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

#274

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:30 A.M. EDT

JULY 18, 1975

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: I have to go to an energy meeting at noon, so I want to get started, and if we are not finished Bill Greener will take up at the end of the meeting.

I think I have some interesting stuff, though, for you today.

For the weekend, the President does have an energy meeting tomorrow at 11:00, at least tentatively scheduled at this time. He has a couple of other staff meetings in the morning, plays golf in the afternoon, goes to Camp David at about 7:00, and comes back Sunday at about 8:30. It will be the President and Mrs. Ford alone going to Camp David.

Q Sunday night at 8:30?

MR. NESSEN: 8:30, right.

Q What is this energy meeting on?

MR. NESSEN: To consider where we stand now in terms of legislation and the decontrol, and so forth.

Q Who with?

MR. NESSEN: With the regular group -- Zarb, Morton and Greenspan, et cetera.

Q What about the economic/energy meeting?

MR. NESSEN: The agenda for that includes a review of the current economic situation. Secretary Butz will bring the President up to date on the wheat sales, and I think that is maybe one or two small items on the agenda.

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Yesterday, when I was describing the Turkish aid meeting, somebody asked me a question about reaction -- or did at the meeting -- the subject of the Islamic resolution concerning Israel and Turkey's part in it, whether it did come up. I said, yes, it had, and that the Secretary had suggested that this could be an example of the weakening of a very longstanding friendship as a result of the arms ban, which is true.

I want to add, however, to that, that since then we understand that the Turkish Government has registered its reservations disassociating itself from the resolution.

Now I don't, frankly, have any more details than that other than that is our understanding and I would think that you need to get to the Turks to find out exactly what their position is, but it does not change what I said yesterday because that is what Dr. Kissinger told the Members, but in the meantime this additional information has come in about the Turkish Government -- our understanding of what they have said about that resolution.

You will find in the bins an announcement that we could not quite get ready for the 10:00 posting. It is an Executive Order amending a 1972 Executive Order concerning the use of chemicals in predator control.

I think some of you who have followed this know that this is the coyote question. I don't frankly know a hell of a lot about this subject other than in 1972 President Nixon signed an Executive Order which prohibited the use of chemical toxicants to control predators.

Q What predators?

MR. NESSEN: Primarily coyotes.

Since then the EPA has issued some experimental permits to allow research on chemical toxicants primarily for emergency use.

What the President's Order today does is it permits for a one-year period expanded experimental control research only on Federal lands and in Federal programs. The President is increasing the funding level and the manpower in order to carry out the experimental research.

Q How much money? Do you know?

MR. NESSEN: Expanding it by \$2.9 million.

Q What do they think they need to find out, with the research, that these things kill coyotes?
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Now, as I say, I don't know ---

Q Can you give us a reason as to why he decided to do this, because it is a sensitive issue?

MR. NESSEN: It is an extremely sensitive issue, Walt, and I would say only this: It is a one-year experimental program and it calls, as I say, for an expansion of manpower and spending. The President believes it is a moderate position in this somewhat sensitive issue. It is aimed at learning how to very carefully control the coyote population without harming other animals, and also at the same time protecting the sheep which are needed for the purposes of food, and so forth.

Q Ron, is this \$2.9 million above that line that the President ruled for the new spending programs?

MR. NESSEN: What I want to say, Phil, is this: It is a technical subject. I wanted to give you kind of the President's overall view of what he is doing.

Q You have not said anything about the poor coyotes.

MR. NESSEN: I know, but wait a minute. As I said, the President believed it is a moderate approach, that it is aimed at learning how to specifically kill the coyotes which attack sheep without harming other animals, and at the same time protecting the sheep.

Q Which coyotes don't attack sheep, Ron?

Q The good ones.

MR. NESSEN: The good coyotes.

Q Your predecessor I remember very vividly --

MR. NESSEN: I remember that very vividly, too, and it is a marvelous line, Les.

Q Has it changed, or what?

MR. NESSEN: At the Interior Department this afternoon, at 2:00, in room 5160, there will be a briefing on this amendment to the Executive Order, and since it is somewhat technical I can't take you much farther because I just don't know a lot more about it.

Q What about Phil's question?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry. I didn't hear Phil's question.

Q On the money, is this a new spending program, or is this funds already provided?

MR. CARLSON: It is a \$2.9 million program. \$1.9 is reprogramming of present funds and it will be \$1 million needed for new funds.

Q How does that jibe with the President's declared opposition to new spending?

MR. NESSEN: It is not a new program.

Q Do you have a number we can contact over at Interior in case we can't make that briefing?

MR. NESSEN: I do. In fact, I have started carrying a list of information officers and their phone numbers.

Many of you know Horace Webb over there.

Is Horace dealing with this? What is the man's name?

MR. CARLSON: Sam Marler.

MR. NESSEN: Marler, at 343-6416.

Now, I have just about done my number here today. I don't see anything else.

Q Ron, I would like to ask this question: I remember at the White House Correspondents Dinner the President made a very endearing statement. He said that, "You all are members of the family" -- that is, all the White House Correspondents.

Now in light of this, I have got a release here that four major news medias, organizations, announced today they have sent letters of protest to President Ford over his policy abandoning news coverage of White House receptions, and also the notation that protests have been made previously through Press Secretary Ron Nessen to no avail.

How does this exclusion of reporters from these social functions square with the President's statement that "you are all members of the White House family"?

MR. NESSEN: Two things: One, the President has received the letter. It is on his desk and he is considering it, and I will relay or he will directly relay his answer.

In more general terms, I think you have to remember a couple of things about the coverage of social events. As the letter pointed out, in the previous Administration there was coverage of receptions. I would point out that receptions were done differently then. The receptions were done through a receiving line with dozens or hundreds --

Q Not always -- I am sorry.

MR. NESSEN: Generally, dozens, hundreds of people passing by the President, having a few brief seconds, and then passing on.

Q That is not true, not always.

MR. NESSEN: No, I say not always but generally.

Q No, not even generally.

MR. NESSEN: Sometimes. (Laughter)

Reporters, I guess, were kept in a little pen 10 or 15 feet away and watched the hand-shaking. This President has felt that he would like --

Q I am sorry, Ron. Your facts are wrong. We were not kept in a pen. We did stand aside, that is true, but we were allowed to always mingle.

MR. NESSEN: Really, the President will give his answer to this but I just do want to point out two things: One, the President has wanted to use these social events as an occasion to really talk with people rather than as was done on at least some occasions in the previous Administration of just having them walk by and shake hands.

This is part of his idea of talking to people, and listening to people, more importantly, and he feels -- at least he has felt -- pending any change, that it is proper for him to have a few moments now and then to talk to people and to listen to people from outside the White House and around the country without a microphone or a notebook.

Secondly, if this were part of a pattern of a closed White House, I think the point would be well taken. The fact is that this is quite a bit more open in terms of press coverage than has been the case for quite a long time, and so it is not a pattern of closing down coverage.

It is, as I say again, a question of him wanting to have a few moments now and then to listen to the views and suggestions of his guests.

Now that is the position at the moment. The letter is on his desk and I will get back to you with his answer, or he will.

Q Is there anything new on the General Services situation?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing to announce.

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Q Ron, on the subject of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Senator Helms' office said it was conveyed to the White House that Solzhenitsyn will only see the President if he is sent a formal invitation. Is that true, and if it is, does the White House plan to offer such an invitation?

MR. NESSEN: Let me bring you a little bit up to date on the Solzhenitsyn situation, since there was some curiosity yesterday and today.

Tuesday afternoon, Senator Helms phoned Max Friedersdorf and said that Solzhenitsyn was, I believe, at that time, on the Hill, and would it be possible for him to come in and see the President. The President said yes, and the appointment was set for 5:15 Tuesday.

The word was relayed to Senator Helms, who then replied that Solzhenitsyn could not come in at that time. He was on the Hill, I believe, attending a reception and could not come at that time. Senator Helms was then told that the President considers that Solzhenitsyn has an open invitation to visit the White House.

Q Who said this?

MR. NESSEN: Senator Helms was told that by Max Friedersdorf, and I am telling you that the President believes that Solzhenitsyn has an open invitation to come to the White House, and I would anticipate that at some point in his visit to the United States he will come.

At the moment, there are no specific plans.

Q He is going to be leaving in a couple days.

Q Wasn't it a little bit odd to invite him at a time when he knew there was a reception going on?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that is the way it worked. I believe that the White House was first led to believe that 5:15 was an acceptable time, that the reception would be over by then. I think it was an afternoon reception.

Q Were you aware of that yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: I was aware of that yesterday.

Q Why couldn't you have told us?

MR. NESSEN: I believe yesterday it was felt -- I think I generally gave you the idea that there had been some contact and having not touched all the bases and making sure that the story was accurate, as I have just given it to you, I wanted a further opportunity to check it, which I did.

Q Ron, the people at the AFL-CIO say that Solzhenitsyn has departed Washington, finished with their sponsorship, and he plans to get lost for a couple of weeks privately and then go back to Switzerland. Do you know where he is or how to get in touch with him?

MR. NESSEN: He does have a sponsor in the United States, which is the AFL-CIO, and he also had been having things arranged for him by Senator Helms. Senator Helms knows -- and I suppose through stories, if he does not already know, Solzhenitsyn will know -- that he has an open invitation to visit the White House.

Q Ron, did you ever present a repudiation of Henry Kissinger's advice?

MR. NESSEN: Now, look, Mort --

Q I think that is a good question, Ron. I think that is a very good and decisive and sharp question. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Mort has won the Question of the Day Award.

Q Do you think you could give us an equally good answer, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I will give an answer, and then I will ask you to rank it among the ranker answers.

Q All right, fine. I will rank it.

MR. NESSEN: I think, Mort, you know that in this case, as in all other cases, the President receives advice and recommendations on a course of action. He weighs those. He factors in his own views and information and then he makes a decision.

When he makes a decision, he chooses a course of action. He does not choose an adviser over another adviser or reject an adviser. He chooses a course of action which may or may not coincide to what somebody has advised. It has nothing to do with repudiating a man, and that goes for Kissinger and it goes for every other adviser in this building who has had his advice turned down or another course chosen. It says nothing about the President's views toward his advisers, and that is something I think that comes up again and again here.

Q That is not bad, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I got a "not bad" on that one.

Q Your update didn't answer Fred Barnes' question.

MR. NESSEN: Which was?

Q Whether the White House was aware that Solzhenitsyn wanted a formal invitation and presumably would be extended one.

MR. NESSEN: The White House has not been directly in touch with Mr. Solzhenitsyn, but some of the people who have been arranging things for Mr. Solzhenitsyn have indicated that a formal written invitation would be desired.

Q Ron, is that Helms' office or the AFL-CIO?

MR. NESSEN: That was one of the loose ends I could not pull together.

Q You say some of the people around Solzhenitsyn had indicated that a formal written invitation would be desired, but that leaves the question, will there be such an invitation extended by the President?

MR. NESSEN: I think those of you who have been around here for quite some time know that that is not the normal way of having people in to see the President.

Q Is that a no, Ron?

Q Ron, you have five more minutes. Have you got any news?

MR. NESSEN: I thought I gave you some.

The answer is that it is not normal. I mean, the President sees what, a dozen or so people a day, and they do not receive written invitations.

Q Ron, are there any White House views on the impending postal strike, and subsequent prospective railroad strike?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything on either strike except that Usery is working on both of them. I believe I read where the railroad strike deadline has been put off for a week, if I am not mistaken.

Q Ron, did you get anything on my question about the President's view on food prices?

MR. NESSEN: John was working on that. Let me wait until John comes in.

Q Does the President know of any progress in the Middle East negotiations?

MR. NESSEN: Phil asked yesterday about the President's views overall on food price levels.

MR. CARLSON: As Ron mentioned yesterday, the greatest majority of the price increases has resulted to the middle man -- increases in transportation, wrapping costs, labor and so forth. We are hopeful that the large wheat crop will help stabilize prices and prevent future increases.

We would not expect much of a drop, if any.

MR. NESSEN: As for progress in the Middle East, Helen, I think you know that Dr. Kissinger has been seeing Ambassador Dinitz, and there will be other consultations, but I don't think it would be very useful to talk publicly about the status of the talks.

Q Is there any status on the President's statement on the Middle East or his policy?

MR. NESSEN: No, no date has been set yet.

Q I don't want the details, but do you have a contingency plan, if there is a mail strike?

MR. NESSEN: I think you have to look at the provisions of -- I forget what law it is, John, but there are various steps that need to be gone through before there can be a railroad strike.

Q No, I said mail strike.

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, I meant a mail strike. There is a 45-day period, and then there is a provision for binding arbitration.

Q Ron, have the President and Secretary Kissinger talked lately and directly about these contacts that the Secretary has had with Dinitz?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes. You know the Secretary has a meeting every morning from 9:30 to 10:15 with the President to review the major outstanding foreign policy matters, and I would certainly think that that would be one of them.

Q Ron, is Ambassador Eilts carrying a message to Cairo this week?

MR. NESSEN: I can't tell you that because I don't know, Dick.

Q Ron, a month or so ago you told us that the President had ordered an investigation into several loose ends connected with the MAYAGUEZ affair. I am just wondering, has that investigation been completed?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Have you anything to tell us about it?

MR. NESSEN: There is a document here in the White House in which all the various views have been pulled together and it is now being reviewed.

Q Is there any intention of making it public?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't know one way or the other on that.

Q How about CIA? Has he done all his polling and made all his recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: I think all the views have been submitted, and I am not as sure of that one as I am of this one. I believe all the views are in on the CIA, and the President will be studying those and announcing any legislative or administrative steps he thinks he will be taking.

Q Ron, on this subject, does the President still have -- as you said immediately after the Rockefeller report -- full and complete confidence in both Ambassador Helms and Director Colby?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q There are reports that the Justice Department is studying material relating to the possibility of perjury charges against Mr. Helms. Can you confirm those reports?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Do you deny them?

MR. NESSEN: I have no knowledge one way or the other.

Q Does the President have any knowledge of this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I have not asked him.

Q Ron, I had a Senator say Mr. Colby is on his way out, from a man who should know. Is that true?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I have heard.

Q How about Helms?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I have heard.

Q Will Mr. Colby be replaced while the investigation on the Hill is in progress?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard that, Bill.

Q Would he be as a practical matter?

MR. NESSEN: I have no way of knowing. I have never heard it discussed.

Q There is no plan to have an overall civilian intelligence adviser in the White House?

MR. NESSEN: As a result of the recommendations and views he has received, the President has promised publicly to come up with both legislative and administrative steps, but what they are, I don't know at the moment.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12 NOON EDT)