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NEWS CONFERENCE

#434

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:10 P.M. EST

FEBRUARY 9, 1976

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President is going to announce at 12:30 that there will be a Bicentennial exhibition on space and technology developments, with the main part of it at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral. He will be announcing that at 12:30, and then there will be briefings for the President to give him more details by Jim Fletcher of NASA and Guyford Stever, Director of the National Science Foundation and John Warner, the Administrator of the Bicentennial. So, we want to hurry and get to that.

Q It is going to be where?

MR. NESSEN: The Cabinet Room.

Q No, no --

MR. NESSEN: At Cape Canaveral.

Q Why should you have to finish your briefing in a hurry for that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we have much stuff any'ow today. I think I said the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, which is the correct name of it.

As you know, this afternoon at two o'clock there will be the presentation of diplomatic credentials by the Ambassadors of Thailand, Barbados, the Central African Republic and Peru.

I wanted to point out one thing to you because I think there was a misimpression given in a New York Times story on Saturday, reporting on Secretary Kissinger's testimony about the uranium enrichment program.

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The story seemed to indicate Secretary Kissinger was not behind the Administration proposal, which is to have the enriched uranium produced by private companies so we can keep up with the demand from countries around the world, as well as our own.

I have reviewed the Secretary's testimony, and the State Department has, and the Secretary was there for the purpose of testifying in behalf of the Administration's program and is supporting the Administration's program.

I want to tell you, too, that we have now completed a small reorganization of the Press Office.

Jack Hushen has submitted his resignation on Friday and will be announcing himself a job that he has secured in private industry.

Larry Speakes is being promoted to Assistant Press Secretary to the President. The President is announcing that today. As you know, that is a job which is commissioned by the President, and it reflects the President's confidence, as well as our own, in Larry. This is Larry's biography.

Q Is there a salary increase?

MR. NESSEN: Larry, as you know, worked for daily and weekly newspapers and wire services in Mississippi and then came to Washington in 1968, working at the Capitol before coming here in 1974.

So, Larry will move into the front office here and will be really running the front Press Office. He has some definite ideas of improvements, some of which he has already carried out, and the others which he plans to carry out.

Bill Roberts will have an expanded role, an expanded responsibility in the lower Press Office, and I think many of you know Bill and respect him. He has been here for 18 years in Washington as a newsman, serving in the press staff of Vice President Ford and in the Press Office since the President took office. His title is Assistant Press Secretary, and, as I say, he will take on added responsibility.

Thym Smith, who will continue to serve in the lower Press Office, came as an intern and is now a Staff Assistant.

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Gail Campbell, a new secretary in the lower Press Office, who many of you have had an opportunity to meet, she formally worked in the EOB, Margita White's office. She is now in the lower Press Office, along with Gay and Carol.

Q Is that a formal designation, lower Press Office?

MR. NESSEN: We call it the front Press Office--out front, also known as the trenches.

Q As opposed to the back room?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, the smoke-filled back room.

One of the things we have tried to do, and I hope you will see continued improvement in it, is the people in the front Press Office will be much more closely involved in policy decisions and other important news matters so that they will have more information to give you, and Larry and Bill and Thym are now and will continue to be more closely plugged into more information so that they can help you.

Now, also we are announcing today that the President is announcing his intention to nominate George H. Dixon of Minneapolis to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. He succeeds Steve Gardner, who has become a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

Mr. Dixon is Chairman and President of the First National Bank of Minneapolis. His salary is \$44,600 a year, and the biography will give you the rest of the details.

Q He is a Republican?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. he is.

That is all I have.

Q Has the President said he wants Secretary Kissinger to stay on if he, Ford, is elected in 1976?

MR. NESSEN: I think that is what he told an interviewer.

Q Did he say that?

MR. NESSEN: I have to check the transcript, but that is my memory.

Q When did that come about?

MR. NESSEN: I think that was the Christian Science Monitor, if I am not mistaken.

Q When was that published?

MR. NESSEN: This morning.

Q Has he said the same thing about his other Cabinet people?

MR. NESSEN: I have to check the record on what he said about other Cabinet people.

Q Has he said this to Kissinger, and has Kissinger said, "Yes, I will," or what was Kissinger's response?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what it was, Jim.

Q Has he said it to Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: I think Dr. Kissinger knows his feelings, yes. I don't know they sit around and talk about it --

Q What is all this "I think" business? You know what the President said to the Christian Science Monitor.

MR. NESSEN: I know what the President said publicly. I don't know all the private conversations --

Q You did not sit in on the interview?

MR. NESSEN: I did.

Q Then you know what he said?

MR. NESSEN: My memory is that he did say that, right.

Q Has the President now included John Connally in the Vice Presidential candidate list who will be acceptable?

MR. NESSEN: What he said is -- he mentioned some and he said there are others, and what he said is former Governors certainly would merit consideration.

Q Including John Connally?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think he mentioned specifically.

Q You said he conveyed his views to Kissinger. Do you know what Kissinger's response is?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that they sit around and talk all the time, Helen, about how long he is going to stay or not stay.

Q I did not say that. I said maybe it is a one-shot deal. Did he tell Secretary Kissinger what he had in mind?

MR. NESSEN: I don't sit in on all their private conversations, but I feel sure that Secretary Kissinger knows his feeling.

Q Does the President know Secretary Kissinger's feeling?

Q Do you mean to say that the President would tell an interviewer that he wants Secretary Kissinger to stay on in 1976 but he has not discussed the matter with Secretary Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: I said I am sure Dr. Kissinger knows his views.

Q Does the President know Dr. Kissinger's views?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I assume he does.

Q Did I understand you to say that the President did specifically name John Connally as one of those that he would accept as Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall that it was a name on the list.

Q The ticker shows that he named, I think, John Connally and Rockefeller, and Reagan as possible Vice Presidents.

MR. NESSEN: I think what he said was that certainly former Governors would merit consideration. I don't know that he did it by name.

Q In order to straighten this out, are you going to give us a transcript?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q How are we going to get this straightened out?

MR. NESSEN: What is it we need to straighten out? The Dr. Kissinger thing?

Q I just read on the ticker that he specifically named Connally and several others --

MR. NESSEN: In the interview?

Q He named four people specifically in the write-up on the ticker.

MR. NESSEN: Is that from the Christian Science Monitor interview or from the New Hampshire news conference?

Q This is from the Christian Science Monitor interview, as I understand it.

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you search the transcript and see what it says, John.

Q Ron, did Mrs. Ford or any of the children plan to be campaigning with the President in Florida, and do you have any more details on that trip?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any more details at the moment. It is not really decided yet whether Mrs. Ford will go on the trip.

Q Is that because that kid insulted her last night by saying she looked old fashioned?

MR. NESSEN: Maybe that is not an insult.

I think I mentioned to you the cities that he would be going to.

Q Could you mention them again?

MR. NESSEN: The cities, again, are Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, St. Petersburg, Fort Myer and Miami, and I think before the week is very old we will have a more detailed schedule for you.

Q We understand he may go back up to New Hampshire the weekend of the 21st.

MR. NESSEN: It is possible, and the real point that will have to be decided is whether there is time on his schedule for him to go. That will be the determining factor.

Q Did you read them in order of arrival there or not?

MR. NESSEN: If the order was Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, St. Petersburg, Fort Myer and Miami, that is the order.

Q Is the overnight Ford Lauderdale?

MR. NESSEN: The overnight is Fort Lauderdale.

Q Do you expect him to go anywhere on Lincoln's Birthday, the 12th?

MR. NESSEN: I expect him to be in Washington on Lincoln's Birthday.

Q Ron, when are we going to get that promised veto of the public works bill?

MR. NESSEN: The deadline for vetoing it is Friday, so you will get it between now and Friday.

Q And also in that connection, since you did mention even before the House voted on that bill that the President was going to veto it, tomorrow the House is going to be voting on a \$6 billion public service jobs bill.

Are you also prepared at this time to give the President's intention on that one?

MR. NESSEN: On which one?

Q Tomorrow they are voting on a \$6 billion public jobs bill.

MR. NESSEN: I would have to look that one up. I am not all that familiar with the details of that one.

Q Isn't that the one he said he would veto when he was talking to the mayors?

Q This is another one.

MR. NESSEN: There is another bill. I have to take a look at that one.

What the President said to the Christian Science Monitor -- the question was, "Would John Connally be on your list or Ronald Reagan?" Before he had a chance to answer, somebody referred back to a previous question about would a woman be a good Vice Presidential candidate, and the questioner said, "As a woman," and then there was laughter.

Then the questioner said, "No, on the long list," and the President said, "Let me say any ex-Governor has qualifications for it."

So, that is how it went.

Q So, he did not say, then, that a woman might be a possible Vice President, that it might be Carla Hills as one of many. That was not true?

MR. NESSEN: On the Carla Hills question -- what was that, Sarah?

Q The ticker shows that he said there might be a possibility of a woman for Vice President and that Carla Hills might be one of many.

MR. NESSEN: The question was, "You did not mention any women. Is that an oversight?" and the President said, "This is only an illustrative list, not a definitive one."

The questioner said, "Well, you would not exclude women," and he said, "No, not at all." "Could you perhaps mention a few that might be qualified?" "Again, if I list one or two, I will get clobbered by not mentioning all of them."

Question: "You could mention a woman office-holder, couldn't you?" "Obviously, we have a very qualified person in my Cabinet in Carla Hills, but I want to emphasize I am not, under any circumstances, saying that there are not many others."

Q Ron, I think this only brings out the fact that if we don't have that transcript the President is going to be misconstrued here, and there is another question of the transcript here that is very vital on the question of the Supreme Court decision on abortion.

His words shouldn't be rewritten by the correspondent. They should be the exact words.

MR. NESSEN: I thought we gave that one out.

Q What he said to the Christian Science Monitor correspondent on the Supreme Court decision on abortion?

MR. NESSEN: You know the President's stand on abortion, Sarah. You do have his words --

Q It is in addition to what you gave out the other day -- it is not the same thing. This is what he thinks about the Supreme Court decision.

Q He said the court would modify its stand, or he thought it would.

MR. NESSEN: Come on, now. Let's not go into the whole transcript issue again.

Q If you don't do it, the words that the President said here are going to be misconstrued and they are not going to be covered.

MR. NESSEN: His views on abortion have not really changed since he was in Congress.

Q I didn't say they had changed, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: They are the same as the views that Jerry terHorst passed on to you, and I think everyone knows his views.

Q I didn't say they were changed. That is not the issue. The point is, there was a very interesting comment.

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to get into the whole transcript matter again, Sarah, because I think that is resolved.

Q Whether you do or do not, do you want your President not to be correctly quoted or do you want him not to have the full benefit of what he said?

MR. NESSEN: The full benefit of what he said was given out in transcript form last week.

Q Over the weekend there were news stories that Governor Reagan had suggested that part of the Social Security trust fund could perhaps be invested in the stock market.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Did he have any comment on it?

MR. NESSEN: He is aware of it and did not have any comment on it.

Q Did he like the idea?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President's own views on how to make the Social Security financing system sound again are spelled out actually in the very message you got this morning.

Q Does the President feel the Supreme Court will shortly modify its decision on abortion.

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you ask him at his next news conference, Sarah?

Q Because he said this at the Christian Science Monitor interview already, Ron. I am trying to tell you this.

MR. NESSEN: Then he would not say it if he didn't believe it, I guess.

Q I don't know whether he did it right or not. I don't have a transcript.

Q When is a press conference? Is there one scheduled?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a press conference schedule to give you.

Q Is ex-Governor Landon of Kansas on this list, too? (Laughter)

Q Averill Harriman?

Q At the risk of belaboring it, since it has already been raised, can you just tell us, apart from what the President may have said in the Christian Science Monitor, when did the President ask Secretary Kissinger --

MR. NESSEN: I just said, Dick, that I don't sit in on all their private conversations, but I feel sure that the President has conveyed his views to the Secretary.

Q Can you give us any indication when that might have been?

MR. NESSEN: No, I can't.

Q Ron, let's put it this way. If President Ford is elected to a full term in November, do you expect -- do you personally expect -- Henry Kissinger to continue as Secretary of State into that full term?

MR. NESSEN: I have no way of knowing Jim. I only have the President's own words.

Aren't we going to get on to some news questions?

Q You don't call that news?

Q Is the President going to submit a proposal to revive the Federal Election Commission and, if so, when?

MR. NESSEN: He already has, I think, last week it was, Bill, indicated the course that he wanted to follow, which was a two-part course: one to reconstitute the commission in accordance with the ruling of the court, which means that he wants Congress to pass a bill for a commission appointed by the President and confirmed by Congress, and the second part of his proposal would be to set a terminal date for the commission and/or the law after this election, sometime next year, so that Congress would then have a chance to review the entire law in light of the experience gained from one election.

Q Did he say he would reappoint the same six members if Congress passed such a law?

MR. NESSEN: He never really said flat out he would, but he commented that these six members have had experience and it might be helpful to keep their experience on the commission.

Q Would he or would he not?

MR. NESSEN: He did not say.

Q Ron, did he say anything about whether he would support public financing if that was extended to either Senate races or both Houses and Senate races?

MR. NESSEN: It was discussed, but not definitively, and he did not offer a view.

Q Ron, is there any date on the State of the World Message yet?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a date on that one, no.

Q A month?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't even have a time frame to give you.

Q Last week several times we asked you about a Presidential press conference, and you said there was nothing scheduled last week. You already said today you have nothing in mind. Things are piling up. Is the President going to spend so much time in weekend campaigning that he will not be able to hold a press conference in the near future?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think a weekend campaigning interferes with having a news conference.

Q When then do you expect there would be one?

MR. NESSEN: I can't give you a date for the next news conference.

Q Do you expect one this week?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't anticipate one this week.

Q What was this you said, the President going to New Hampshire, would depend whether he could break away. Is there some major project going on or is this just day-to-day business?

MR. NESSEN: Just day-to-day business.

Q Ron, when is the President going to provide his financial disclosure?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the date on that. I know material is being pulled together, but I don't have the date when it will be in.

Q Might it be this week?

MR. NESSEN: I doubt if it will be this week.

Q How about the final medical?

MR. NESSEN: I have the final medical report, and I think the best way to do it would just be to have anyone who wants it come around and pick it up in the Press Office or look at this copy in the Press Office. This is the actual standard Government form filed by Lukash. So, I think the thing to do is just to put it over here in the press room and have people look at it.

Q Why can't we have a copy of it? That is going to be mayhem.

MR. NESSEN: We will Xerox a bunch of copies. It is seven pages.

Q Has the President asked for a study of arms sales to the Persian Gulf nations, or an analysis?

MR. NESSEN: I think that is fairly constantly reviewed, but I don't know of any specific study.

Q There were stories over the weekend that he has asked for a review and may ask Congress to look into the question.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that because I have not heard it before.

Q What is the status of the intelligence reform proposals?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are pretty close.

Q Ron, has President Ford sent a message to the new Chinese Premier in Peking?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Does he plan to?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure what the procedure is on that, but I will check for you.

Q Do you know if he met with him when he was in China?

MR. NESSEN: We know the President did not meet with him in a normal conference or negotiating setting. He was not in on those meetings. Right now, people are checking back to see if perhaps the President met him in a less formal setting, receiving line or reception or something like that.

Q This appointment is announced as a temporary or acting appointment. What is going to be the drill? Is the President, as the representative of the American Government, going to wait until the Party Congress or the Central Committee meets and acts and actually chooses a permanent Premier or will he send something to this man?

MR. NESSEN: I said I will check on that because I don't know what the proper diplomatic procedure is. I will check.

Q Is there any more on the U.N. appointment to replace Moynihan?

MR. NESSEN: No. I don't have a name to give you today.

Q Was the Government caught by surprise with this appointment -- in view of all the things we have in China -- who the obvious successor was?

MR. NESSEN: The President knew about it in a timely way. I would rather not go into it.

Q Before the announcement?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know when the public announcement was but he knew about it.

Q Before?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know when the public announcement was.

Q Why did you say in a timely way? Can you explain that?

MR. NESSEN: His morning intelligence report on Saturday contained the information of the appointment.

Q On Saturday, but wasn't it done the night before?

Q Ron, do you expect a new Ambassador-designate -- representative-designate to Peking prior to Mr. Nixon's trip?

MR. NESSEN: When is Mr. Nixon's trip?

Q Three days before the New Hampshire primary.

MR. NESSEN: No. I don't know what the timetable is for appointing one. There is not one to announce now.

Q Ron, speaking of that, I think Secretary Kissinger was quoted as saying he learned about Mr. Nixon's travel plans on last Monday.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so. I think what he said was they had discussed China and traveling to China in a general way, but never discussed a specific trip or specific date. My understanding is that is what transpired out there -- general discussion of travel to China.

Q You did not answer my question as to whether the President was surprised or whether the experts in the White House or State Department were surprised at the developments, or have they analyzed them in any way?

MR. NESSEN: Have they analyzed it?

Q Or are they surprised?

Q What is the meaning of it all, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: It will not have, as far as we know, any effect on America's current relations with China.

Q How do you know that?

MR. NESSEN: That is what the analysis leads to.

Q Before we finish here and since the former President's name has been mentioned, Senator Cranston of California is quoting Nixon as saying that at one point he could go into the Oval Office, press a button and 60 million people would be dead in 25 minutes, or words to that effect. Several questions about it. First, is the President aware of the former President ever saying this? Number two, what is his general reaction to the quote, and three, does he favor these various fail-safe or precautionary measures pending in Congress?

MR. NESSEN: I don't see how I can or should answer any of those, Jim.

Q What about the third one anyway?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the measures are. Let me look into them.

Q Is he aware of the quote? Does he know about it?

MR. NESSEN: If it was in the paper, I guess he read it.

END

(AT 12:30 P.M. EST)