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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:50 A.M. EDT

MARCH 19, 1975

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President met this morning with Teamsters Union President Frank Fitzsimmons and with Labor Secretary Dunlop.

The President requested this meeting. It is one of a series of meetings he is having with labor leaders. The last he met with Mr. Fitzsimmons was on December 18, 1974.

Today, they discussed the economic situation in the trucking industry and some of the recent regulatory actions taken by the Department of Transportation which affect the trucking industry.

At 12:15, the President is meeting with the Boy's Club of America Boy of the Year. About 1,000 Boy's Clubs participate in the annual competition. The winner is selected on the basis of service to home, church, community and the Boy's Club. The winner this year is Kenneth Ivory, a 17-year-old boy from Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

He is the captain of his high school football team, baseball team and basketball team.

Q He is going to the University of Michigan, right? (Laughter)

Q What is he studying?

MR. NESSEN: He is also President of his class and he is receiving a \$4,000 scholarship.

Q To where?

MR. NESSEN: The President is the honorary chairman of the Boy's Clubs and there will be a chance to film and take pictures of the ceremony.

At 1:10 today, the President will be the host at a luncheon for the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, His Excellency Dzemal Bijedic. There will be coverage of the arrival ceremony at the North Portico at 1:10. Those who want to go to that will leave here at 12:55.

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Q Is this a private visit, a state visit?

MR. NESSEN: It is an official visit.

At 1:30, there will be a photo at the start of the lunch in the State Dining Room. That is open to photographers, silent cameramen and a writing pool, which has been posted.

To cover that portion, you will leave the press room at 1:15.

At 2:30, there will be an exchange of toasts in the State Dining Room, which will be piped into the press room. If you want to record it, you can plug into the mult and record it.

The Prime Minister is here to review U.S.-Yugoslavia bilateral relations, particularly those involving economics, and also to discuss international issues. We will post an announcement and some details after the luncheon.

At 4:15, the President is meeting with the Northern Marianas Political Status Commission Chairman Edward Pangeliaan and Senator P. A. Tenorio of the Micronesian Congress.

The purpose of the meeting is to demonstrate the importance the United States attaches to its recently concluded Commonwealth Covenant with the Northern Marianas and to Micronesia, in general.

For background, just to remind you of what has gone before; on February 15th, the United States signed an agreement with the Northern Marianas making them a Commonwealth of the United States, the first addition to United States' territories since 1917.

You will also have, if you want, a chance to film the beginning of that meeting.

Q What time is that?

MR. NESSEN: 4:15.

I have three personnel actions to announce involving the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. I think you have the exchange of letters. First of all, the President is accepting the resignation of John Powell as Chairman of the EEOC. You have the letters.

Also, the President is accepting the resignation of William Carey, the General Counsel of the EEOC. Their letters are also here.

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The President today is designating Ethel Walsh, who is a member of the Commission, to be the Vice Chairperson. In that capacity, Mrs. Walsh becomes the acting Chairperson of the Commission. She has a background of some 20 years in industry. Before joining the government, she was the plant manager of a large cosmetics firm and also before that, vice president for operations of an aerosol packaging company.

She is married and has two children. She lives in the District of Columbia.

Q Where is she from?

MR. NESSEN: She is a native of Connecticut and was Director of the Advisory Council for the Small Business Administration before she was named a member of the EEOC.

Q Was there a vice chairman?

MR. NESSEN: The vice chairman was Luther Holcomb. He resigned as vice chairperson in September of 1974.

Q He resigned as vice chairperson or as vice chairman?

MR. NESSEN: Chairperson. The official title is vice chairman.

Q Ron, would you explain? Are you elevating or rewriting the terms for chairperson, chairwomen and chairman officially?

MR. NESSEN: No. Mrs. Walsh indicated she preferred to be known as vice chairperson.

Q Will the President name a chairman soon?

MR. NESSEN: We do not have any announcement today, but I would expect one soon.

Q Can you explain this typo in the second to the last paragraph of the President's letter? "You have earned my thanks as well as my own."

MR. NESSEN: Yes. That should read, "You have earned their thanks as well as my own." The letter from the President to Mr. Powell the last sentence of the next to the last paragraph should read, "You have earned their thanks as well as my own."

Q Ron, normally, this would not be relevant, but because of what this Commission does, I am going to ask it anyway. Is Mrs. Walsh also black?

MR. NESSEN: I am told she is not.

In terms of other personnel announcements today, the President is announcing the appointment of 21 persons to be members of the National Advisory Committee for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The President is designating J. D. Anderson, of Omaha, Nebraska, as chairman of the Committee. He is the president of the Guaranteed Mutual Life Company in Omaha. I think you have the release on that with all the names.

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: The whole thing is coming.

Also, the President is announcing the appointment of 13 persons to be members of the National Highway Safety Advisory Committee and you will have those shortly, so I will not go through those names.

Also, the President is announcing the appointment of Henry A. Berliner, Jr., of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the District of Columbia Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure. This is a 5-year term. Mr. Berliner has served as a member of the Commission since December 14, 1973.

He is being reappointed. You have his biography, or will shortly.

The President also today is redesignating J. Raymond Bell, of New York City, as Chairman of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. He has been a member and Chairman of the Commission since November, 1973. He is being reappointed.

The Foreign Claims Settlement Commission has jurisdiction to determine claims by American nationals against foreign governments.

The President is appointing two persons to be members of the National Council on the Humanities for terms which run until January 26, 1980. They are William A. Hewitt, of Rock Island, Illinois, who is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Deere Company of Moline, Illinois. He succeeds Henry Haskell, whose term has expired.

The other member of the National Council on Humanities being appointed today is Robert Nisbet, of New York City, who is the Albert Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at Columbia. He is succeeding Mathilde Krim, whose term has expired.

This Council has 26 members and a chairman, all of whom are appointed by the President for six-year terms.

The purpose is to advise the Chairman of the Endowment on policies and programs and procedures for carrying out its functions. It reviews applications for financial support and makes recommendations.

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Q Ron, will you go back to the National Advisory Commission on Juvenile Justice for a second? As I recall, seven of these people are supposed to be 25 or under. I see an age on only one. Can you tell us who the other youth members are?

MR. NESSEN: We will get the ages now.

You also have a letter from the President to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate concerning a set of legislative proposals which would limit the pay increases for Federal employees to 5 percent and also allow the benefit payments to individuals whose benefits are tied to cost of living to go up a maximum of 5 percent.

You recall these were in the President's original economic program. The letter has gone to the Hill today.

Earlier today you were briefed on the legislation going to the Hill today concerning giving small savers and investors a better break at their banking and savings and loan.

For tomorrow, I just want to tell you about one thing the President is going to do. He will be going to the annual luncheon for the travel program for foreign diplomats at the State Department in the State Dining Room and will make remarks at the luncheon. Those attending the luncheon will be leaders of the business community, the diplomatic community and government officials, about 230 people altogether.

The travel program was established in 1962 to offer travel programs for foreign diplomats to give them an opportunity to see America from other than Washington or New York.

For covering the President's trip over there, we will have a travel pool, which will gather here in the press room at 12:45. If you want to film the President's remarks, you will need to go directly over to the State Department to the State Dining Room and set up equipment between nine in the morning and 11 in the morning.

The C Street entrance freight elevator will be available to take up your camera equipment. This is actually not a government program, but rather a private tax exempt corporation supported entirely by contributions from businessmen and is not a government program.

Q Will we have a text tomorrow morning?

MR. NESSEN: I expect we will.

Q Ron, on J. Raymond Bell, what is the salary on that?

MR. NESSEN: Which job is his?

Q He is the Chairman of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. Is he a Republican or a Democrat?

MR. NESSEN: We will get that for you.

Just to give you some idea of what the President is working on in terms of legislative proposals, as you know, the other day, on Monday, the President sent to Congress a proposal to restructure the Federal airport and airway development program.

Today he sent up a bill to help small investors and savers. Later this week, or possibly the first of next week, I expect the President to submit to Congress a message and legislation called the Railway Transportation Improvement Act.

This will be the first piece of an overall program in which the President is seeking the reform of transportation regulation. There are other far-reaching proposals to reform the regulatory system, which are under consideration.

As we mentioned the other night in South Bend, within the next week or so a new highway program will be sent to Congress. This would emphasize the President's belief in completing the interstate system by 1980, to combine some of the categorical grant programs which give small amounts of money earmarked for very specific highway and road projects into just a few broad programs that would allow the states to have much more discretion in how they spend the Federal highway money and some other elements.

That should go to the Hill within two weeks, and all of these programs I have mentioned will go to Congress before Easter.

Following Easter, among other things, I would expect a revenue sharing message and legislation which would extend the revenue sharing program for a little over five years.

Q Is there new money in the highway program that he is sending up -- additional?

MR. NESSEN: The legislation is not completed, Murray.

Q Did you put out a figure, though?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, the Associated Press carried a story yesterday that about half of the Federal gasoline tax money would go to the states to be used at their discretion. Is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: It is what came up in South Bend, and also in one other previous meeting with the Governors. The Governors Conference has recommended that the Federal Government give up one or two cents of its four cent Federal gasoline tax and let the states add it to their various formulas for doing this, but in essence, what would happen would be that the Federal Government would give up part of its four cent Federal gas tax and the states would pick up that one or two cents.

The President has discussed it, and how it comes down will be decided and then included in the bill we are talking about.

Q How much does that represent in terms of dollars?

MR. NESSEN: Generally, a penny per gallon equals \$1 billion per year.

Mr. Bell's salary would be \$36,000 a year.

Q When are Federal employees due for another pay raise?

MR. NESSEN: October 1.

Q Ron, has the President ever expressed any opinion on any Supreme Court decisions or is that not done at all?

MR. NESSEN: I do not know what you mean by that.

Q If it is never done, I won't ask the question, if the President never comments on Supreme Court decisions, but has he? I think he has, hasn't he?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall.

Q Then do you know what his reaction is to the Supreme Court's decision that fetuses or embryos are not entitled to unemployment or rather aid to dependent children.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any way of knowing.

Those are all the announcements I have.

Q Ron, could you enlighten us on what specific regulations or decisions of independent agencies Mr. Fitzsimmons was asking about or discussing with the President, and what he was proposing?

MR. NESSEN: Among the things that were on the agenda to be discussed -- and I did not attend the meeting so I cannot tell you whether or not they all came up -- the heavy truck bill, which you recall from the last session of Congress, was one of the matters that Mr. Fitzsimmons indicated he might want to talk about.

Mr. Fitzsimmons indicated he might want to talk about the 55-mile-an-hour speed limit and regulations which govern the length of time that a truck driver can continuously drive.

Q What does the President have to do with that?
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: It is a Department of Transportation regulation, Peter, and these are some of the matters that Mr. Fitzsimmons indicated he wanted to discuss.

Q If that is the case, why was the Secretary of Transportation on the Advisory Committee?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Ron, on Secretary Kissinger's plane, a high American official this morning said he regrets arranging the Paris peace accords because of Congress' failure to come through with aid to South Vietnam. Does this represent the President's thinking in the matter?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the story.

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Dick is saying that a high official on the Kissinger plane was quoted by someone as saying he regrets arranging the Paris peace accords.

Q He regrets arranging, organizing, the Paris peace accord agreement on Indochina because of Congress' failure to come through with aid to South Vietnam that was part of the deal with the South Vietnamese in coming to the agreement in Paris.

Q I think he also said he would not have done it if he knew that Congress would renig.

Q He would not have done it if he had known Congress would refuse to come through with the aid?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the story, and I cannot comment on the story specifically. Clearly, what is happening and has been happening for some time in South Vietnam is a violation of the Paris peace accords.

As I told some of you yesterday, there was an effort made in the past couple of weeks -- a message made to the signatories of the Paris peace accords -- asking for renewed negotiations to stop the North Vietnamese from violating the treaty and there was no response from North Vietnam.

Q Ron, do you know whether or not the President regrets the fact that Congress has reniged on part of that accord?

MR. NESSEN: That Congress has reniged?

Q That they have not given this aid to North Vietnam.

MR. NESSEN: You mean North Vietnam. I think the question was -- in any case, aside from the question -- obviously, the President feels this \$300 million is needed and is needed urgently now. I think I told some of you yesterday what is happening there is that the South Vietnamese are uncertain about whether they are going to get any more American aid.

For that reason, they have been conserving their fuel and ammunition out of fear that they may not get any more. The money already appropriated -- the \$700 million -- does not permit much in the way of replacement of spare parts, so a number of their weapons, airplanes and tanks and so forth, are out of action for lack of spare parts.

The Paris peace accords do provide for one-for-one replacement, that as they lose weapons or as they are damaged, the United States is permitted under the accords to replace them one for one, but under the present situation and the amount of money that is available, the United States is not replacing weapons.

The vast majority of the \$700 million is being used for fuel and ammunition.

Q Under the Paris accords, Ron, are we committed to replacing those military supplies that the South Vietnamese blow up themselves if they withdraw?

MR. NESSEN: Tom, I don't think it is a question of being required to replace anything one for one. This is permitted under the Paris accords, but there is not money available to do it.

Q Isn't it an old policy that American planes with American persons fly missions over Cambodia for reconnaissance purposes?

MR. NESSEN: Is it an old policy?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I am not even sure if it is a present policy.

Q A Pentagon spokesman said earlier this week that long ago it had been announced by Defense that we fly unarmed reconnaissance missions over Cambodia and turn the photographic information over to the Cambodian government. That is why I asked the question.

MR. NESSEN: I do not know what the present policy is on reconnaissance planes.

Q Let me ask you, someone mentioned aid to North Vietnam. I think that our Secretary of State did talk or possibly did promise aid for North Vietnam, and the question I think was whether the President has any feeling on that. Does he?

MR. NESSEN: As I understand it -- and this was long before I came here -- my impression was that there was no one in Congress who supported that, and it got nowhere for that reason.

Q This is not anything that President Ford might be interested in or might relate to the present situation in Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: I have not talked to him about it and don't know where he stands on it.

Q Ron, Secretary Schlesinger arrived at the White House a short while ago. Has he seen the President?

MR. NESSEN: I'll have to check.

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Q Ron, on another issue, what is the President's view of the FBI on the apartment in Alexandria in which agents are supposed to have battered down the door and entered without a search warrant?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what his view is, Jim, because I did not ask him about it. I am sorry.

Q Do you think he is going to request a report on this from the Attorney General?

MR. NESSEN: I just have no way of knowing one way or the other, Jim, because I failed to take it up with him.

Q Could I follow up on that. While you are doing that, could you tell us what the President's reaction is -- and if you don't know, would you ask, to the report that the FBI, for some ten years or so, was taking disruptive action against the Socialist Workers Party?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President has already said how he expects the FBI and all other government agencies to perform in his Administration.

Q As a general rule, and in line with that announcement by the President, does he and his lawyer believe that there are circumstances under which the FBI can forcibly enter a residence without a warrant. As a matter of policy, does he believe this should not be done?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I know you don't want me to talk about a subject I have not prepared myself on, and I simply have not.

Q Could you undertake to find the answer to some of these questions -- what the President's view is, whether he has asked for a report on it, and so forth and so on? I would particularly like to know -- the FBI is asserting that they have a policy of what amounts to hot pursuit -- if they have reason to believe that someone they are searching for may be somewhere, that they are following or have followed, and assert the right to follow a policy of entrance without a search warrant.

This, at least according to press reports, is their enunciated policy. One of the things I would like to know is whether this policy is being carried on with the permission and approval of the President, or whether he thinks otherwise.

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Q Ron, when Edward Levy was appointed Attorney General, did the President give Levy specific instructions as to what he expected Levy to do as regards the FBI? Was he to bring the FBI, for the first time, fully under the control of the Attorney General? Did he give Levy such instructions?

MR. NESSEN: I do not know that, and I will ask.

Q Ron, when did the President first learn about the CIA effort to salvage that Russian submarine, and what is his view of it? Does he think it is worth the money?

MR. NESSEN: The White House does not have any comment.

Q Ron, specifically, did the President know of, approve of or instruct Mr. Colby to try and suppress that story?

MR. NESSEN: The White House does not have any comment.

Q Did the President personally call the New York Times several months ago asking them not to run that story?

MR. NESSEN: The White House does not have any comment.

Q You are taking the policy of not commenting on something which, if true, involves the expenditure of \$350 million worth of taxpayer's money, public money. In the light of that, do you think you are ever going to have any comment on the expenditure?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have any comment, Jim.

Q I did not ask you if you had any now. I was asking if you thought you ever would have a comment on something involving that much of the taxpayer's money. Down the line, in other words. Do you think you ever will have any comment?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have any comment, Jim.

Q Will you confirm the story?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have any comment.

Q Will you just explain to us why you can't comment on a story that is of such great public interest?

MR. NESSEN: I can't comment, Bob.

Q Ron, how about commenting on something regarding the Ullman energy bill?

MR. NESSEN: All right. Let me answer the question first about the members of the Advisory Committee for Juvenile Justice who are under the age of 26. I did have a question about it. I thought I would answer it.

If you have your sheets, I can tell you that the fifth name on the first page, Cindy Ritter, was born in 1954. Mr. Stokes was born in 1951. Down in the next category, the fourth name, Mr. Martin, was born in 1951. If you will turn the page, the second name, Mr. Baca, was born in 1949.

Of the last three names, Mr. McFadden was born in 1954, Miss Myklebust was born in 1951 and Mr. Olson was born in 1958.

Q Ron, can you tell us what the President's assessment of the situation in Vietnam is, what the cables and reports and such that he is receiving say?

MR. NESSEN: I think I cannot go into the details of the cables other than to say that he is watching it closely and with considerable concern.

Q Ron, does he still think there is a chance that the Khmer Rouge will negotiate, and if so, why?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing has really changed in terms of that since we talked about it before, Les.

Q Ron, yesterday you were unable to say whether or not the President thinks those provinces have been abandoned. Can you give us any more details on that?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot, Bob. He is being kept informed by the Embassy in Saigon.

Q Ron, in your speech last night and in interviews, you made quite a point of how you believe you have restored credibility and believability to the White House. You also said you run an open and accessible press office, both of which I happen to think are true.

Today, there is a major story going all around the world involving United States operation. It seems to me that your own believability and the credibility of the White House is in some jeopardy if you refuse to comment on this story and refuse to explain why you cannot comment in any way. Is there anything you can give us in the way of enlightenment on that story or on why you cannot talk about it?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Can I get back to Ullman now?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q First of all, in the President's news conference in South Bend the other night, he was asked about a gasoline tax increase and he said that he would not support an increase of the magnitude a lot of people are talking about. The fellow who asked it then followed up and said, "Well, does that mean you might accept it of a smaller magnitude?" And as I read the transcript he really skirted that question.

Now, in view of the "regs" that the FEA published yesterday to implement this gasoline tilt they are talking about thus putting a major burden of increased energy cost on gasoline, it seems like you are accepting the principle that gasoline should bear the brunt of this thing. So, I am asking, is the President still opposed in principle to a higher gasoline tax of any kind?

MR. NESSEN: He was asked a question the other night, and I really don't see the need to go beyond his answer.

Q But he did not answer it.

MR. NESSEN: I think he answered it the way he wanted to answer it. (Laughter)

Just on a more general point, Frank Zarb and Chairman Ullman are in negotiations and are making good progress. There are still some areas of disagreement.

Q How often are they meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Their staffs are meeting quite often, and they are getting together with some regularity.

Q What is "quite often"?

Q Is it just Ullman and Zarb or are other Members of the committee involved in those meetings?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure of the exact details of how large the meetings are.

Q Ron, has the President come to a decision yet on the procedure in handling the charges that the CIA was involved in foreign assassinations?

MR. NESSEN: No, he has not made his decision, yet.

Q Do you know when he will on that?

MR. NESSEN: He said the other night four or five days, didn't he?

Q He said a few days.

MR. NESSEN: A few days.

Q Ron, a housekeeping question: If, when all of a sudden, instead of the usual rather congenial answers that you give, we suddenly get a volley of these "no comments", would we be wrong if we concluded that you have been ordered to say "no comment", not applying to any specific issue?

Would we be wrong if we concluded that when suddenly all these rigid, but polite "no comments" -- would that indicate you have to do your duty or is this your own decision to make no comment?

MR. NESSEN: I think, as a general matter, you should always consider whatever is said up here represents the White House position.

Q The President?

MR. NESSEN: I am the President's spokesman.

Q I would like to go back to the FBI thing a minute. Has the White House received -- you said you have not had time to talk to the President about it -- has the White House, the staff, anybody on the staff, received any kind of report or information on this incident? Leaving aside the question of whether the President is going to ask the Attorney General for a report, have you gotten anything from the FBI or the Justice Department other than just the press accounts that you have read?

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MR. NESSEN: Jim, as I said before, I did not anticipate there would be the interest in this subject, so I did no checking on it at all.

Q You did not anticipate that people would be interested in the smashing down of a door without a search warrant?

MR. NESSEN: I did not anticipate it, Jim.

Q Ron, I would like to approach something from a different angle. Is the White House concerned that the stories which are being carried about the Central Intelligence Agency's activity, is the President concerned that these might jeopardize Secretary Brezhnev's upcoming visit?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have any comment, Walt.

Q It was in the press report, Ron.

Q That was why I asked it that way. I was not asking you to confirm the incident. I was asking you if news accounts to that effect might jeopardize U.S.-Soviet detente or perhaps Secretary Brezhnev's visit.

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have any comment.

Q Ron, has the President decided what to do about the Senate committee's request for the Colby report, and other documents?

MR. NESSEN: No, that is still with the Counsel's Office for study and recommendations.

Q Ron, can you tell us about these resignations at the EEOC, whether the President is planning to look into the situation there or to make any changes in policy and direction?

MR. NESSEN: The President did ask for these resignations because he has become increasingly concerned about the reports of management problems and disputes at the EEOC. After looking into those problems and disputes, he concluded that a number of changes were in order. He came to that conclusion because he wants to improve the operations of the Commission, for one thing, and because he does have a commitment to equal opportunity in employment.

So, now he is looking for highly qualified people to take those two positions as well as one other opening on the Commission. I think it would be fair to say that he would like to take this opportunity to replace these two gentlemen and thereby make a fresh start.

Q The Financial Institutions Act, which you sent to the Hill this morning, is virtually a carbon copy of the one sent up in 1973. I wonder why you think the outlook for passage might be any better this time around?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with what happened in 1973, but this bill does give small depositors a better break on their interest rate and allows savings and loans to give checking accounts, and so forth.

Q The previous one did, too, and Secretary Simon said this morning this is virtually the same bill.

MR. NESSEN: This benefits small depositors, and the President would hope that Congress, the Democrats in Congress, would go along with something that does benefit small depositors.

Incidentally, along that line, it is two more days now before the Senate is scheduled to go on its Easter vacation, and there is no tax bill that has been passed.

I think the President pointed out the other night that it takes between 45 and 60 days for the Internal Revenue Service to program its computers to send refund checks to people, and again, the President just finds it very difficult to understand why Congress has taken so long to pass a tax cut bill to stimulate the economy and give people purchasing power to pull the country out of the recession and enable businesses to hire back workers.

His concern now is that even if the Senate passes a version of a tax cut this week before the Senate goes away for another vacation, that the bill will be left in the Conference Committee while the Senators are gone, and they don't come back, I guess, until sometime the first or second week of April. You would be up past the April 1st deadline into early or middle April before there is a tax cut.

Then, you have to add 45 or 60 days to that for the IRS to program its computers and you are talking about a tax cut coming, I guess, mid-April or May -- you are talking about the middle of June before people would be getting any checks back.

Q Ron, has the President completely ruled out acceptance of a June 30th cut-off date for aid to Cambodia?

MR. NESSEN: He is strongly opposed to a June 30th cut-off date.

Q How does he feel, Ron, on the matter of affirmative action? Does he support affirmative action or does he support merit in hiring?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with his views on that, and I can check for you, though, Les.

Q Ron, we have made quite a fuss about those missing in action in Vietnam. I am just wondering, have we taken steps to notify the Russian next-of-kin of all those people we found on their submarine? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: That may win the week's award -- the honor roll of great questions. I just can't comment.

Q Ron, now that the House, as well as the Senate --

MR. NESSEN: But I have great admiration for the question. (Laughter)

Q -- have a virtually identical strip mining bill which seemingly has ignored the President's objections to the one last year, is it far enough along that you are prepared to make a comment on the prospects for its acceptance?

MR. NESSEN: I would say I disagree with your assessment of the two bills. The Senate bill is different from last year's bill. If you recall, at the time of the veto last year there were people advising the President that he better take last year's bill because this year they would pass a worse strip mining bill. In his terms, worse. Well, it turns out the Senate bill is better than last year's bill. It does correct a number of the objections he had to last year's bill; and since it does have to go to conference, I think I just would leave it at that, that the Senate bill is better than the bill he vetoed last year and meets some of his objections.

Q So, he might accept it?

MR. NESSEN: It has to go to conference and we will see what comes out.

Q Can you give us any specifics on his objections?

MR. NESSEN: I was looking for them this morning. I had some and I cannot seem to locate them, but it does meet some of his objections.

Q He objected the last time to the reclamation fee, and the Senate bill has that in it.

MR. NESSEN: That is probably a good idea. John did some research on this this morning and would be happy to talk to you after the briefing about the specific improvements in the Senate bill.

Q Ron, has the U.S. government been in touch with the Soviets at all concerning the submarine?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot comment, Marty.

Q You cannot comment whether the White House, the State Department, or anyone else, has been in touch with the Soviet Embassy or any other Soviet officials?

MR. NESSEN: I can't.

Q Ron, have you had any word from the Soviets since the appearance of this article? Have you had any inquiries from the Soviet government as to whether or not we recovered part of that submarine?

MR. NESSEN: I can't comment, Jim.

Q Ron, have you been in touch with the President regarding this story that has been in the press?

MR. NESSEN: Which story?

Q Regarding this trying to salvage this submarine.

MR. NESSEN: I cannot comment on that, Phil.

Q Another CIA matter. The President of Mexico has accused the CIA of fomenting a student demonstration that resulted in his being struck by stones and/or bottles. Do you have any reaction from President Ford to this charge?

MR. NESSEN: I did not see the charge, but I do not have any comment from the President on it, either.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:35 P.M. EDT)