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

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 1:00 P.M. EDT

JULY 25, 1975

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: We will give you now two letters, one from Stanley Hathaway and the other from the President. It is fileable and you should go ahead, but I have one or two other points I wanted to make here.

Are there any questions on Hathaway before I go on to one other item?

Q Anything you can tell us about a successor?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Had the President asked for Hathaway's resignation?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q What changed between last week, when he declined to accept it, and today, when he did accept it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that I can add anything, Gaylord. Secretary Hathaway made clear late yesterday afternoon that he wanted to follow this course, and the President accepted.

Q Did he see him?

MR. NESSEN: He did not. A member of Hathaway's staff called to the White House and informed the White House of the Secretary's decision to resign and later yesterday, or really I should say more toward last night, the letter was delivered.

Even though it is dated today, it arrived here last night.

Q So the President has had no contact with Secretary Hathaway since last week?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly had no contact by phone yesterday.

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Q Or the day before?

Q Has he had any?

MR. NESSEN: I have not kept up with every possible contact. I think you all know that it is standard procedure when any ranking member of the Administration is having medical problems that the President normally asks Dr. Lukash to be his liaison and Dr. Lukash has talked to Stan Hathaway's doctors and has relayed the information from them to the President.

Q Are you suggesting that the Secretary was really sicker than the President realized?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any knowledge of that. I think you have to talk to Secretary Hathaway's doctors.

Q Ron, Secretary Hathaway's appointment was perhaps one of the most controversial Cabinet appointments the President made. There was a lot of flak from environmentalists during the confirmation hearings. Could we assume whoever the President nominates to succeed him he will first check out the guy's environmental background so that he is not really doomed from the start, so to speak, by having a lot of opposition to him?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have anything on the successor.

Q Ron, who is running that department? There is no Under Secretary.

MR. NESSEN: Kent Frizzell is running the department. He is the Solicitor of the department.

Q Ron, you have a number of major decisions hanging over there involving off-shore leasing, the coal program and other things. When are you going to name a Secretary.

MR. NESSEN: In due course, Gaylord.

Q Does that mean a week, a month?

MR. NESSEN: I can't give you a timetable.

Q Ron, is it true there was a security check on Hathaway, but not what is called a personal profile, and if so, will there be on any future selections?

MR. NESSEN: What do you suggest by the question, Steve? First of all, I don't know the answer to your specific question, but I feel maybe I ought to say something to perhaps correct any impression you may be leaving.

Q Fine. I am delighted.

MR. NESSEN: Stan Hathaway has never had a previous record of similar illness.

Q There was no history at any time prior that would have come up in a personal profile?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q Did he ever really serve in the job? Didn't he go to the hospital the same day he was sworn in?

MR. NESSEN: He did not, so far as I know.

Q He did not serve in the job?

MR. NESSEN: He did serve in the job. He did not go to the hospital the day he was sworn in. In fact, refreshing my own memory, he participated as an active participant in a number of meetings which I attended.

Q Was he involved in or instrumental in the Federal coyote extermination project?

Q Interior said he ruled himself out of it because he was --

MR. NESSEN: One other item. At 1:45, which is roughly 41 or 42 minutes from now, the President will have a statement to make in the Cabinet Room. Bill Roberts will take care of arrangements for cameras and pools and so forth.

Q What is the subject?

MR. NESSEN: We will have some paper to give you, perhaps even in advance of the oral statement.

Q You can't give us a hint?

MR. NESSEN: It has to do with a piece of legislation here awaiting his determination.

Q The veto message?

MR. NESSEN: It is his response to the legislation.

Q What legislation?

MR. NESSEN: The HEW legislation.

Q Ron, can you elaborate on Secretary Kissinger's statement --

MR. NESSEN: I never try to do that.

Q Did the President send a telegram to Ankara after the vote? In fact, I am not sure who the telegram went to. Will you tell us.

MR. NESSEN: Did he not say Prime Minister Demirel?

Q He said he himself called Prime Minister Demirel, but I don't think he was clear who the President wrote and secondly, can you tell us what it is the President told him?

MR. NESSEN: I will make an effort to find out who it went to and when and how. Traditionally, it would not be proper to make public the contents of an exchange of correspondence between heads of Government.

Q The Secretary gave us the substance of what this Government thinks of the vote and if that is what the President told Turkey, I don't see where you would be violating any dark secret, do you?

MR. NESSEN: I will check, but I doubt it.

Dick?

Q Could I go back to the Hathaway thing for a minute? His letter does not say anything more than for reasons of personal health. Can we correctly assume that it was in fact something in the nature of psychiatric?

MR. NESSEN: Call his doctors, Dick.

Q Ron, one more question. Mr. Banowski was under consideration at one point for Under Secretary-of the Interior. Is he under consideration for appointment as Secretary of the Interior?

MR. NESSEN: When we have a nominee, we will announce it, Gaylord.

Q Ron, a question on a nominee you have. Can you give us some idea whether the swearing in of Dr. Mathews will take place while the President is in Europe, or after he returns?

MR. NESSEN: I frankly had not thought about that until this minute.

Q I don't know if the Secretary covered this, but do you plan to go back to the Hill on the Turkish aid matter?

MR. NESSEN: The President indicated yesterday he would continue to press his view that this legislation is vital to American security, but I can't give you any specific plans right now to continue the project.

Q Ron, I think it is unfair to Mr. Hathaway, really. He is a very nice man.

MR. NESSEN: You can say that again.

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Naomi fears that some of the questions here may have left a mistaken impression about Mr. Hathaway and says he is a very fine man, and, of course, the President feels the same.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 1:10 P.M. EDT)