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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 NOON MST

DECEMBER 26, 1974

THURSDAY

(Vail, Colorado)

MR. NESSEN: The President has signed 11 bills and Connie is here to pass them out. They are mostly routine bills. She is passing out the list and information on each one. There are 11 of them.

To give you a breakdown of what remains to be done, there are 126 bills that have been passed by Congress and sent to the President which need to be acted on by January 4 and three more bills which Congress has not yet sent to the White House. So, to get the total rundown, you take the 126 now at the White House that need to be acted on, three more Congress has not sent to the White House, 11 bills that have been acted on which we are giving you today, and 17 bills which were acted on earlier and which we posted here Monday. That gives you a grand total of 157. Eleven today, 126, three and 17, that should add up to 157. Seventeen are the ones we posted the first day here.

Q Can you indicate when he may act on the major bills, such as trade and strip mining?

MR. NESSEN: I can't give you a time table, Carroll. Some have deadlines and he will meet the deadline, of course.

Q You didn't mean to imply all the 126 have a January 4 deadline? They vary, don't they?

Q Is it correct he will not act on the strip mining bill until Tuesday?

MR. NESSEN: Why would that be?

Q I just asked.

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard that, Jim.

Q January 4th isn't necessarily the deadline for these 126. It is up to that date, isn't it?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

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Q Does he still intend to veto the strip mining bill? Is there any change?

MR. NESSEN: No.

The President worked at the house from about 8:00 or 8:30 and Don Rumsfeld arrived at about a quarter to ten, and they worked together until the President went skiing, which was about 11:00. He is skiing now and the protective pool is with him.

Q We were taken to the foot of Gondola 1 and that is all we were permitted to do.

MR. NESSEN: Aren't you supposed to wait at the bottom until he gets back?

Q We will go back.

MR. NESSEN: When he gets through skiing this afternoon, he will start working again at about 3:00 with Don. I don't get any feeling we are going to have any bills to announce this afternoon but for protection's sake, let's say if we have any bills or anything else in the way of information, we will have a posting at 5:00.

Q Ron, could you clarify the situation? On Christmas Eve, I called in to ask if there was a posting and was informed they were not there to do any work for me.

MR. NESSEN: Who did you call?

Let me clear that up after the briefing. That should not have been done that way.

Q On these bills, what is he going to do about the strip mining? Is he going to formally veto, not veto, or what?

MR. NESSEN: The only decision is whether to pocket veto or formally veto. There has been no change in his decision to veto the bill.

Q What does it matter?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, it may have some legal significance that I am not aware of.

Q Is there any substance to the report the President may not sign the trade bill while he is out here, that he may wait until he gets back to Washington.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know about that, Walt. I have not heard one way or the other on that.

Q You don't know what the precise deadline is on trade?

MR. NESSEN: Trade was passed a day or so before we left. We have to count the ten days.

Q There is some delay sometimes until it reaches the White House and you don't count the days until it reaches there.

MR. NESSEN: I will check on that.

We will have a 5 o'clock posting if there is anything to post.

The President and Mrs. Ford have been invited out to dinner tonight at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fitzhugh Scott. They have the house next door to the house the Fords are renting. Mr. Scott is a resident of Vail, Colorado, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is an architect and has designed many of the buildings in Vail.

The Scotts have met the Fords on several other occasions during previous Christmases at Vail. Dinner is at 7:00. The guests will be friends of the Scotts and of the Fords.

The dinner is Colorado grass-fed tenderloin beef. There will be a shrimp and crabmeat appetizer. The pool, as usual, will go over to watch the Fords -- the Fords will walk to dinner, it is just next door; and walk home.

The CIA report is arriving late this afternoon. It is being brought out by a courier, who is flying here on a commercial airliner. I think I saw something which said a military plane and that is not correct. He is coming on a commercial airliner.

Actually, there is a regular schedule for couriers to come out here every Tuesday and Thursday to bring material the President needs, including some of these bills, so this is the regularly scheduled courier flight.

Q Do they all come out by commercial flights?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q We would need to know if it arrives before 5 o'clock.

MR. NESSEN: I would think we would get that in the 5 o'clock posting.

Q Is this a special courier flight or a courier on a commercial flight?

MR. NESSEN: It is a courier on a commercial flight.

Q Is the Tuesday and Thursday always commercial?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What you are saying is he normally takes a commercial flight, the courier?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do you mean any classified material will be held up, not connected with the briefings of former President Nixon?

MR. NESSEN: I vaguely remember that. I will have to check that.

Q Is it handcuffed to his arm?

Q Is the CIA report classified?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is parts of it are classified.

Q How voluminous is it?

MR. NESSEN: It is voluminous. I think the President told some of you it was 50 pages, didn't he?

Q I thought he said it was an inch thick. Fifty pages wouldn't be an inch thick.

MR. NESSEN: Maybe they have heavy covers, thick paper.

Tomorrow morning, the President's energy and economic advisers will arrive here in Vail at about 10:00 local time.

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Q On a government plane, right?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, that is right.

Q On what?

MR. NESSEN: On a government aircraft.

Q Helicoptering in from Denver, or what?

MR. NESSEN: From Grand Junction.

Q Helicoptering or driving?

MR. NESSEN: Helicoptering from Grand Junction, weather permitting.

Q Ron, do you know what kind of airplane they are coming on?

MR. NESSEN: I am told it is a small one. I don't know exactly what kind.

Q A Jet Star?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what kind of plane it is.

Q Ron, you spoke just now of energy and economic advisers. I thought the economic advisers were coming Saturday.

MR. NESSEN: No. We said yesterday they were all coming at one time, except Roy Ash, who is coming commercially from California.

We will have a pool to photograph their arrival at the residence and we will also take a pool inside to film the beginning of the meeting.

Q Is that the standard protective pool?

MR. NESSEN: I think we might expand it a bit tomorrow.

Q What time is the meeting tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Sometime between 10:00 and 11:00. The pool will be taken over there to show the arrival at the residence and then inside to show the beginning of the meeting and the energy meeting will begin sometime between 10:00 and 11:00.

Q Will the economic advisers also take part in this energy meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Some will. I think we gave a run-down on that the other day. Some will attend both meetings.

Attending the energy meeting -- which is tomorrow -- will be Morton, Zarb, Greenspan, Simon and Seidman, and two of Zarb's aides will be there, Eric Zausner and John Hill. Of course, Rumsfeld and the President will be there.

Then for the Saturday meeting you will also have Greenspan, Simon and Seidman, plus Burns, Eberle, Cole and Ash. Is that clear, now?

Q Ron, on that pool coverage, will any of them be making a statement of any kind?

MR. NESSEN: I think not after the energy meeting because no decisions will be made at the energy meeting.

Q I was thinking of the arrival tomorrow, will anybody be talking to us at all about the kind of options they are bringing?

MR. NESSEN: I was going to get to that next. This meeting is expected to last two hours, that is the energy meeting. My plan was to sit in on the meeting and come back here and give you a fill-in. That would delay my briefing until 12:30 or 1:00. Are there any strong objections to that?

Q No.

Q Either I will do the report on the meeting or try to bring one of the participants down here, so it will be one or the other.

On Saturday -- just to move along to the economic meeting -- that is going to be on Saturday between 9:00 and 10:00 for the starting time. We will have the same arrangements with probably an expanded pool to show them going in and then some pictures of the beginning of the meeting and then a read-out.

I know there has been some request for one of the economic advisers to come down here and talk and I am going to try to work that out.

The arrival plans are that they will fly from Andrews to Grand Junction in a C-135 -- that is the small plane I was talking about. They will then go by helicopter to Avon and will drive to Vail and will go home sometime Saturday late in the day.

Just to bring you up-to-date on a couple of the events of Christmas day, the President made some phone calls to a few personal friends to wish them Merry Christmas. I didn't get the names; they are just close friends.

Among others, though -- you all know Joy Chiles who works in the press office -- he called her grandmother, Mrs. Hall, who lives in Liberty, Missouri, and it was her 86th birthday on Christmas eve and the President called and wished her a happy birthday and a Merry Christmas.

Yesterday, at about 4:30 or 5:00 in the afternoon, the President telephoned former President Nixon to wish him a Merry Christmas and asked the former President to pass along Christmas greetings from the Ford family to Mrs. Nixon and their two daughters.

The former President asked the President to in turn convey his best wishes to the Ford family. It was a brief phone call and there were no other subjects discussed other than the exchange of Christmas greetings.

That looks to me like all of my announcements.

Q What impression did President Ford have of President Nixon's condition, or did he get an impression?

MR. NESSEN: The President indicated that former President Nixon sounded better than he did the last time he talked to him, which was in the hospital at Long Beach.

Q Ron, do you expect there will be any Cabinet appointments out here?

MR. NESSEN: Grace, it is really hard to look ahead and predict what is going to come up. I wouldn't rule it out but I don't have any feeling one way or the other whether they are going to be ready to go while we are here.

Q Is there any way we can get faster word on things like a phone call instead of delaying that long?

MR. NESSEN: I gave you that as soon as I found out about it.

Q Ron, the President seemed to take a great deal of stock in a Newsweek poll that said 81 percent of the people said they were behind him as far as the gas tax. What kind of stock does he put in the Gallup poll that shows his popularity goes down to 42 percent in favor of his job in office, and 41 percent not in favor of his job in office.

MR. NESSEN: What is the question?

Q What kind of stock does he put in a poll like that?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard him express any concern.

Q Has he talked to you about it?

Q Does he keep track of polls generally, or do any of the staff members?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Does that worry him? Is that an incentive to bring on some drastic measures in the economy and energy in January?

MR. NESSEN: His decisions on what to do about the economy and energy are based on what he thinks will be best for the country and not based on public opinion polls.

Q Did the President talk to Dr. Kissinger today at all?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he did.

Q About what?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know; I left when the call came in in order to come down here.

Q Did he talk to Colby?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

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Q Ron, do you think that the President's economic programs will be outlined in the State of the Union Message or in a separate message before the State of the Union Message?

MR. NESSEN: The State of the Union Message.

Q Do we know when that will be?

MR. NESSEN: A few days after Congress returns. Congress returns on the 14th, I believe. It will be within a week after Congress returns.

Q And the same is true for the energy program?

MR. NESSEN: The energy program, since it is so intertwined with the economic program, the major outlines will be in the same message. The basic proposal on the energy program will be in the State of the Union Message.

Q Will there be separate messages either before or after the State of the Union Message?

MR. NESSEN: There may be various legislation sent up to carry out the energy and economic program, but the major proposals will be announced in the State of the Union Message.

Q You may have just answered my question, but yesterday you said these conferences were being used to get ready for the State of the Union, budget and so forth, and other legislative measures. Is that what you are talking about?

MR. NESSEN: That is what I am talking about, major legislative proposals to carry out the proposals on the economy and energy.

Q On the courier flight, do you have any better time on when the CIA report may arrive?

MR. NESSEN: Just late afternoon. It depends on driving time from Denver and whether the plane is on time.

Q You will let us know when it arrives?

MR. NESSEN: I hope to have that in my 5 o'clock posting.

Q Will the President follow the usual practice of having a series of follow-up messages after the State of the Union on specific topics or just let the legislation speak for itself?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know exactly what you mean.

Q Most Presidents have a special series of special messages they send after the State of the Union.

MR. NESSEN: I am not really clear on the timetable and it hasn't been decided on. Obviously, the budget, the economic report and the State of the Union and legislation to carry out the economic and energy proposals. I don't know. Beyond that, the plans have not been decided on.

Q Ron, a procedural question. I am sorry to throw it in at this point, but under the Nixon Administration, as you know, usually quite late, but at some point in the new year they would put out a foreign policy, a foreign affairs message, a state of the world message. What is the status of that in this Administration? Are there going to be messages of that kind?

MR. NESSEN: I think there will be a state of the world message and what form it will be in has not been decided. The State of the Union speech will zero in almost entirely on energy and the economy.

Q So, the State of the Union -- except for the areas of the economy which is worldwide -- but the State of the Union will concentrate on the domestic aspects?

MR. NESSEN: Sharper than that, on the economy and energy.

Q Is this in response to various Republican Members of Congress that have urged him to do that and not give a laundry list of the proposals?

MR. NESSEN: It was decided about two weeks before the Republican leaders spoke out.

Q Ron, has the President had any personal interest in that storm damage in Australia?

MR. NESSEN: I am told that the State Department is announcing -- really, you should check this in Washington because I only got brief details in case it came up -- that two American planes are on duty to evacuate people who need to be evacuated and to bring in supplies and so forth, but the State Department has given out the full details of the flight.

Q Ron, when the President spoke to Dr. Kissinger, where was he?

MR. NESSEN: He was in the downstairs recreation room in the house.

Q No, Kissinger.

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe Kissinger has left for Puerto Rico yet.

Q He was In Washington?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, as far as I know.

Q On two occasions I have seen the President's children unescorted by Secret Service here in Vail. Has there been a relaxation of coverage of the President's family here in Vail and has there been a relaxation of coverage of the President?

MR. NESSEN: I think you probably didn't recognize the agents, Walt, in their ski garb. They are there, though.

Q I saw Mike and Gayle on Christmas Eve walking into a shop and they were by themselves. Perhaps the agent stayed outside?

MR. NESSEN: I suspect he did.

Q But they are still receiving full coverage all the time here?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

I wanted to make double sure when I said the Tuesday and Thursday flights are routine to bring material out here and somebody asked whether they were always on commercial flights.

The answer is yes, there are no special courier planes sent. They are sent escorted on a commercial flight.

Q Is Kissinger staying at the Rockefeller place?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I talked to him last week. I don't know where they are staying.

Q On this special report, it is by Colby but was reviewed by Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q Can you give any description of where this conference is going to be in the house -- in the living room or den?

MR. NESSEN: I think the downstairs recreation room is where the President works most of the time. He works sometimes in the living room but Don has a little office set up down there and there is more room down there than in the living room, so it will be in the recreation room on the ground floor.

Q Is the CIA report accompanied by any kind of documents from Kissinger, any kind of cover letter or his own view of the report or anything?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I will have to check.

Q Do you know if it recommends any specific action, without going into the substance?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if there is a covering letter or if the President read the raw documents --

Q Whatever it is, a covering letter, do you know whether the whole package contains any recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Do you know what years it covers?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that.

Q Did the National Security Council or Dr. Kissinger write any of the report or is it entirely Colby's report?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, entirely Colby's.

Q It was reviewed by Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: It was reviewed by Kissinger as head of the NSC.

Q Did he write a report?

MR. NESSEN: I would rather not speculate on what he has done until the report gets here.

Q Has the President made any use of the swimming pool available at his house?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

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Q Was a special cover put on that pool at the request of the Secret Service for security reasons?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of. He has been swimming about once a day. As I understand it, the pool belongs to those people who live in that cul-de-sac up there and they launched themselves into this pool project quite some time ago before it was known that the President was going to use that house.

Q What kind of cover is it?

MR. NESSEN: It is some kind of shed, a wooden shed.

Q Is the building heated?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, and the heating is not working very well and Mr. Scott says he has been waking up about three times a night to go out and check the thermostat.

Q Is the pool itself heated?

MR. NESSEN: I think the heated water is what heats the air.

Q Do the people in the cul-de-sac swim with the President?

MR. NESSEN: Everybody does, even staff.

Q When the President swims, are there other people swimming in the pool with him?

MR. NESSEN: They can if they want to. I don't know that they have.

Q When does he usually go swimming?

MR. NESSEN: After skiing.

Q How big is the pool, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Is it on the Scott property?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know where the property line is. It is sort of between the Bass house and the Scott house.

Q Are the Ford children skiing any other areas?

MR. NESSEN: I have not kept up with the family skiing activities.

Q About the CIA report, we asked would that be made public after the President has reviewed it, and you said you wouldn't rule that possibility out. Do you have anything on that at all?

MR. NESSEN: I did talk to the President about that and he indicated that any portions which are not classified could be made public.

Q Will they be?

MR. NESSEN: As he said, it depends on the content. We will see later.

Q Can you tell us generally what is in the report?

MR. NESSEN: Ralph, I have no idea what is in the report.

Q I wondered if you had any advance indications?

MR. NESSEN: No, and I don't know if the President does either.

Q I understand the President will not be skiing tomorrow and probably will not be skiing Saturday. Is that right?

MR. NESSEN: He almost certainly will not be skiing tomorrow. Saturday -- I don't know. The meeting starts at 9:00 or 10:00 and he possibly could get out there later in the day. It has not been decided that far ahead.

Q Ron, since the President has not seen the report, is it not a fair assumption that most of this report will be classified? It deals with an area that is so sensitive, perhaps even illegal.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I should speculate. I don't know what is in the report. I only know it is lengthy.

Q But the President knows basically what is in the report?

MR. NESSEN: As I said the other night, he had that phone call with Kissinger. Kissinger did not go into any detail of what was in the report.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:32 P.M. MST) #111