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NEWS CONFERENCE

#114

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:32 P.M. MST

DECEMBER 30, 1974

MONDAY

(Vail, Colorado)

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry it took so long, but as you can see, we have a considerable packet of material to pass out today. I will go through the highlights with you.

As far as the President's schedule today goes, he worked in the house for about 2-1/2 hours this morning. He went skiing at 10:45, roughly, and your protective pool was there to see him safely off. He will be back and working at the house at about 2:30 or 3:00.

In this packet, among other things, you will find, one, the President is appointing 24 members of the National Committee on Productivity and Work Quality and is designating John Dunlop as the Chairman.

He is announcing nominations of two individuals at the U.S. Patent Office.

The President has signed five bills. The most important is the Foreign Assistance Act and there is a statement with that -- a rather lengthy statement -- to explain his feelings about the bill as he signed it.

He also has signed a joint resolution authorizing the President to issue a proclamation designating January 1975 as March of Dimes Birth Defect Prevention Month and the proclamation is here.

There is another bill relating to Indian lands in Arizona; another bill dealing with Army officers; and another one involving the exchange of public lands in Idaho.

The President has also decided to withhold his signature from two bills which expire midnight tonight. One of those is the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1974, better known as the strip mining bill. The other is the Energy Transportation Security Act of 1974, better known as cargo preference. Those are two pocket vetoes.

Q Is cargo preference the trucking bill?

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MR. NESSEN: No, that is the bill that would have required something like 30 percent of all imports to be carried in American ships.

There are memoranda explaining his reasons for the pocket vetoes of those two measures.

Q May I ask a question on that? The story is, as you will recall, it said he agreed to sign this cargo preference bill in order to get the trade bill through Congress.

MR. NESSEN: I guess this takes care of that story, doesn't it?

Q Do you have any comments on those stories?

MR. NESSEN: Carroll, I think I made clear way back when we were in Washington that the President had indicated that he would not stand in the way of the cargo preference bill coming to a vote in the Senate and that is all he ever did on this bill.

I think you have all the material you need in terms of the signings and the vetoes.

Now, I am not, frankly, looking for any other signings that we will announce today, however, I think in all fairness we probably ought to say if there is anything further today that we would have a posting at 5:00. Does that suit everyone? I can't promise there will be anything at 5:00, but let's say check back here at 5:00 to see if we have anything.

To give you a rundown on where we stand on the bills, the President has acted on 43 bills and 115 more are pending. The three that previously we said had not come from the Hill have come from the Hill and are now part of the 115. So, that makes a grand total of 158, 43 that have been acted on and 115 that need to be acted on, and the various deadline dates extend up through January 4. Today's vetoes bring to a total of 20 the President has vetoed since he became President. Of those twenty, three have been overridden.

Q Does that include pocket vetoes?

MR. NESSEN: In the 20, yes.

On a social note, the President and Mrs. Ford have been invited out to dinner, for a change, tonight. The hosts tonight are Pepi and Mrs. Gramshammer and the place is at the Gasthof Gramshammer. The reception is at 7:30 and dinner after that, with ten couples, most, or all of them, friends from Vail.

Q Wasn't that where he was last night?

MR. NESSEN: The dinner was there last night, but the hosts were the Woolners.

Q Is this par for the course? Does the President always party this much when he comes out to Vail?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is about the same as the press is doing, and most people who are out here for vacations. This is the normal Vail social life during the Christmas and New Year's vacation and I know I have been invited to various newsmen's parties and receptions almost every night I have been here. You probably have been, too.

Q No, as a matter of fact, I have not. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Seriously, I think people who have been here in prior years will tell you this is the Christmas-New Year social schedule for Vail.

I noticed some stories saying there are indications that the President will, at the last minute, announce that he is staying through the weekend. I don't know where those indications are coming from. The President plans to leave Vail at 11:45 Thursday morning, which is the 2nd.

Q Leaving here?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. I think that is what we have been saying all along, but apparently there are indications otherwise.

Q You have been saying "about" the 2nd.

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Well, it is the 2nd.

Q Any notes on our departure?

MR. NESSEN: They are here, but I think there needs to be a few things filled in. I think the plan is to post this sometime this afternoon. It has to do with baggage calls, pools, get-up time, and so on. It is nearly done and Jack will post it sometime this afternoon.

Here is a little item the President mentioned to a few folks last night, and to give all of you the benefit of it: Yesterday, Jack Ford was skiing on a trail called Lodgepole. He was skiing with a Vail Ski Patrolman named Bob Zeeb and two Secret Service agents named Dave Behler and Sam Phillips.

While they were on this Lodgepole trail, they came upon a girl who was suspected to have had a broken leg. They were near a Ski Patrol telephone and the Ski Patrolman, Mr. Zeeb, phoned the Ski Patrol headquarters and two Ski Patrolmen named Joe Macy and Jeff Huston were dispatched to the scene of the accident with a toboggan.

The girl appeared to be very upset. In fact, she was described as hysterical and was hyperventilating -- breathing very quickly -- and at one point, her heart temporarily stopped beating.

The Secret Service agent named Sam Phillips applied closed-chest heart massage, which basically involved just pounding on her chest, and her heart began beating again.

The leg was splinted at the scene by the Ski Patrolman and she was taken to the Vail Valley Medical Center for diagnosis and treatment. The last word I heard was that she was discharged last evening.

Q What was her name?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have the name.

Q Was the leg broken?

MR. NESSEN: Apparently the leg was not broken.

Q Can we get her name?

Q How old is Jack Ford?

MR. NESSEN: He is 22.

Q Did he stay there throughout the incident?

MR. NESSEN: Jack, yes.

Q How old is the woman? Can we get that?

MR. NESSEN: Get together with Pam after the briefing for additional details she can fill in. The reason I mentioned it was because the President mentioned it last night to some reporters. He didn't have all the details handy, so I thought I would fill in.

That basically completes my announcements.

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Q Is Alexander Butterfield being removed from his job?

MR. NESSEN: When we have any personnel matters to announce, we will.

Q Has the President been kept informed of this top-level shake-up that is going on at the CIA with three officials that have resigned within the last 24 hours?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure there is a top-level shake-up there. Isn't there just a New York Times report of a top-level shake-up?

Q Three resignations.

MR. NESSEN: Are they confirmed or is it a report?

Q CBS confirmed it last night.

MR. NESSEN: If it was on CBS, you know it has to be true. Whatever is happening at the CIA, the President is being kept informed of.

Q Does he have any reaction?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Do you expect any visitors from Washington?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Do you expect any Presidential reaction when the word comes in on the Watergate trial?

MR. NESSEN: Let me ask him that. I haven't thought ahead that far.

Q Do you know if there is a shake-up at the CIA? Has the President got any hand in it, or is he just aloof from what is going on topside in the CIA now?

MR. NESSEN: You know he is not aloof from the topside of the CIA.

Q You don't know what has been happening there? It has been on the wire all morning, even with a spokesman confirming it.

MR. NESSEN: I am sure he is aware of what is going on at the CIA.

Q Is the President going to stick to his resolve to remain in tomorrow night, New Year's eve?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is that a custom in Vail, also?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know. This is my first year here, Tom.

Q Ron, I would like to pursue the CIA matter a little further. You say the President is aware of what is going on at the CIA. Are these resignations being made at his direction, or at the direction of someone else with his approval? If so, whose direction are they at?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I think we are going to have to stick to what we said yesterday because I talked to the President today about CIA matters and his feeling is that he would like to make his full statement after he has had these meetings in Washington, as we said yesterday, or the day before.

Q I thought he was not dealing with it directly, but the report from Mr. Colby deals with matters that appear to be of public record, that is to say, resignation of public officials. I am asking whether the President directed this or was it directed by someone else with his approval?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I can say more about the CIA.

Q You are leaving the impression that these major shake-ups in government are going on with his knowledge but that he didn't make the decisions. Is that the impression you want to give?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how I can leave that impression.

Q Did he make the decision then?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I can talk any more about the CIA until the President puts out his statement in Washington.

Q Do you expect that statement to deal not only with the report but also the personnel changes?

MR. NESSEN: I think it will deal with the CIA.

Q Ron, has he completed reading the report?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, and, as he said the other day, he has read it and is going to study it for the rest of the time he is out here.

Q Has he had any personal contact with anyone in Washington by telephone?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he talks to a lot of people.

Q Who, Cabinet?

MR. NESSEN: He talks to Dr. Kissinger every day.

Q How about the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure one way or the other on that. I was there today when he talked to Kissinger, but I don't know about Rockefeller.

Q Kissinger is in Puerto Rico, isn't he?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, you gave the impression -- and I want to be sure I am correct -- that you, yourself, are not aware of these resignations or firings, whatever they are.

MR. NESSEN: I saw the story, Bob, and I wasn't sure whether they were stories or whether they had been confirmed.

Q You were not aware of them as a Government representative other than what you read in the newspapers?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Then in light of that, since you are one of the only two senior staff members out here that didn't know about those things except what you read in The New York Times, what makes you confident the President knows about them other than reading it in The New York Times?

MR. NESSEN: I know the President is keeping up with the CIA situation.

Q He didn't tell you about these?

MR. NESSEN: We didn't talk about the resignations.

Q It is possible he, himself, didn't know about them?

MR. NESSEN: I doubt that, Jim.

Q Ron, does that mean you are not sure?

MR. NESSEN: Well, in the sense that I didn't say to him, "Do you know about those resignations at the CIA," I did not say that, but I am sure he did know about them.

Q So, your statement he is aware of what is going on at the CIA is a general statement and doesn't necessarily apply to these resignations?

MR. NESSEN: He is aware of what is going on in the CIA.

Q There was a report in the Washington Post that Butterfield was being eased out because he told the truth in the Watergate situation. Is that true?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, we have not announced any departure from the FAA.

Q Are you planning one?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, when there are personnel changes, we announce them.

Q By the way, Ron, speaking of personnel changes, you have been refusing for at least a couple of weeks to confirm the more or less common knowledge that Mr. Lynn is going to be the new Director of OMB. The President confirmed it to United Press in the interview, as you probably noticed. Are you now in a position to confirm this to us, also?

MR. NESSEN: It seems to me the President has confirmed it, Jim.

Q When is he going to take over, when is the President going to send the nomination up, things like that?

MR. NESSEN: I can't give you a date on that. As you know, we don't announce personnel changes until they have had all their clearances.

Q The fact the President told United Press reporters means he is going ahead, right?

MR. NESSEN: No, because when all the clearances are completed, we will announce it.

Q It seems to me, since you didn't discuss the matter of the departures from the CIA, you can't answer this, but maybe you could find out for us. It is a very important point whether these men actually resigned voluntarily or were ordered to resign. I wonder if you could find that out.

MR. NESSEN: Let me talk this afternoon to the President about these resignations and give you more informed answers about them.

Q To your knowledge, are the resignations still confined to the immediate reports, or do you have additional information that in fact the resignations have occurred?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't, Russ.

Q If you have anything on that, will that be before the 5 o'clock posting?

MR. NESSEN: No, it will be at the 5 o'clock posting.

Q Is the President in touch with Colby? How is he getting his CIA information?

MR. NESSEN: He has been in touch with Colby and Kissinger.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:51 P.M. MST) #114