

This Copy For _____

NEWS CONFERENCE

#391

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH BILL GREENER

AT 11:32 A.M. EST

DECEMBER 12, 1975

FRIDAY

MR. GREENER: The only announcement I have is to point out that the President presided at the senior staff meeting which, as some of you know, he has been doing from time to time.

I have no other announcements. I think you already have the paper on the Fair Trade Act.

Q Does that represent any downgrading of Cheney?

MR. GREENER: No, it does not. It certainly does not.

Q Did he talk about the poll?

Q Did he have a message to give his staff?

MR. GREENER: He just conducted the staff meeting.

Q Did he talk about the poll and how they should not be disgruntled or discouraged by the latest Gallup Poll?

MR. GREENER: Aldo, I don't think I am going into the things that went on at a senior staff meeting.

Q Did the President have any comment on the latest Gallup Poll?

MR. GREENER: Yes, he did. I put that out yesterday, reflecting his views on it.

Q Was anybody grunted? (Laughter)

MR. GREENER: No answer to that one, Dick.

MORE

#391

Q What can you tell us about the meeting with the Defense people this afternoon?

MR. GREENER: It is with the Joint Chiefs, as you know, and the Secretary of Defense, no designees being allowed.

Q Does that have anything to do with the NATO meetings?

MR. GREENER: They will be discussing part of that. They will be discussing some budget matters and overall defense posture.

Q Does that include SALT, Bill?

MR. GREENER: It is not specifically mentioned here. I would not rule it out.

Q Bill, an overall defense posture means just what?

MR. GREENER: It just means that they are going into force structures around the world.

Q Does that mean that they are concerned?

Q Bill, we cannot hear the questions back here.

MR. GREENER: The question was, what did I mean by overall force posture, and I said just overall force structure of troops and weapons.

Q Preliminary to the posture statement for next year, or why is this meeting being held?

Q Question?

MR. GREENER: Why is the meeting being held?

Q Why not?

MR. GREENER: It is being held mainly to receive the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on military trends in general and the FY-1977 defense budget.

Q Bill, is this the last appeal for the defense budget?

MR. GREENER: No.

Q You know you talked about that process.

MR. GREENER: No, it is not.

Q In other words, they still have more chances to come back and ask for more?

MR. GREENER: There is a meeting planned already.

Q Bill, do you confirm the nice information that George Wilson had in the Post today on what they are probably going to talk about or seek in the way of reductions in defense?

MR. GREENER: No, I would not confirm or deny, Sarah.

Q You would not confirm or deny it?

MR. GREENER: No, I just think that is a matter they will be discussing this afternoon.

Q Can you tell us?

MR. GREENER: Not into the particulars, no, I cannot.

Q Bill, did the President endorse the statements made by General Haig in Brussels about his concern over the defense cuts in NATO of some of our partners?

MR. GREENER: I don't know, Dick. I will get somebody to check on it right now for you.

Q Also, did the President have any comment on the content and style of Ambassador Moynihan's remarks at the United Nations?

MR. GREENER: No, he did not.

Q Bill, is it true that the United States is supplying up to \$50 million worth of arms to forces that are fighting in Angola?

MR. GREENER: The President and Secretary Kissinger both made their comments about the situation in Angola, and beyond that I don't think I would like to comment, Bob.

Q Is it true that the Administration is going to ask openly for more money to help out certain forces in Angola and it is going to ask it in a mark-up session up on the Hill this day or sometime?

MR. GREENER: I will check on it for you, John. I don't know of any mark-up that we are asking for this afternoon, nor did I hear it mentioned.

Q Bill, you are not denying that we, in fact, may be supplying up to \$50 billion towards it?

MR. GREENER: I am just not going beyond the statements that have already been made.

Q I am sorry to say I am not familiar --

MR. GREENER: The statements where they commented on the Soviet intervention, and there was no comment at all of our activities, if there were any.

Q That is right, so it is about time we have some comment.

Q Nobody has commented on it at all, and it seems to me in this particular case we are going back to a Vietnam type situation in which we are getting involved in a war in which the American people are not being told what is going on.

I would like to ask why we cannot have some information on what we are doing in Angola.

MR. GREENER: Let me see if I have anything on it, and I don't. I don't know what I just did with it. Let me just check on that one thing, Bob. I had some stuff on Angola, and I will get it for you.

I did check on this one thing, and this is all that I have; that is, that there is no U.S. agency involved in any recruitment of mercenaries, as reported. I have no information on the reports of \$25 million in arms and supporting funds.

Q How about the \$50 million?

MR. GREENER: \$50 million, I am sorry.

Q Reports of \$50 million in arms and supporting funds?

MR. GREENER: Well, the report was that we have spent \$25 million and that we plan to spend another \$25 million, and I said I have no comment on it.

Q How come you don't have information on that? There is a story in major publications this morning that \$50 million in American arms are being sent into Angola. There is no comment from the State Department, and Secretary Kissinger is in Brussels.

Isn't there somebody, some way, that the White House can use its influence to find out whether this is true or false?

MR. GREENER: I will certainly try again.

Q Could you try that?

MR. GREENER: Certainly.

Q Mr. Greener, I am speaking from total ignorance, but --

Q We all are.

MR. GREENER: On both sides.

Q -- don't we have, or shouldn't we have, something that prevents our citizens from going into another country and fighting under their flag and taking part in something that creates or is part of a war? Are they supposed to lose their citizenship if they fight under another flag?

MR. GREENER: As you know, there are statutes governing such things, and I don't have the answer to it, but the Justice Department is prepared to answer that today and the effects on one's citizenship, as you point out.

Q Bill, on the meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is Angola on the agenda?

MR. GREENER: It is not on the agenda.

Q We could not hear the question, Bill.

MR. GREENER: The question was, was Angola specifically on the agenda items for the meetings with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I answered no.

Q Bill, is this defense budget review going to take any longer by reason of the fact that the Secretary is new in the job and may not have had time to thoroughly be briefed up on it?

MR. GREENER: No, I don't think so, Bill.

Q Bill, is the President going to be in the Washington area this weekend?

MR. GREENER: Yes.

Q All weekend?

MR. GREENER: Yes.

Q There is no chance that he would take a quick one-day trip anywhere?

MR. GREENER: None that I know of, Ann.

Q How about Camp David?

MR. GREENER: It is not planned at this time.

Q Bill, what does he plan to do?

MR. GREENER: He plans to have a budget review meeting tomorrow morning, and I don't know the rest of the schedule at this time.

Q Bill, did the President see the Gallup Poll this morning or yesterday and, if so, did he have any response?

MR. GREENER: As I mentioned earlier, Jules, I stated yesterday that the President feels that in any campaigns there are ups and downs and that the only real poll that counts will be the one on election day and that he plans to continue working on the problems of the Nation, and by doing his job, he expects to win the nomination and the election.

Q Bill, we have heard a lot from some of these Senators, some of these candidates who are running for office about how the President is using the incumbency to help his own campaign. I wonder how he feels about some of these Senators using the forum of the Senate and the Senate Press Gallery to put out their Presidential statements on Presidential campaign literature and all that?

MR. GREENER: The President has not made any specific comment on it, Sarah.

Q Maybe he would like to. Would you ask him?

MR. GREENER: I would be glad to ask him, but I think he normally runs on his own record, as he said.

Q Oh, well, now come on, Bill. I am asking you to ask him a question.

MR. GREENER: I will ask him the question.

Q Will you get me an answer?

MR. GREENER: Yes, Sarah.

Q Bill, can we go back to the reaction of the poll?

MR. GREENER: Yes.

Q Was the President surprised by the newest figures?

MR. GREENER: I don't think he expressed anything beyond what I just said, Dick. I mean, I didn't notice any surprise or any immediate reaction.

Q Was there not an expletive deleted or any sort of emotion at all?

MR. GREENER: No. As a matter of fact, I didn't take the initial poll in to him, but I did go in to talk to him about it to see what reaction he wanted me to use, and he was doing exactly what the statement says. He was in the middle of a budget review, he stopped for a minute, looked at what I had written out, handed it back and said fine..

Q Bill, excuse me, but then obviously he already knew about the poll when you went in to see him, so he would not necessarily have expressed any surprise at the news you were bringing him.

MR. GREENER: That is correct, and as I say, as far as I know, I talked to the person that did tell him about the poll, and he did not --

Q Who was that?

MR. GREENER: Dick Cheney.

Q What did he say?

MR. GREENER: He said that he did not show any great expression.

Q When was that?

MR. GREENER: Yesterday morning, about 11 o'clock.

Q Has the President taken any steps to reorganize his campaign organization?

MR. GREENER: No, not that I know of.

Q Is he entirely happy with Bo Callaway?

MR. GREENER: Absolutely.

Q Bill, what is the White House's thinking on why the President's popularity suddenly took such a nose-dive -- not necessarily the President's thinking, but his own political advisers?

MR. GREENER: I reject your premise, to begin with. You are talking about a poll that, as stated in the story itself, has a ten point variance in it because of its small sample.

Q Is he skeptical that it reflects Republican opinion?

MR. GREENER: He didn't say, Frank. I didn't ask the question.

Q Does the President put much stock in polls?

MR. GREENER: No.

Q Not these. (Laughter)

Q Let me see if I understand that. He does not put that Poll? weight or significance into the recent Gallup

MR. GREENER: He feels just exactly the way I said, that there are ups and downs in polls and that the only significant ones --

Q Specifically, does he put much stock in this poll or much significance in polls in general?

MR. GREENER: He does not put much significance in polls in general.

Q Why does he feel that at this particular time there is a down, and what is he going to do to promote an up?

MR. GREENER: He is going to continue to work on the problems of the Nation, as he has been doing, as exemplified by last night's meeting on the tax cut.

Q Any change in that situation this morning?

MR. GREENER: Absolutely no change in the situation.

Q Wouldn't you say that over the last several weeks and months that he has been behaving like a President and doing Presidential duties, and he is now down in the polls? I mean, doesn't he have to do something different?

MR. GREENER: Mort, I don't know what the date of the poll was, do you?

Q November 21 to November 24.

Q It was right after the Halloween trip.

MR. GREENER: He feels that as long as he does his job right, he will be nominated and elected.

Q Bill, you said the President does not put much stock in polls, but I have memory of the President on at least two occasions citing polls in support of his programs and policies. When did he stop putting stock in them?

Q 11 o'clock yesterday.

MR. GREENER: Peter, I was specifically talking about individual polls, and which I thought Ann was on election matters, not on issues.

Q The question was, "Does he put much stock in polls," and it was a general question and you said no.

MR. GREENER: That is a correct answer. He obviously, as you say, has quoted polls that were overwhelmingly in support of his position on issues. I am not denying that.

Q So, he does have stock in some polls?

MR. GREENER: Yes, I suppose that would be more proper, yes.

Q Bill, on that tax situation, there is a report this morning that Congressman Rhodes told the President, in the meeting that they had with him Tuesday, I believe it was, that it looked like the Republicans could not sustain a veto in the House. Is that true?

MR. GREENER: I was not in on that meeting. I would have to check for you.

The President feels just as he said last night, and has been saying all along, that what he wants the Congress to do is to pass a \$28 billion tax cut, which is some \$11 billion more than they are considering now and, at the same time, to point out to the American people that they are limiting the growth in spending by dollar for dollar amount equal to that, and his position stands the same on it.

Q Does the President have any comment on what Bellmon said last night, that the President is trying to break its own budget law?

MR. GREENER: There is no breaking of the law by passing a concurrent resolution, which simply points out to the American people that there has to be some reduction on the growth in spending. That is clear, and all that was said in there was at least going on record as saying this is the amount of money maximum that we will spend in the fiscal year 1977.

Q But the President wants this written into the bill, not a concurrent resolution.

MR. GREENER: The President said that it could be done by whatever budget system that they normally used, including a concurrent resolution, which Lynn pointed out last night.

Q Bill, to pursue Bob Pierpoint's question, regardless of what Rhodes may have told the President, are his advisers still convinced today that his veto could be sustained?

MR. GREENER: Yes, Dick.

Yes, Mary?

Q Bill, could I ask you, you don't want to tell us why you think the President has gone down. Would you want to tell us what you or some of the others think might be the reason that Reagan has gone up?

MR. GREENER: No, Mary. I think the questions that you are asking me are more appropriately addressed to the President Ford Committee and let Bo and Peter Kaye answer those.

Q Bill, has there been any change or any decision made on Ford's view of the common site picketing bill?

MR. GREENER: There has been no decision made. He has to wait to see that bill. As I mentioned yesterday, there are some 15 additional amendments that have been added to it, and until it gets down here, there is no way for him to make that decision.

Q How about the energy bill?

MR. GREENER: He expects to see an analysis of that bill over the weekend, and no decision has been made as yet on it.

Q Do you have a schedule for Saturday?

MR. GREENER: I do not, except, as I said, there is a budget meeting tomorrow morning. We will have it later today, Fran.

Q Is the President disappointed that the House threw out this great big \$6 billion project that was for coal gasification and threw out another one on oil shale? I think he was for those.

MR. GREENER: I talked to Frank Zarb about it this morning, and the President, and Frank pointed out that unless we do something, some vehicle to expedite the development of these important synthetic fuels, that there is just no way we are going to reach our goals for our ultimate energy independence.

Frankly, everybody said we just have to find a way to reconcile these differences with Congress or this Nation will not develop an effective energy program. We hope, however, incidentally, that the Senate will reaffirm the Conference Report and send it back to the House for reconsideration.

Q It seems to be not only Congress' bill, but the big lobby groups are so effective this week. I wonder if the President has any idea of working on them?

MR. GREENER: I think he just plans to continue working with the Congress itself at this time, Sarah.

Q What sort of mail does the President get? What do people write these days? Are they concerned about the economy? Do they care about energy? Were they interested that he went to China, the fact that he was out of the country ten days? Just what are they writing these days?

MR. GREENER: Cliff, I haven't got an immediate report on it, but if you want someone to check, we can get a rundown of what the mail is.

Q Bill, can you give us some sort of a timetable? Does the President expect to veto the tax bill in time for the Congress to get a crack at overriding, or will he pocket veto it, choking off --

MR. GREENER: He was asked that question last night, and did not take a position on it.

Q He was asked that by whom?

MR. GREENER: In the meeting.

Q When you say he did not take a position on it --

MR. GREENER: I believe the way it was put to him was, "if you plan to veto it, can you do it before Christmas," and he said, "I will take that into consideration." That was his answer.

Q Did you get the impression that he would try to accommodate their wishes?

MR. GREENER: I didn't get anything out of it except just that.

Q Bill, is it still the recommendation of Frank Zarb that the President sign the energy bill?

MR. GREENER: No change that we know of, Russ.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Bill.

END (AT 11:52 A.M. EST)