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NEWS CONFERENCE

#352

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH JACK HUSHEN

AT 9:20 A.M. EDT

OCTOBER 21, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. HUSHEN: Dr. Lukash reported that the President slept soundly all night long; awoke at about 7:20 a.m. Dr. Lukash examined him at that time and found that his temperature had dropped into the 99 range.

Q What is the 99 range?

MR. HUSHEN: Less than 100. (Laughter)

Q More than 99.

Q Below normal and ailing?

MR. HUSHEN: Upon initial examination, the President's general physical findings appear to be improved.

Q Could you repeat that?

MR. HUSHEN: The President's general physical findings appear to be improved.

Q That means he has generally improved?

MR. HUSHEN: Correct. I was just giving you Dr. Lukash's terminology.

Dr. Lukash said the treatment program will continue, which is restricted activity, bed rest and medication.

The President had his regular breakfast at about 8:30 consisting of orange juice, melon, English muffin and tea.

That is all I have to give you.

Q What about his schedule? Are all these meetings cancelled that Ron had said last night?

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MR. HUSHEN: Yes.

Q He will have maybe a few aides in like yesterday?

MR. HUSHEN: Don Rumsfeld is going over to meet with him right now.

Q Who is?

MR. HUSHEN: Don Rumsfeld.

Q Is he spending the day in his brown pajamas?

MR. HUSHEN: Tan pajamas. We will be able to give you a better update at the briefing.

Q He is going to spend the day resting?

MR. HUSHEN: Yes.

Q Jack, what time is the briefing going to be today?

MR. HUSHEN: 11:30.

Q Is he still coughing and does he still have the congestion?

MR. HUSHEN: Some.

Q I mean, he says that --

MR. HUSHEN: In an examination upon awakening you don't -- I don't want to get into some of the medical terminology. He checked his temperature and his general physical findings were improved. Beyond that I am not going to go. We will have more for you at the 11:30 briefing.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 9:23 A.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:48 A.M. EDT

OCTOBER 21, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me make a little announcement here.

The President has invited Prime Minister Gaston Thorn of Luxembourg to Washington on November 12 for an informal working visit.

Q Do you know what type of visit it is?

MR. NESSEN: It is an informal working visit.

Q What do we have to work on? (Laughter)

Q Luxembourg?

MR. NESSEN: Prime Minister Thorn has accepted the invitation and will come to Washington from New York, where he is presiding over the 30th session of the UN General Assembly.

They do have bilateral issues to review, as well as international developments that are of interest to both countries.

Q Ron, before you go any further, would you explain about the New York bond market?

MR. NESSEN: I do actually have some things on the New York bond market.

The President went to bed last night at 9:30, slept soundly and awoke at 7:20. Dr. Lukash examined him upon awakening; found his temperature was 99.4.

Q When it goes below 100, give us an exact reading.

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MR. NESSEN: The doctor performed an examination and found that the President is showing considerable improvement. The President felt rested. He had breakfast at the dining room table in the family quarters. Dr. Lukash recommends the same routine today as yesterday, which is rest and fluids, consisting of juice and water. He can have his regular meals, and he takes the same medication, which is antibiotics and decongestants and aspirin.

Q What brand?

MR. NESSEN: The diagnosis remains the same, which is that he has a cold and sinus infection. The symptoms include nasal congestion or sinus congestion, an occasional cough and a slightly elevated fever.

As for the future, that depends really on when the President's fever subsides.

When I saw the President this morning, he was dressed in the same white robe with the blue tennis racket symbols on it. He had pajamas on that were blue and white stripes, the same pants, slippers and a pair of socks.

Q Did I understand you to say you say him this morning?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Did he express any willingness or any anxiety to get back to work?

MR. NESSEN: He is back at work, actually. Don Rumsfeld saw him this morning. When I went up there, Dorothy Downton was going through a large stack of paperwork with him. He said, "I feel much better. My head is not as congested. I am not as achy." Then he commented on the fact that he had got ten hours sleep and how that really makes you feel good.

Q Is that his quote?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, would you remind him about that on the trip to Paris and Peking?

MR. NESSEN: One other small item.

Mrs. Ford also has the symptoms of a cold. She has a little nasal congestion and a slight achiness.

Q Is she cancelling her trip?

MR. NESSEN: She does not have any temperature; no fever, I should say. (Laughter) I know the difference. No fever.

Q Where is the nurse?

MR. NESSEN: Mrs. Ford is taking cold medication, which consists of aspirin and a decongestant, and also taking it easy today.

Q Did that develop at the tree planting ceremony?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q One question, which I don't know if you can answer. Which part of the sinuses does this affect? Is it high up in the head?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q This comes from our medical person?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it does. As you know, there are six sinus cavities. You remember that from the TV commercials, don't you? (Laughter) It is the ones both above the eyes and under the eyes, Howard.

Q How does he look?

MR. NESSEN: You know, I think he looks about the same. I think he looks better today than he did yesterday. His hair is a little tousled, but other than that, he looks normal.

Q Any weight loss?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't ask him. He is eating his regular meals.

Q Ron, in view of the fact that the President said he was going to go to California next week to do some political appearances, do you think that is still on, or is it in some jeopardy now?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is still planned that he will go.

Q A two-day trip?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q With the accompanying stops? If you will remember, he was talking about stopping in Albuquerque because that would give him another State to make the fifty.

MR. NESSEN: I have not gotten the full rundown on that trip. We will announce it.

Q What are the dates?

MR. NESSEN: I think it has been announced.

Q Is it possible that the President could have worn himself out in all this travel?

MR. NESSEN: Dr. Lukash didn't indicate that at all.

Q Did you say the 29th and 30th?

MR. NESSEN: That is what I have heard, and read, printed before.

Q What California cities?

MR. NESSEN: Jim Deakin says Los Angeles on the 29th and San Francisco on the 30th.

Q Is he accurate?

MR. NESSEN: Isn't he always?

Now, I would like to review with you the New York City bond market.

Q When you talked about the future, you said that depends when the President's temperature subsides?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Would you think that the President would probably maintain at least a lighter than usual schedule through the rest of the week, then?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is pretty likely, yes.

Q Would you think then that he might be back at work in his office tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: It just really depends on when the temperature goes down.

Q I am talking about the rest of the week.

MR. NESSEN: The question was a lighter than normal schedule for the rest of the week.

Q The New York Times today says the President will sign suitable legislation.

MR. NESSEN: No, it says a source says.

Q Yes, all right. The quote says sources saying the President will sign suitable legislation to help New York City. What is the President's attitude today?

MR. NESSEN: The President's attitude today is the same as it was yesterday, and the day before and last week. There has been absolutely no change in the President's position.

Q He has not specifically said -- and neither have you said -- that he would veto anything that came from the Hill.

MR. NESSEN: I think if you read the interview he had with the Cox Newspapers last week when somebody said, "In other words, you are leaving that option open," or something -- I forget what the exact question was -- and the President said, "Well, that is funny, I thought I was trying to give you the opposite impression."

The President has firmly said this over and over again, that he does not believe legislation would be needed if New York City and New York State took the steps necessary to get the city's finances back on a responsible basis, which would then give confidence to the investors to come back and buy the bonds and notes, and there would be no need for Federal legislation.

As for the various items under consideration up there, or proposed, he has not seen any that he favors, and I think there is a very big question about whether Congress sees anything that it would favor.

Q Ron, are you saying that he would veto such legislation if he was trying to give the opposite impression?

MR. NESSEN: I think you ought to read his words carefully because they haven't changed.

Q Ron, you are not denying this story in the Times this morning?

MR. NESSEN: First of all, I don't know who the source and, secondly, I can't find out what the source is talking about.

Q Why don't you come straight out and say he will veto?

MR. NESSEN: Because there is no legislation here that needs any consideration to veto, and there is a very big question whether any will ever get here.

Q Ron, you have been saying that he has not seen any legislation that he would veto.

MR. NESSEN: I can't hear two people at one time, Tom. Could you start the first part of your question again?

Q Secretary Simon has said the only possible legislation that he might consider would have to be punitive and painful for New York City. Is that the type legislation that would have to come from the Hill for him to consider?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, you have to start off with the idea that he does not believe any legislation would be needed if New York City and New York State did the things that they had the ability to do to straighten out the city's finances and restore the confidence of the investors.

That is all you are talking about, is for the city and the State to make the hard choices that have to be made to restore the confidence of investors to buy New York City's bonds and that the President believes firmly that that can be done without any Federal help.

Q Should that not happen, would he consider a legislative proposal would be of short-term and high interest, which would make it very undersirable for other cities and set a lesson for New York? Is this the type legislation that eventually he might go after?

MR. NESSEN: The President believes that New York City and State don't need any kind of legislation, if they will do what they have the ability to do, and Bill Simon, in response to a lot of people who have said "like what" gave a couple of examples on Sunday.

Q Ron, you said he has not seen anything that he favors and you have said that on other days. Does that mean that he would veto any of the bills that he has seen so far, any of the bills that he is presently aware of that he would veto if presented?

MR. NESSEN: I think he indicated his view in the Cox interview and you would have to read what the exact words were.

Q Could you summarize what the President's position is as of today?

MR. NESSEN: I just tried to summarize it, Lou.

Q Could you make it more clear, Ron? Would he veto or not veto?

MR. NESSEN: You know, I think we are really looking here in the wrong direction. The question is, is New York City and New York State willing to take the hard steps that would restore the confidence of investors and bring them back into the market for New York City, notes and bonds, and that is all that it is really about.

As I have said before, New York City has not yet been able to persuade the State that it is doing that. Governor Carey sat in the Cabinet Room one day and when the idea of the State helping New York City came up he said, "I am not going to endanger the credit of New York State."

So what is the idea here? If the State does not have enough confidence in the steps that the City is taking to give its help, why are they coming here and asking that the President use people's money from elsewhere in the country?

Q Ron, have you asked the President --

MR. NESSEN: Once again, let me just point out that what we are talking about here is not help or a bail-out for the people of New York. We are talking about some underwriting of those people who can afford to buy notes and bonds, and the President does not believe that that is a proper use of taxpayers' money when the city and State have not done everything they can.

Q Ron, have you asked the President again today or yesterday if there is any change in his position?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, I assume the President read that article in the New York Times.

MR. NESSEN: He did.

Q Was he unhappy that some member of his Administration is saying that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he didn't say he was unhappy. All he said was that his position has not changed and he didn't understand what the source was talking about.

Q Ron, let me ask you one other question.

Q Did he say he didn't understand what the source was?

MR. NESSEN: Where the source got the idea that he had changed his position.

Q Ron, let me ask you one other question. The President has frequently --

Q So there were --

Q Wait a minute. I am asking a question.

Q Go ahead.

Q He is giving an answer to the last question.

Q He had stopped.

Q Let's follow what you started on here.

Q Let me finish up, okay?

Q Go ahead.

Q Ron, the President often says that he is doing something that the American people want, like the tax cut, because they are demanding it. How does he feel about the New York City issue? Does he think the majority of the people do not want aid for New York City?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, and I think some of the Members who came back from being at home for 10 days or so reflected that yesterday in their questioning of Mayor Beame. Some of the things I have read indicate that that is a strong feeling outside of New York City.

In fact, one telegram here came into the White House -- if I can find it -- it is a telegram from the council members of Medford City, Oregon.

Q There we go.

Q Are they buying a dog?

MR. NESSEN: Is that where David is from?

Q No, he is from Roseburg.

MR. NESSEN: This is just a copy of the telegram that they have sent to their Congressional delegation saying, "In the event that a bill is introduced in Congress to approve financial help to New York City, the City Council of Medford, Oregon, requests you add an amendment to that bill providing \$1 million in funds for fiscal year 1976-1977 for our city. This sum represents our projected difficulty" -- well, it says difficulty, I think they mean deficit -- "for next year. If you cannot agree to sponsor the above amendment, we request that you vote no to any direct financial aid to New York City or any other local unit of government. Observingly" -- I don't know what observingly means -- "you recognize the discrimination in helping one city out of financial difficulties to the exclusion of any other."

Q Have you had any similar telegrams or letters from other cities?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check up on that.

Q Ron, get back to this source. The President read that story this morning and he said he didn't know where that fellow got that idea. Is that what you are saying?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q You are saying the President said on the basis of having read this story this morning that this source, this unnamed source, apparently thought he had changed his position?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Well, the change in position would be that he would reluctantly sign legislation so you are saying he would not sign legislation?

MR. NESSEN: I am saying that the President indicated that he did not know where, whoever the source was, they got the idea that he had changed his position on New York City because he has not changed his position on New York City.

Q Are you saying, then, that he would not sign legislation?

MR. NESSEN: He has not seen any legislation that he approves of and he does not believe legislation is needed.

Q So what you are saying is that the President says this source does not know what he is talking about?

MR. NESSEN: The President does not know where the source got the idea that he has changed his position.

Q Ron, has the President made any effort to find out who the source was?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of, John.

Q Does he ever care about those things enough to make such inquiry?

MR. NESSEN: You mean like set up a group over in room 16? (Laughter)

Q No. This story was quite a serious story about serious reporting.

MR. NESSEN: I could not agree more.

Q Attributed to a high White House official.

MR. NESSEN: That is correct, but the high White House official --

Q Ron, could I follow that up?

MR. NESSEN: Or the Administration official, whatever the exact description is.

I just want to assure you that the President has not changed his position on New York City.

Q Ron, did you get mail reflecting the attitude of the Oregon council?

MR. NESSEN: You mean other people? Well, some of the questioning of Beame yesterday I thought reflected some of that.

Q But I mean stuff actually coming into the White House. Are you getting a large volume?

MR. NESSEN: Of that kind of thing?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Well, there is one mail count that I got which I need to check up on and have updated.

The President gets a weekly summary of mail from Roland Elliott. Now this is for the week of October 13 to 17. It is a little behind the times and I think most of it came in before last Friday's events.

Anyhow, at that time it says -- this is a note to the President -- "We have received considerable amounts of mail this week commenting on Federal aid to New York City." And the breakdown at that time was in favor of aid to New York City, 478, and opposed to aid to New York City, 296. So you see from that that the letters during that period were more in favor of aid to New York City, but let me read you --

Q Can you give us a date on that?

MR. NESSEN: I say this was the week of October 13 to 17.

Q I say can we get an update on that for today?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to give it to you in a second.

Q Did he give you any breakdown on where it was?

MR. NESSEN: That is what I want to read, if I may.

Q I am sorry.

MR. NESSEN: This, as I say, is a note to the President. It says: "Those supporting Federal aid are largely New Yorkers who argue that default would cause serious economic dislocations throughout the country. Many also argue that their situation is analogous to major private industries -- Lockheed, railroads, et cetera -- which have received Federal assistance under similar circumstances."

Then the next paragraph says: "Those opposing aid to New York City are generally not New Yorkers. They oppose the precedent that a Federal bail-out would set and argue that only default will force New York to adopt responsible fiscal policies."

Now there is a little later breakdown here for the period during the last two weeks. Those in favor of aid -- well, it is almost 50-50. Opposed to aid to New York City, 1,396; in favor of aid to New York City, 1,355.

Q What is the period on that phase?

MR. NESSEN: The last two weeks leading up to this morning at 10:00 a.m.

Q That includes the October 13 to the 17 dates; is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, that is a breakdown of letters and telegrams. Roland Elliott is limited to letters received during that week of October 13 to 17.

Q Ron, if you will forgive me I would like to pursue this question of what position it is that the President has not changed? Could you state --

MR. NESSEN: I just don't see how I can state it any more clearly, Jim.

Q Well, I would like you to state it one more time.

MR. NESSEN: All right, one more time.

The President believes that no Congressional legislation would be needed if New York City and New York State took the steps they have within their means to restore New York City to a fiscally responsible footing and thereby give investors the confidence they need to resume purchasing New York City notes and bonds.

Second, on the subject of various proposals that have been made on the Hill, he does not believe any would be needed if New York City and State did that. He has seen most of the proposals that have been talked about up there. He does not see any that he approves of.

Finally, he believes that there is a very large question as to whether Congress sees any there that it can approve of.

Q Well, how does the statement attributed to this source today counter that position? Why does it necessarily mean that the President would change that? This source really is quoted as saying that the President would reluctantly approve such legislation if Congress sent it to him. He can still hold to his position that it is not needed and sign it, can't he?

MR. NESSEN: You know, Jim, I just think the kind of question you are asking can't be answered. As we have said before whenever the same question was asked in different forms, what would he do if this happened and that happened -- I am telling you what his firm position today is, and has been, and it has not changed.

Q Ron, haven't there been precedents for the President signing legislation with reluctance that he did not approve of? I am thinking of the tax cut bill.

MR. NESSEN: You know, we have been around this hill so many times. Why don't we stop now because it is not going to go anywhere.

Q I want to be sure. Do I have you quoted correctly, though, that he saw the story and said he did not understand how the source got that idea?

MR. NESSEN: How the source got the idea that he changed his position on New York City.

Q You know, there is another source, or maybe it is the same source, I don't know, that told CBS that same thing on Saturday. Now it is not my story but basically the same story.

NBC had another source, or maybe it was the same source, who told Levin about that same thing last night.

MR. NESSEN: I saw it.

Q Is the President concerned that maybe nobody knows what the game plan is here, or does he wonder where all these stories are coming from?

MR. NESSEN: He knows what the game plan is and I try to reflect to you what the game plan is.

Q But the sources don't know?

MR. NESSEN: You know what the President's position is and it has not changed.

Q Could I follow just on that point? A couple of weeks ago you told us several times that it would be wrong to suggest that there might be Federal aid because if you hold out the even slim hope of Federal aid then New York will not take its own necessary actions.

In light of this, does the President still feel that way about it and in light of that how --

MR. NESSEN: You mean, is this a charade and a sham?

Q No. Is he then concerned, is he concerned about all these leaks? Is he disturbed about all these leaks?

MR. NESSEN: Enough to set up a plumbers union, no.

Q No, not to set up a plumbers union but to send out the word --

MR. NESSEN: You know, there was a lot of feeling, I think, that if New York got to the brink of default that the President would rush in at the last minute and prevent it, and I think the events of last Friday show that what we have said about that was true and I suggest that he is just as firm in his feeling about the need for legislation.

Q Well, that is not necessarily so because the President knew, he had received calls from the Teachers Union to the effect that they probably would rescue him so we cannot say that or --

MR. NESSEN: Oh, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. Where do those calls come from?

Q Check the Joe Kraft story this morning.

MR. NESSEN: I have checked the Joe Kraft story but I am asking you where does the idea come from that there were calls from the Teachers Union?

Q According to the Kraft story the President knew New York was not going to default next week and that is why he could take that tough position.

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry but I respectfully disagree with Joe if that is what he is saying.

Q Did Rohatyn not call the White House, then?

MR. NESSEN: He may have talked to the monitoring group but, as far as I know, he did not talk to the President. The only call I know about was the call from Goldmark to Cannon saying it looked like the Teachers Union pension fund was not going to buy the notes.

Q But Kraft says that Rohatyn called the White House and informed the White House that they would back down.

MR. NESSEN: Well, who is the White House? I don't know about that call. The monitoring group, as I said last week, was talking to people all through the period.

Q But you cannot deny that Rohatyn may have called someone here and that information may have been passed on to the President?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you ask him whether that is what he said because I have no information that -- the first that anybody here knew that the Teachers pension fund had decided to participate in the plan was when I took a piece of wire copy in and showed it to the President at about 2:30 or 2:28.

Q Was he surprised?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he appeared to be surprised and asked --

Q Did you ask him whether he knew already that this was going to happen?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I had no reason to believe that he did know, Jim.

Q Did you ask him?

MR. NESSEN: I did not ask him that question because he seemed surprised.

Q Was there anything that indicated that he knew in advance?

MR. NESSEN: He appeared surprised.

Q Ron, what is the President's general viewpoint on the use of unidentified sources? Does he have a respect for this? Does he feel it is necessary? Does he feel that there is a possibility that sometimes these so-called sources are made up of whole cloth or not? What is his feeling on it?

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: I have not had an opportunity to ask him, Les.

Q What is your feeling as far as being his Press Secretary? These unidentified sources, I mean, how do you --

MR. NESSEN: I have already said that my views don't really mean anything.

Q Ron, does the President see any contradiction in the rejection of New York's appeal for help and the reinstatement of the 235 program which by helping middle and low income people does indirectly subsidize the housing industry which has been clamoring for help?

MR. NESSEN: John, I don't see any reason to review all the reasons for his stand on New York City, although I will if you want me to.

Q Ron, did the President indicate to you that he knew who this source was?

MR. NESSEN: No, he indicated he did not know who the source was.

Q At the risk of belaboring this --

Q He does not know where the source got the idea they came up with?

MR. NESSEN: He does not know how the source got the idea that he changed his position.

Q Does the fact that the --

Q Can we go away from here safely saying that the President has shut the door; that today you have shut the door on any kind of Federal aid for New York City?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you can say whatever you please, Bob, but I would think --

Q We are trying to find out what the deal is here.

MR. NESSEN: I would be happy to review the deal one more time, as I did for Jim.

Q We keep asking you all these questions and you never do give the answers.

MR. NESSEN: I am giving the answer that reflects the President's view. Now if you would like me to give you some other answer, I can do that, but my view here has always been that the purpose of answering questions at the briefing has been to give you the President's views. Now if you would like me to give you something else than that, I will.

Q We would like some answers.

MR. NESSEN: I am giving you the President's views.

Q Will he veto legislation that would help New York City?

MR. NESSEN: Shall I go through it again, Bob?

Q You have never answered that question.

MR. NESSEN: The President's view is that no legislation would be needed if New York City and State take the steps needed to restore fiscal responsibility to the management of the city's affairs thereby --

Q We are not deaf, Ron. We have heard you say that before.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I wonder about that sometimes, Bob.

Q Ron, what if New York City does not take these steps and Congress goes ahead and passes some legislation? Then what is he going to do? Is he going to veto it or not?

MR. NESSEN: I just think that is one of those hypothetical questions that I can't answer.

Q Ron, can we try this one other time?

Q If I could go back to Jim's question, I think there is a real problem here which can't be cleared up by simply quoting your answer. You are saying that the President has not changed his views.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

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Q The point is if he could do what was described that he might do in that New York Times source story without changing his view, so it would be very helpful if you could give us some indication of whether that story is accurate, but when you say he won't change his view, that does not go to the story.

MR. NESSEN: Here is how the question would have to be phrased in order for me to deal with it, Lou. Suppose New York City does not do what it can do, and suppose New York State does not provide any aid, and suppose the Congress decides to pass some kind of legislation, and suppose the legislation is something that the President does not favor.

How can I answer a question that is prefaced with five "if's," Lou? I can't.

Q Can you answer this question, Ron. Is this source wrong in having said that President Ford would reluctantly sign legislation to ease New York City's fiscal crisis if it contained stringent restrictions that Congress is likely to insist upon?

MR. NESSEN: That question has implied in the four "if's," Jim, which I cannot answer those kinds of questions on this or any other matter.

Q So you have left the door open?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, you can obviously write the story any way you please, but I am telling you that there was a good deal of feeling that the door had been left open to some Federal action to prevent a default by New York City, and I think the events of last Friday showed that when I had indicated before firmly that the President was not going to do that, I was reflecting the President's views, and I am on this matter, too.

Q Your statement still stands that the President will do nothing to prevent New York City from going into default?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Didn't you say he had no power to do anything?

MR. NESSEN: I am doing a kind of shorthand with John. He has no authority to do it, and he does not want the authority, and does not believe in any use of authority. If he had any authority he would, by using such authority for a short-term infusion of money, get to the basic problem.

Q Ron, is it also true that the President will not announce that he is going to veto legislation to help New York until he sees the legislation?

MR. NESSEN: If there is any legislation.

Q Is that a yes, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Only in the sense that he never says that he is going to veto any legislation until there is a bill and until he sees it.

Q That is not so. What about the tax cut?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, you know, we are wasting a good deal of each other's time here in a fruitless exercise. The President has not changed his position, and I am not going to be--

Q Nobody said he has changed his position, and you keep repeating that as if it were the point of the New York Times story, which it is not.

MR. NESSEN: And you keep asking me a question which I cannot answer because it has implied within it four if's.

Q I have not asked a question with four if's. I just asked if he will veto legislation to help New York City.

MR. NESSEN: There is no legislation. He does not believe there needs to be any.

Q Ron, you said the President will do nothing to prevent New York City from going into default.

MR. NESSEN: I said that last Friday, so if it is news today, I don't understand why it is news.

Q Therefore, if he were to sign legislation that would help New York City, that would be going against what you just said, so basically you have answered the question.

MR. NESSEN: He will not take action to prevent a default by New York City, but he does not believe that there needs to be a default in New York City.

Q Ron, you made a categorical statement before with no if's attached to it, and you made it several times, in fact; that is, that the President believes no Congressional legislation is needed to restore New York City and New York State to fiscal soundness.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q The question is, will the President act on that belief? If he believes no legislation -- that is, no ifs, ands or buts -- no legislation, that he would veto?

MR. NESSEN: That is his belief.

Q I am asking if he will act on that belief. That is my question.

MR. NESSEN: There is nothing to act on right now, Phil.

Q So, your categorical answer, Ron, as was brought out here is --

MR. NESSEN: Les, I would rather --

Q This source does not know what it is talking about. He, she or it does not know what it is talking about, in effect. Isn't that true, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Are there any other subjects we want to talk about today?

Q The City Manager of Hartford, Connecticut, has presented a bill to the State GOP for some \$9,000 for overtime pay for the police and firemen. The City Manager says that he didn't know about any negotiation for that, that it was the White House and the Secret Service. Are you considering paying such a bill, and has one been sent to you?

MR. NESSEN: This is the first I have ever heard of it.

Q Would the White House consider paying such costs for Presidential travels?

MR. NESSEN: I have to look into it, Fran. I have not heard of it before.

Q Ron, yesterday Assistant Commerce Secretary Pate said that if there were not an extension of this year's tax cut, which would in effect amount to an increase in taxes next year, this would be a drag on the economic recovery.

Now, he is a fairly high-ranking official there, and it seems to be differing from what the President is saying. Can you clear this up?

MR. NESSEN: How does it differ from what the President said?

Q The President has said he would veto any tax cut bill that was not tied to a spending ceiling, and Mr. Pate seems to be saying that if there is not an extension of this year's tax cut, it is going to retard the economic recovery. Does he reflect the President's thinking?

MR. NESSEN: What is the conflict?

Q Are you saying, then, that the President would be willing to retard the economic recovery by vetoing a tax cut not tied to the spending ceiling?

MR. NESSEN: You know what the President's proposal is, and that is what he believes is needed both in the long run and in the short run.

Q Ron, can you tell us something more about Jack Eckerd, why he was chosen for this job?

MR. NESSEN: Because some of the kinds of things that he was doing in Florida are very good preparation for the kinds of things he will be doing for the Federal Government.

Q Like run a chain of drug stores?

MR. NESSEN: Like doing a fair amount of building and construction work.

Q Ron, can you tell us why Art Sampson is staying on the payroll for another six weeks at \$145 a day after six or seven years at high paying salaries in the Government?

MR. NESSEN: Maybe it is leave time. I don't know the answer, but I will look it up.

Q Ron, there is a story in the New York Times to the effect that no military aid to Egypt is contemplated during this fiscal year or, in other words, that when President Sataf comes here no military aid would be extended to Egypt at the present time. Does that reflect the President's view?

MR. NESSEN: What is new about that?

Q I was just asking.

MR. NESSEN: I mean, I don't understand the question. There has never been a commitment to give military aid to Egypt. There has been a commitment to discuss it.

Q I know, but it has been the Administration's position not to give military aid to Egypt if it were asked for by Egypt.

MR. NESSEN: That may be one of the issues they will discuss. That is a commitment we made, to discuss it with them.

Q Right, but this story goes farther than that, Ron. It says that when the matter is discussed, the United States is going to tell President Sadat that there will be no military aid for Egypt in this fiscal year. Is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the specifics of the discussion with the President will be.

Q What is the President hearing from Dr. Kissinger regarding his talks?

MR. NESSEN: He is getting regular cables back from Dr. Kissinger.

Q Could we go back to the Eckerd thing for just a minute?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q I would like to know why the President chose him for this job.

MR. NESSEN: I thought I indicated that he has had experience in an area that will be helpful for him in his new responsibility and also has a reputation as being a good administrator and manager.

Q Can you tell us what his relation --

MR. NESSEN: Is there some problem with him that I don't know about?

Q No.

Q I would like to know -- I am told that he is an old friend of the President's. Can you tell us how that relationship could be described? How long have they known each other? How had they become friends? Anything of that nature.

MR. NESSEN: I have to look into the background. I don't know the background on that.

Q Did he ask for the job?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that.

Let me straighten out the Art Sampson matter. I am told that there is an agreement for Art Sampson to remain on as a consultant for 30 to 45 days. The purpose of this is to assure continuity at the GSA. The new Administrator has not been confirmed, and so cannot perform the duties, so Art Sampson will be there as a consultant through this transition period.

Q What is the pay?

MR. NESSEN: We will have to check it for you.

Q Did the President consider the objection of the Anti-Defamation League that Jack Eckerd ran anti-Semetic campaign advertisements during his Senate campaign?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know specifically whether -- that is the first I have heard of it, frankly, but whatever questions there may be raised about his qualifications, there will be an opportunity for the confirmation hearings to bring that out and deal with it.

Q I mean, nobody in the White House informed the President the Anti-Defamation League and other organizations have accused him of running anti-Semetic ads in the last campaign and that this has been checked out with the Senators and with the House Members from Florida?

MR. NESSEN: Is that right?

Q I am asking you.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, I didn't hear a question. I am sorry. What was the question?

Q Has anyone informed the President of the charges regarding Jack Eckerd running anti-Semetic advertisements in his campaign for U.S. Senate?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that.

Q Ron, your answer to that question a minute ago implied that the White House makes appointments like this either without knowing or checking such a matter in a man's background.

MR. NESSEN: How did my answer imply that? I don't know how my answer implied that.

Q I am about to tell you.

MR. NESSEN: Oh.

Q Without checking it or without caring what the results are -- in other words, ignoring it -- and then relies on the Senate to clean it up, is this what is going on here?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Did the White House know about these charges before the nomination was sought?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, I will check.

Q About the indictment of the two men in California, the others you know well of, the man with the gun in St. Louis, the Federal agency was offered a bribe on the two gun incidents in California and discounting the automobile accident, how does the White House explain those and is there any thought given to the possibility of some individual force behind them, either offering money or some form of conspiracy, not necessarily linking the individuals at all?

MR. NESSEN: As I understand the question, it is, is somebody looking into the possibility of some overall plan that links all these things together.

Q That is the first part, and the second part is how do you explain it? Why are there so many? Is it media attraction or do these things go on all the time and are just unreported?

MR. NESSEN: No, I would not try to explain them, Tom, but you know each one of them is investigated by the Secret Service and the other authorities. If there is anything more than they appear to be, I am sure that those investigators will find it.

Q Ron, is there anything you could tell us more about this case in California of these two men that apparently were conspiring to kill the President?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't know anything more about it.

Q Did you know about it at the time you were in California with the President?

MR. NESSEN: I did not personally know about it, nor did the President know about it.

Q Has the White House gotten any kind of a report on it that would indicate what the reasons were?

MR. NESSEN: No. Of course, the President is aware of it now because he read it in the paper.

Q Is that how he became aware of it?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Isn't a conspiracy to assassinate the President something that he would be normally informed of?

MR. NESSEN: No. It is not. He is not normally notified of threats against his life.

Q No, but I am talking about a conspiracy.

MR. NESSEN: Well, he was not notified of this.

Q Has he asked to be given more information about it?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Have you ever gotten that report from the Secret Service that you were supposed to on the Hartford incident? Did it ever come in?

MR. NESSEN: I meant to check that. I have not checked it.

Q What is the philosophy behind not telling the President when there is a threat on his life?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Ron, one more subject, please. We are getting some secondhand reports that you have said Dr. Kissinger is unduly secretive and does not fill you in properly on foreign affairs. Can you tell us how you feel about that?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Are those your views?

Q Ron, you are being quoted on the record, I think, at a certain function that limits it to a small number of reporters and I think Fran's question is legitimate. You said it once on the record. Why can't you say it now on the record?

MR. NESSEN: I would prefer not to, Ralph.

Q Did Fran's question accurately reflect what you said this morning?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Would you want to explain what it is you actually said?

Q Do you want to get off the hook on this?

MR. NESSEN: No. I don't know what hook I am on but whatever it is I --

Q Is Dr. Kissinger keeping you fully informed on --

MR. NESSEN: Oh, come on. I have got a busy day; you have got a busy day. Do you have any more questions?

Q I think we are all interested in this, Ron. I think this is an item of considerable interest that Fran has raised, Ron, and I know you want to try to --

Q I am just curious. When you said you had a busy day, I thought we were your business. What do you do?

MR. NESSEN: I am here and ready to answer questions, Bob, to provide you with information about the White House activities for the purpose of writing stories, which is what I understand the purpose of the briefing to be.

Q Well, Ron, you are a subject of great interest.

MR. NESSEN: I realize that.

Q I mean you were in a cartoon last night.

MR. NESSEN: God.

Q Ron, are you saying you have not changed your position?

Q Have you had an opportunity to check with the President, in reference to the Safire column report, that a message was relayed from this connection to Mr. Ford warning him about Dr. Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: I did not check that today, no.

Q I didn't get an answer. I asked what I thought was a serious question.

MR. NESSEN: Which is?

Q The question is, do you feel that you are being kept fully informed by Dr. Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: I feel that I have all the information on foreign policy that enables me to deal with the questions here at the briefings.

Q But that has not been answered. The question is, is Kissinger keeping you properly informed?

MR. NESSEN: Don't point your finger, Les, please.

Q I will point my finger. I was not pointing it at you, I was pointing it to the air.

Q The Almighty.

Q Are you ordering me to control my body motions? (Laughter) I was not pointing at you, Ron; I was pointing up like that. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: What else have we got?

Q I just want to make sure we are cleared up on this quote of this morning, that is all.

Q Did you discuss that topic?

MR. NESSEN: Well, my understanding -- I think I have told you my feelings.

Q Have you had any opportunity to discuss with the President the action of the New York Conservative Party in endorsing Mr. Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: No, I have not.

Q Have you any comment?

MR. NESSEN: No, I haven't.

I will give another medical briefing at 5:00 if you want one.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:35 P.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 4:00 P.M. EDT

OCTOBER 21, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The main thing that I wanted to clean up was this Jack Eckerd business from this morning. I should have had the information at the time, and didn't, but I think the question basically had to do with did the White House know about some charges that had been made a while back against Mr. Eckerd.

Let me trace briefly the history of this and then answer that specific question.

A day or so before the election in 1974 in which Jack Eckerd was running against Richard Stone for Senator from Florida this newspaper ad ran. It is a Jack Eckerd for U.S. Senate ad and what it really does is it has Eckerd and Stone and it has their profession, birth place, family, religion, military service and education.

As a result of that ad some people felt that the inclusion of the comparison of religions as well as other matters indicated some anti-Semitic thought, including the Florida ADL.

Then on November 7, which was after the election, Jack Eckerd wrote a letter to Dick Stone congratulating him on being elected to the Senate, and in the second paragraph said: "There is one point on which I would like to set the record straight. I ran an ad which I now understand was considered by many people to be anti-Semitic. It was not intended that way. If I had realized that anyone would interpret it in that manner the ad would not have run. The reproduction of this letter as an advertisement personally paid for by me and run in Florida key newspapers is my way of apologizing to those who were offended."

This particular copy ran in the Miami Herald on November 11, 1974.

Q That is what he said to Mr. Stone, is it?

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MR. NESSEN: Mr. Stone, and paid to have it published in the paper.

Then there are a series of endorsements that came in from different people to the President when they thought that Jack Eckerd was under consideration for a job. Some of these people, including this particular chairman of the board of the St. Petersburg Times, said that he had personally been against Eckerd for Senate but he has known Eckerd all of his life -- not all of his life but has known him and said, "We don't have the slightest doubt about the sincerity of his apology. We know him and we have observed his life work and we have found in him the highest principles that the best of men exhibit. Bigotry is simply not in him," and so forth, and so on.

Q Who was that? Pointer?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Pointer's paper also ran an editorial saying that the ADL, which also apparently has raised this charge, is off-base, as you see.

The other two elements are these: Eckerd's company, of the top 32 people in Eckerd's company, I understand 20 are Jewish, including the chief operating officer, or whatever the exact title is.

Finally, the White House staff was fully aware of this series of developments of the charge. The President was aware of the charge. It was looked into. The President satisfied himself that there was nothing to the charge and it was on that basis that he nominated Jack Eckerd to the GSA job.

Q Stone, in fact, accepted his apology on the record?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q What religion does Eckerd list for himself on that?

MR. NESSEN: Protestant.

MORE

Q You are going to give us copies of those two things, right?

MR. NESSEN: Which two things?

Q The ads and the letter.

MR. NESSEN: The ad ran a year ago in the Miami Herald and the letter ran a year ago in the Miami Herald. I don't know that there is any big deal about it.

Q Well, you are using it so we would like to see it.

MR. NESSEN: As soon as the Xerox machine can warm up we will crank them out for you.

Q Thank you.

Q Can you tell us what the status of Mr. Franco is as far as you know?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, we have nothing.

Q You don't have any information on the condition of Franco?

MR. NESSEN: Well, we don't have any information to confirm the reports that have been broadcast, I understand.

Q Had denied?

MR. NESSEN: I saw something on the wire that said the Spanish Government denied it.

MORE

Q There is a story on the UPI that said the American Ambassador said that he was in fact alive. I don't know how he knew that. Nevertheless, does the White House have information to that effect?

MR. NESSEN: As I understand, the original story that sparked the queries was a report that he had died, and we don't have any confirmation of that.

Q Ron, has the White House made a routine inquiry with the U.S. Embassy in Madrid?

MR. NESSEN: There is contact with the Embassy in Madrid.

Q And has the Embassy in Madrid denied the reports that Franco is dead?

MR. NESSEN: There is just no confirmation of it.

Q We understand there is no confirmation that he died.

MR. NESSEN: Yes. There is no confirmation that he died. I think that is really the question.

Q Is there a confirmation that he is still alive?

Q What is the American Ambassador doing there?

Q I just want to finish the question.

There is a difference, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: Between being dead and being alive? I think there is, too.

Q Wait a minute, Ron. There is a difference between not being able to confirm that he is dead and confirm that he is alive. There is a big difference.

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure that the White House is the proper place to deal with that question.

Q All right.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, there is no confirmation of the reports that have been on television.

Q Does the White House know whether he is dead or alive?

MR. NESSEN: We just don't have anything further than what I have said, Russ.

Q Have you had any reports through diplomatic channels?

MR. NESSEN: Are you going to correct the story?

Q Wait just a minute. That is a private matter. Have there been any reports through diplomatic channels that he is in fact still alive?

MR. NESSEN: You know, the Spanish officials are fully capable of discussing the state of health of their Chief of State.

Q Have you received any reports --

MR. NESSEN: The United States Government has no confirmation of the reports I have seen on television.

Q Ron, you mentioned this morning in an apparently on-the-record session that sometimes the communications are not as full as you might like with Secretary Kissinger's office. If Kissinger's office had been cabled a report that Franco was dead --

MR. NESSEN: I don't want you to paraphrase what I said, Tom.

Q If Secretary Kissinger in Peking had been cabled that Franco was dead, would you know that as the Press Secretary?

MR. NESSEN: Let me assure you, Tom, that up until about 30 seconds ago that I have seen every piece of paper that has come from Madrid relating to this matter, if that assures you of my ability to provide the information desired out here.

I also think that you know this morning, and every other morning, I probably had ten to 15 times as much material on foreign policy that I was asked about, which is the case most mornings.

Q The question is not what has come from Madrid, but what has gone to Secretary Kissinger. Have you also had access to that information?

MR. NESSEN: It is the same information.

Q The same information?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q When you say confirmation of the reports, are you referring only to John Scali's report?

MR. NESSEN: And whatever other reports there may be along the same line.

Q Yes, but Ron, there is a report on the UPI that says that the American Ambassador has said that he is alive, and it seems to me there is a discrepancy here.

MR. NESSEN: I just think, Bob, that reports on his health need to be handled by the Spanish Government. The original question was had we had any confirmation of the report, and the answer is no.

Q Just a minute. To pursue Bob's point --

MR. NESSEN: I am going to sit down. I see this is going to stretch out.

Q The Ambassador has told our bureau there that as far as he knows Franco is alive.

MR. NESSEN: Good. Then that resolves the question.

Q Has he not sent the same word to you?

MR. NESSEN: I have read the cables from the Ambassador.

Q Presumably.

MR. NESSEN: I assure you that I am aware of what is going on there.

Q I don't question that.

MR. NESSEN: Okay.

Q So then wouldn't he in fact have advised the White House of the same information?

MR. NESSEN: He is keeping the Government fully informed.

Q Will you answer that question?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Has the President received any information on the state of Franco's health from either the Central Intelligence Agency or the NSA?

MR. NESSEN: What else have we got?

Q That is a legitimate question.

MR. NESSEN: It certainly is, but it is not going to get an answer.

Q Why?

Q Ron, is this a case of diplomatic delicacy, that you don't feel you can be in a position to comment on the health of another head of State? Could you give us any guidance off the record?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q All right. Then, would you object if we went ahead --

MR. NESSEN: I object to the second paragraph of your night lead on the New York City story.

Q Highly irrelevant.

MR. NESSEN: No, it isn't.

Q For the record, it is not my story. (Laughter)

Q We believe you, Dick.

MR. NESSEN: Is it going to be corrected?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Has it been corrected?

Q It will be as soon as I can get out of here.

MR. NESSEN: But I told you about 15 minutes ago. Why hasn't it been corrected since then?

Q He has been busy.

MR. NESSEN: Have you been reading all the cables in the New York case?

Q Don't shake your finger at Dick Lerner. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Have you read all the cables from the Hill containing information about the New York City situation?

Q No. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Does that mean that you are not fully informed on the New York City situation?

Q Yes, it does.

MR. NESSEN: You are not fully informed on the situation?

Q Correct.

MR. NESSEN: All right.

Q Partly because of what comes out of the White House. (Laughter) For the record, then, you would not object if we went out and reported that the White House has received no word from Madrid that Franco is still alive?

MR. NESSEN: Why wouldn't I object to that?

Q You said you have no confirmation of any reports.

MR. NESSEN: No, I said I had no confirmation of the report that appeared on ABC and perhaps other places.

Q Which report are you referring to?

MR. NESSEN: That is the report I am referring to.

Q The report that he is dead?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q And we are raising the question that the Ambassador is being quoted as saying that as far as he knows Franco is alive.

MR. NESSEN: Why wouldn't you print that, then?

Q We are.

MR. NESSEN: Okay. Then what is the problem?

Q You cannot confirm that you have received such word.

MR. NESSEN: I don't blame you, Bob. I feel the same way.

Q Can you tell us the President's temperature?

MR. NESSEN: I will at five o'clock.

Q Does he have a schedule tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is the five o'clock thing going to be for recording, as it was yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, if you desire.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 4:12 P.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 5:01 P.M. EDT

OCTOBER 21, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: I don't think you probably want to film this, but that is up to you.

Dr. Lukash finds that the President has shown a marked improvement during the day. His temperature has been basically within the normal range. That means that since this morning, it has not been above 99.

He had two short naps during the day, but he did more staff work today than he did yesterday. He met for two fairly long sessions with Dorothy Downton, his secretary, for dictation and paperwork, and twice with Don Rumsfeld and once with me.

The outlook is for an expanded staff schedule for tomorrow, at least up in the study. Whether he goes to the office tomorrow or not has not been decided yet.

Because the fever has come down, his aspirin dosage has been lessened. He is still taking the antibiotics and the decongestant. His symptoms -- namely, the cough and the congestion -- have also lessened.

He has a general feeling of getting better.

Mrs. Ford is also feeling somewhat better. She has still had no fever. She is also taking aspirin and decongestants. She felt well enough to increase her own staff work today, working with the people on her staff.

That is about it.

Q No word on the public schedule for tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: No. At this point there won't be a public schedule. At this point, he will stick to staff members.

Q Were public events on a previous schedule that have been cancelled as a result of the illness?

MR. NESSEN: Let me get a hold of the grid for tomorrow.

Q You said the aspirin dosage has lessened. Is he not off aspirin entirely?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is still taking a little.

Q And the antibiotic, did you say?

MR. NESSEN: He is still taking that.

Q Can you tell us what that is?

MR. NESSEN: No. Dr. Lukash's method of operating is not to indicate the name of the medication.

Tentatively for tomorrow -- none of this had been locked in -- he was at least tentatively scheduled to see the bipartisan Congressional leaders early.

He would have had his staff meetings in the morning, and he will have an increased staff schedule tomorrow, at least in the Residence.

There would have been one of those Congressional hours, tentatively, scheduled tomorrow. You know, that is when the Members come in for a few minutes each to deal with some specific problems that they may have.

He would have had his regular meeting with the Vice President tomorrow, and it is possible that that will be held, too.

Q Is it possible that the bipartisan leaders will still meet?

MR. NESSEN: No, I will say he won't do that.

Q That is cancelled?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

That would have been pretty much the day of staff work.

Q In other words, if he does come to the office tomorrow, he probably would just confine his work to staff meetings?

MR. NESSEN: And possibly the Vice President.

Q The Congressional hour?

MR. NESSEN: No, not the Congressional hour.

Q That is out, too?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Would it not be possible to have the meeting with the Vice President in the Residence?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, that is possible.

Q So, it is not contingent upon whether he comes to the office?

MR. NESSEN: No. He may meet the Vice President tomorrow, either in the office or the Residence.

Q Is what he has catching?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't ask Dr. Lukash that. That is a good question.

Q We don't want the Vice President to catch it, too.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't ask.

I think as for tonight he is expected to turn in early again and sleep later than usual tomorrow.

Q Can I change the subject a second?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Can you give us any reaction as to what the President feels about the legislation approved by the Senate Banking Committee today?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't get the idea that that legislation had been approved by the Banking Committee. I think they decided to take it up, as I understand it.

In any case, I don't think the President will have any reaction to each and every step of the legislative process as they consider that subject area.

Q What is the subject area, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Federal help for New York City.

Q Ron, do you have any clear idea at this point what the status of Franco's health is?

MR. NESSEN: I have only that we have seen that report that appeared on television, which stated that he had died, and we don't have any confirmation of that.

Q Can we have a lid now?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I am concerned, yes.

Q What time did Lukash see the President?

MR. NESSEN: About four o'clock.

Q You won't see the President again today, but you will see him tomorrow morning?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 5:09 P.M. EDT)