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

#165

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:40 A.M. EDT

MARCH 13, 1975

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: I didn't have a chance yesterday to congratulate Helen on being elected to the --

Q Yes, you did.

MR. NESSEN: Jack did, but I wanted to do it in person. I wanted to make clear that the White House did not ask Jim Deakin to step down in the interest of negotiated settlement.

Q He gave me full pardon. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: The President met this morning at 10:30 a.m. with the Chairman and the ranking Members of the House and Senate Post Office Committee to talk to them about problems relating to the Postal Service.

Do you have a list of the attendees?

The Chairman of the House Post Office Committee is Congressman David Henderson, a Democrat from North Carolina. The ranking Republican on that committee is Ed Derwinski of Illinois. Senator Gale McGee of Wyoming is the Chairman of the Senate Post Office Committee, and the ranking Republican is Hiram Fong.

Also attending were Jim Lynn and Max Friedersdorf. Congressional Members requested the meeting.

At 11:30 the President is meeting with the Postmaster General, Benjamin Bailer; also to discuss postal matters, specifically some labor contracts that will be coming up and proposed rate increases.

At 12:30 the President will greet Pamela Jo Baker, the 1975 Easter Seal poster child. She is five years old and is from Wellsburg, West Virginia. She was crippled with cerebral palsy at birth and learned to walk and talk through the Easter Seal program.

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As most of you know, this is an annual ceremony which kicks off the annual Easter Seal campaign. More than 250,000 handicapped children and adults are helped each year through the Easter Seal campaign.

Peter Falk, the television actor, is the National Chairman of this year's Easter Seal program. He is taking part in the ceremony, and I think we will have a photograph of that at 12:30.

At 12:45 the President will have a brief 15 minute meeting with General William Westmoreland. It is an informal courtesy call. The General recently had a heart attack and is now just about fully recovered from that. General Westmoreland asked for this chance to come in. It is a courtesy call. No matters of substance are expected to be discussed.

This afternoon at 5:45 Major General Richard L. Lawson will pay his farewell call on the President. He has been Military Assistant to the President since August 1973. He succeeded General Brent Scowcroft at that time.

Just to tell you a bit about General Lawson, he was born in Fairfield, Iowa and graduated from Parsons College in Iowa. His military career was mostly as a bomber pilot and a staff officer with the Strategic Air Command.

Now that he has concluded his tour at the White House, he will be going to the Pentagon as Director for Plans in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations. He will be developing air staff positions for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the National Security Council as they relate to Air Force strategic plans and policy.

Q He is strictly in the Air Force now as an Army counterpart, I suppose.

MR. NESSEN: You mean at the Pentagon?

Q Yes. This Director of Plans job. Is that an Air Force job or an all service job or what?

MR. NESSEN: I need to check my Pentagon adviser on that.

Q Does he have a successor?

MR. NESSEN: No successor has been chosen yet.

Tonight the President is dropping in at the Radio and Television Correspondents Dinner at the Washington Hilton. He will be leaving the South Grounds at 9:20 in a motorcade and getting to the Hilton at 9:30. He will speak briefly. We won't have any text of what he is going to say.

Q Will that be on or off the record.

MR. NESSEN: I think all those are off the record, aren't they?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't think it makes much difference. (Laughter)

He will be back at the White House at about 11:00.

The President has one appointment to announce today. He is appointing Paul A. Miltich to be a member of the Postal Rate Commission for the remainder of a term which expires November 22, 1976.

Paul, who most of you know, is a native of Silver Spring. He is succeeding Fred B. Rhodes, who resigned effective December 30, 1974. As you know, Paul has been Assistant Press Secretary to the President since August 1974, and he was the Press Secretary to Vice President Ford from December 1973 until August 1974.

Q What does the job pay?

MR. NESSEN: The salary is \$38,000.

Q Ron, can I ask something about that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What is it in Paul Miltich's career that qualifies him for the Postal Rate Commission?

MR. NESSEN: The official description of the Postal Rate Commission says that the duties of the Commission suggest that its members could or should be drawn from attorneys, economists, statisticians, accountants, industrial engineers, administrative officers and others representing the public interest.

Q He is one of the others?

MR. NESSEN: Just to finish telling you about Paul --

Q In answer to Fred's question, which of those categories does the White House construe that Mr. Miltich falls under?

MR. NESSEN: The President has very high regard for Paul's abilities, and has for a long time. Paul handled a wide range of areas when he was working for Congressman Ford, and he does bring to this Commission a wide range of understanding of the government. He does represent the public.

Q Wouldn't he be of better use to the President than on something called the Postal Rate Commission?

MR. NESSEN: The President feels that Paul is highly qualified for this and will perform a valuable service.

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Q Ron, why was the President meeting with the Postal Chairman and with the Postmaster General? Is he concerned about the possibility of the labor contracts or is he asking them to strike down the proposal to increase the mail costs?

MR. NESSEN: These meetings were both requested by, on the one hand, the Congressional delegation, and on the other hand, the Postmaster General. It is not a question of the President calling them in to discuss a matter. They wanted to discuss some postal issues with him.

Q What issues did they discuss with him?

MR. NESSEN: I thought I had mentioned that.

Q Yes, sir, you did mention a few.

Q But you didn't say how they stood.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how they stand on them.

Q Do you know how the President stands on the possibility of further increases in postal rates, first-class and others? Is he opposed to them? Would he like to see them postponed as in the case of the Federal pay increase, because of their impact on inflation? Is this one of the factors today?

MR. NESSEN: As a general matter, the President believes that the Postal Service should manage the mail service without outside political interference. The President also believes that as a general matter, the users of the mail should pay for their services.

Further, the President is concerned about wage increases that would be so large as to have a severe inflationary effect.

Q Is he concerned about rate increases for the same reason or from the same standpoint?

MR. NESSEN: I say that the President believes that the users of the mail, as a general matter, should pay for their service.

Q Then, he would oppose any increase in the first-class rate because first-class does pay its own way and would be in favor of increases in second- and third-class rates, is that what you are saying?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will probably just leave it with his general views, Jim, since I don't know specifically what turn this meeting will take today. He does believe the Postal Service ought to manage the mail without political interference.

To clear up one question over here, General Lawson's job is in the Air Force area of the Pentagon.

I believe you have Paul's biography. He joined the Booth newspapers as a Washington correspondent in October, 1957. He was a member of the standing committee of correspondents. He became press secretary to Congressman Ford in March of 1966. He is a graduate of the University of Minnesota with highest distinction. I think you have a further detailed biography of Paul.

Looking ahead to next week just a bit, the contact for credentials in South Bend -- if you have camera crews or local people -- is Dick Conklin. He is in the Department of Information Services at Notre Dame. His phone number is (219) 283-7367.

Saturday noon is the deadline for you local people to apply for credentials. That office will be open at 8 o'clock on Saturday, local time, to handle that.

Q You suggest it can be done by phone, and people don't have to go there Saturday?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that much about it. They had better call and find out.

Q Ron, can I ask something about that trip?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Can you give us any guidance as to when this prepared speech will be available? Might that be available Sunday night?

MR. NESSEN: It is possible. I am not sure.

Q What is the topic?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a topic to give you today.

Q Is it still a major speech?

MR. NESSEN: I never characterize Presidential speeches, Bob.

Q But Hushen, your deputy, did.

MR. NESSEN: The President wanted me to remind you today that the scheduled Senate Easter vacation starts in eight days and the Senate still has not passed a tax cut bill, which the President feels is absolutely essential to turn around the recession. Time is growing short.

Also, I wanted to point out to you a story that was in the Star-News of yesterday in which Congressman Rhodes explained why he was developing his program. It generally follows some of the things I said to you when I was asked about it the other day.

Those are my announcements for today.

Q I am a little unclear, Ron. Which story is that about Rhodes? Is that Rhodes' response to disassociating himself from that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Since you brought up the tax thing, I just noticed on the wire back there that Senator Long has the mark-up in the Senate Finance Committee that began this morning on the tax cut bill. He said he would be willing to go as high as \$30 billion. What is the White House reaction to that, if any?

MR. NESSEN: There is really nothing new to give you on that today. It would be the same answer I gave you yesterday, which is, the President believes \$16 billion to \$19 billion is the right area.

Q Ron, I was struck by the way you just phrased that. You said the President wanted you to remind us that there were only eight days left.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Why does the President want you to remind us there are only eight days left until the Congress goes into recess?

MR. NESSEN: He feels strongly about it, as you know.

Q Has he done any personal reminding or are we supposed to be the pipeline?

MR. NESSEN: I am just passing along what he said.

Q Is he considering or reconsidering sending Congressman Rhodes and Congressman Albert to China during this time-wasted vacation since he is providing transportation for their trip?

MR. NESSEN: He hopes, and expects, that the Senate ~~==~~ and then the full Congress -- will pass the tax cut bill before they leave for their vacation.

Q Would he like them to put off the Easter recess?

MR. NESSEN: He thinks there is plenty of time to do this tax cut before the Easter recess.

Q Will he ask them to put it off if they don't?

MR. NESSEN: He thinks they can, and should, do it before they take off for their Easter recess.

Q Ron, did the President consider asking the Vice President, who, according to his schedule, is going off to Dorado Beach, Puerto Rico, today, to stay behind and talk to Senators individually to persuade them to act more promptly on the tax cut?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard anything like that, Ted.

Bob?

Q Ron, General Westmoreland -- is he still on the schedule, by the way?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is the President asking his advice on the Indochina situation?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, this is a courtesy call of which no matters of substance are expected to be discussed.

Q Ron, on that Rhodes thing that you brought to our attention, you said the President wanted to remind us about the Senate recess. Was it his wish, also, to bring that article with some words by Rhodes to our attention?

MR. NESSEN: No. I had been asked about this the other day and had some trouble, I think, getting across where I understood this fit into things. Congressman Rhodes did it himself. I thought I would call it to your attention.

Q So, this is just you doing it and not the President?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is the President happy that a loyalty petition is being circulated on his own behalf by his own party?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that I would call it a loyalty petition.

Q Solidarity, or whatever you want to call it.

MR. NESSEN: He is happy to have support.

Q Ron, is the President going to go along with the request of the Church committee to turn over the Colby report and make it available to the committee?

MR. NESSEN: The letter of request arrived this morning and was turned over to the Office of the White House Counsel for study and recommendations.

Q Will there be a problem with that, Ron, that you know of?

MR. NESSEN: It has gone to the Counsel's office for study and recommendations.

Q Ron, the Governor of New Hampshire has indicated he may run as a favorite son conservative challenger to the President next year in the New Hampshire primary. When will the President make his decision as to whether his name will be entered in the primaries? Will he campaign in the primaries? What is he going to do about the conservative challenge in New Hampshire?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any answers to any of those today, Walt.

Q Ron, when is he going to announce his trip to Palm Springs?

MR. NESSEN: As soon as he has decided finally to go.

Q He is having second thoughts about going?

MR. NESSEN: It is just not tied down enough to announce it.

Q Will he go even if there is not a tax bill?
What does it hinge on?

MR. NESSEN: What does what hinge on?

Q His trip to Palm Springs?

MR. NESSEN: A number of things.

Q What?

MR. NESSEN: A number of things.

Q I mean, Congressional pace or controversy?

MR. NESSEN: I think you saw what happened at Christmastime, which was that he stayed behind until the Congress had finished its work. I would expect the same thing would happen on this trip.

Q So, his departure date hinges on the Congressional recess?

MR. NESSEN: Among other things.

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Q Ron, I have a question about the tax cut, if I might.

MR. NESSEN: I think Tom wanted to get a question in.

Q Will the President veto the stripmining bill that was passed by the Senate this week and will arrive here in essentially that form?

MR. NESSEN: There is still a ways to go yet on the stripmining bill. It still has to go through the House and the Conference Committee, and it would be just premature to suggest what he might do. We don't know what the final form is going to be.

Q Now can I ask my question about the tax cut?

MR. NESSEN: Please.

Q You have several times said in answer to questions about the tax cut that -- just by repeating the fact that the President favors a tax cut of \$16 billion to \$19 billion, but as a practical and realistic matter a good many Members of Congress are saying that the Senate is going to vote around \$30 billion and the House has voted \$21 billion -- the Conference Committee will, as it has often done, split the difference at around \$25 billion somewhere.

Since this does appear to be a very realistic possibility, can you tell us two things: first of all, whether the President has asked the Council of Economic Advisers or the OMB or anyone else for guidance, for a report, or for advisory material on whether or not he should accept the \$25 billion tax cut or a tax cut in that vicinity; and secondly, can you get off the dead center of this \$16 to \$19 billion and give us some idea what kind of reaction the White House, the President, is going to have to a tax cut of about \$25 billion?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, the answer to that is the same as it has been each day that it has come up, that the President feels \$16 to \$19 billion is the proper amount needed to stimulate the country out of the recession. There is no final tax bill through Congress, and I think we will leave it at that.

Q Is it conceivable to you as the President's spokesman that after all the President has said about the recession and about a tax cut that he would veto a tax cut of more than \$19 billion? Is that conceivable to you?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, we never make a judgment on whether to veto or sign -- the President does not -- until the legislation is here.

Q Ron, speaking of vetoing or signing, OMB Director Lynn said on the Hill a couple days ago that the President would veto that \$5.9 billion emergency job bill.

MR. NESSEN: I think we need to be just a little more precise in the words. He said that he would recommend that the President veto it.

Q Okay. So then you are not saying anything on that, either, at this point?

MR. NESSEN: I have some of the thoughts that the White House has about the bill.

Q Could you give us those, please?

MR. NESSEN: This bill is called the Emergency Employment Act, and yet an analysis of this indicates that only two parts of it are actually directed toward getting jobs on an urgent basis. One of those has to do with public service jobs, and the other has to do with summer youth employment.

As you know, the President last week himself requested \$2 billion for those two areas. Obviously, I think it is proper to say the President supports that portion of the bill, which goes along with the action that he took on his own last week.

Q What was it besides the summer youth jobs? What was the other one?

MR. NESSEN: You remember the \$1.6 billion for public service jobs. So, that part obviously there is no controversy about.

Q Two billion dollars?

MR. NESSEN: It is \$1.6 billion, plus \$412 million for summer jobs.

Q Does that bill have \$1.6 billion for public service or is it more?

MR. NESSEN: Two billion overall. That includes the summer service and youth also, so it is in the same ballpark. Theirs is the same as what the President did last week.

As far as the rest of the bill goes, the bill is being described as one which would create 900,000 jobs. We just don't frankly see how the bill would do that. Just to give you one small example, there is one provision of the bill which has \$114 million in it for soil and water conservation. This would be used to construct water sheds and flood prevention projects.

The committee claims that that \$114 million would create 32,000 direct jobs. If you divide 32,000 jobs into the \$114 million appropriation, you get roughly \$3,500 per job. The White House can't figure out how \$3,500 -- which would have to go for salaries, materials, plans and equipment and so forth -- is going to be able to create 32,000 jobs.

That is just an example of how the 900,000 figure breaks down.

In addition, there is a proposal in there which would put up \$443 million to buy automobiles for the GSA. Now, this ignores the GSA's standard procedure for the life of its automobiles and would be uneconomical. At the present time, the GSA standards are that they keep an automobile for six years or 60,000 miles. Six years or 60,000 miles is their normal procedure.

At the present time, or when the last count was taken, there were only 19,000 automobiles that were eligible for replacement under those rules. This bill wants to come along and put up \$443 million to replace the entire motor pool of the GSA, which is 73,000 vehicles. It is just uneconomical to do that.

Q. Ron, haven't the Democrats said this is a deliberate thing, recognizing that it would not be economical, but it would be a deliberate thing to spur automobile sales?

MR. NESSEN: On the other hand, Jim, out of those 73,000 vehicles in the motor pool, which this bill would require to be replaced entirely, 19,000 of them as I say, are over six years old or over 60,000 miles. That leaves 54,000 which are serviceable and would be sold at an auction, as is the custom over there.

It is felt here that that would take away 54,000 sales from new and used car dealers because the government, in effect, would be competing with the new and used car dealers.

Q Ron, in my calculation, 73,000 cars would cost \$6,000 a piece. I don't see how \$443 million would be used. Does the GSA buy \$6,000 cars?

MR. NESSEN: I think that must include trucks, too, and cars and station wagons and pick-ups and that kind of thing. It pulls the price up.

Also in that bill, there is a \$465 million provision which goes for the repair and improvement of Federal buildings. This would be scattered around the country, with no guarantee in the bill, as far as the White House can see, that the work would be concentrated in areas of high unemployment. Also, some of these projects could not be started for 18 to 24 months, so there would really be no immediate effect on jobs.

In addition, there is \$900 million in the bill for the Postal Service. As I mentioned a moment ago in another connection, the White House does believe that the Postal Service ought to operate on its own. This would put the Postal Service back where it was before 1970, when it was made independent.

Q What is the Postal money for?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what they propose the \$900 million for. The bill has not been given final passage, and so it is not possible to say what the President's final decision would be on this bill. He does have the recommendation from Director Lynn to veto it, and these are some of the problems that the White House sees with the bill.

Aren't you glad you asked?

Q I don't know.

Q Ron, could you give us the current status of the negotiations between Frank Zarb and Mr. Ullman on the energy program?

MR. NESSEN: I did. I talked to Frank this morning. He is meeting fairly regularly with Chairman Ullman and Frank's staff is meeting with the subcommittee staff.

Frank describes what is going on as making good progress, and he says there are some areas of disagreement. But, they are working on those, and he is hopeful of reaching a compromise.

Q Did he mention the areas of disagreement?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q What are they really trying to do? Are they trying to get together on the oil import tariffs and the whole range of energy?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes. What they are trying to do is to write a compromise energy bill.

Q I wanted to ask you this the other day when we first heard about these Zarb-Ullman negotiations. Do they have before them just the Administration's or the President's program and the Ways and Means program, or do they also have the so-called ad hoc programs in both the Senate and the House? In other words, are they trying to get --

MR. NESSEN: Frank also has been meeting with Senator Pastore and with Congressman Wright on this, and their staffs, and so there is really sort of a whole spectrum of negotiations going on to arrive at one single bill.

Q Ron, the Dow Jones wire had a story the other day which evidently nobody has picked up -- or nobody has done anything with -- but the writer claimed to have been privy to some of this stuff and said that the Ford Administration has proposed a plan that would include a 5 cent gasoline tax, eventually rising to 25 cents, keeping the \$1 import fees as they stand, but gradually rising for imported products, a more gradual approach to decontrolling old oil, whereby the ceiling would go up \$1.50 every six months until it reached the price of new oil.

MR. NESSEN: I read that, and I didn't get the feeling that they were describing an Administration plan. I got the feeling they were describing some of the moves that Ullman was prepared to make. I had a feeling that they were describing the negotiations, but that was some of the ideas Ullman was putting forward.

Q Do you have any reaction to those?

MR. NESSEN: They are up there, they are negotiating a compromise, and I think we probably ought to leave it there until they reach agreement.

Q Ron, have you discussed with the President the proposal that Senator Mansfield be sent to China to talk to Sihanouk and, if so, what was the President's reaction?

MR. NESSEN: The President and Senator Mansfield maintain communication.

Q They were talking about maintaining communication with Sihanouk.

MR. NESSEN: That is all I am going to be able to say.

Q The suggestion came up?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure whether they have or not, Helen. They do maintain communication.

Q Is the President aware of the proposal?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes.

Q He has no reaction to it?

MR. NESSEN: No direct reaction. I do point out to you that last month, as Phil Habib said at the State Department the other day -- only a month ago or less than a month ago I guess it was -- there was an attempt made to contact Sihanouk, and it was unsuccessful. He did not respond, I should say.

Q Well, since then Sihanouk has written to Mansfield.

Q Helen's question about this petition of support on the Hill, what role is the White House taking specifically to Max Friedersdorf's people and encouraging Republicans to sign the petition?

MR. NESSEN: None.

Q None?

MR. NESSEN: None as far as I know.

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Q If I could get back to the Sihanouk thing, Senator Mansfield said that Sihanouk has not been contacted for four years despite the fact that Kissinger has been in China seven times. Now, are you talking about something that has happened very recently, Ron, and if so, how recently?

MR. NESSEN: As Secretary Habib said at the State Department the other day, less than a month ago an attempt was made to contact Sihanouk and he did not respond.

Q Did he say anything more about who made the attempt, through what channel it was made?

MR. NESSEN: I get the feeling from some of the questions yesterday and what I sense is about to come today, that some of you may have been too busy to have a chance to stop in at Habib's briefing, or read about it, and I think if I could give you one or two of the highlights, it will probably answer -- it won't answer most of your questions -- but it will indicate.

He put out there the other day an outline of negotiating attempts going back quite a number of years. He pointed out that it does not mention specific details in either terms of the personalities or the countries who have been involved in the contacts.

He said that was not by accident; it was done deliberately.

"But the record does attempt to present some kind of a picture of a concerted, sustained, continual effort to bring a peaceful settlement of a war which has gone on too long. The war in Cambodia does not continue by any lack of effort to bring it to an end on either our part or on the part of the government of the Khmer Republic. If there is any lesson that one learns from a quick perusal of this outline, it is that not only has there been a sustained effort in the past, but that it would be hoped that at some time, in some way, as that effort is continued, there will be found the means to bring about an early compromise settlement which both the United States and Cambodia want."

He was asked about who had made the contacts, how had they been made, and so forth, and he replied that "in order that one does not wish to close out channels, one does not wish to enter into such details at the moment that would in any way detract from the possibility in the future that we will be able to achieve a peaceful settlement."

He says that the reason he put out this outline the other day was because the Administration, the government, has a responsibility to the reporters and to the public, to explain its actions in the past and that is why it was put out.

But he said it is also equally important in terms of the basic objectives which are a peaceful settlement, a negotiated settlement, not to specify or go into undue detail about the timing or the personalities or the channels used.

He does say that there were a variety of contacts with various elements in various channels, and he would not go beyond that for fear that it would have the effect of upsetting any future possibilities of a negotiated settlement.

Then, he says, that "the search for a peaceful settlement has not been thwarted by any action or any position taken by our side or by the Khmer Republic."

He did point out that an attempt had been made to contact Sihanouk last month and that he did not respond.

He said, "we continue to hope that there is a reasonable chance for a negotiated settlement, but the evidence is quite clear that as far as the other side is concerned, that when they pursue their objectives through the use of force and if they have hope for achievement of that objective, through the use of force, that they have less of an interest in a negotiated settlement."

Q Is Dr. Kissinger running our Cambodian policy by remote control?

MR. NESSEN: Dr. Kissinger is in touch with the White House and the State Department normally two or three times a day and does deal with the situation in Indochina during those contacts.

Q Ron, on the same subject that Peter was on, I know what you said yesterday and what you said --

MR. NESSEN: Let me add one other word to my answer to Peter's question.

I do think the things that Secretary Habib said the other day hopefully clear up -- well, they may not give you answers, but I hope you understand why we cannot give the answers you want.

Somebody pointed out to me something that Scotty Reston, one of your colleagues, said when he had been to China and had had a meeting with Chou En-lai. He said, "If we leave everything to the journalists, the world will be in a mess; it has to get down to quiet diplomacy."

That is one of your colleagues. (Laughter)

Q May I go ahead on my question?

Q Are you sending Mr. Reston to China to talk with Sihanouk?

MR. NESSEN: I had not heard of any plan.

Q Again, I heard what you just said and what you said yesterday on this subject, Ron. I am just wondering. I had an impression of what you said yesterday that the President is more or less closing the door to the possibility of choosing Mansfield as an emissary to deal with Sihanouk, but in listening to you today, isn't the door still open?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it certainly is wide open, and has been for a long time. It has been since the beginning.

Q This remains a possibility, then?

MR. NESSEN: What Habib has said and what we have said is that any lack of progress or even contact toward negotiations must be laid at the feet of the other side.

Q Ron, the problem of the channels which we went into in some degree yesterday was partly because it is not so much that we want to know what the third parties are who are carrying the messages, it is that we would like to know who the messages are being carried to.

Now, today, you have specifically said there was an attempt to carry a message to Sihanouk.

MR. NESSEN: Habib said that the other day.

Q As you point out, Habib said that the other day. But in fact, there is somebody of the opinion that Sihanouk, himself, does not really represent very much, that the real leaders are other people and it does not seem to me that the question of who we are trying to talk to or who we are trying to reach should be necessarily secret.

The question I tried to ask yesterday is, who do we think are the leaders of the other side?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it just is not possible, Bob, without running the danger of possibly harming any chances of a negotiated settlement to discuss personalities and channels.

Q Well, without saying who they are, Ron, without identifying a single person by name, do we know, are we satisfied that we know, who the leaders of the Khmer Rouge are?

MR. NESSEN: We know who some of the leaders of the Khmer Rouge are.

Q Ron, some important votes are scheduled in Senate committees today on aid to Indochina. Has the President telephoned any of the Senators on those committees?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure.

Q Has he contacted anyone on the Hill about that vote?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure whether he has or not.

Q Can you find out?

Q Does the Administration still have any hope of getting Congressional approval after that vote yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. The President feels that a combination of the testimony of some of the Congressional delegation which went and his own feelings expressed on the matter and plus what is being seen on television and reported, he would hope that this would persuade Congress to put up the necessary money.

Q Has he gotten any word from any Republican leaders on the Hill that there are going to be a lot of Republicans to vote against the aid?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what kinds of contacts he has had in that direction.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:20 P.M. EDT)