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

#346

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:30 A.M. EDT

OCTOBER 15, 1975

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: We probably ought to get going, I don't know how many of you want to go to the Hilton to see the President.

All right, let's hurry on.

First of all, there has been one addition to the President's schedule since the schedule was prepared and that is Defense Secretary Schlesinger at 4 o'clock. It is a regular meeting that they have periodically and I don't have the agenda for that.

Q Can I ask you one question about Mr. Coleman -- do you know what he is coming in to discuss?

MR. NESSEN: I don't and he didn't give his reason when he asked for the meeting. He just said he wanted to see the President and didn't give a reason.

The second thing is, in keeping with my belief that confession is good for the soul, I want to tell you I made a mistake. I did make a mistake and I want to try to repair it and apologize for it.

Yesterday, when I was giving a run-down on the various events that led up to the President's decision on the tax cut spending cut proposal, I said something to the effect that the President had made the fundamental decision in July. That is not correct. My notes don't contain that, as a matter of fact, and I can't understand why I said that. These are the same notes I had yesterday and that is simply not in there. What the President did in July was to decide that that was a very real and viable option among several and that before making a decision on which way to go, he gave orders in July to bring in a lot more material to see whether you could get the budget cuts of that size and more information on how a matching tax cut would work.

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Then I did say that the OMB worked through August to pull that together for the President. I did talk to the President this morning about when he did make the decision. Maybe I ought to start again for Jim's benefit.

I just confessed not to exactly the cardinal sin, but to an error yesterday in saying that the President had decided in July on the fundamental decision to have the tax cut and budget cut linked.

As for when he did make that decision, the concept has been one that has been attractive to him for some time and I mentioned to you that it was discussed at Vail last year. The final, specific numbers and figures were decided within a few days of the speech. When he decided in his own mind that he was going for this is difficult to pinpoint, but it was within a week or so of the speech and I did ask him specifically whether it was after the Omaha news conference in which he said he had not made a decision and his own decision in his own mind was made after the Omaha news conference.

I have a few additional bits of information on how the budget process is going to proceed from now, which I think in part would answer some of your questions about why doesn't the President give the specific cuts now.

I think I have referred to this calendar before. It is a calendar of both OMB and Presidential work on the budget and the President actually gets involved himself on October 30. Leading up to October 30, through the months of September and October, the OMB is reviewing requests from the various departments and agencies listening to their justification, discussing the justification with them and putting together these requests for the President's consideration.

As I said yesterday -- and I hope we ended up with the matter clearly stated -- there have been tentative ceilings set on each of the overall totals for each agency and department and I hope that by the end of yesterday's briefing I had straightened out the fact that these are not 100 percent firm. They do add up to 395 and that is firm. But if some agency or department can persuade the President that it needs a little more and he makes that decision, then somebody else would have to be reduced an equal amount so as the overall total doesn't go over 395.

Q Could I ask a question at this point? I was a bit confused yesterday about the chain of command. Do these agencies go through their particular Cabinet Secretary or do they go through OMB?

MR. NESSEN: You mean the agency or department? They go through the departmental heirarchy, their Secretary and Budget Director.

Q So the Secretary of Interior could juggle those below it?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, obviously a conference has already been voted by the House on the Defense budget included in the proposed cut --

MR. NESSEN: That is fiscal '76. We are talking about a budget for fiscal '77 which begins on July 1, 1976.

Q Would the budget re-establish the cuts made for '76.

MR. NESSEN: As I mentioned the other day, in part some of these budget decisions are determined, or at least the direction is given, by previous decisions. In fact, that is one of the ideas in trying to reduce the increase in spending is because there is a certain effect the first year but then the effect gets greater as you go on if you stop that sharp rise.

Then, beginning on October 30, after the OMB has done a good deal of preliminary work stretched over two months, the President will have a series of 13 meetings of an hour and a half each during which--the dates, the specific dates, whether you care, is October 30, November 3, 6, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, and 26--an hour and a half each day and each of those days there will be one, or two, in some cases; in the case of some of the smaller independent agencies, three or four budgets by department or agency are taken up by the President and officials of the OMB and he will then make specific, tentative decisions on the line-by-line budget items for the various departments and agencies.

Q Ron, aren't some of those days that he will be away?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so.

Q That 16th, won't he be in Europe?

Q There is a European trip on the 15th, 16th and 17th.

MR. NESSEN: This is the schedule, if it has to be juggled -- this is dated far enough back that it could be that that date or a few dates may be juggled but this will give you an idea of the calendar he has. At these meetings he looks at the OMB recommendations and arguments and makes some tentative decisions on a specific budget for each department and agency. From the 8th to the 19th of December, on a daily basis, each day a certain amount of time will be set aside, not counting Sundays, but Saturdays he will work, and this will be when agencies and departments come in to appeal the tentative decision that the President has made on their budget.

If they think that he should not have cut something or the cut should have been made somewhere else, they will have that period from the 8th to the 19th of December to come in and appeal.

So that is the budget process. Then when you get into beginning about mid-November, the budget message will begin to be drafted and then from late November until mid-January, the preparation for the printing process begins, and so forth. I guess the reason I am going through this is to explain that it is a very long and cumbersome procedure which is done every year but it is obvious that it is not at a point now where you can send Congress the specific cuts for specific departments, although the President does not see that as being directly involved in his request for just an overall ceiling of \$395 billion to be set now.

Once you get into -- well, the period that really begins now, you not only have this whole series of budget meetings but you have a lot of meetings that are related in the sense they have to do with the preparation of State of the Union, legislation and the economic message and I can give you a run-down of how much time has been requested for these meetings.

The Economic Policy Board has requested between now and December 20, in that time period, the EPB has requested 22 meetings for a total of 22 hours. The Domestic Council --

Q Between now and November?

MR. NESSEN: December 20.

Q These are meetings with the President or meetings they will have among themselves?

MR. NESSEN: All these meetings I have told you about are with the President.

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Q Excuse me, Ron. Can we go back a second? Is December 19 absolutely the final day for any changes before the budget is locked up?

MR. NESSEN: That is the final date for appeal. My experience last year in watching the budget put together was after that the President does make his final decisions.

Just to finish here quickly, the Domestic Council has requested between now and December 20, 24 meetings lasting a total of 26 hours. The Office of Management and Budget has requested 23 meetings lasting a total of 25 hours. Of course, in that 23 are some of the ones that I have told you about.

Q Lasting a total of how many hours?

MR. NESSEN: 25 hours.

Q The Council meetings are part of the budget process?

MR. NESSEN: Part of the State of the Union process and legislation process which affects the budget because the State of the Union would lay out programs that could have a cost factor.

The only reason for doing this is to try to indicate that the President did not pull this \$395 billion figure out of the air. As I mentioned yesterday, that figure began to evolve in June and he is now well along on the process that will lead to a specific budget of \$395 billion. Tentative ceilings have been given to the departments and agencies and it is clear that he cannot, just when this process is really getting underway, send any kind of detailed budget to Congress earlier than normal this year and, again, the President doesn't feel that that is what he is asking Congress to do. He is asking Congress to set a ceiling and then next year Congress will deal with each agency and department request within that ceiling.

Q Ron, since you contend he didn't pull the figure out of the air, can you explain to me what this lengthy schedule of things he is going to do in the future has to do with how he conceived that --

MR. NESSEN: There are two points. I think, Adam, yesterday I indicated going back to June a figure of \$397 billion had initially been come up with as being feasible. Why I give you these things is to say he cannot send to Congress now a detailed item-by-item budget or even department-by-department budget because he is still in the midst of this very lengthy process. That is why I mention that.

Q Ron, I still don't understand why he can't send to Congress the tentative ceiling for each department and agency that has been set?

MR. NESSEN: It is still tentative and still is under discussion but, again, I think we are just moving away from the central point, which is that is not what he is asking Congress to do right now. He is only asking Congress to do, as I used the analogy before and others have, of doing what any family does when it knows what its income is.

Q I understand that, but didn't the President make his decision on what the appropriate level of the budget would be based on some understanding of what it would do to each department and agency?

MR. NESSEN: At the time the \$395 billion figure was determined it was based on the fact he not only had a whole series of ideas of how you could get to \$395 billion, but he had a whole series of ideas which added up to more than \$28 billion. So he was convinced that it was possible to do it and still have a series of choices of how to get there.

Q Ron, but the President has had the benefit of an extensive budget analysis process precedent to his putting out the \$395 billion figure. He is asking Congress without benefit of the same process to come up with the same figure that he has merely presented as a figure and without justification.

Isn't it reasonable for Congress to want to know what kind of priority choices are to be made in order to come to that figure?

MR. NESSEN: Mort, I think this all sounds repetitious after a few days, but Congress knows what the general areas are and the general concepts that the President has for holding the spending increase to \$25 billion because he sent the rescissions, deferrals and vetoes --

Q For this fiscal year?

Q What do the rescissions, deferrals and vetoes add up to? I know he said vetoes add up to \$6 billion.

MR. NESSEN: We will need to get John Carlson out here to give you that.

Q Ron, the point is the President knows what effect these cuts will have on each and every department and agency in the Federal Government --

MR. NESSEN: No, because the specific cuts --

Q He is asking Congress to buy a pig in a poke by not explaining to them the effect this will have --

MR. NESSEN: No, not at all. The way the President sees this is differently.

First of all, the specific cuts have not been made. All that has been done so far is enough evidence has been presented to the President to convince him that not only can you hold the increase in spending to \$25 billion but you could actually hold it lower than that; there are ways to do it.

All he is asking Congress to do is not go on record as how big should the Defense Department budget be, or HEW, HUD, or any of the others. All he is asking Congress to do is link -- all he is really asking Congress to do is what Congress is already on record as pledging itself to do, which is to set a ceiling on spending for the year and then to work out --

Q After the budget is received?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Which it has not been.

MR. NESSEN: Which has not been. All he is asking Congress to do is link what he thinks should be linked, which is the level of spending with the level of revenue and the idea of leaving more of the money with people to make their own choices on how to spend it. He is not asking Congress --

Q Ron, two questions, if I may. If the President had some evidence -- which is the phrase you used a minute ago -- if the President had enough evidence -- I believe that was the phrase you used -- to convince him spending could be held at \$395 billion or even perhaps below that, why doesn't he merely furnish that particular evidence, whatever it was, to the Congress and say, "All right, here it is, this is what I had, and it is on that basis I made my decision and would like you to reach the same conclusion"?

MR. NESSEN: Again, Jim, I think the answer there lies in the fact Congress has a very clear idea, going back to January, as to what his general concepts are of how you control Government spending and that those ideas should come from the bills he has vetoed and the rescissions and deferrals he has sent.

Q Ron, if I might ask my other question, you said Congress knows the areas in which the President would like these cuts made?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q My question goes to that issue of what Congress knows at any given moment. Secretary Schlesinger has now asked Congress to restore \$2 billion --

MR. NESSEN: In 1976 fiscal year.

Q All right, but the principle remains the same. The fact is, Congress receives the budget from the President. Congress appropriates certain sums of money and then from time to time -- as a matter of fact, rather frequently -- heads of departments come back and say, "Well, you cut too much, I am going to need some back." This is why we have what we call supplemental appropriations, as you know. Secretary Schlesinger has just done this.

At any given moment, what does Congress know about what the Administration wants? Officers will come back and say I need more money.

MR. NESSEN: By the same token, the Administration sends requests up there for less money than was originally requested.

Q Ron, where does this \$2 billion fit into the rescissions and deferrals? Put another way, does the President back Schlesinger's request for \$2 billion more for Trident?

Q We can't hear the questions back here.

MR. NESSEN: The question was, does the President support Secretary Schlesinger's request for \$2 billion in additional Defense spending for various items? I am not familiar with what the specifics are of the \$2 billion request but the Secretary is the President's Defense Secretary and, obviously, he speaks for the President in Defense matters.

I do want you to know the President believes the debate on this should be conducted on the level -- at this point, at least -- of overall what he is trying to accomplish, which is to say that Congress ought to go on record now on only one matter, and that is that Congress will pledge itself to hold the growth of Federal spending to 7 percent in the fiscal year 1977. That is all he is saying.

Q He is not saying Congress now needs to promise to cut HEW by \$5 million, or so many percent, even. All he is saying is Congress ought to go on record and let the people know that the money that their Government is spending on their behalf will increase by only 7 percent in the next fiscal year.

Bill Proxmire, a very respected Democrat, an acknowledged expert in the field of budgets, went on television Sunday and said he didn't see why Congress couldn't cut the budget by 1 percent instead of letting it go up by 7 percent. That is all the President is asking Congress to do right now.

Q Could we move on? I would like to know if you have an estimate yet on the damage to the President's car?

MR. NESSEN: Jack Warner will be handling all the specific questions on the accident last night, other than to say that Don Rumsfeld has asked the Secret Service to send a report here on how this could possibly happen.

Q How is the President feeling? Did he have any after-effects like any sore muscles or bone as a result of the accident?

MR. NESSEN: No, he did not appear to and didn't mention it this morning.

Q Ron, does this indicate, if Mr. Rumsfeld has requested a report, the White House is unhappy with the security of last night?

MR. NESSEN: The White House is wondering how in the world a car could do something like that. (Laughter)

Q It isn't the car that did it, it was the people. It is sort of like guns.

MR. NESSEN: That is why we need to register automobiles. (Laughter)

Q Is there any explanation of why there were no police guarding that crossing?

MR. NESSEN: That is one of the questions Mr. Rumsfeld is asking the Secret Service to answer in its report.

Q What are some of the other points specifically he is asking?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that there were so many specific requests, but primarily we want to know how it could have been allowed to happen.

Q Could you give us a description of exactly what happened to the President in the car, was he thrown forward, or thrown to the floor?

MR. NESSEN: No, he saw the car coming and braced himself, he didn't fall out of the seat.

Q Did he call out?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q I am not asking this question to be funny, but was the President's car running a red light?

MR. NESSEN: Peter, as you probably know, I didn't make the trip yesterday and I don't have all the details of what happened.

I think the Secret Service has been investigating and perhaps can give you those details.

Q Ron, I am not asking this to be funny, either, but is the President's car equipped with and did the President have on a seatbelt?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that, Jim. Jack Warner could perhaps help you with it.

Q Ron, after two assassination attempts, you made it a point to say there was no need to ask for a report because you would get one anyway.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Does the asking for a report here imply a slap on the wrist at the Secret Service, imply an unhappiness at the White House with the Secret Service?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to imply anything in terms of the attitude, but I think I would just rather leave it that the White House wants to know how that could be allowed to happen.

Q When is the report due?

MR. NESSEN: There has not been a date set.

Q Is it true that the Secret Service always reviews the plans of the local agencies for the protection of the President?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask Jack Warner, Steve I don't know.

Q Ron, may I ask a question on the China trip?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q There is an article written by Ross Monroe, who works for the Toronto Globe and Mail. He was writing out of Peking -- maybe you have seen it. He starts off by saying China has strongly attacked the U.S. Government for "undisguised interference in China's internal affairs," because it allows Tibetan refugees to operate an office in the United States. He goes on to say, again writing out of Peking, "The attack casts doubt on whether Mr. Ford will come at all." Do you have any comment on that?

MR. NESSEN: Bob Funseth at the State Department devoted considerable time yesterday to discussing the Tibetan dance troop question specifically. I have a transcript here that you can read through or they would at the State Department.

Secondly, I would say there are no changes in the plans to visit China, either in the Secretary's trip or the President's trip.

Q Ron, was the meeting with the Vice President set up before or after the reported rift?

MR. NESSEN: No, this is the regular weekly meeting.

Q Ron, he went on to say there is real doubt as to whether the President would be able to see either of the two top leaders, either Mao or Chou En Lai. And this further reinforces the pieces that the President might go.

MR. NESSEN: That aspect of the story is quite speculative and there is no change in the President's plans.

Q Ron, after giving up the schedule of the meetings the President is going to hold, it seems to me you have given us the schedule of the China trip as far as the time sequence is concerned. I wonder if you can tell us where he will stop during those nine days?

MR. NESSEN: I can't, Aldo.

Q Ron, the President told the columnists who talked to him, according to reports we read, that there is a "minimal difference" between he and Vice President Rockefeller on the New York City matter. Could you please explain what the minimal difference is?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really like to do textual analysis of the President's views but, let me put it this way, if you read the Vice President's speech, you will see that he and the President walk down precisely the same path, that it is New York City's responsibility to find and take the steps that are necessary to restore fiscal responsibility and fiscal help and to restore the confidence of the bankers and to convince New York State that the City has taken adequate steps to justify help from New York State.

As you know, the first try at that was unsuccessful, the State rejected New York City's plans as not being adequate and they are now in the process of trying to satisfy the State before the State will help out. The President agrees on that.

The President and the Vice President agree that there are a whole series of steps that New York needs to take to get its fiscal house in order, that it hasn't taken them yet, that when it does take them the State apparently has pledged itself to help, that this all should aim toward balancing the City budget in three years. All that distance the President and the Vice President are perfectly in tune. When you get to that point on the path, the President feels that Federal help for a bail out would not be needed.

The Vice President's remarks indicate that at that point he feels somewhat differently but it is at that point that there is a difference and the President feels the difference is minimal since they agree on all the previous steps.

Q What about Basil Patterson's statement, his charge that the attitude of the Administration on the City is racial?

MR. NESSEN: Rubbish.

Q What was the question?

Q Basil Patterson of the Democratic National Committee charged the attitude of the Administration on cities is racist and Ron's answer was "rubbish."

MR. NESSEN: The answer was "rubbish." (Laughter)

Q Ron, there was an article in the Post today that Brezhnev is likely to come here in January.

MR. NESSEN: Some of you maybe saw the Secretary of State on the Meet the Press show on Sunday in which he really sort of summed up the situation and it hasn't changed since then, which is that two or three issues do remain to be resolved on SALT and that prospects for concluding the agreement within the next months is good.

I think you all know how the SALT agreement relates to a Brezhnev visit and so beyond that I really can't suggest any particular dates for concluding the negotiations or for a visit by the Secretary General -- or the General Secretary.

Q Ron, does the President agree with the recommendations made by his Drug Abuse Task Force that the Federal Government should continue de-emphasizing the possession and simple use of marijuana as a law enforcement effort?

MR. NESSEN: Let me say two things: One, the President, several weeks ago, got a brief summary of what the report would contain. He got the report itself the night before last, the full report, and, as you see in his statement, he asked the various agencies involved to give him their views in sixty days. So at this point I can't give you a Presidential view on the Task Force Report.

I would say that your paraphrase of the reports perhaps is not quite to the point. I think what the Task Force was saying was that, given the resources to fight this problem, they seem to feel that it would be better to focus your effort on the hard and more serious drugs, which necessarily means that marijuana is not given the same attention as, say, heroin.

Q Ron, do you know why there was no briefing on this report which the President described as a very significant report?

MR. NESSEN: I saw on television what looked like a briefing over at the Domestic Council office. I thought I saw Dick Parsons and some others on TV.

Q Why wasn't there a briefing here?

MR. NESSEN: At this point it is a paper to the President and there is very little the White House can say about the report until the President has had a chance to read the report --

Q Parsons is part of the White House, isn't he?

MR. NESSEN: He is in the Domestic Council and it is my understanding the Domestic Council did have a briefing.

Q Does the President agree with or disagree with Vernon Acree's criticisms of this report as unprofessional and misleading?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard him say that. As I say, he just got it night before last.

Q Ron, in the interest of precision, I would like to go back to this Rockefeller minimal difference thing. You seem to be saying the President feels that after all these steps have been taken, New York is not going to need any help and, therefore, the Federal Government shouldn't have to intervene and the Vice President feels after all these steps are taken New York will still need help and the Federal Government should intervene. Is that a minimal difference, in your view?

MR. NESSEN: If I read the Vice President's remarks correctly, it was that at that point he felt some legislation was needed from Congress and it is at that point that the President and the Vice President have a difference of opinion.

Q But isn't that the basic issue here, as to whether the Federal Government is in fact going to have to help or not?

MR. NESSEN: I think why the President says there is a minimal difference is because the President and Vice President agree on all the other steps New York City and State need to take. At the end of that process which they agree on, the President thinks no Federal bail out would be needed because the problem would be solved. The Vice President indicates he feels that some Congressional action would be needed at that point. That is their minimal difference.

Q Are you trying to make a difference between the action of the Congress and the action of the Federal Government here?

MR. NESSEN: No, I am merely saying that is what the Vice President said.

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Q Initially we were talking about the horrible precedent it would set. Now you are saying it is a matter of the President simply believing that once the steps are taken it won't be needed, which judgment would always be subject to change, without principles being involved, if the President proved wrong on that point. Are you now saying that is not the reason?

MR. NESSEN: No, I just think it is a case where the reasons for the President's position, as in many cases, is not an either/or choice, Steve. He believes it would be a bad precedent. He believes it is a break with the traditional Federal system. He does not favor that kind of Federal interference in local affairs. He does not believe that taxpayers' money from all over the country should be used to help New York out of its own financial troubles since they haven't taken the steps they could. He believes the Federal Government had no authority to do it. He believes it wouldn't be needed if New York took the proper steps. So there are a range of reasons and you can't pinpoint one and satisfy that that is why he doesn't believe in it.

Q I don't remember exactly what the President said, but it was my impression what he said was exactly what you said -- he feels if they follow the plan he laid out, there would be no Federal help needed.

What I am trying to say is, he didn't rule out any further action if this didn't work out, but that he would look at what Congressional proposals came up.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think he said that.

Q He didn't rule it out. He didn't flatly say nothing after it collapses.

MR. NESSEN: His position is unchanged and I think toying with words will not get anywhere.

Q What is his position? When we asked you the other day you were unable to tell us what he would actually do if confronted with that situation because it was speculative.

MR. NESSEN: Exactly right, Dick. That would be the response to any question based on, if something happened, what would he do. That is just not a proper question.

Q Now you are dealing with it wholly on a philosophical basis. You are saying his difference with the Vice President is philosophical, but if in fact confronted with a real situation, you can't say what he would do; is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: The President doesn't think that the City of New York needs to get to what you call the real situation.

Q I know he doesn't think so. We understand that.

MR. NESSEN: There are ways for New York City to solve its problems without a Federal bail-out.

Q But you still won't say, really, that the President is so opposed to this that if, in fact, the situation he does not expect to happen should occur, that he would --

MR. NESSEN: On this or other matters, Dick, I will not answer a question that starts of "if".

Q Ron, in light of the Press Corps' evident interest in whatever disagreement may exist between the President and the Vice President, can we get a readout on their meeting today?

MR. NESSEN: I would doubt it, Jim, because these are private conversations that go on weekly. You know, we don't do it ordinarily and I see no reason to do it today.

Q Can you find out on our behalf whether they did discuss the New York City situation and their disagreement?

MR. NESSEN: I will ask.

Q Could you ask the Vice President whether he might come out and talk to us?

MR. NESSEN: I will also ask that.

Q In the press conference Thursday night when Phil asked the President would he veto legislation for Federal aid to New York, the President did stop short of saying that -- he said, "I would have to read the fine print first."

On occasions before, you have indicated, the President has indicated he would veto particular types of legislation that he was totally opposed to.

Now, you know, if he feels so strongly about this, why doesn't he just say, no, I will veto any bill?

MR. NESSEN: I think all of this is devoted to looking for a crevice that just is not there.

Q Ron, the New York Times this morning says the Administration feels the National Security Agency is in a cloudy legal situation in its overseas operations and is contemplating a new Executive Order on this subject. Is this accurate?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to forgive me for saying that I can't answer any NSA questions today.

Q Ron, concerning the accident last night, at one point you said the White House is asking how this could happen and you said Rumsfeld is asking for a report. I notice the White House and Rumsfeld became synonymous.

Is the President also asking -- is Rumsfeld acting at the request of the President?

MR. NESSEN: Rumsfeld, in his role here as Coordinator of Staff Activities, asked for it in that capacity. The President knows a report has been requested and is also anxious to find out how it occurred.

Q Is the President disturbed about what happened last night?

MR. NESSEN: We have asked for a report to find out how it happened.

Q What did the President say to you this morning about the accident, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: He kind of retraced what it looked like to him.

Q Did he express any views as to why it happened or should not have happened?

MR. NESSEN: I think he just wants to wait and see what the Secret Service explanation is.

Q Could you give me a rationale as to why any difference between the President and, say, Mr. Rockefeller, or the President and Mr. Simon goes beyond being minimal? It is so abhorrent.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know exactly what you are driving at but, as I said before, the President has a policy, his Administration has a policy on New York City and I have told you what that policy is.

Now I have tried to say over and over again out here that there are often differences of views on proposals and I have tried to say that those differences have to do with the policy and have nothing to do with the relationship between the President and the person on the staff, or in the Administration who have a differing view.

I think it is probably healthy to have people offer differing views to the President and, when he makes his decision, the difference of opinion doesn't do anything to his relationship -- the difference of opinion on policy doesn't do anything to his relationship with that staff member or member of the Administration.

Q Isn't it unusual once the differences have been expressed in private for a top level Administration official to come out publicly, distributing advance copies of his speech in which he disagrees with the President, whether that is a minimal difference or not? Does the President consider that loyal?

MR. NESSEN: I suppose a few years ago we would get the question about, "Do you think it is proper for all people who have differences with the President within the Administration to be muzzled and not allowed to express their opinion?" This is, I think, something that is encouraged -- well, encouraged is probably too strong a word, but it is something -- there is nothing wrong with people expressing different views on policy.

The travel pool going to the Hilton needs to meet Larry at the side door.

Q The President and you frequently are in an absolute ecstasy to minimize these differences. What would be wrong with having everybody differing on every subject and allowing the American people to make the choice on who to believe? Why minimize the differences?

MR. NESSEN: The President says that difference is minimum.

Q When the Vice President was appointed by the President, considerable tribute was paid to Mr. Rockefeller as being expert in urban and State problems and the President gave strong indications he would look to the Vice President quite often for advice on the problems of the cities and the problems of the States because of his expertise, an expertise the President did not develop during his years in Congress.

Is the President looking to the Vice President for advice on this New York problem, and is his mind still open on the question of Federal aid?

MR. NESSEN: If you are saying is this a trial balloon, the answer is no.

Q Does the President feel the Vice President is more qualified on this issue than he is?

MR. NESSEN: Look, gang, you know what the Administration position is. You know what Vice President Rockefeller said in his statement. You know, we are going around a long time.

Q Is the White House satisfied that the accident in Hartford last night was indeed an accident and not an attempt on the President's life?

MR. NESSEN: The Secret Service at this point says they are satisfied it was an accident.

Q Did the President express any criticism of the Secret Service when you talked to him?

MR. NESSEN: He knows the report has been asked for and we will wait and see what it says.

Q Ron, on previous occasions of security problems you have gone to some pains to say the President has full confidence in the Secret Service protection. Can you still say that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, are you saying, in effect, the President's view is let's wait and see what they can accomplish? Suppose they are able only to half solve their problem rather than totally solve it, as you say here.

MR. NESSEN: Bill, they can't even convince the State of New York, which does have some legal role in the affairs of New York City. They can't convince the State, the Governor, that they have done enough to justify State aid. How in the world can you talk about taking people's money from all over the country to bail out New York when the people of New York, at least the representatives of New York State, are not convinced they are doing enough to justify help?

Q Ron, suppose they convince New York State, and whatever aid they get from the State still doesn't solve the problem. Then what happens?

MR. NESSEN: That is a speculative question with a lot of "ifs" in it. I am not going to answer it.

Q Secretary Simon told the Christian Science Monitor a few weeks ago that, if there is any legislation to bail out New York, it should be, I think, punitive to the extent no other city would want it so there is no chain reaction from other cities in trouble.

MR. NESSEN: AP and the travel pool need to go now.

Q I am wondering what the President's view is on Secretary Simon's comment on legislation for New York City?

MR. NESSEN: I have no comment on that.

Q Ron, a leading columnist this morning reported that you and several aides, unnamed, in the White House don't appreciate David Kennerly for a number of reasons and I am just wondering --

MR. NESSEN: Who is that columnist?

Q His name is Anderson. I am wondering is this rubbish, too, or is there anything to that?

MR. NESSEN: There is nothing in that.

Q Is it rubbish?

MR. NESSEN: No, there is just nothing in that.

Q It is not quite as bad as rubbish. (Laughter)

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:15 P.M. EDT)