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

#279

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH BILL GREENER

AT 11:30 A.M. EDT

JULY 23, 1975

WEDNESDAY

MR. GREENER: I have a couple of things on the European trip.

First, we have available a background paper on CSCE, which may prove helpful in preparing for this afternoon's background briefing at 3 o'clock, which is in Room 450 of the EOB. We will have that for you in just a minute.

To get to this briefing, you should enter the EOB on the Seventeenth Street entrance. White House and State Department passes will get you in. All others should call Sandy Wiesniewski at 2977 to get your clearance.

Q Will there be a transcript of the background briefing?

MR. GREENER: There will not. There is no need to bring tape recorders.

Q Why can't we use tape recorders for back-up note taking?

MR. GREENER: I think we might be able to get a transcript for you, which will be just as good, won't it?

Q It is slow for those of us who have immediate deadlines. We don't have broadcast quality tapes when we just sit them in our laps. We have done it with senior American officials when they have briefed and when others have briefed. It generally works fairly well. It is a convention most of us honor.

MR. GREENER: I will check on it and see, and do everything I can.

MORE

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Q Who is doing the briefing?

MR. GREENER: Arthur Hartman and Hel Sonnenfeldt.

Q There will be a transcript?

MR. GREENER: I will try to make sure of that.

Q Will we get the text of that agreement here?

MR. GREENER: It is 100 pages long, and they are trying to get it.

Q It will be made public in Geneva. That is the place where it really originates, not here.

MR. GREENER: Yes, but we will try to have it for you, at least before the trip.

The second announcement on the European trip is the photo and sound equipment lists should be to Ray Zook no later than 5 p.m. tomorrow. They should include serial number, quantity and manufacture. Thym has the forms to fill out.

Q Personal cameras, too?

MR. GREENER: And personal cameras.

Third, and a rather nice announcement, somehow there has been a misimpression of mine, as well as yours, that there will be doubling and tripling of rooms in Helsinki. There won't be. We have singles for everyone, and we are hopeful to get singles everywhere else, too.

We are not sure of it. There may be doubling in Bonn, but we are not sure of that.

Fourth, and most importantly, there is a 45-minute reprieve on Saturday. All the times we gave you will slip up 45 minutes, and we will post new baggage and take-off times after the briefing.

Q Why is that?

MR. GREENER: So we can make it on time.

Q Does that mean you can tell us where we will be staying in Helsinki. You obviously know. Can you tell us?

MR. GREENER: I can't yet, but I will be glad to check with Ray.

Q What sort of accommodations are they?
Hotel?

MR. GREENER: Well, I will check with Ray.

Q Does that 45-minute delay apply to the
President's schedule, too?

MR. GREENER: Yes.

The baggage deadline for Pan Am is 6:30; for
TWA, 6:45. Pan Am check-in without baggage, 6:45; TWA
check-in without baggage, 7:00. Pan Am departs Andrews
for Bonn at 7:30; TWA departs Andrews for Bonn at 7:45.
Air Force One departs for Bonn at 8:30.

Q Is there any reason for this delay?

MR. GREENER: None except I assume they have
changed the actual arrival time over there 45 minutes,
for whatever reason.

Q You mean we don't have to turn our bags
in Friday, we can just bring them to the airport?

MR. GREENER: That is right, by 6:45 for you.

Let me remind you that the fact that I announced
that Hartman and Sonnenfeldt are briefing on background,
their names are also on background. That is all I have.

Q Bill, why is that on background? Is that
really necessary?

MR. GREENER: What?

Q Sonnenfeldt and Hartman.

MR. GREENER: Just that it is what we arranged,
Aldo, for them to have a background briefing, and we
have an on-the-record briefing Friday by Secretary
Kissinger.

Q What time is the Kissinger briefing?

MR. GREENER: Eleven o'clock in the morning.

Q Yesterday I asked if that Kissinger
briefing would be available for live broadcast. Do you
have an answer now?

MR. GREENER: I do not. I didn't know we had
the question. I will check on it.

Q Have you checked on whether there will be a briefing here on Friday?

MR. GREENER: We have not decided yet, but I expect we will, particularly to clean up anything before we depart on the trip, but it won't be at the same time.

Q Is the President taking a direct part in the conversations this morning between Kissinger and Ambassador Dinitz?

MR. GREENER: No, he is not.

Q When Secretary Hathaway met with the President on July 15, did Secretary Hathaway offer to resign?

MR. GREENER: When Secretary Hathaway came in on July 15, he told the President that he was extremely tired and felt he had a mild depression and he brought up the question of perhaps he should leave. The President quickly stated he was not concerned with that, that his first concern was his health, and he had him go see Dr. Lukash and if the doctor felt he should go in for further tests at Bethesda, that he would recommend he do it.

He did see Dr. Lukash. He did recommend further tests. He has been at Bethesda for eight days undergoing treatment for exhaustion and mild depression. I am sure that the President wishes him a speedy recovery, and his quick return to his duties as Secretary of the Interior.

Q May I follow up Dick's question. Will the President meet with Dinitz and Kissinger?

MR. GREENER: Of course he is meeting with Secretary Kissinger in his regular meeting this morning. Whether there will be any further meeting at this point, I don't have anything further on that.

Q That was not my question. My question is, Dick asked you about the meeting with Dinitz and Kissinger. My question is, will they then meet with the President?

MR. GREENER: There are no plans at this time, but I will check.

Q Was there any word out of the White House about a letter the President sent to President Assad of Syria?

MR. GREENER: No.

MR. GREENER: Let me bring you up even more on that, and I will get the exact phraseology in a moment. Last night on the SEQUOIA the President met with Members of the Congress for about an hour of the trip and discussed the decontrol situation with them.

He directed Frank Zarb at that time to explore the alternatives and to get back to him as quickly as possible with recommendations to see if there is some middle ground that can be reached.

The specific answer to your question, however, it is entirely possible that we might send another phased decontrol plan to Congress if it looks as though Congress were willing to compromise on some of the main points.

We would send up a package if we felt it would be generally acceptable.

Q What would that do with the veto of the extension of controls?

MR. GREENER: The six-month extension?

Q Yes.

MR. GREENER: It remains as it has been.

Q What is the time frame on this? Would it be before the President leaves on the trip?

MR. GREENER: He asked for Frank to meet with Senator Mansfield, Senator Scott and John Rhodes to see if we can reach some accommodation before Friday.

Q And Albert?

MR. GREENER: Albert was there.

Q In this meeting?

MR. GREENER: This was not a specific meeting. He asked them to work with these people.

Q Zarb will work with these three people?

MR. GREENER: That is correct, to see if they can reach some accommodation before Friday.

Q But not with the House Democrats and the Speaker?

MR. GREENER: And the Speaker. I am sorry.

Q This flies in the face of what we were told earlier this week. A question was asked about Phil Shabecoff's story in the Times earlier this week. We were told that was an incorrect story, that there would be a second phased decontrol.

Q That was my understanding. I think Nessen told us here yesterday there would be no compromise. There would be no compromise plan.

Q He said the planning had not gone that far.

Q And the President's feeling was that he favored just taking the controls out the door.

MR. GREENER: If a phased decontrol plan could not be worked out.

Q Was the President asked last night by some of the Democratic leaders that sailed on the SEQUOIA with him if he would accept a 90-day extension of the controls?

MR. GREENER: I don't have anything on the specific recommendations. I was checking to see.

Q They are saying on the Hill this morning he rejected the idea of a 90-day extension of the controls. My point is, I guess, what are the compromises that the President would like Congress to make and what are the compromises that he is prepared to make?

MR. GREENER: Tom, I think that will have to wait until Frank finishes this reassessment of all the alternatives and gets his recommendations to the President.

Q Do you have any guidance for us on what is the major obstacle?

MR. GREENER: No, I don't.

Q Could I follow that question up?

MR. GREENER: Go ahead, Dick.

Q Anderson and Tip O'Neill told us last night that a 90-day extension was suggested but the President did not commit himself one way or the other. Ron told us on Saturday, I guess, that the President would veto a simple six-month extension.

MR. GREENER: That is correct.

Q He seemed to leave open the possibility that the President might be willing to go for a shorter extension. Can you tell us at this point would a possible compromise be something shorter, something less than six months?

MR. GREENER: Let me answer both your question and Tom's.

I may have misled Tom. I have this much for you, Tom. The timing of the decontrol is one of the big issues and probably the central issue. How fast to decontrol, in other words. Windfall profits was also a big part of the discussion last night, and a rebate mechanism to the American people.

They were all discussed on how we continue to strive. And they are basically the issues that were discussed last night on the SEQUOIA, and they are the issues which Frank is now exploring.

Q Can you clarify the issue of windfall profits? Is the issue whether or not to allow 100 percent plowback or is that to limit the plowback to about 35 percent?

MR. GREENER: It is which of them? They are both issues. I don't follow you.

Q The windfall profits tax, as I understand it, is to soak up profits above the cash flow necessary to maintain the increased cost for the secondary and tertiary recovery projects. Now, the President's proposal was to include a plowback provision and some Democrats have complained a 100 percent plowback provision is a loophole which means there will be no windfall profits tax.

Their proposal is to limit the amount of the plowback to say 35 cents on the dollar, get a 35 cent tax credit for each dollar that is put back in the ground. Is that what is at issue?

MR. GREENER: That is one of the three things that are at issue, yes.

Q Bill, let me ask you, has Frank Zarb offered any kind of compromise plan already in the last 24 or 48 hours?

MR. GREENER: Not to my knowledge, Tom.

Q Is this business on three years and a different ceiling rather than \$13.50, does that have any validity in terms of what the Administration is thinking?

MR. GREENER: All of this is being discussed, Helen. Almost every alternative.

Q Are they meeting now?

MR. GREENER: They are meeting now.

Q What is the issue regarding the rebates? It is my understanding both the Congressional Democrats and the President, of course, want the rebate. Where do they differ?

MR. CARLSON: We are getting too technical and too detailed. The process of how to structure windfall profits tax, the mechanics for the rebates program, that stuff will be discussed on the Hill. It would be premature to discuss how we differ.

Q Does that apply to the previous question about plowback?

MR. CARLSON: Yes.

Q Can you address Tom's question? Do you have any additional information, John? Bill said he was not aware that Zarb offered any specific compromise.

MR. CARLSON: That is right. Last night was mainly a listening session to see what the Hill believes and where they disagree on the Hill, what areas of compromise could be reached.

Q Wasn't Zarb at the Hill before the SEQUOIA cruise?

MR. GREENER: Yes, he was.

Q Was that just a listening session?

MR. CARLSON: It was the same type of thing to get the Senator's views on where areas of compromise could be reached.

Q He did not put forth any proposal there?

MR. CARLSON: No.

Q Are you sure?

MR. CARLSON: I am not sure.

Q I don't understand why you are using the conditional tense when you were asked in response to might a second phased decontrol bill go to the Hill, you said we might send another phased decontrol bill if it looks as if Congress is willing to compromise. If Zarb is meeting with key Congressional leaders, it looks as though they are already talking compromise, so why can't you say yes, we will send them a second decontrol bill?

MR. GREENER: Because of the fact, Walt, if they don't work out any compromise that is acceptable, why would you send it?

Q Then what you are talking about, you would need to send it. You are working out a compromise. You would reach it in meetings with Zarb and the lawmakers.

MR. GREENER: And the decision of the President.

Q Does the President still intend to veto an extension?

MR. GREENER: A simple six-month extension, yes.

Q We have been getting word all week that the President is willing to compromise only insofar as some modifications in his basic phased decontrol proposal. In other words, time, profits, plowback, but it had to remain strictly within the framework of his basic outline.

MR. GREENER: That is what I just said. Those are the three major areas of difference, and that is what they are discussing?

Q On that six-month extension -- what I tried to ask before -- I am not sure you understand or that you answered my question.

MR. GREENER: I do understand your question, but I am going to limit my answer to the six-month because that is the only proposal that has been made.

Q You can't say whether he would go along with a shorter extension, which might provide them with a way to get past the August 31 deadline and some further room for working out a compromise?

MR. GREENER: I can't say anything on that until the President sees it.

Q In one of the briefings we had on this it was suggested the President might take a very short extension of about 30 days if it comes in advance to work out a phased decontrol plan.

MR. GREENER: I understand that.

Q Is that still the President's feeling?

MR. GREENER: I have nothing to say about that other than the six months, until we see what it is.

Q Bill, are we ready for another subject?

MR. GREENER: Yes.

Q What was the progress or what happened this morning on the meeting on Turkish aid?

MR. GREENER: At the meeting on Turkish aid-- incidentally, the meeting was entirely on Turkish aid; it was the only subject that was brought up-- the President spoke, Secretary Kissinger spoke, Doc Morgan spoke.

Q Was Schlesinger there?

MR. GREENER: I will check. Morgan emphasized the compromise was worked out on the Hill, that it was their compromise. The Secretary indicated the compromise was acceptable, that they would prefer the Senate bill, but that this compromise was acceptable and that is where it was left.

Q Did the Secretary say if the compromise was acceptable to the Turks, the Turks would be willing to forego the renegotiation on the status of U.S. bases, which had been postponed from the 17th for ten days?

MR. GREENER: He did not say.

Q Is that what the President said on the subject?

MR. GREENER: It is an urgent need to pass this as rapidly as possible.

Q Did he make progress in winning the support of the House on this?

MR. GREENER: Say that again.

Q Does he feel now he will be able to sell a compromise to the House?

MR. GREENER: He is certainly very hopeful. It is not his compromise. It is their compromise, though.

Q Both sides?

Q On this subject, did the President talk about the base renegotiations in his presentation to the Members?

MR. GREENER: I was not there for the whole meeting, Russ. I will have to check, but I will get it.

Q On the oil discussions, did anybody raise the question that a man buying gasoline at the pump will have to pay more? Is this something that is taken for granted, that there will be this continuous escalation of price?

MR. GREENER: As we have said, under any system of decontrol over a period of time and over the 30 months, it would be expected to raise approximately 7 cents at the pump.

Q How about the Congressmen? Did they voice any objection? Did anybody ask any questions, is this becoming a normal way of life, to keep paying more and more for gasoline?

MR. GREENER: I don't have the details. I was not there. I don't have all the details of everything brought up at that meeting. I will ask, if you want.

Q Bill, you said the President told Zarb he wanted to try to find room for accommodation before Friday. What is the President's position if that is not possible? He will be leaving on Saturday. That would leave one more week. Is the President in effect saying, "I will give you until Friday. If not, that is where things end, as far as we are concerned"?

MR. GREENER: No. Obviously, negotiations can always continue. The problem is that after Friday, we no longer have five legislative days before the recess to submit any legislative package. And we feel that this would be the best vehicle and the most rapid means for the President to send up another decontrol program which they would accept.

Q Bill, one thing I don't understand. You talk about a windfall profits tax as being your key part of this, but the President has no power to put that in place by Executive Order. That has to be passed through a complicated procedure -- Ways and Means Committee in the House, the Senate Finance Committee -- aren't you really talking about getting some kind of gentleman's agreement that Congress will take up a windfall profits plan after they return from recess?

MR. GREENER: We could certainly agree on a formula.

Q Does the fact that the Consumer Price Index rose higher than the White House had expected -- which Ron told us yesterday, and that it was due primarily to higher oil and gasoline prices -- does that make the President more willing than he had been previously to accept some sort of a postponement or showdown of the decontrols insofar as they increase oil and gasoline prices?

MR. GREENER: I would rather address the point that any delay that we put on this is just that much longer, as we have said, that we are dependent on foreign oil producing countries and what they can do to the charging of the price of oil to us and that position remains the same.

Q I understand that, but the Democrats are saying that in addition to their previous objections to the plan they now have a sudden rise in Consumer Price Index and a threat of reigniting inflation and that this would be wronger than ever as a time to further increase oil and gasoline prices through decontrol.

How do you respond to that?

MR. GREENER: There has been no question that the President has and continues to be concerned about the problems of inflation and that is one of the things that has been the whole point of him trying to hold down the huge deficit spending that we are doing.

Q Bill, have you gotten anybody yet to sponsor your gun control legislation on the Hill?

MR. GREENER: We are at this time in consultation with senior Members of the committee and working specifically on some wording in regard to Saturday night specials.

Q Is it true you are having a difficult time finding a Republican lawmaker to sponsor that legislation?

MR. GREENER: No. Not to be misleading, if you are asking, is there some who have voiced some question about it, yes, they have.

Q I know you have been turned down, but do you have prospective sponsors?

MR. GREENER: Yes. Let me answer one question Carroll had. Schlesinger did speak to the Congressmen at the breakfast and his remarks were limited to the importance of U.S. bases in Turkey.

Q By the briefing time, had Zarb met with any of the Senators or Congressmen or talked with them?

MR. GREENER: John will check for you.

Q Do you know at what point the White House feels they have enough people to go along with compromise measures? Are you finding it difficult to find out who speaks for Congress? Do you have certain names that you have to have their cooperation before you can go along, before you feel you have to compromise? Are there certain people without whom a compromise cannot be effected?

MR. GREENER: I would think certainly the chairmen of the key committees, beyond a shadow of a doubt, and the leadership in the House.

Q Do you have to have all the leadership?

MR. GREENER: I don't know that we would have to have all. We would certainly consult with them.

Q Is three years the limit of the President's flexibility?

MR. GREENER: It is all part of the thing they are looking into.

Q Are there any new thoughts on the Army's drug testing program in light of the new disclosures today that they still have an active program going on, 6,000 people have been tested?

MR. GREENER: Are there any new thoughts, you mean here at the White House?

Q I understand the President is pretty upset about the other thing and apologized.

MR. GREENER: Yes, he apologized, as you know. As for the specifics, we had a call in to Laitin to find out the actual specifics and have not gotten an answer yet.

Q Apparently it was nastier today than yesterday, public knowledge.

MR. GREENER: I read the same stories. As soon as I get something from Joe, I will get with you.

Q Has the President asked for a report on this?

MR. GREENER: No, he has not.

Q I would like to follow that up, and one other question. How long does it generally take you when you call the Pentagon to get an answer from Mr. Laitin when the White House calls, aren't they pretty prompt?

MR. GREENER: Yes, they are, Les, and generally I get him on the phone myself. I just ask for him to call back.

Q How long ago did you call, just before the briefing?

MR. GREENER: I called about 10:30 and then I was out and in with the President. I will get back to him and get an answer, Les.

Q My question is that yesterday Fran of AP asked the question, how is the President going to observe the National Prayer Day that he proclaimed and Ron said he would find out and tell us.

MR. GREENER: I will have that answer for you this afternoon, too. We are looking at what he will be doing.

Q Ron also said, I think two or three weeks ago, that he would try and find out when was the last time the President was in church.

MR. GREENER: It was at Mackinac Island two Sundays ago.

Q Bill, it has been days we have known about this Army program, and the President is so concerned about Olsen. Isn't he concerned about these other Army people that are being given this drug?

MR. GREENER: The question is, had he asked for a report, and I said at this time he has not.

Q Is he concerned?

MR. GREENER: Yes.

Q What is he going to do about it?

MR. GREENER: I will have to take that up with him specifically.

Q Are these all volunteers?

MR. GREENER: Dr. Van Sim is having a press conference at three o'clock this afternoon at the Pentagon on this very subject.

Q The same time they are having this other press conference. That will interfere with a lot of White House press going. Why can't you ask the Pentagon to have it another time?

MR. GREENER: We will see what we can do, Helen.

Q Is the President aware of the testing that was done --

MR. GREENER: I do not know, Phil.

Q Do you know if there is anybody other than the Press Office checking on it, Bill?

MR. GREENER: No, I don't know, but I will run it down for you.

Q Isn't it strange that the President has to keep relying on press reports for things that are going on in the Government at that kind of category?

MR. GREENER: I would not say that he does rely only on press reports.

Q You mean when Schlesinger was over today he did not say anything about that?

MR. GREENER: I did not say whether he did or did not, Sarah. All I am saying is I have to ask him particularly myself. I am not going to stand up here and surmise what he said.

Q Will you go back there and come out real quick and tell us and don't wait until this afternoon?

MR. GREENER: As soon as I can get it and find out.

Q This morning did you speak to him about this particular subject, this newspaper story?

MR. GREENER: I did not.

Q Did you discuss this subject with him?

MR. GREENER: I did not.

Q Bill, do you have any further words on Hathaway in regard to the President's views on how sophisticated the people are about mental illness? There was a time when anyone who suffered from depression would have been eased out of his job. The President is taking a fairly sophisticated view of this.

I gather he feels the American people have different views than they once did about the subject?

MR. GREENER: We have not discussed his views on that at all except I do know, as I said, he is concerned for his health and wishes him quickly to return to his job.

Q When are you sending up Banowski's name as Under Secretary?

MR. GREENER: We have no personnel announcements.

Q Are you saying at this time there is no consideration of a resignation by Hathaway and that it will depend on the progress of his recovery?

MR. GREENER: I am saying that there is no consideration at this time of a resignation by Secretary Hathaway.

Q Things have certainly changed, haven't they, Bill, from the time they had Forrestal out there?

Q Would you say you are behind him 1000 percent?

MR. GREENER: One additional announcement.

The President sent a letter to the separate leaders regarding his position on the voting rights extension, and we will have these available for you after the briefing, a copy of the letter to Senator Scott, which is a duplicate of the one he sent to Mansfield and others.

Q Bill, did the President get a telegram yesterday from Senator Lloyd Bentsen urging that he look more carefully into the question of Soviet contributions of around \$10 million to Portugal to help that country go Communist before he goes to the Security Conference?

MR. GREENER: I don't know. We will check.

Q We would like to have an answer on that right away.

MR. GREENER: We will have to check and see if there is one.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Bill.

END (AT 12:05 P.M. EDT)