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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 2:10 P.M. EST

JANUARY 18, 1975

SATURDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me read you a statement here that may be of interest to you.

The President has assured Secretary Simon that he wants him to continue as Secretary of the Treasury. The President has full confidence in Secretary Simon. The President has not and has no intention of asking him to leave.

Secretary Simon has been a principle participant in the development of the President's economic and energy programs. He is the President's chief economic spokesman.

In the weeks and months ahead, Secretary Simon will be playing a principle role in presenting these programs to Congress.

Q Did the President talk with Mr. Simon today?

MR. NESSEN: Secretary Simon attended this meeting which dealt with revenue sharing.

Q Did he talk privately with him?

MR. NESSEN: And afterwards the Secretary of the Treasury stayed and talked to the President after the meeting.

Q Did the President and Kissinger talk?

MR. NESSEN: No, the Secretary of the Treasury talked to the President privately after the meeting.

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Q Ron, in one of the stories that obviously brought this statement about it has been stated that Mr. Simon himself has said he will leave if the Government's deficit reaches a point where he considers that he can't live with it. I think the amount was something like \$45 billion. Has that been discussed between the President and Mr. Simon?

MR. NESSEN: I can't even vouch for the accuracy of that quotation. You know, you really have to ask Secretary Simon whether he really made that statement or not. Obviously he desires to stay, as he said at his own news conference the other day. And clearly the President wants him to stay.

Q Did the Secretary ask the President to issue the statement?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q How did this come up? Did the Secretary say, "How about all these reports that I am on the way out?", or what?

MR. NESSEN: No. The President has seen these speculative stories and felt he wanted the Secretary to know of his feelings instead of all this speculation in the newspapers.

You know, I told you yesterday to be careful of that kind of speculation.

Q Ron, this speculation has been going on for well over a week. Why did the President wait until today to give Mr. Simon these assurances?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it started off with one story, and then it seemed to be continuing. So the President thought he should make this statement.

Q Ron, I was not at yesterday's briefing, but from accounts of it that I have read I felt you could not give full backing to Mr. Simon, you just said you had not heard the President say he wanted the Secretary to leave.

MR. NESSEN: I said the President did not want him to leave. I thought that was pretty strong.

Q But this is the first day you have come out for him.

MR. NESSEN: I never saw any need to, as I said yesterday. I said this was all speculation. What I said yesterday I thought was going to stop the speculation, but it didn't.

Q But Simon did not ask the President to issue the statement?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Did he ask for the meeting after -- did he stay afterwards, or did the President ask him?

MR. NESSEN: The President asked him.

Q What about speculation on other Cabinet Members? Will the President make the rounds of all of them and ask them to stay or leave?

MR. NESSEN: I think we will get to those as they come up.

Q Does that mean there has to be speculative stories first?

MR. NESSEN: We have no control over speculative stories, except when they are incorrect, as they were in this case. The President felt that he wanted to get on the record with the facts.

Q There had been reports, Ron, that overseas Simon was no longer considered the man to see about international monetary issues, and I gather the President's statement is also designed to bolster him not only domestically but internationally?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that it is designed to do anything like that, John. It is designed to state precisely the President's feelings on Secretary Simon.

Q Did they talk about any specific time frame, or did the President want Secretary Simon to stay on indefinitely, say, for the rest of Mr. Ford's tenure in the White House?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have a complete statement here, Gaylord, of the President's attitude towards Secretary Simon.

Q Has Secretary Simon been given any specific orders or instructions on how to behave with respect to the President's economic program, or what to say?

MR. NESSEN: As we say, he was a principle participant in preparing it. I don't know that he needs to be given any orders about it. He helped put it together.

Q We know they had this meeting after the other meeting, the private meeting. Did the President inform Simon at that time that he was going to release this statement?

MR. NESSEN: I called Secretary Simon and told him we were going to release this statement.

Q After he met with the President, you told him?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Was the statement drafted in their meeting?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q So it would be incorrect to say at this meeting the President personally gave him a vote of confidence?

MR. NESSEN: I am sure the President told him the same things.

Q He did?

MR. NESSEN: In his own words, sure. I don't know that he used those words, but they were his exact thoughts.

Q How long was the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: About ten minutes.

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Q It has been -- I don't know whether by those in the White House -- but it has been said that Mr. Brennan is going.

MR. NESSEN: Well, we will announce it when it comes up.

Q You don't want to make a statement like that about Mr. Brennan?

MR. NESSEN: Do we have to make a statement about every Cabinet Member? I made the statement yesterday that Cabinet Members are serving because the President wants them to serve, otherwise they would not remain in the Cabinet.

Q But you have made a statement about a pending termination.

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going to go through every member of the Cabinet and give a ringing endorsement of every one. We would spend all of our time ---

Q I think a Labor Department spokesman was quoted as saying that Brennan himself told his deputies that he had been offered an Ambassadorship to Ireland, and he hadn't decided yet whether he would take it.

MR. NESSEN: He is the Secretary of Labor because the President wants him to be Secretary of Labor.

MR. HUSHEN: That is incorrect about the meeting.

Q Are you aware of the story that I am talking about?

MR. HUSHEN: There was a report in the paper that the Secretary of Labor had told his assistants of the offer. That account of the meeting was untrue.

MR. NESSEN: We are not going to go through the entire Cabinet, Gaylord. There is no need to. They are all serving there because the President wants them there.

Q Do you have anything on Monday's schedule.

MR. NESSEN: You mean what it will be like? Terry usually gets them later in the day.

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Q Can you tell us anything about possible speeches yet?

MR. NESSEN: No. There is one Wednesday night at the Conference Board.

The Conference Board is a group of top business executives.

Q Ron, Senator Schweiker's office is saying the President will visit a deep coal mine near Pittsburgh on Friday. Is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: There is no speech scheduled for Friday.

Q I didn't ask about a speech. A deep coal mine ---

MR. NESSEN: There is no visit to a deep coal mine scheduled for Friday.

Q Will he be in Pittsburgh Friday?

MR. NESSEN: It is not on his schedule.

Q What is on the schedule?

MR. NESSEN: He is looking at a whole list of invitations and will pick some out to accept.

Q You were asked was he going out of town, and you said yes. Someone said Pittsburgh, and you said yes.

MR. NESSEN: He is not scheduled to be in Pittsburgh.

Q Where is that meeting Wednesday?

MR. NESSEN: In the Sheraton Park Wednesday night, eight or nine hundred board chairman and presidents of America's major corporations.

This is a dinner at 7:30, and then the President speaks. It is expected to be a follow-up of some of the things he said in his State of the Union Message.

Q When does he speak?

MR. NESSEN: After dinner. The dinner starts at 7:30.

Q Will he be there for dinner?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What was the thing you said about the President's speech?

MR. NESSEN: It is expected to be a follow-up on the State of the Union.

You have the disaster announcement.

Q Anything else the rest of the day, Ron, aside from the evening stuff?

MR. NESSEN: The evening stuff and probably a schedule and some words on whether he goes to church or not.

There will be no church tomorrow.

Q You said we might or might not have a text, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: The next is expected to be out late this afternoon.

Q Can we have a lid until then?

MR. NESSEN: If you would like a lid, why don't you take a lid, and those of you interested in the Monday schedule can call up and those interested in the text can call up. Otherwise, we will give a lid.

Q The text poses a problem, at least for me.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I would either stay if you feel like staying or check back at five o'clock.

Q Can we have a lid until six?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. It is a lid for everybody who doesn't want a text or schedule. It is a lid until six for those wanting a text or schedule.

Q What is the transportation situation, if any, for that thing tonight?

MR. NESSEN: Talk to Bill, or whoever is handling it. We will transport the protective pool.

Q I would like to ask about tomorrow's journey. I understand the time has been changed for the departure to about 2:30.

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q What exactly is he going to do there?

MR. NESSEN: It is a private dinner, a private party.

Q Just a get-together, then?

MR. NESSEN: The Chowder and Marching Society. They do it periodically. He was the host for one of these, and now this time the host is former Senator Charles Potter of Michigan. He is the host for this one.

Q In other words, the pool arrangement will be just escort, essentially?

MR. NESSEN: That is right. They will not go inside.

Q The pool won't know what goes on, really?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Will the pool be fed?

MR. NESSEN: You can probably go out to the nearest McDonald's, seriously.

Q I understand the nearest McDonald's is quite a long distance.

MR. NESSEN: You have quite a long time.

Q How long does he expect to stay?

MR. NESSEN: They expect to get back sometime between nine and ten.

Q I ask because Pappy Noel said that he thought they might be back by about 6:30. Does your time take into account the earlier departure?

MR. NESSEN: No, it does not so it may well be.

Q It turns out it is an afternoon affair instead of an evening affair?

MR. NESSEN: That would change it.

Q What time does he speak tonight?

MR. NESSEN: He speaks at 7:30.

Q Is that before the AFL-CIO?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is in the dinner.

Q He is supposed to be at the Goldwater thing at 7:50?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q He is supposed to speak to the AFL at 7:30 and make it to the Goldwater thing at 7:50?

MR. NESSEN: Around eight.

Q Is that definite he is not going to the touchdown dinner tonight?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is not.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 2:22 P.M. EST)