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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 10:27 A.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 6, 1975

SATURDAY

MR. NESSEN: There isn't much to tell about this meeting today. Actually, I think the Members, as I understand it, gave you a pretty factual rundown on what happened in there, and I don't really have much to add.

Q     Ron, there has been a little confusion here. Is the President willing to accept a 45-day compromise if he can get it?

MR. NESSEN: I think you have to take this in steps, Sarah. The first thing he is going to do is to veto the six-month extension.

Q     When will he do that?

MR. NESSEN: Probably Tuesday. Tuesday is the last day that he can veto it, and I think he will do it on Tuesday.

He and the Congressional Liaison Office, Jack Marsh and Max Friedersdorf, are now confident that by the time -- Wednesday, or whenever they are going to try and override -- that veto comes around, that the President does have the votes to sustain the veto in the Senate.

Q     Did you say they are confident now or will be confident?

MR. NESSEN: They are confident by the time Wednesday comes they will have the votes to sustain the veto.

Q     Is that the assurance they got this morning from those men?

MR. NESSEN: No, that didn't come up this morning.

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Q Does that include the House and Senate?

MR. NESSEN: You only need the Senate, and it comes up first in the Senate, so if you win there, as I think they will, it doesn't make any difference. That is one step.

Then secondly, at that stage it is really up to Congress where you go from there. His preference is for phased decontrol and always has been.

His position basically has not changed from last week, which was if he got a reasonable assurance that Congress would then pass the 39-month phased decontrol, he would, as he said, not veto a 30 or 45 day extension.

There is another possibility, which is that he would simply go directly from sustaining the veto to passing a 39 month extension and you could cut out the 30 to 45 day extension if they can move fast enough.

But, one way or the other, he prefers the 39 month phased decontrol, and if he were sure that Congress would pass it, reasonably sure, he would not veto a 30 or 45 day extension to give them time to pass that phased decontrol.

Q Is he going to arrange a meeting with Mansfield and Albert?

MR. NESSEN: I suspect that you all know that on Monday morning at 7:30 he is having a breakfast meeting with Republican leaders of the Senate to continue to discuss some of the same issues that were discussed this morning.

Then, after that, I would expect that he would have really a series of meetings with various Congressional leaders, excluding Mansfield and Albert, but I can't give you the timetable now.

Q When you say right after, do you mean Monday?

MR. NESSEN: It is possible some of the meetings may take place on Monday.

Q Did he call Mansfield?

MR. NESSEN: He called Mansfield immediately after the meeting this morning, yes.

Q How does he feel? Did he say anything about the incident yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: He gave these Democratic senators a very brief, minor two minute kind of synopsis of the episode and basically it was almost precisely what he said yesterday in the lobby of the hotel.

I could only hear one end of the Mansfield conversation, obviously, but clearly Mansfield said something to him, and he said thank you and he went on and again gave a brief description over the phone of the episode.

Q Who is he playing golf with today?

MR. NESSEN: We have the lists of his partners in this tournament, and Larry will give it to you.

Q He is going to do that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What did he tell Mansfield about the meeting this morning?

MR. NESSEN: It was the Senators who were here who suggested another meeting with Mansfield and so then he called Mansfield and said, you know, your Democratic colleagues were here this morning and suggested we sit down again and talk about the possibilities of a compromise that would get us to a 39-month phased decontrol.

Q Who took the initiative on this morning's meeting? Did they or the President?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think this was a White House initiative this morning.

Q Did Mansfield go along with the idea of having another meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q We were told after that caucus today and after that one conversation here -- was it Thursday?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q -- that they didn't -- Mansfield and Albert -- didn't see any reason to come back because they thought Ford wouldn't take 45 months.

MR. NESSEN: The report on the caucus that was given to the President this morning by these Democratic Senators was somewhat different from the account given by, I guess it was, Senator Jackson, wasn't it, immediately after the caucus, and the President was somewhat surprised because all he had known about the caucus was what he read in the papers.

The Members here this morning gave him a slightly different account, and the fact that there was actually no vote taken.

Secondly, some of these Members said they didn't attend the entire caucus, that they went in and out because of other business, and so the decision of the caucus as reported last week by the account given to the President this morning was very much less firm or less in opposition to a compromise than the accounts that the President had led him to believe.

Q Ron, could the President, by administrative action, extend price controls for 45 days?

MR. NESSEN: No. What he can do is, by administrative action, send up a 39-month phased decontrol, if the controls were extended for 30 or 45 days. Right now, the controls are off, so there is nothing he can do administratively. If they were revived for a very brief period, then during that brief period he could send up an administrative proposal which Congress would have five days to disapprove, if you remember that procedure we went through once before.

Q Would the President take 45 months?

MR. NESSEN: No, 39 months is the maximum. Even 39 months, Frank told the meeting this morning, is very, very close to the limit, or at the limit of what would be effective in reaching the goal of stimulating domestic production. 39 is as far as he can go.

As Frank pointed out, the issue of, 39, 43, or 45 or whatever has never been the issue on the Hill. The 39-month phased decontrol lost by 39 votes in the House, but nobody feels that any more or less votes would have been picked up by jiggering the number of months. That was never the issue, and Frank does not feel it will be the issue again.

Q Ron, to my knowledge we really have not had any price increases and decontrols off yet.

MR. NESSEN: No, but as Frank said, most of the companies are holding off until they see how this sorts out. If you did come out with a 30- or 45-day extension and then 39-month phased decontrol, it would all be made retroactive to the first of September and none of these companies want to go through the bookkeeping problem of having to refund and so forth.

Frank again pointed out this morning that the figures have been checked again and again, and the FEA is even more confident that the economic effects of either instant decontrol or phased decontrol would not seriously upset the economy, and especially with those steps he announced the other day would be taken to soften the impact on specific industries; namely, independent refiners, independent gas stations, and farmers and rural dwellers.

Q What will be the format of the veto? Anything special, or is he just going to announce it?

MR. NESSEN: At this moment the format has not been decided.

Q He might make a speech?

MR. NESSEN: It has not been decided.

Q If they come up with a 30- or 45-day extension and he is reasonably sure they will go for a phased decontrol, would that avoid the veto or does he have to go ahead with the veto anyway?

MR. NESSEN: No, what he is vetoing would be a six-month extension, and it would become law without his signature if it goes beyond Tuesday.

Q Even if he vetoes, is there a chance they can arrive at a compromise on this so that there won't be a vote in the Senate on overriding the veto? Isn't that a possibility?

MR. NESSEN: It is certainly a possibility, but you would have to ask the Congressional leaders. These Senators this morning did not say one way or another whether there would be a vote in the Senate or not.

Q Sparkman said it was scheduled for Wednesday. They were talking about a compromise where they would avoid the confrontation of the veto vote. I don't know how they can do it parliamentarily, properly following the rules of the Senate.

MR. NESSEN: I suppose what they would do -- I shouldn't speculate on Congressional procedure -- but I suppose they could just put the veto on the shelf and get to work right away on Tuesday or Wednesday on a 30- to 45-day extension and get the 39-month phased decontrol in the work.

Q Is that what the President would like?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think he has a preference as to procedure. I think he has a preference as to the outcome. As you know, his first choice is a 39-month phased decontrol. If he can't get that, that leaves only either instant decontrol or an extension, and between those two choices he prefers total decontrol.

Q Ron, is the President aware of the fact there is a sort of crisis developing over the Voting Rights Act and the regulations on putting the Voting Rights Act into effect through a confrontation between the Census Bureau, the Justice Department and the State of Texas?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of it.

Q He is going down there right away, and this is a situation that is probably brought about in the filing of the suit by the Texas Governor.

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check. This is the first I have heard of it.

Q Were any people arrested or put in jail before the President got to Sacramento as being probable violence provokers or something?

MR. NESSEN: I think you will have to check with them or with Jack Warner.

Q They won't tell you anything. This is frequently done. When the President is going someplace, they usually pick up people who are suspicious who might be probable cases.

MR. NESSEN: I think you have to check with the police department or Jack Warner.

Q Neither will tell you a crying thing.

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure of that.

Q Can you find out?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so, Sarah.

Q Just like they should have viewed this girl's interview, she might have been one of those they could have done something like taken her away or suggested she go out of town for a few days or something. That is what they usually do.

Q Will there be any increased security at the golf course today as a result of what happened yesterday, any additional agents?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure from my own point of view, but I think Jack Warner can help you with that.

Q Is there any concern on the parts of anyone here at the White House that this girl was not considered by the Secret Service as a threat to the President's life in view of her association with Manson?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard that view expressed at the White House, but I think for the factual details you need to talk to Jack Warner.

Q Is he in his office today?

MR. NESSEN: I presume so.

Q No one at the White House has gone to the Secret Service and said why didn't you know she was in the area?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of, no.

Q Why don't they? Isn't that a lack of concern on the part of somebody here at the White House?

MR. NESSEN: Sarah, I am just not familiar with the Secret Service procedures, and Jack can help with that. I have always found Jack to be very helpful, both when I was a reporter and since.

Q Are you going to become an expert on Secret Service procedures as a result of this incident?

MR. NESSEN: I don't expect to, no.

Q Ron, this point about the 45-day extension, did he say anything specifically to Mansfield on the phone regarding that or regarding whether he did wish some sort of action to come on a short-term extension?

MR. NESSEN: It wasn't really a substantive phone call. It was really to tell Mike that the other Senators had suggested they get together again and to arrange this meeting, and I think they will talk about the substance when he gets here.

Q Did he suggest any time ~~frame~~?

MR. NESSEN: I would look probably for Monday.

Q Ron, what was the status on which they chose these Senators today?

MR. NESSEN: Frankly, I don't know.

Q Can you find out for us?

MR. NESSEN: Where is the briefing paper on that?

Q The Republicans coming Monday, are they really Republican leaders or are they key Republicans from East Coast States that will be hardest hit by the --

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the guest list, but they are primarily not leaders.

Q Is there anything scheduled after the golf game?

MR. NESSEN: Today?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: For guidance, so you can plan, the President is going to a small private party this evening for Colonel Blake and Colonel Sardo, who are being promoted to full Colonels from Lieutenant Colonels at the Bolling Air Force Officer's Club, and there will be a travel pool to go with him to that.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't got a time, but I think somewhere around 7 or 8 o'clock, in that area, and we will post the time of the protective travel pool.

MR. SPEAKES: As I understand it, after golf the President will be coming back here and changing and in a few minutes pulling out.

MR. NESSEN: It will be the same pool that goes to the golf course with him, and the event starts at 7 o'clock.

Q Is Mrs. Ford going with him?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What is he doing between now and 1 o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: He has some staff meetings. He leaves for the golf course about 1 o'clock.

Q Will you find out why these Senators were picked and why the ones Monday were picked.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I think we will put a lid on except for the two travel pools now.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 10:43 A.M. EDT)

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