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NEWS CONFERENCE

#146

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:30 A.M. EST

FEBRUARY 18, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: I have rearranged my schedules in the morning in an effort to get the briefing started on time, and it looks like it is working. At least, it has worked today, and I hope we are going to be able to do this every day.

The President, at 7:30 a.m. this morning, had a breakfast with Republican Congressional leaders. I think you have a list of participants. The purpose was to discuss the President's energy program and his economic program.

This was a regularly scheduled weekly meeting and was not any sort of a special meeting. In fact, only two of the Congressional meetings this week were specially arranged. This morning's breakfast and the bipartisan leadership breakfast on Thursday are both regularly scheduled meetings, and the reception for the Republican House Freshmen on Wednesday was a regularly scheduled meeting.

Q He has them all the time.

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry. The reception was a protocol matter that had been scheduled for some weeks, or, I guess, more than a month, so, actually, the only meetings that, really, you could say were special would be the --

Q Is there some point you are trying to make here, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how I got myself into that. I am just going to push right on.

Q What are the special meetings?

MR. NESSEN: That would be the steering committee, the Wednesday Club and the Southern Senators.

Q Three?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, three.

MORE

#146

Let's see what was discussed this morning.

Q Just routine things, probably.

MR. NESSEN: The Republican leaders who were there said that most of them had received little or no complaints from constituents for their vote in the House opposing a delay in the President's action on oil tariffs. The President said he could not emphasize strongly enough the importance of tomorrow's vote, and he said that he has received indications that he is picking up strength.

The President said, "We have a good answer to the energy problem. There is no democratic answer." If the Senate insists on trying to delay his tariff, the President said, "By sustaining the veto, they will then have to deal with our plan with whatever modifications we might agree on."

Secretary Simon spoke of the need for sacrifice, the fact that there is no painless way to break our vulnerability to the Arab oil. He said that those who are talking about an allocation plan -- a limit on imports with an allocation plan -- have not talked about the fact that this allocation plan would cost 400,000 jobs.

He also said that, under an allocation plan, the 250,000 independent gas stations would have a very hard time surviving because their quotas of gas would be reduced to 85 percent, and he recalled that he had had experience in this and knew what he was talking about because as "Energy Czar" he had administered the last oil allocation.

Q Where does the job figure come from, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: It is partly based on his last experience and partly based on some statistics that he has gathered together.

Q So, the Administration is now announcing that the allocation would cost 400,000 jobs?

MR. NESSEN: That is what Secretary Simon told the members this morning.

Q Is that what happened last year, when we had an allocation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether it was 400,000 jobs or not.

Q Did anybody doubt him on that figure?

MR. NESSEN: They did not, Tom.

Q It should be easy enough, shouldn't it, Ron, to find out how many jobs were involved?

MR. NESSEN: He is testifying on the Hill today, but I am sure you can get in touch with him when he gets back.

Q Why did they set the allocation at 85 percent for the independents?

MR. NESSEN: Well, this would be the kind of allocation you would need to get down to the million barrels a day.

Q How much would it be for the regular ones?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't make that point. He was only making that point about independent gas stations.

Simon said that he begins to question whether Congress really wants to sacrifice. He said that they have called for sacrifice, but now he questions whether they really want sacrifice. He said that the Administration has told them what the sacrifice should be, and they don't like this sacrifice. They say "Give us another sacrifice that is not so hard."

Congressman Anderson asked about the justification for reducing the million barrels a day by the end of this year. Frank Zarb replied that those who questioned the million barrels a day also are questioning the 2 million barrels a day by 1977 and, ultimately, they must be questioning the whole idea of independence from the Arabs by 1985. Those who say "Don't go for the million barrels' really should be saying "We accept the risk of continued vulnerability to the Arabs through 1977 and beyond."

Q Is that a quote from Zarb?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

-- "And they should say 'we are willing to run the risk of another embargo by the Arabs.'"

The President, at that point said that if we don't start reducing oil imports that imports will rise to nine or 10 million barrels a day within the next few years.

Q From what now?

MR. NESSEN: It is roughly between seven and 8 million barrels a day now.

Q It will rise to what?

MR. NESSEN: Nine to 10 million barrels.

Alan Greenspan said that some of the initial criticism of part of the President's energy program was based on a mistake in programming a computer at Data Resources. I think I have mentioned that here to you before.

Congressman Anderson said, "What about the \$50 billion figure that the Library of Congress is talking about as opposed to the \$30 billion figure that the Administration talks about on prices?"

Zarb said, "They counted a number of things that are not attributable to the President's energy program, such as the cost of environmental equipment by utilities, which would have to be bought regardless of the President's program and other things such as interest on utility bonds and so forth."

The President said that he has ordered a paper prepared to demonstrate that the \$30 billion figure is correct, and he emphasized, again, that the \$30 billion that would be taken out of the economy would be put back in the economy in the way of permanent tax cuts and that any family that makes less than \$15,000 a year or so would get more back from the tax cuts than their higher costs of energy.

Q Who is preparing the paper?

MR. NESSEN: I guess the Economic Policy Board is preparing the paper. He didn't say who was preparing the paper.

The President said that what we need is to sustain the veto, then let Congress get to work on an energy program, and we might be able to make some accommodation on details.

Q Like what?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't spell it out, but I think you saw, the other day on the trip, he indicated that he would at least be willing to listen to some arguments involving a plowback provision for windfall profits, those kinds of details that would not change his basic program.

There was a discussion around the room of the amount of the increase in prices that would come from this increased tariff. The point was made that this is not the President's energy program, that the debate in Congress needs to be focused on the fact that this is only an interim step designed to push Congress into passing the President's energy program, that the tariffs are not an energy program, they are just an interim measure, and that what the President thinks the Congress really ought to do is to stop wasting time trying to stop this and get to work on the full energy program, including the tax cuts.

There was agreement by the members that that point needed to be made on the Hill.

Zarb said that he was working on the mechanism for doing what the President said last week, which was to help farmers in the form of a rebate for their higher fuel costs.

Q How imminent was that, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't get a feeling of how imminent it was. He is working on the mechanism.

Q May I ask you one clarifying question on the rebate to farmers, since the President didn't give any details of it?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Am I correct in assuming that the President was not referring to the fact that he has proposed to apply the increased investment tax increase to farmers as well as business firms, this was something other than the investment --

MR. NESSEN: This is strictly to make up for their higher energy costs. Milt Young, who was there, described in some detail the kind of fuel uses that farmers have which run into thousands of gallons in terms of tractors and combines and things like that.

Q Whatever it is, it is something in addition to the investment tax credit, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: That is right. That is my understanding.

Q Ron, can I ask a clarifying question about this?

MR. NESSEN: Sure.

Q Not being an energy program, what he wants to do is get Congress to pass a program?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Doesn't his bill propose that Congress put a \$2 a barrel tariff on imported oil?

MR. NESSEN: Excise on imports, excise on domestic oil and cut taxes, give people tax credits for insulation, the wind-fall profits tax -- that is the program. This is not the energy program, and there was general agreement at this meeting this morning by every one that that has been lost sight of in the Congressional debate over this, that this is not the energy program they are voting on tomorrow up or down.

Q Ron, the only difference in practical application is that his final program would apply the same increase to everybody and all oil rather than only to imports, which now may affect certain parts of the country.

MR. NESSEN: I disagree with you, Steve. The President's energy program includes excise taxes. It includes deregulation of oil and natural gas. It includes a permanent tax cut, weighted for the lower- and middle-income families, which would more than make up for their higher energy costs.

It involves giving industry, local government, and state governments money back to make up for their higher energy costs. It involves tax savings, if you insulate your home. It involves giving free insulation to poor people to insulate their homes.

That is the energy program, and it is not what Congress is voting on now. I guess some hearings are beginning now, but Congress has not taken up the President's energy program so far.

Q What did the President say about his timetable for raising the tariff to the full \$3?

MR. NESSEN: He intends to raise it a dollar a month and also to decontrol oil on the 1st of April.

Q Ron, are you saying then when he talks about making accommodations on details he is not talking about compromising on the dollar a month schedule?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is not because that is not his energy program. He is talking about looking at the possible accommodations on details of his energy program, which is not before Congress, or Congress has not taken it up yet.

Q As you answered the question earlier on the accommodations, the only people who will be accommodated will be the oil people because they are the ones who will profit by the plowback. You said we need to sustain the veto, to get working on an energy program and then we might be able to make some accommodations on details.

When you were asked specifically, you said the plowback on the windfall profits. Aren't we accommodating the oil industry here? Who are we accommodating?

MR. NESSEN: Walt, I was really asked to give an example of what he meant, and I said, well, one example would be -- but there are other examples, too. The rebates to farmers would be an example. At this point, he does not see, as I have said before, anything to accommodate or compromise with because there is no other energy program up there.

What I am saying is that he has got in a comprehensive energy program, and there might be, if anybody else had any other ideas about an energy program -- he might take a look at it and work out accommodations on details not on the overall program.

I really cited the plowback as an example of what I meant by details rather than a fundamental change.

Q You are saying he is set in concrete on raising that to \$3?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q He is not going to exercise any flexibility whatsoever on that? Is that what you are saying?

MR. NESSEN: Every time he has spoken on this, he has said that he is going ahead with the \$1, \$2 and \$3 and the deregulation of oil. As I say again, this is not his energy program. This is an interim measure until Congress will settle down and get to work on the energy program.

Q So, it is not true that he would be flexible on the schedule for raising it to \$3?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard him indicate that he intends --

Q The accommodations you are talking about would come on the overall program, not on the --

MR. NESSEN: On the program, that is right.

Q This is the first step of a program.

MR. NESSEN: No, it isn't. It is an interim step while he is waiting for Congress to start --

Q Isn't it intended to conserve oil?

MR. NESSEN: In the interim, right, while Congress passes his overall program.

Q How can you say it is not part of the program?

MR. NESSEN: It was pointed out at the meeting this morning because there seems to be some feeling in Congress and in the public, perhaps, that Congress is voting tomorrow on his energy program. They have not started work on the energy program yet.

Q Was there any discussion, Ron, on what the President might do if his veto is not sustained?

MR. NESSEN: No, there was not.

Q Ron, who is it alleging or charging that the vote tomorrow is on his energy program? You keep saying there are people in the Congress and in the public. Who are they? They are voting to postpone for 90 days his levy on imported crude, and that is about all they are voting for. Who believes otherwise?

MR. NESSEN: For instance, one of the Senators there said, "We need to point out that all that is involved in the vote is the temporary tariff. This is not a vote on the President's program." Then somebody else --

Q Somebody enlightened the Senator at that point?

MR. NESSEN: No, they did not, Peter.

Let's see what else happened at the meeting this morning.

Q One question for clarification. You keep talking about "the veto." Is this the first time that you are announcing that he will definitely veto this legislation?

MR. NESSEN: No, we are not announcing --

Q You keep talking about "the veto" which I have not heard before.

MR. NESSEN: If Congress passes this bill to delay the tariff increase, we would have to take a look at what the legislation is. I am told that there is a possibility of amendments and so forth, so we don't know what the legislation is going to look like if it comes from the Hill.

Q Is the President saying that the first thing to do is sustain the veto? Did he go on to say, "If I veto it"?

MR. NESSEN: I am just quoting what was said at the meeting today, Jim.

Q Ron, are you saying you are not conceding defeat in tomorrow's Senate vote?

MR. NESSEN: The President does not even want tomorrow's Senate vote.

Q You say, "We need to sustain the veto." This suggests that the Senate vote is going against the President tomorrow and that he accepts a vote against him.

MR. NESSEN: I think I am just going to give you a readout on what happened over there this morning and push right along.

Q Could you be specific in response to Jim's question?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, Jim.

Q Did the President add "if he vetoes it," or did he just say, matter-of-factly, "sustain the veto"?

MR. NESSEN: He did not. The "if the veto" was implied.

Q Is that your assessment?

MR. NESSEN: Based on that. I heard this matter discussed for quite a long time.

Q He knows it was implied or "When he vetoes it" was implied?

MR. NESSEN: Let me back up another step. If the Senate passes the delay, if the Conference Committee justifies the two bills, and if it gets here, we are not going to say what he is going to do with it. (Laughter)

Q Ron, you want the President quoted as saying "The first thing we have to do is sustain the veto," right?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have a policy here that we generally follow, and I think we need to follow it, which is that the President does not announce before legislation gets here what he intends to do.

Q Then you better change his direct quote, Ron, because you have said flatly that "What we need to do is to sustain the veto and let Congress get to work on an energy program."

MR. NESSEN: I am going to leave the quotes the way they are and not tamper with the quotes.

Q Thank you, Ron.

Q We are dealing in nonsense. Then we can quote the President as saying a veto, but not you?

MR. NESSEN: Then there were some other Senators who spoke.

Rogers Morton pointed out that Canada will be reducing its oil shipments to the United States, and that the only way we can pick up this difference is from the OPEC countries, that this will increase our vulnerability and it increases the reasons for Congress to get to work on the program.

Q Did he give a timetable or deadline?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't give it there, and I don't know precisely what it is, but I know it was discussed here at the time of Trudeau's visit.

Then several Senators mentioned that they felt from being out and around the country that the momentum of public opinion was on the President's side, that the people know the President has the only program, that they are critical of Congress and so forth, and the President ended it by saying, "We will win." No, that is somebody else's quote. (Laughter) He said, "I would appreciate your maximum effort."

That was the leadership breakfast this morning.

Q Ron, you said he felt that he was gaining strength in the Senate for that thing tomorrow.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Have you done a nose count? How does he know he has gained strength?

MR. NESSEN: There are some numbers kicking around.

Q How is he counting it? Is he counting it for the passage of the bill or for sustaining of the veto?

MR. NESSEN: What veto?

Q The one he talked about.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, that one. They are counting noses up there, Tom.

Q Ron, he does not have any real hope of winning that vote tomorrow does he?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really think I ought to guess at what the vote is going to be.

Q Ron, is it your policy not to bring the leaders out themselves?

MR. NESSEN: I would have. They are over there. You know it was in the Residence section, and I guess they left at about 9 o'clock, and I don't know whether they came out the front way or the back way or how they came out. I have no problem with them coming out.

Q If they came out the back way, which they always do when they are invited to breakfast, because they drive around on the other side -- we asked permission last night to have some access to them, and we were told we could stand outside the Southwest Gate.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't know that part of it.

Q Ron, do you have a readout on the Senate Steering Committee dinner last night?

MR. NESSEN: I do not, Tom.

Q Ron, do you know those Senators advised the President that he will have to cater more to the conservative right if he hopes to hold their support in the future?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't go to the meeting, but I didn't hear anything like that discussed here this morning.

Q Ron, how long was the breakfast meeting?

MR. NESSEN: It lasted from 7:30 until shortly after 9:00.

Q Ron, from what you said, it sounds like the President is going to be concentrating totally on energy this week and not tax cuts, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: No, that is not right. I don't know exactly what you mean by concentrate entirely on energy.

Q That is what he is talking with Congressmen about in all these meetings, isn't that right?

MR. NESSEN: No, not at all. The President thinks Congress is dragging its feet on the tax cut to fight recession. The President agrees with George Meany that it is of critical importance for Congress to deal with unemployment.

The President feels very strongly that people need jobs and that they need purchasing power. Congress has been here since the 14th of January. He made his anti-recession tax cut proposal on the 15th of January. This is the 18th of February and it still has not been reported out of the Ways and Means Committee yet.

Every week that Congress delays passing an anti-recession tax cut, Congress delays getting purchasing power into the hands of the people. Every week that Congress delays passing a tax cut, they delay getting jobs created. Every week that Congress delays passing a tax cut, they extend the length of time that people will be out of work.

I thought it was interesting that one of the Senators up there made a speech on television on the 22nd of January, nearly a month ago, saying, "The first action of this Congress must be a tax reduction for individuals and business. This can and must be done in the next 30 days."

So, I guess there are about four days left on that timetable.

The same Senator was on television Sunday saying, "Congress must pass a tax bill within the next 30 days."

Q Who was that?

MR. NESSEN: I am nonpolitical.

Q Who is this mysterious character?

MR. NESSEN: I am nonpolitical, and I don't want to say.

The fact is that the President really feels strongly about this matter, that Congress has been in session nearly five weeks and a tax cut is not even out of the Ways and Means Committee yet.

It does take time to program those IRS computers to give these rebate checks back, and the longer they delay up there, the longer it is going to take to get people their tax cut. I mean, there is 100 percent agreement among economists, Congress and the President that a tax cut is needed urgently to help the country out of the recession, and yet there is no action in Congress.

Q Ron, you spoke of an agreement. Does the President agree with this same Senator, who said on Sunday that the Federal Reserve Board better get with the program and start making things a little easier as far as money availability?

MR. NESSEN: The Federal Reserve Board is an independent agency and has independent status, and I don't think it is proper for me to comment on their policies.

Q The President still has a right to an opinion about the Federal Reserve Board, as he does about everything else. Does he have an opinion?

MR. NESSEN: I think since the Federal Reserve Board is independent that it is not proper to make that kind of comment, Jim.

Q This unnamed Senator said specifically that he supported the independence of the Federal Reserve Board, but nonetheless, given the state of the economy and the decisions the Board has been making, the time has come to put pressure on it for the good of the country in spite of its independent status.

Would the President agree with that or disagree?

MR. NESSEN: I will just say that the Federal Reserve Board is subject to Congressional oversight.

Q Ron, you stated partial agreement with George Meany. Now he also said yesterday that he felt the tax cut should be larger than that being proposed by just about anybody. He talked about possibly a \$30 billion tax cut.

How far does the President's agreement with Mr. Meany go?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly agrees with Mr. Meany that it is critically important for Congress to stop dragging its feet. The President believes that his \$16 billion tax cut is the proper size, and he believes that his is the proper method of doing it, which is \$12 billion in rebate checks to individuals this summer and fall on their 1974 taxes. I think I will leave it at that.

Q What did you mean by that statement that the Fed was subject to Congressional oversight? Do you mean if there is any leaning to be done, it ought to be done by Congress and not the President?

MR. NESSEN: No, I was just stating a fact. I think I was asked whether it was improper or something for the Senator to say that.

Q Ron, is the President going to speak to the AFL-CIO?

MR. NESSEN: Let me get into that.

At 12:30 the President is going to attend the swearing-in ceremony in the Cabinet Room of Betty Murphy, to be Chairperson of the National Labor Relations Board. She was confirmed by the Senate on February 5. She is the first woman member of the NLRB.

The President will speak there briefly and we will have an as delivered text after the ceremony. There is a pool that will go in there.

The President will have a dinner tonight for the 12 Republican Members of the Wednesday Club. This is an informal group of Republican Senators which meets each week to discuss issues.

The Senators who have been invited are Senators Beall, Packwood, Pearson, Percy, Stevens, Brooke, Hatfield, Case, Javits, Schweiker, Stafford, Weicker and Mathias.

We are also announcing that the President is going to make a trip to Miami next week on Tuesday and Wednesday. We don't have a complete schedule for you, but I can tell you some of the events.

The purpose of the trip, primarily, is for the President to conclude another one of those White House conferences on domestic and economic affairs sponsored by the Office of Public Liaison, similar to the one in Atlanta.

Q What is the full title?

MR. NESSEN: White House Conference on Domestic and Economic Affairs.

Q Where is it being held, in Miami, or Miami Beach?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think it is in Hollywood, Florida, at the Diplomat Hotel.

While there, the President will meet with regional news executives, print and broadcasting. I don't have the details of that meeting yet.

Q Is it one of those breakfast things?

MR. NESSEN: It may not be a breakfast.

Q If it is a breakfast, are those closed to us?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the details of that meeting yet.

Q When will that be, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether it will be Tuesday or Wednesday.

Q Ron, why is that closed to the White House press?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it is just a private breakfast, or dinner, whatever it is going to be, that the President invites these people to for a little, private chat. You know, he does that frequently here.

Q Is it off the record, or do they not go away writing stories about it?

MR. NESSEN: It is more for their background information than for hard news stories.

Q They do ask questions though, don't they?

MR. NESSEN: Yes; I think, at the last two, there has been a question and answer session.

Q Off the record?

Q They are free to write straight news stories, interpretive stories, using the President's quotes, what the President said and so on?

MR. NESSEN: We have never put it off the record.

Q Well, if they are free to do that, what is the justification possible for excluding the White House press?

Q The guys in Atlanta said it was off the record.

MR. NESSEN: I think the Atlanta one was off the record, or for background.

Q You broke the "off the record." You told them it was off the record and then you came out and told us what had gone on inside, didn't you?

MR. NESSEN: In Atlanta, or in Houston?

We didn't have one in Houston, did we?

I don't know. We will have to take a look at the ground rules.

Q I think it would be a good idea at least to have a pool in there of the White House press.

MR. NESSEN: Let me take a look at the ground rules.

Q Ron, you said there were 12 Republican members of the Wednesday Club. You gave us 13 names.

MR. NESSEN: Did I?

I guess they need all the help they can get.

There is a ringer in there somewhere. We will have to check that for you.

Q So, Tuesday he is going to go down there. Is that when he is going to wind up the economic conference in Hollywood, Florida?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What about takeoff, will that be late Tuesday afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a takeoff time yet.

Q Will there be a press conference there?

MR. NESSEN: There will be a press conference there, and it will be at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, Eastern Time, and that will be in the same hotel where everything else is happening.

Q In Hollywood, at the Diplomat?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is that where we are going to stay?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q Is that near Miami Beach?

MR. NESSEN: Hollywood is north of Miami.

Everybody is going to stay in the same hotel as far as I know.

This will be similar to the one in Atlanta and Topeka as far as the news conference goes. Then we will come back to Washington later Wednesday.

Q Could you arrange a time for the sign-up list for questions?

MR. NESSEN: I think we found a solution to the sign-up questions.

Q At the stroke of midnight?

MR. NESSEN: No. Here is what we are going to do. The regular sign-up sheet for the trip, if you want to ask a question at the news conference, put a little "x" mark next to your name and, then, we will have a drawing in which somebody will come and witness it.

Q Is the President going to play in the golf tournament while he is there?

MR. NESSEN: It is possible. That has not been decided yet, whether he is going to stay over for that or not.

Q When is that going to be, if he played?

MR. NESSEN: If he played, I think it is Wednesday afternoon.

Q Is this the Jackie Gleason --

MR. NESSEN: Is that the Inverray Tournament or something?

Q What is the name of it?

MR. NESSEN: Inverray.

The President accepted, on Saturday, the resignation of Sidney L. Jones as the Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy to the Counselor for Economic Policy, who is Bill Seidman. The reason that Sidney Jones has resigned from that position is so that he can accept his new assignment as Counselor to the Secretary of the Treasury.

Sidney Jones, for the past five years, has served in several positions of economic policy making.

Q Ron, he has been Counsel to the Secretary of Treasury for quite some time, hasn't he?

MR. NESSEN: I think this makes it official.

Q It was official at Treasury several months ago.

MR. NESSEN: Now, let's see -- 12 members of the Wednesday Club will attend the dinner. The 13th member is Senator Percy, who will come at the beginning of the meeting but will have to leave early because he is the host at a dinner for the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Now, we passed out a packet of routine announcements, which deal with five members being appointed to the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, two-year terms. I think you have that. The Commission altogether has 26 members. Twenty are appointed by the President, three by the President of the Senate and three by the Speaker of the House. The Commission was established to maintain a continuing review of the operation of the Federal Government system and to make recommendations for improvements.

There are some other technical Executive orders and some other appointments.

I don't have any other announcements to make today.

Q Could you give us a full rundown on the events in Florida? Just the one speech to the conference and, then, the meeting with the Regional News Executives -- just those three events?

MR. NESSEN: So far, yes. I will be giving you the others as they are nailed down. There will be other events.

Q Is there a likelihood that the President will address the AFL-CIO Executive Council?

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

Q Would they still be meeting by Tuesday?

MR. NESSEN: I think they break up on Tuesday.

Bill.

Q Ron, the meeting with the regional news executives, will that be Wednesday or Tuesday?

MR. NESSEN: It is not set yet.

Q Does the President plan to see the Governors tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I think he is having the Governors over for dinner on Thursday.

Q Is he going to make an address at that meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think he is meeting over at the Governor's Conference, is he? I think they are coming for dinner, but I don't know of any plans to make a speech over there.

Q May I add, I was at Governor Rampton's press conference, and he said they would talk business, as well as a social evening on Thursday.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, absolutely, it is a working dinner. Yes. I didn't mean to leave the impression it is a social occasion. It is a working dinner.

Q Is there coverage of that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if it is --

Q The wives are coming?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q How can it be a working dinner with the wives?

MR. NESSEN: Have you not been able to work while your wife was at dinner with you?

Q Not fifty of them.

MR. NESSEN: How many wives do you have, Peter?
(Laughter)

I am sorry, Fran. Did you start to ask a question?

Q It says spouses here and invitation only, black tie.

Q Ron, has the President been encouraged by what he has been talking daily to Secretary Kissinger about, the Middle East?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I ought to characterize it. Secretary Kissinger has been putting out statements as he goes along, and he has been in touch with the President every day by cable. He will be coming back tomorrow, I think, early afternoon at Andrews, and then will come in here tomorrow afternoon to brief the President on his meetings and also will give a report to the Thursday morning bipartisan Congressional leaders on his travels.

Q Did you have any comment yourself concerning this malicious canard that is going on back and forth, since I notice your name keeps popping up there?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think that was all straightened out a long time ago.

Q What is the malicious canard?

MR. NESSEN: This has to do with the Bill Safire article and book. I think that was probably all straightened away at the time, and I don't really want to say anything more on that.

Q I just notice that you are identified as one of the officials in Safire's column yesterday when he responded to this malicious canard charge.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't respond.

Q No, no, but he did.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q And he identified you as one of those who had leaked some of these stories.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, no. I don't think that is the way it was. I don't want to get into this thing.

Q Oh, but we want you to.

MR. NESSEN: I know. No, I think my only role in the thing was my statement in Vladivostok, which I think has all been straightened out.

Q Ron, has the President had any further communication from former President Nixon?

MR. NESSEN: No.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:15 P.M. EST)

#146