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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 1:10 P.M. EDT

JUNE 5, 1975

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: I think you have already -- some of you have already heard from Congressman Rhodes and Senator Scott on the Republican Leadership Meeting this morning. After that, the President, as you know, went out to Susan's graduation at the Holton Arms School, where he was the speaker, and those of you who did not go, I think, were able to hear the remarks piped back through the loudspeaker system.

The rest of the day the President will be in the office meeting with various members of his staff. We don't have anything firm in the way of a schedule for tomorrow.

On Saturday, the President will meet at 10:00 with a group of Governors, who are affected by the Rail Reorganization Act of 1973. The meeting was requested by Michigan's Governor Milliken, to take place before the Governors' Conference, which is coming up shortly.

Those who are going to be in the meeting are the President and Secretary Coleman and Governor Milliken, of course. The other Governors are Walker of Illinois, Longley of Maine, Salmon of Vermont, the Lt. Governor of Massachusetts, who is Tom O'Neill -- that is Tip O'Neill's son -- Governor Grasso of Connecticut, Governor Carey of New York, Governor Byrne of New Jersey, Shapp of Pennsylvania, Lucey of Wisconsin, Bowen of Indiana, Mandel of Maryland and Holton of Virginia.

Q Holton?

MR. NESSEN: Mills Godwin.

Q Were they all invited, all 50 Governors?

MR. NESSEN: No, only the Governors of the States affected by the Rail Reorganization Act. That meeting starts at 10:00. I am not sure how long it will last, but afterward we will have probably some of the Governors and some Administration people out to talk to you about the meeting.

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Q Have all these Governors accepted? Is this the acceptance list or the invitation list?

MR. NESSEN: I am told this is the acceptance list.

Q You do have a Bipartisan Leadership Meeting tomorrow morning at 8:00, don't you?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is this going to deal entirely with rail reorganization, or do they want to take up other matters?

MR. NESSEN: I am told it is about the Rail Reorganization Act.

Q Why did Milliken request the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Just to talk about it before the Governors' Conference takes place, Mort, is all I know.

Q Why is there a Bipartisan Leadership Meeting?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, it was scheduled for last night at 6:00, and the members were not able to come because -- I guess it was -- the House side was busy with voting on legislation, so it was postponed. And the next available time on the President's schedule was 8:00 tomorrow morning.

Now, we have not gotten the announcements out yet, but they will be by the end of the briefing in the bins in the Press Room. There are four announcements. Two of them are bill signings that have statements with them. One is the Securities Act amendments of 1975, and the second bill that he signed, and it has a statement with it, will be concerning the Federal share of highway projects. Both of these bills were signed last evening.

Also, there are two appointments today. One is Martin Anderson of Palo Alto, California, to the Defense Manpower Commission, and the other is the nomination of William Kendrick of Potomac, Maryland, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission.

Q Who will he replace on EEOC?

MR. NESSEN: Holcomb. Luther Holcomb. And I don't have any other announcements today.

Les?

Q Ron, coming down here -- I could not get to Holton Arms -- but the report was that the President endorsed ERA at the Holton Arms -- the equal rights amendment.

MR. NESSEN: I think that is what he said. I don't have the exact words in front of me.

Q In consideration of this and the HEW statement about no discrimination against women and so forth, and the visit to West Point, has the President given any further thought to backing the Stratton amendment to require appointments be accepted to all the Service academies or not?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he has given any thought to it, Les, but he has not indicated any conclusion he may have reached.

Q Do you know of any plans for the President to make a televised speech to the Nation on his European trip?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q A news conference this week?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Next week?

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: Jim wanted to know whether I knew of any plans for a televised speech to the Nation. I said no, and then I was asked if there would be a news conference this week and I said no, and then I was asked about next week and I slugged.

Q You can rule out the possibility of the President going before the Nation tomorrow night?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do you expect him to stay in town this weekend?

MR. NESSEN: At the moment I do.

Q Does he think a report to the Nation is necessary on this trip?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard him speak about it one way or the other, Phil. I think as we went along he had a news conference in Brussels and he had a news conference of sorts in Salzburg, and there was a senior American official or two on almost every flight. So I think, you know, the progress of the trip was sort of reported as we went along.

Q Ron, what was the President's reaction to Mr. Moynihan's statement vis-a-vis withdrawing our support of the UN if they exclude Israel?

MR. NESSEN: Well, first of all, the United States is totally opposed to the use of expulsion from the United Nations membership as a method of political retaliation against a member.

As for the personal opinions of Ambassador Moynihan, he was asked for his personal opinion on that question and he gave it.

Q In other words, this is the President's nominee and he is being asked about a very important policy in the UN. In other words, the President does not endorse this particular view, or does he?

MR. NESSEN: I am telling you what the official American position is and I am telling you that Ambassador Moynihan was asked for a personal opinion and gave it.

Q One clarification point on this, Ron. If they did, does American policy say we would withdraw, or is there no specifics on that?

MR. NESSEN: I think that is pretty hypothetical, Les.

Q Ron, I have a Middle East question.

MR. NESSEN: I hope I have a Middle East answer.

Q There have been reports about the possibilities of the shape of the reassessment in relation to Geneva and step-by-step talks, but one question: Has the Administration settled on whether it favors step-by-step diplomacy as being the next thing to happen in the way of Middle East negotiations, or is there any possibility that the United States might try to propose a full-scale settlement for the whole Middle East as the next step?

MR. NESSEN: I think the senior official on the way home was asked that very question in almost those words, if I am not mistaken, and he said -- as the President has said publicly -- that there are the three options for the way to proceed, and that there would be no indication of any American views as to which one is preferable, at least until after the meeting with Rabin and the conclusion of the reassessment.

Q Has the President ruled in or ruled out the possibility of announcing that the United States desires that Israel return to its '67 borders or some variation of those borders?

MR. NESSEN: Mort, I tell you, the President and the senior official have both, I think, addressed this and between the time they did and today there has been zero change, and I think simply by talking about it we are going to get a whole, new story, as if something has happened; and nothing has happened.

Q Ron, does the United States have any written assurance from Egypt that cargo destined for Israel will be allowed to use the Suez Canal?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware one way or the other on that. You should check the State Department.

Q Will the President announce his candidacy this month?

MR. NESSEN: I guess the answer is the same as it was when I was asked the same question yesterday.

Q Which was?

MR. NESSEN: I expect him to. He told other people he was going to. I assume he has.

Q When is the crime message coming?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a precise date on it.

Q Ron, the Republican whip in the House commented when the House sustained the veto on the jobs bill that if the Democrats could not override on that one they could not override any others. Does the White House share the confidence that other vetoes will be sustained now, since there are several pending and apt to be many more this year?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President told the Cabinet yesterday, which I reported yesterday, that this was an important vote and that if the veto had not been sustained he felt the flood gates would be open to excessive government spending.

But, on the other hand, the President hopes that these votes are decided on the issues. It was not a straight party line vote by any means. It could not have been or else it would have lost. Let me put it this way: I don't think he anticipates winning every single veto, which is what I think you are asking.

Q Putting it another way, Ron, narrowing it down specifically, is he hopeful now that his veto of the strip mining bill will be sustained and also his veto of that bill which would defer his authority for the oil imports?

MR. NESSEN: He is hopeful all of his vetoes will be sustained.

Q Beyond hopeful, expectant?

MR. NESSEN: The strip mining bill--I think you could say he has some confidence that that will be sustained, and the leaders told him as much this morning. The leaders indicated that there was some question whether it would even be brought to a vote. In fact, I think Senator Scott said that this morning.

Q Are you having a transcript out of Scott and Rhodes?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. And also there was some question, I think, on whether the other matter would be brought to a vote, too.

Q What other matter?

MR. NESSEN: You remember the original veto long ago of the bill taking away his authority to increase tariffs. That is how this whole thing started long ago, and it has been on the shelf ever since.

Q Ron, when will the plan for decontrol go to Congress?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a date on that, Adam. I think the FEA has concluded its hearings and is reviewing the public comments and will come back with the recommendation. But I don't have a time on it.

Q Ron, I wonder if I could get at this Middle East situation another way, following Mort's earlier questions. Senator Scott said on the Floor of the Senate Monday that sentiment or pressure, or whatever you want to call it, for a Geneva meeting, for a Geneva Conference, appeared to be waning. Was he reflecting the White House's view when he said that?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, again, this is a rehash of all the things that have been said over the past week. The senior American official on one of the flights, I think, referred to a resurgence of interest in step-by-step talks which is perhaps the opposite side of what Senator Scott has said, but there is just simply nothing new to give you on the progress in the Middle East.

Q Does the United States -- does the President and his senior official believe that the positions have in any sense come close so that resumption of step-by-step diplomacy would be productive? This is based on the statements by the senior official and by Secretary Kissinger ---

MR. NESSEN: Both of them? Both of those people?

Q Yes.

Q --- saying this was not productive until the positions were very close.

MR. NESSEN: Jim, look, there is no use running this around today. I have nothing that I can offer on this subject today.

Q That is a specific question, whether the United States thinks the positions in any sense have grown closer.

MR. NESSEN: I think Dr. Kissinger was asked that at his final briefing in Salzburg. I forget what the answer was, but I can look it up in the transcript for you.

Q Ron, what was the President's reaction to Senator Church's strong statements with regard to the Rockefeller Commission?

MR. NESSEN: Leaving aside characterization, Les, the President has not received the Rockefeller Commission's report.

Q When will he receive it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q This week?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q In that connection, the Rockefeller people are saying that the issue of whether it is given to reporters tomorrow for Sunday release or not is up to the White House. The White House will have the final say so. Can you tell us whether you have decided to give it to reporters at the same time the President physically receives it with an embargo for Sunday, or where that thing stands?

MR. NESSEN: The report has not been received by the President, and I am not absolutely certain at what point it will be received by the President.

Q Apparently, it has been received by Senator Church.

MR. NESSEN: I do believe it will be received by the President soon, and other than that, I just don't have anything.

Q What I am asking is, whether you are going to hold it for awhile and then give it out, or whether you think it is liable to be put out at the same time the President gets it?

MR. NESSEN: I really don't think it is possible to know that until the President gets it.

Q Ron, a lot of guys are going to be tied up this weekend working on that, presumably. Can you give any clue at all, tentatively, for guidance as to how they ought to plan their lives?

MR. NESSEN: What a responsibility. (Laughter.)

Q That is true? He is supposed to get the report tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, it is not absolutely certain when he will get it, although I think he will get it soon. For the rest of it, as to what you are asking about, I just don't have anything I can give you on it.

Q Have you decided one way or the other whether there will be a public version and a report to the President or whether it will definitely be the same piece of paper?

MR. NESSEN: None of those decisions regarding the report will be made until the President gets a copy of it.

Q Ron, will there be one report or two?

MR. NESSEN: I only heard of one report.

Q What I asked is, whether you are thinking of a sanitized version?

MR. NESSEN: I see. Well, there is simply nothing decided one way or the other on any of the elements of it.

Q What is the problem? According to the Vice President's Office, it was supposed to be released tomorrow for Sunday a.m. Is there some concern here at the White House that part of that report would be better not to go public?

MR. NESSEN: It is simply the fact that the report has not been received by the President and no decisions have been made on these questions.

Q Have you been following this pretty carefully, because they have said publicly it will be sent to the President on Friday? And is that not true?

MR. NESSEN: I am aware of the reports, and I am saying that it has not been received by the President. I am not sure when it will be received. I think it will be soon, and there have been no decisions made on these other questions.

Q Will it be resolved this afternoon, do you think, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: There is just no way of telling, Bill.

Q Does someone in the White House have it? You are saying the President does not have it. Does Mr. Buchen have it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who has it. It is still in the hands of the Rockefeller Commission.

Q Ron, what appears puzzling here is, Senator Church is a responsible person and has elaborated in detail a very strong opposition to it. Are we supposed to presume that Senator Church has a copy of this but the President and nobody in the White House has it?

Doesn't the President know what is in it? It is his Vice President. I am a little puzzled.

Q Wasn't Senator Church commenting on what Rockefeller said and not on the report?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that Senator Church has the report, Les. It is, at this moment, still in the hands of the Rockefeller Commission, as far as turning it over officially to the President. It is a lengthy report.

Q Aside from this semantic question of when something is physically in the custody of the President, has it been given to members of the President's staff?

MR. NESSEN: I simply don't know who has it, Adam.

Q You don't know whether it has been given to members of the President's staff?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Do you think you could find out where the President stands exactly?

MR. NESSEN: I am telling you where it stands exactly, Helen.

Q You are being so vague, and it seems very deliberate that you are. What is the big hang-up?

Q Ron, have you seen the report?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, what we are wondering, I think, is whether, on a matter of this importance, the White House staff actually would wait until a copy was delivered to the President before making these basic decisions on whether to release the entire report, whether to release it at the same time the President got it, or to hold it for awhile. We are wondering why, on a matter of this importance, there would not be some advance consultation back and forth between the White House staff and the Rockefeller Commission to make these decisions and have them ready to go when the formal presentation actually came to the President.

MR. NESSEN: Regardless of what your views are as to how it might be done, Jim, the fact of the matter is, the decisions have not been made.

Q Has any of this process I have outlined here taken place, so you are in a position to know what is in the report and to make these decisions before the thing is actually handed to the President?

MR. NESSEN: As Helen indicates, she feels my answers are carefully thought out, which ought to be some answer to your question.

Q Ron, when will the President next meet with the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: He has a meeting tomorrow.

Q Will you release the full report or commit yourself to that now, or are you trying to retain the prerogative of the President to excise part of it before deciding when and whether to release the rest of the report?

MR. NESSEN: There have been no decisions made on the report.

Q You won't make a guarantee that the public will get to see the entire report?

MR. NESSEN: There just have been no decisions made.

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Q Ron, if you get the report tomorrow, isn't it normal course, since the President has not seen the report -- indeed, has not seen it -- that he would take some time to weigh it before releasing it?

MR. NESSEN: The decisions have not been made, but the fact is it is a 300-some page report and it strikes me it would be normal procedure for the President to have an opportunity to read it before it was released.

Q In other words, you are saying, then, your best guidance would be not this weekend?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I am unable to give you guidance until certain decisions are made, and why would you want to force me to give you what possibly would turn out to be incorrect guidance? When decisions have not been made yet, I cannot give any guidance.

Q When do you expect to be able to give us guidance?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a time estimate.

Q Would the President consider censoring the report?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, no decisions have been made on the report.

Q You certainly are holding out the possibility that at least part of this report is not going to be made public, which is directly contradictory to what reporters have been told who have been covering the commission. Is that the impression you mean to leave?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q As far as you know, then, it will be made public; it is just a question of when?

MR. NESSEN: I did not say that, either, Dick. I suggest you listen to the words carefully.

Q I did listen and I am just seeking clarification.

MR. NESSEN: I am saying the report has not been received by the President. I am not sure when it will be. I think it will be soon, and no decisions have been made on the report beyond that.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

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