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

#319

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:34 A.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 10, 1975

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: We have announcements to hand out here.

The President is announcing today that he is going to nominate Richard L. Dunham of Malden Bridge, New York, to be a member of the Federal Power Commission for a term expiring on June 22, 1980. He is succeeding John N. Nassikas, who resigned effective upon the appointment and qualification of a successor.

Upon his confirmation by the Senate, the President will nominate Mr. Dunham as the Chairman of the Federal Power Commission.

Q Ron, does this have any special significance in Dick's role in the Domestic Council and the President's whole thing about deregulation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't see the connection.

Q Well, I am wondering if this is a move by Ford to put in his own deregulation-conscious man since Dunham has had a very active role in the whole development of this concept?

MR. NESSEN: I feel a little bit uncomfortable reflecting Dick's views and also, of course, once he gets to the Federal Power Commission, it is an independent regulatory agency and you know the White House does not have any direct authority at all over the Federal Power Commission.

Q It is not Nixon and the Supreme Court.

MR. NESSEN: It is not what?

Q Nixon and the Supreme Court, where there was a contest published after the -- (Laughter)

MORE

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MR. NESSEN: No, it is not. No, it is not.
(Laughter)

Q Ron, do you happen to know his views on deregulation as a member of the Domestic Council, based on that alone?

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

Q Was he responsible in any way for the development of the ERFCO plan?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that, either, but I think when he has his confirmation hearings, I am sure they will explore all these questions.

The President is going out this evening to attend a fund-raising reception at the Capitol Hill Club. This is a fund-raising reception to collect funds for the Club. The reception is in honor of the President and Mrs. Ford, and the Vice President and Mrs. Rockefeller. It begins at 6 o'clock.

There will be about 150 couples there. Contributors and also Cabinet members and Members of Congress will attend.

We will have a travel pool going with the President. He will leave the White House at about 6:55. The travel pool will go with him and go on up to the Capitol Hill Club and the pool will go inside with him and mingle with the guests, and then they will go in and mingle with more guests in another room and then the President will go to the platform and make remarks, which will be covered by the pool.

Q Not open coverage?

MR. NESSEN: They don't have enough room up there, as I understand it. The Capitol Hill Club pretty much made the ground rules for this.

Q Will there be any kind of a mult on that?

MR. NESSEN: Larry can work with you, whoever is going with the pool tonight, to set up the arrangements.

Do you mean to feed back here?

Q No, I mean just to take it.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, they can work something out.

Then the President speaks at 7:40, and then they leave and arrive back at the White House at 8:00.

Q What is the price of admission?

MR. NESSEN: I am told that the price of admission is \$1,000 per couple.

Q If you come stag, is it \$500?

MR. NESSEN: If you have got that much money, you can get a date, Walt. (Laughter)

Q Is it for the club?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

The trip Friday, the press check-in at Andrews is 10:30 and the press plane leaves at 11:00.

Q Is that 10:30 with bags, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, bring your bags to the airport.

I won't say it, Jim.

Q Luggage.

MR. NESSEN: I really won't. I am going to restrain myself. (Laughter)

Q Are you anticipating any activities at the White House Friday morning before departure which will require coverage?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check a little more this afternoon. There may be a reason to have somebody here on Friday morning.

Then the President will leave the South Lawn at 11:20, arriving at Andrews at 11:40 and taking off. The arrival time at Lambert Field, St. Louis, at the TWA ramp is about 12:30 Central Daylight Time.

Q 7:00 a.m. check-in tomorrow; is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: That has not changed, that is right.

Q 7:30 departure?

MR. NESSEN: Departure tomorrow, yes.

Q When will we get the bible?

MR. NESSEN: I wish we knew.

For tomorrow it is going to be late in the afternoon today, at the earliest, and for St. Louis and Kansas City and Dallas we will try and have it ready when everybody gets back tomorrow night.

Q Mrs. Ford is not going to St. Louis, Kansas City and Dallas?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, is the delay on the bible for tomorrow's trip in any way associated with additional security?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, no.

Q You are not going to hold that bible back until the last minute?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, certainly not. It has to do with trying to get all the places and times and events locked up.

I don't think there will be any need to be here Friday. That grain thing I thought was going to go Friday, and it went yesterday.

Q Is there any possibility that the President may meet Reagan in New Hampshire?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is he is going to be up there at some point today but I don't have any indication he is going to be there tomorrow.

Q Ron, on the St. Louis trip, I know this is sort of far ahead looking because of the kind of day you are going to have Thursday, but what about an advanced text on the speech to the Baptist meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are making better headway than usual on getting the speech texts out, and they will certainly be ready when you get back tomorrow, at the latest, I would think.

Q Do you think we might have them at the airport?

MR. ROBERTS: I doubt if they would have them tomorrow morning.

MR. NESSEN: You mean have them out at Andrews when everybody gets back? We could do that. That would not be a problem.

Q Ron, without spelling out all the cross-road stops he may make in New Hampshire, where is he going to have set speeches?

MR. NESSEN: Have we gotten that much of the schedule yet?

Q I mean the Wyman people have the whole route.

MR. NESSEN: We gave out the route the day before yesterday.

What do you hear about where the major places are going to be?

Q I would assume Nashua and Portsmouth, but nothing at the small towns in between.

MR. HUSHEN: There are a couple town squares but I don't look for any major addresses.

Q Where does he have lunch?

MR. NESSEN: Jack has been dealing with that.

MR. HUSHEN: I will have to get my file out.

Q Ron, has the President said anything directly to you further after publication by some of these commentators that he at least restrict movements on plunging into crowds, that some of his activities be slowed down a little?

MR. NESSEN: John, he really hasn't. I think his feeling is as he expressed it in Sacramento the other day, and I have not heard him say anything, and also I did see that the head of the Secret Service, Stuart Knight, said something the other day -- yesterday, I guess -- down in Norfolk, that the security for the President is adequate and has not been tightened, and the size of the detail is sufficient for the job. Of course, he agrees with the President that the detail that was with the President in Sacramento performed extremely well.

From the President's point of view, I have not heard him change his mind from what he said in Sacramento.

Q Ron, one of the issues that came up at Sacramento was not so much the size of the detail but the question of surveillance of potentially dangerous people before and during the President's visit, and there was a good deal of criticism, of course, about the fact that Miss Fromme was not under surveillance before or during the President's visit.

Is there any intention, or are there any plans to beef-up or expand or intensify the surveillance of potential threats to the President on his visits to these various cities?

MR. NESSEN: I suggested the other day that those kinds of questions ought to be directed at the Treasury Department, and I don't know how many did call over there but I did, anyhow, to save you the phone calls.

The Treasury says that it is normal procedure to look into an incident of this kind, to get a report on it, which they are doing -- an internal Treasury Department report -- and the aim of the report, which is a routine procedure, is to find ways to improve the protection of the President.

I would think just on my own that if they are looking for ways to protect the President that their intelligence function might be one of the areas that they look at.

Q I called Treasury and I got the impression that the report which you speak of will be prepared by the Secret Service and forwarded to Treasury, and that is not quite the same thing. Now, perhaps, I was informed in error.

MR. NESSEN: No, I think you are right. I think the Secret Service is doing a report to send to its superiors in the Treasury Department, which is routine.

Q But that is the people in question investigating themselves, isn't it?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, I don't know, Walt.

Q I spoke with Secret Service and I got the whole string of no comment, which didn't take me very far.

Q Ron, realistically, if they were going to change in any way the protection of the President, should we assume that they would tell anybody in advance?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think it is obvious on the face of it, Bill, that security of the President and protective measures which they take, I think, just on the face of it or by definition is something that you probably don't want to talk about very publicly.

Q Ron, you just made the statement that "I would think" that they are looking for ways to increase the protection and intelligence in one area. Are you reflecting here merely a personal opinion? You volunteered that and I wonder if you are reflecting a personal opinion, or is the White House and Presidential view that the intelligence function of the Secret Service should be strengthened?

MR. NESSEN: No, it should not be taken that way at all. The President has, I think, made clear and has made clear privately since that day that he has nothing but praise for the Secret Service.

Q Well, I am wondering about the origins of what you said.

MR. NESSEN: I am just saying that based on what the report is aimed on doing, which is looking for ways -- if there are ways -- to improve the protection of the President, that it is my assumption that one area which could possibly be involved that they might want to look into would be that.

Q But have you talked to the President specifically about these points?

MR. NESSEN: I have not because he has never offered any word of complaint at all about this.

Q Let me put it to you this way, Ron. You often, if not usually, reflect the views of the senior staff. Are you, in this case, reflecting the views of the senior staff that the intelligence should be strengthened?

MR. NESSEN: In this case, I am only reflecting an assumption of my own, based on the routine report that the Secret Service is preparing.

Q You are not telling us that you have not discussed the subject at all with the President since Friday, are you?

MR. NESSEN: My discussions with the President since Friday have resulted in every case in the President praising the Secret Service.

Q And nothing else?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Ron, has the President initiated any action to cite Buendorf for his actions in Sacramento?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of, but I can look into it. I will look into it. I have not heard of any.

Q Ron, have there been any high staff meetings at all to review this and to see if there are any questions the White House wants to ask the Secret Service?

MR. NESSEN: No, no one in the White House has asked --

Q Given all we know now about what she said, what group she was part of, what they have done and said, no one here is asking on behalf of the President why Squeaky Fromme was not under surveillance?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, there has been no request or order or anything go forward from the White House to the Secret Service. The report they are preparing, they are preparing as a routine matter on their own.

Q Ron, can you say whether those preparing this report will discuss the matter with the President to get his views on it?

MR. NESSEN: I think if there is something in the report that would be of interest to the White House, I would expect that it would be sent over to the White House.

Q He has not seen any report or talked with anybody drawing up the report so far?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

Q Ron, is it your personal feeling that the intelligence function, as was carried out by the Secret Service, was inadequate in Sacramento?

MR. NESSEN: Fred, I am not going to deal with that.

Q You suggested that that is one of the areas they might look into, that they didn't do anything?

MR. NESSEN: I only suggested that the purpose of this report is to find ways, if there are any ways, to improve protection for the President, and I observed rather casually and as a personal opinion, that that might be one area that they could look into.

Q Do you think that is an area that needs improvement?

MR. NESSEN: I, personally?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to answer that, Fred. I have no way of knowing anything about it.

Q Ron, what is your personal opinion of an agency charged with protecting the United States Government that in fact does not put surveillance upon a person who has been an associate of a convicted mass murderer?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, you know I am not going to answer that question.

Q Why not?

MR. NESSEN: First of all, I don't know anything about their intelligence operation at all.

Q Well, you can.

MR. NESSEN: Secondly, you are dealing with a person who is involved in a judicial process, and I don't think that I or anybody here should say anything that could in any way affect the judicial process.

Q The Secret Service is not involved in any judicial process. They are not on trial or not going to be on trial.

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I am not going to answer the question.

Q Can you answer this. Since the President was on the Warren Commission and there obviously was a breakdown between the FBI and SS liaison, is the President concerned that there is not enough contact with the local police departments, with the FBI and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, as I say, all the times I have heard him talk about this incident since Friday, he has never uttered a single word of complaint, he has never raised a question, and he has had nothing but praise for the Secret Service.

Q Ron, do you know for a fact whether the intelligence function is one of the areas they are in fact looking into?

MR. NESSEN: No, I certainly don't.

Incidentally, I have a meeting at noon on some energy legislation, and I would like to be able to go to it, if I could.

Q Let me just ask, aren't there some members of the Manson family still at large?

MR. NESSEN: I have no way of knowing, Les.

Incidentally, I think something I forgot to do at the beginning of this briefing was to say that I think one of the finest reporters who covers the White House and someone I have had a privilege to know for a very long time is attending his last briefing at the White House -- we hope it is not his last briefing, but it is his last regular attendance -- Carroll Kilpatrick.

It has been a great honor and a privilege for me to know Carroll on both sides of the line, and we are going to miss him very much.

Q Here, here.

Q Will you say anything about this Cabinet meeting?

MR. NESSEN: It is not a Cabinet meeting. As you know, there are a number of pieces of legislation that are about to go to the Hill involving natural gas, deregulation, special provisions on propane to protect the farmers and rural dwellers, special measures to help independent gasoline stations and independent refiners, and legislation involving the conversion of certain plants to coal.

That whole package will be going up to the Hill shortly, and this meeting at noon, the President is not attending --

Q You say shortly. This week, yet?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Well, the President promised it would go this week.

Q Not today, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Possibly today.

Q What expertise does Dick Dunham have in matters to come before the Federal Power Commission?

MR. NESSEN: Dick has dealt with energy and power matters both as Deputy Director of the Domestic Council and as Budget Director and Deputy Budget Director of New York State.

In addition, the President has been able to observe him close up here at the White House, personally, and has found him to be an efficient, very well-qualified executive, and he feels that he is the best choice for this job.

Q Ron, yesterday Secretary Kissinger indicated that the visit by Brezhnev is slipping toward the end of the year. If the SALT talks stay deadlocked, is the President willing to go ahead with a summit meeting with Brezhnev in the absence of a SALT agreement?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot accept the premise that the SALT talks are going to remain deadlocked, Rudy. I think Dr. Kissinger spelled out the sort of timetable that is looked to, and I think he indicated that the visit was on course for some time before the end of the year.

Q Before you escape, I would like to ask you about the President's views on the Wyman-Durkin race and how much he thinks he is going to be able to help Louis Wyman tomorrow and also a question in the same vein on the questionability of the President's visit in view of perhaps an investigation of Mr. Wyman.

MR. NESSEN: In answer to the first part of the question, I really can't answer how much the President will contribute to the Wyman campaign, but obviously he believes that Louie Wyman ought to be elected, and he is going to go up there and do what he can to help him be elected.

Q And he apparently thinks his trip there will swing some votes?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly hopes so.

The second part of the question, I don't know exactly what you are talking about.

Q The Watergate Special Prosecutor's investigation of the Ambassadorships, I think the name is Sparkus.

MR. NESSEN: As I understand it, Louie Wyman is not accused of anything, not indicted on anything. I mean his status under the law is an innocent man, if I understand the Bill of Rights correctly.

Q On the other hand, Henry Ruth has refused to publicly give him a clean bill of health.

MR. NESSEN: Under the law, I believe you know that he is an innocent man.

Q No, we assume it.

Q No, we know he is not accused.

Q General Haig was in Washington in recent days. Has the White House been in touch with him?

Let me add an unrelated question. When was the last time that the White House has been in touch with Richard Nixon?

MR. NESSEN: The first part of the question, I have not seen Al Haig around here, and I am not aware of him coming to the White House.

Q Well, that is why I asked. Has he telephoned, if not in person, to your knowledge?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

The other part of it, you know, I just don't bother every day to go around and ask. I have heard of no phone calls or other communications with the former President.

Q Certainly not since Sacramento.

MR. NESSEN: Not that I have heard of.

Q Ron, to clarify something on New Hampshire, does the President expect Wyman to win?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't know. I don't know.

Q Ron, could I return to the security matter just a minute?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q One of the concerns expressed to the Warren Commission, of which the President is a member, was the publication of every move of a motorcade or every movement that a President would make in a city.

Have you had any internal discussion or discussion with the Secret Service in changing this so that publication of every move would be changed in any way?

MR. NESSEN: I have heard no such discussion.

The fact is that Louie Wyman, under the law, is an innocent man and I don't think we ought to let that flap around loosely. Louie Wyman is an innocent man, period, and I think we ought to nail that down.

Q Ron, could I ask a lighthearted question?

MR. NESSEN: I would love it, Les; it would brighten my day a little. (Laughter)

Q As a former Naval officer and now Commander of the Navy, this episode has been on page 1 of the Post and an editorial -- has he or Mrs. Ford had any comment on this?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Was he amused by it?

MR. NESSEN: I have no idea.

Q Okay. I very much appreciate it.

Q On that meeting, are many secretaries involved in this?

MR. NESSEN: This is the affirmative action meeting. John Carlson is in there and if there is anything to report afterward he will be available.

Q Are you coming out with a statement after this veto override thing?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, does that meeting you are about to attend have anything to do with this corporation for --

MR. NESSEN: No, no, it is the five pieces of legislation that I listed.

Q How close is that corporation?

MR. NESSEN: The "yes" was to will I have a statement after the veto is sustained. (Laughter)

Q Is the President apt to consider the results of the New Hampshire election a bellwether on his own performance?

MR. NESSEN: No, unless Wyman wins big. (Laughter)

Q Will the President address the General Assembly?

MR. NESSEN: No, no plans to.

Q I didn't get in the second part of my question. Is that corporation for encouragement of production of new sources of energy very close? Is it about to be introduced?

MR. NESSEN: I don't anticipate it in the immediate future.

Q What stage is it in right now? Is the legislation formal on it?

MR. NESSEN: The President has not had a meeting on it since he has been back from Vail.

Q On the Fromme incident, do you have any reaction to the appearance of Squeaky Fromme on the cover of a national news magazine?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any reaction to that.

Steve, were you trying to ask something?

Q You answered the question.

MR. NESSEN: The one about the go-go dancer?

Q I don't think this question has been asked, and just for our own protection, do you know of any security changes that have been instituted that will take place tomorrow that will be different from what was instituted on the last trip?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:01 P.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 3:08 P.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 10, 1975

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: I mentioned this morning that the President was working on several pieces of energy legislation to send up to the Hill, involving natural gas and the independent service stations, independent refineries, propane and coal conversion, and he decided to send this legislation to the Hill today, which he did about an hour ago.

So I have some somewhat boiled down fact sheets which will give you a general idea of the legislation. It did go at about 2:00.

The actual copies of the legislation and much more detailed fact sheets are available at FEA, and possibly a briefing is going to be held at FEA later this afternoon on this. I will keep you posted on the time and place, if there is one.

Q This was sent in advance of the vote? They have not voted yet?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

Q Two separate bills?

MR. NESSEN: It is three separate bills -- actually, two bills and a letter from the Treasury Secretary.

Q It does not matter how the vote goes at all?

MR. NESSEN: Some of this deals with the natural gas shortage which is entirely separate from oil decontrol. The other part of it -- that is, the independent service stations and independent refineries -- are two of the steps that he said he would propose to ease the transition from control to no control.

Q Inasmuch as the Senate is now voting, I take it you have gotten the word that they are going to sustain the veto.

MR. NESSEN: No, it is unrelated. As I said, this went up at 2:00. He promised the Members some time ago that he would send this up.

Q Will there be more legislation given to us this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: No, this is it -- five areas. Really, two pieces of legislation and a letter from the Treasury Secretary, adding up to five different areas being covered.

Q Where are the letters, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I say the legislation and the letters are available at FEA.

Q Will he withdraw these measures because the independent retail gasoline dealers' proposal, if there is an arrangement, will lead to decontrol over 39 months?

MR. NESSEN: I think the idea was that he wanted these to be on the books anyhow, but let me check that with John.

Q Ron, is the President going to have anything to say or does he have any information about this alleged assassination?

MR. NESSEN: I just heard about it 30 seconds ago.

Q How about the CIA material that the White House has asked to hold off on subpoenas until they can --

MR. NESSEN: I don't know about that one.

Q Routine material given to the President on four major subjects.

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen that, Helen.

Q Will you have anything for us after the Luns' meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Not sure, I don't think so.

Q What about after the vote? Will you have something?

MR. NESSEN: John, the service stations and the refinery legislation, whether we have phased decontrol or instant decontrol, he still wants that legislation on the books, doesn't he?

MR. CARLSON: If we have phased decontrol, this is all moot except for the non-propane natural gas portion. This is just in the event of immediate decontrol -- no compromise.

Q So this is designed to soften the impact of immediate decontrol, right?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

MR. CARLSON: The first sentence says that.

MR. NESSEN: We will keep you posted on what time and whether there is an FEA briefing.

Q With a vote coming up just momentarily, would it not make more sense to send this up after the vote so he would have an idea of whether it is going to be moot or not?

MR. NESSEN: He promised the Members that he would be sending this along and he wanted to keep his promise by sending it today before the vote.

Q Also a little encouragement?

MR. NESSEN: Carroll makes the point that if they sustain his veto there is still this talk about a 39-month phased decontrol so you don't know quite yet whether it is going to be instant decontrol or the phased decontrol.

Q If you have the phased, is this moot?

MR. NESSEN: If you have the phased, this is moot except for natural gas and propane.

Q Did he look into that CIA stuff that Mark took up?

MR. NESSEN: I will check.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 3:13 P.M. EDT)