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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:35 P.M. EST

MARCH 1, 1976

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: For the weekend, the President will campaign in downstate Illinois. I don't have all the details for you except that I believe Springfield will be the first stop on Friday. We will leave here some time Friday morning and go to Springfield. There will be other stops on Friday and Saturday all in the southern part of Illinois, or so-called downstate Illinois, and although many of the arrangements have not been made yet, I think we will probably stay Friday night in Peoria.

Q Why do you smile when you say that?

MR. NESSEN: Because it is a beautiful city.

Q Where else, pray tell, will he go?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any other details except it will be downstate Illinois.

Q Is he going to Chicago at all?

MR. NESSEN: I don't expect him to on this trip.

Q Do you rule out any return to Florida?

MR. NESSEN: I don't rule it out. It is a possibility, but it will depend on the judgment of what is the best use of the resources of the campaign.

In other words, both in terms of the money it would cost and in terms of pulling the workers off their duties to take part in another Presidential visit as well as the best use of the President's time, and that decision won't be made until later this week.

Q Ron, you said you don't expect him to, on this trip, go to Chicago?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

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Q That leaves an inference he will go to Chicago on another trip.

MR. NESSEN: I think there is a possibility of another trip to Illinois.

Q When might that come about?

MR. NESSEN: There is not all that much time, Bob, left to go before the primary. There is only one other weekend after this weekend.

Q In view of the fact there is not that much time, that is why I asked.

MR. NESSEN: I would think if he goes back to Illinois it would almost certainly be the following weekend.

Q Do you anticipate the Friday and Saturday trip to be the kind of motorcade activity that he had in Florida on Saturday and Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't.

Q What about overnight on Saturday? Will he come to Washington?

MR. NESSEN: He will be home Saturday night.

Q Is this definite?

MR. NESSEN: At this moment it is, yes.

Q If he goes to Florida, will he go on Sunday or Monday?

MR. NESSEN: It has not been decided to go yet and, if so, when.

Q Ron, is the Bradley Union Q and A session firm for Friday night?

MR. NESSEN: That is one of the events being discussed.

Q Where is Bradley?

Q In Illinois.

Q Is that the extent of your announcements?

MR. NESSEN: That is the extent of my announcement.

Q Does the White House have any reaction to Pat Moynihan's endorsement of Henry Jackson one day after he left the Administration?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q No reaction whatsoever?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q None whatsoever?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, has the President done anything more about forming a possible Cabinet level committee to deal with the foreign policy situation?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check on that. I have forgotten to check on that.

Ed Schmults, who is in the Legal Counsel's Office, has presented to the President a series of options of how to pursue his interest in looking into the question of payments to foreign officials.

So, the President has a paper of options to choose from. As far as I know, he has not made choices yet.

Q Do you know what those options are?

MR. NESSEN: I did not see that paper.

Q Do all those options assume that is not a direct violation of the present law?

MR. NESSEN: You mean American law?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: John, I don't know. I have not seen the options.

Q Ron, you said the President's trip to Southern Illinois would not be like the motorcade thing in Florida?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What would it be like? Would it be air stops at different places?

MR. NESSEN: It just has not been put together yet, and I cannot give you any more details than the ones I have given you.

Q How come you don't have any reaction to the Moynihan endorsement?

MR. NESSEN: As I understand it, it has to do with Democratic primary politics and I don't think the White House would normally get into that.

Q Did the President have any conversation with Richard Nixon yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: He did not.

Q Does he plan to have any?

MR. NESSEN: He does not.

Q Have any members of the SALT negotiating team or the periphery of advisers threatened to resign if the U.S. does not take a tough position?

MR. NESSEN: No, the current American negotiating position was agreed to unanimously by all the participants which includes State, the various elements -- civilian and military -- of the Pentagon, and the intelligence service. That is the unanimous position that the United States has advanced, unanimously agreed upon position.

Q Where does that stand now, SALT?

MR. NESSEN: It is in negotiation. Henry is going back to Moscow at some point.

Q When?

MR. NESSEN: We have not set the date yet.

Q Has former President Nixon called the White House switchboard today?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q Do you know whether he has called the State Department, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I have no way of knowing, but I have not heard that he did.

Q Has the President called him?

MR. NESSEN: He has not.

Q Has anybody been detailed to go to San Clemente to talk to him?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q What was the purpose of Mr. Rumsfeld's visit to the White House today?

MR. NESSEN: It is one of his regular two-or-three-times-a-week meetings with the President.

Q Has he discussed any primary politics in Illinois?

MR. NESSEN: No, the purpose of that meeting is to deal with Don's area, which is national defense. I think Brent sat in on the meeting with him.

Q Mr. Nixon has not called the President, the President has not called Mr. Nixon, and there is no plan to go to San Clemente, but Secretary Kissinger said, "Of course, we will talk with Mr. Nixon because he was carrying on important conversations." Who was going to talk with him?

MR. NESSEN: As we have said -- I think you are quoting Henry on something he said in Latin America a while back.

Q Right.

MR. NESSEN: The situation is if the former President believes he has something significant to report, I am sure he can get in touch with somebody from the State Department to hear it or somebody from the State Department would hear his report.

Q Don't you think nine hours with a new leader of China, acting leader, would be something interesting?

MR. NESSEN: We have day-to-day diplomatic contacts with the Chinese through their Liaison Office here and ours in Peking.

Q Are you getting that kind of information? Do you know about the new leadership in China and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going into details of our daily report from our Liaison Office.

Q George Bush was in Peking for a year, and he never met Chou En-lai.

Q Ron, do the daily reports that come back indicate the acting head of the Liaison Office in Peking has ever met the new acting --

MR. NESSEN: I am not going into details of diplomatic reports from our mission there to the State Department, to the President.

Q I would assume by your response, we have this day-to-day liaison and Mr. Ford does not want to talk to Mr. Nixon about the trip?

MR. NESSEN: He does not plan to.

Q I said does not want to-- does not think it is necessary.

MR. NESSEN: As we have said, Phil, if the former President feels he learned something of significance there, I would expect him to convey it to somebody from the State Department.

Q Would Mr. Nixon have to initiate any communication?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the procedure is. You could ask the State Department.

Q Couldn't he use a friendly intermediary, such as Gerald Warren, to communicate from Mr. Nixon to the White House or back and forth?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans for that that I know of.

Q Don't you think it looks a little childish to back off and refuse to have anything to do with information?

MR. NESSEN: I said that if he has anything significant to report, Howard, I am sure somebody from the State Department will hear it. Lots of private citizens come back from trips overseas with things they feel are significant, and there are ways for them to be heard.

Q What you are saying now, that would not send him forward with information, running to the White House.

MR. NESSEN: The whole point is there is nothing new being said here today at all. This is the position the President has had and the White House has had since the beginning of the Nixon trip. Nothing has changed, in other words, today.

Q You don't know of any message from Mao?

MR. NESSEN: I don't.

Q When President Ford went to China last December, Secretary Kissinger said it was important to keep up the momentum of growing relations between the two. Is it in the interest of growing relations for the current United States Government to have some kind of official contact with the current officiating people in Peking?

MR. NESSEN: Our official relations are carried on through our Liaison Offices in Peking and Washington.

Q When will you have a new head of that office?

MR. NESSEN: Relatively soon.

Q Is the President considering any foreign trips this year?

MR. NESSEN: None that I know of.

Q What is the reason for this particular position that you said, "The President has had this position and the White House has made this position clear since the beginning of the Nixon trip to China"? What is the reason for this position?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean, what is the reason for this position. Nixon is a private citizen going there at the invitation of their Government as a private citizen, no diplomatic mission or messages. That is the reason for the position.

Q In view of that position, Ron, was President Ford surprised to hear that the acting leader of China gave Mr. Nixon nine hours of his time for talks?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if he kept track of it. We can go around and around with that, and there is nothing to say on Nixon today, so I think we should move on to something else.

Q Ron, Deakin asked about whether there was any communication between former President Nixon and President Ford and, if so, did you make any conscious effort this morning to find out whether Mr. Nixon had called the switchboard or are you assuming he did not?

MR. NESSEN: I made a conscious effort because I anticipated the questions and the answer is no.

Q Ron, does the White House have any indication that Mr. Nixon is planning any further foreign travel as a private citizen?

MR. NESSEN: I have no way of knowing.

Q One would assume you also made a conscious effort to determine whether there had been any contact between the State Department and Mr. Nixon since his return. What was the result of that inquiry?

MR. NESSEN: I know Dr. Kissinger does not plan to see the former President when he is in California, but I have not taken it beyond that.

Q Has he been told not to see him?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q He is just acting on his own?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q You have not answered my question. Has there been contact between the State Department and Mr. Nixon?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Ron, to get back to this option paper you mentioned at the outset, will we be told what are those options before the President decides?

MR. NESSEN: I think you will be told what the President decides.

Q Is there any timetable for him to decide?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what it is. I will have to check on it.

Q Ron, has the President made a final determination yet as to whether the Nixon trip hurt him in New Hampshire?

MR. NESSEN: He has not made any more determination from what he said publicly last week.

Q Ron, is the President aware of Senate Minority Leader Scott's general endorsement of the legislation that would cause divestiture in the oil industry? Does he have any comment on Scott's endorsement of the divestiture bill, that bill itself?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what Senator Scott's position is. I have to look it up, but I don't have any comment from the President today.

Q Where did the President get ten examiners to shoot down to Miami, and was that a political move?

MR. NESSEN: Ten immigration examiners?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: He got them from the Immigration Service. There is a fair backlog of people waiting to have their cases moved along. I think the Justice Department can tell you the details of that. I don't have them.

Q Ron, I am sorry, I fail to understand if anybody in the world had spent nine hours with the acting Premier of the People's Republic of China, any merchant or any scholar, I would think that this Government would want somebody in a high official capacity to talk to this person, whether it be former President Nixon or anybody, nine hours.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:50 P.M. EST)