spending, as you know.

Let me point out one other thing, that already is available, as we talked about before, is a billion dollars for public service jobs which would create 150,000 jobs, and this money is available to State and local governments. I am told that only about 25 percent of that billion dollars has been spent so far.

Q Ron, is it the President's plan to press anew next year for a 5 percent income tax surcharge to pay for this program?

MR. NESSEN: Russ, really the outlook for that has not changed since we talked about it before, and I think Secretary Simon said pretty much what we said here the last time, which is that realistically speaking it looks like this Congress is not going to pass it, and the President's economic proposals for next year have not been prepared yet. Secretary Simon said this is one of the options, and that is really where it stands, Russ.

Q Ron, what do you have to tell us about the steel price increase?

MR. NESSEN: I thought you would never ask about that, Peter.

The Director of the Wage and Price Stabilization Council, Albert Rees, was called this morning by United States Steel. The company told Mr. Rees that the company would have a written explanation and justification of its price increase to Mr. Rees on Friday.

Q Who called Mr. Rees?

MR. NESSEN: One of their executives over there.

Q You mean from Pittsburgh or here? They have a man here named Whyte who is a very close friend of the President. Did he call or did somebody call from Pittsburgh?

MR. NESSEN: I think it was somebody from the Washington office who called.

Q So, in other words, it was Mr. Whyte?

MR. NESSEN: Somebody from the Washington office.

Q Can we find out --

MR. NESSEN: I will check on it for you.

Q Has the President himself made any telephone calls to the steel company relative to the price increase?

MR. NESSEN: No. I asked him that this morning, and he has not. It is in the hands of his Council, his Wage and Price Stability Council, and they are doing precisely what he wants them to do, so he has not himself called.

Q Ron, do you know what the Council will do with this explanation and justification since it has no power or authority to do very much besides hold hearings? Now, will it hold hearings depending upon what the steel company says?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the Wage and Price Stability Council, reflecting the President's views, hopes that U.S. Steel will lower its announced increases.

Q By how much, Ron?

Q Lower or roll back?

MR. NESSEN: Lower.

Q By how much?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have a figure. And that other steel companies will keep the public interest in mind and not raise their prices to the level that U.S. Steel has announced. And once the explanation has come in from U.S. Steel and is studied, we'll have a better idea of what further action the President might take.

Q Ron, does the President wish that the legislation was drafted in a way where the Council could do something more than hope that U.S. Steel would lower its price increase?

MR. NESSEN: I did not talk to him specifically about that, Norm. As you know, there is more the Council can do in the way of focusing public attention on this price increase and can hold hearings.

Somebody asked me yesterday, what was the effect of -- I mean, this system can work. For instance, the Ford Motor Company case, which we mentioned, after the Price and Wage Stability Board concentrated on that, the Ford Motor Company reduced some of its increases by as much as \$150.

Q When you reflect this, are you reflecting the Council's view?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean by that?

Q This hope for a decrease.

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure we said that yesterday, I don't remember that we did.

Q Ron, are you saying the President has had no conversation at all with Bill Whyte?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding, or any other steel company executive.

Q You said yesterday the same thing had happened to the sugar industry, and the beef industry. Do you have any statistics on that? How much they planned their hikes?

MR. NESSEN: The Council held public hearings on the sugar price increases, and the Council and the White House are gratified to note that sugar prices have gone down since the hearings were held.

Q Do they attribute that to the hearings?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know one way or the other on that, Jim. They did go down after the hearings.

Q I am just asking whether the Council had said anything publicly, or whether its people believe that the recent drop in sugar prices was due to the hearings. I ask that principally because most explanations about price drops have not mentioned the hearings as a factor at all.

MR. NESSEN: I did not ask that specific question.

Q How about beef?

MR. NESSEN: The Council held a joint conference with the Agriculture Department in late October on the general food price situation. And a large part of it was devoted to meat price problems, and there also have been Congressional hearings on that subject.

Q Ron, has the President's view -- that is, his hope that U.S. Steel will lower its announced increase -- has his view been communicated directly to U.S. Steel, or are you limiting yourself to an expression of his general views?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am not sure what the exact conversation was this morning between Rees and the steel company executive, but -- and as I said yesterday -- and I noticed that the Wage and Price Stability Council put out a fair amount of information after my briefing. I think maybe if you give them a call they would be able to provide you with more information.

Q I am puzzled by your inability to give us anything on how much the President would like to see the U.S. Steel increase --

MR. NESSEN: I would give it to you if I had it. I think we said yesterday that the President is disappointed in the price increase. Now, whether he wants it rolled back, cancelled entirely, or reduced, I just did not get that information.

Q You did not use the roll back? You did not use that in your first statement?

MR. NESSEN: I said that the Council, reflecting the President's views, hoped they would lower their announced increases. Lower is the same as a roll back, isn't it?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: A roll back would be a cancellation, wouldn't it?

Q That is right.

MR. NESSEN: And I said I don't know whether the President --

Q Would it be possible for you to find out what the President or the Administration is thinking as to how much they would like this thing reduced by?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, all right. Rather than speculate on what they might want, I think it would be better to find out.

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Q Ron, since a lot of us only got part of the story and since a lot of us are going to be waiting around for Rumsfeld anyway, could you undertake to find out what that is?

MR. NESSEN: Well, just interpret his saying that he hopes they will lower it. We will ask him if he means cancel.

Q Ron, if I could ask a question about foreign policy, which I understand is set by the President. Considering Ambassador --

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q Considering Ambassador Scali's demands in the United Nations yesterday, that the Republic of South Africa give us Namibia, is the President going to continue what I understand is U. S. policy, or has been, that the Soviet Union should evacuate the Baltic States, which I also understand still have ligations operating in the United States and recognized?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know anything about any of those subjects, but I will check, or you could ask the State Department.

Q I did. They recognize it, but I could not get a concise answer on the matter of do we want just South Africa to evacuate, or do we want the Soviet Union, or maybe even China -- should China evacuate Tibet?

MR. NESSEN: I will check on it.

Q Is the President going to put Rockefeller in charge of a new Domestic Council?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President has said publicly that he plans for Governor Rockefeller to play a big role in domestic policy, but whether any new groups are going to be formed -- I saw that story in the paper, and I had not heard that around here.

Q Can you amplify? What do you mean?

MR. NESSEN: Just what I said.

Q Play a big role in terms of what? In terms of what, adviser?

MR. NESSEN: The fact is, Helen, that the White House felt it would be improper to make any detailed plans of Governor Rockefeller's role until Congress had confirmed him, and once he is confirmed, then the precise duties that the President will assign to him will be decided? But it was decided here some time ago that it was just improper

to get into very many details of what he is going to do, or any details for that matter, until he was confirmed.

Q Has a decision been reached on the strip mining bill?

MR. NESSEN: As to whether to veto it or pocket veto it?

Q Yes, sir.

MR. NESSEN: No decision has been made yet. I might say, along the lines of the strip mining bill, there seems to be some movement on the Hill to make some changes in the bill. You probably ought to look into that on the Hill, but it might answer some of the questions that Frank Zarb raised about the bill the other week.

Q Ron, what about a decision on the Nixon tape bill?

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MR. NESSEN: Soon, but not today.

Q Were you able to determine whether the former President is still getting briefings from the White House?

MR. NESSEN: About once every seven to 10 days.

Q Did your answer to that question about the strip mining bill mean that the only decision is whether to directly veto it or pocket-veto it?

MR. NESSEN: That was the question I was asked, yes, and no decision has been made. But there certainly is no change in what the President announced the other day, that if the bill comes in its present form his intention is to veto it.

Q So, as the situation stands, the President will veto the bill. How he vetoes is open.

MR. NESSEN: Right. But there is some movement on the Hill --

Q Are you suggestion that the Congress might change the bill enough so that it is possible that the President might accept it the way it is?

MR. NESSEN: If it meets the objections that were raised the other day. That is why we sometimes are reluctant to talk about bills until they get here because they do change at the last minute on the Hill.

Q To follow up on the Nixon tape question, you said "soon." He has until midnight Friday to do something with it.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Everyone knows Congress wants to get out of here by Thursday. Friday at the very latest. They are concerned now whether to hold over their session until after midnight. Has there been any indication to the Hill what he is going to do and when so that they can, as a matter of courtesy to them, get out on time?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of, Bob.

Q In other words, what I am asking is, is the decision going to come before midnight Friday?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. It has to.

Q Ron, two questions, if I might, unrelated questions. Does the President plan to hold a press conference before departing for Vail?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have anything to announce, Jim.

Q Is that a possibility?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot give it to you today, Tom. I have not got anything to give you today.

Q I would like to ask another question about what appears to be a great deal of public speculation in meetings and sort of informally around the country about the possibility that the United States was planning an invasion of one or more Arab countries, to take them over and secure their oil fields or encouraging an Israeli invasion of one or more Arab countries to do the same thing. What assurance can you give the American people in this public forum about this concern or this speculation that appears to be quite widespread around the country?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think we have said here before that the speculation along those lines is irresponsible. There have been some reports, some specific published reports, which we have said are irresponsible and they are irresponsible.

Q They are not true?

MR. NESSEN: In answer to Helen's question, I have heard the President, and maybe some of you have heard the President, say specifically that he knows of no plans to do anything like that.

Q Would the President, for all time, rule out the use of American armed force in the Middle East to secure oil fields?

MR. NESSEN: I think even the question is irresponsible, Jim, and the President said he knows of no plans to do anything like that.

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Q I don't think it is irresponsible. Using the President's phrase, I respectfully disagree. The people who are talking about this thing are looking to the White House for guidance.

MR. NESSEN: I am giving you the guidance that any such speculation is irresponsible, and the President does not know of any such plans.

Q What makes the question irresponsible?

MR. NESSEN: The question will cause further speculation about something which is irresponsible.

Q My original question was what you could say to lay to rest this speculation.

MR. NESSEN: That this speculation is irresponsible, and the President knows of no such plans.

Q Ron, you used that phrase, "The President knows of no such plans" about four times. It seems to be carefully prepared.

MR. NESSEN: Because that is what he says when people ask him about this.

Q Is there a possibility that such planning might be going on and that he would not know of it?

MR. NESSEN: Do you think the President would not know of such plans?

Q That is why I am asking you.

MR. NESSEN: I cannot imagine such a thing.

Q If the President does not want to do something like this couldn't he just make a point of making sure that nobody is doing any planning like this?

MR. NESSEN: I think he has certainly gone out of his way to indicate his feeling about these irresponsible stories and speculation.

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Q Are you saying there are no NSC memos outlining such possible steps in the case of ---

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I am saying the President knows of no plans for any such action.

Q Ron, is there anything you can say about reports out of Moscow that the Soviet Union will have no part of a U.S.-Soviet trade agreement that is conditioned on Soviet emigration policy?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the stories, Russ.

Q Would you check on it, please?

MR. NESSEN: All right.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 1:05 P.M. EST)