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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:35 A.M. EST

MARCH 9, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me give you a couple of schedule things.

You know about the National Buddy Poppy Girl coming in to see the President at noon. Then, the Maid of Cotton at 12:10, and then the trip over to the Associated General Contractors at 1:50, and there is a travel pool, obviously, and you have the text in advance, which has already been put out.

Q What time does that travel pool leave? Do you know?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President boards his motorcade at 1:49, so I would say the travel pool ought to be here about 1:30.

You know, I mentioned to you that the President was winning this award. The award carries a cash prize of \$1,500 so the President will give it to his favorite charity, and I don't know what the charity is yet.

Q The President Ford Committee. (Laughter)

Q What is it for?

Q Were there any other contestants?

MR. NESSEN: Well, if we are going to get that deeply into it maybe you ought to ask the Association.

Q What was the name of that award, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Service, Integrity, Responsibility -- those are the three reasons for the award -- spelling SIR.

Q Did you mention his favorite charity?

MR. NESSEN: No. I said I don't know what he will give the money to.

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Q The President Ford Committee?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that qualifies.  
(Laughter)

Q Has anybody else ever gotten this award in the White House?

MR. NESSEN: They say this is the Association's first (Laughter) annual. It says, "The first SIR award will be given to you for your service and attention to matters affecting the construction industry."

Q Convenient for the contractors but he cannot accept the money.

Q He can take it and give it away.

MR. NESSEN: Let's see. Now this evening the President is going to be dropping by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Annual Dinner. This dinner honors Members of Congress. It will be at the Sheraton Park. The President expects to leave the White House a little before 8:30. There will be a travel pool for that. He will go over there. He will speak for probably 10 minutes on the subject of national defense, and then he will take part in the presentation of the VFW Congressional award for this year, which goes to Congressman F. Edward Hebert for outstanding service to the Nation. It is a plaque and the President will help to give the plaque.

Then the President will leave the Sheraton Park at about 9:15 and get back to the White House at about 9:30. As I say, there will be a travel pool. If you have any desire to cover the festivities or the President's part of it, you should get in touch with Mr. John Smith, who is with the VFW. He is their information person and he is reachable at the Sheraton Park Hotel. I am told that open coverage or any kind of coverage is acceptable to them but I think you will probably need to make the arrangements.

Q Does he have prepared remarks?

MR. NESSEN: They will be prepared but I am not sure we will be able to get them out ahead of time, but we will try.

Q Do you anticipate any comment at that event by the President on the Florida primary?

MR. NESSEN: It is not planned that he would use that occasion to comment on the Florida primary except in perhaps the most passing way.

Q If you didn't have a camera crew, you would not have to call John Smith, would you?

MR. NESSEN: No, you would just have to go in there and sit down and listen.

Q When he returns will he watch the returns at home?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q He will have watched some returns before he goes, will he not?

MR. NESSEN: If there are any returns before 8:30, yes.

Q Ron, I think the polls in Florida will be closed early enough so that there may be a projected winner.

MR. NESSEN: That is what I have heard.

Q In such a likelihood, would you expect him to comment?

MR. NESSEN: If the returns are far enough along so that a winner is apparent in Florida, he might make the most passing reference to it but I would not expect more than perhaps just an acknowledgement of the outcome, a sentence or so.

Q One of the campaign issues there has been his record in defense and he is making it a defense speech?

MR. NESSEN: If he mentions it at all, if the results are clear enough to warrant mentioning, he would only mention it in a most passing way.

Now you want to hear about the Chicago trip at all? And North Carolina?

This is all very tentative because the advance people are still making the arrangements and so all these are approximate times and tentative events. Let me preface by saying that.

On Thursday at 2:30, approximately, the President will leave for Rockford, Illinois, getting to Rockford at about 3:20 Central Standard Time, having lost an hour.

At 4:00 the first event will be a farm forum at the Clocktower Inn. This will be similar to the farm forum last weekend in Central Illinois. I have to check and find out who is the sponsor of this one but, for those of you who went on the trip last weekend, you recall the format consisted of a brief opening statement by the President and then questions from farmers and representatives of farm organizations in the audience.

The President will be staying at a private residence in Rockford. Whose residence it is I have not gotten yet.

The other event of Thursday will be at 8 o'clock in the evening at a shopping mall called Cherryvale -- that is one word -- Cherryvale Mall in Rockford. It is essentially a campaign stop, talking to the people who are shopping in the mall.

Q Much like other shopping center appearances we have seen?

MR. NESSEN: Right, complete with the Baskin-Robbins ice cream stand and everything. They move this mall from place to place. (Laughter)

Q I thought they got it from Hertz Rent-a-Mall. (Laughter)

Q Do you know if it is downtown?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I don't know that much about Rockford.

All right. As I say, the President will be staying at a private residence and the name of the owner I will get for you. The press is going to be split between two hotels but they are close together -- the Clocktower Inn and the Ramada Inn.

Friday, the first event is at about 8 o'clock at one of these hotels, and I think it is the Clocktower Inn, and will be a breakfast with the Chamber of Commerce of Rockford, and then the times get a little fuzzy.

Q A speech?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, some remarks and I think probably some questions and answers.

Q That is 8 o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: 8 o'clock it begins.

Then, somewhere around 9:30 or so the President will leave Rockford to go to Wheaton College, which is in Wheaton, Illinois.

Q Is that a flying or a driving trip?

MR. NESSEN: Do we know whether it is a drive or a fly?

We don't. This is all, as I say, still being put together.

At Wheaton College he will address an audience of students from five colleges -- and I have to get the names of the other four colleges for you.

Q Do you have a time on that?

MR. NESSEN: It is going to be very rough, somewhere around 10:00 or 10:30 maybe, a speech and Q&A. I don't have the subject of the speech.

Then, after that, the President goes to the Palmer House in Chicago. Again, I don't know how far Wheaton is from Chicago and whether it is a flying or driving trip.

At 12:30, he will speak to the Chicago Foreign Relations Council and I think you know that that is a foreign policy, defense policy speech.

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Q 12:30?

MR. NESSEN: 12:30 Chicago time.

After that the President goes out to the O'Hare Marriot for an afternoon of staff work and at 4 o'clock a press conference sponsored by the Northern Illinois Editors Association. They are putting it together and it is their event.

Q All locals?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Local and regional, I think.

Q Are they barring us?

MR. NESSEN: You mean from sitting there and listening?

Q No --

MR. NESSEN: Of course not.

Q Asking questions?

MR. NESSEN: You have to get in touch with them. My understanding is it is for their members, Helen.

At 8 o'clock the President goes to Buffalo Grove High School in Northern Cook County. I don't have the name of the town -- well, the town must be Buffalo Grove. There the President will speak and answer questions. It is open to the public.

Overnight at the O'Hare Marriot --

Q All of us?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q The President, too?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Saturday morning at 8 o'clock the President has a breakfast for the President Ford Committee workers, volunteers, at the O'Hare Marriot. I don't have the exact take-off time but the next stop is Greensboro, North Carolina, arriving there about 12:30 on Saturday. That would put us back to Eastern time.

The President will go to the Guilford County Courthouse which is about 20 miles from Greensboro. It is a Bicentennial event and the President will make a Bicentennial speech on the steps of the Courthouse. I don't have the subject other than it is a Bicentennial speech.

Then the other two stops of the day are Winston-Salem and Wilkesboro.

Q North Carolina or Pennsylvania?

MR. NESSEN: North Carolina

Now what time is he going to be in each of those places and what the event is has not been arranged yet. I would look for the President to get back to the White House in the 11:30 to midnight area.

That's it. This is all tentative and all the times are approximate because the advance team is still out there.

Q Are you still describing the noon speech Friday as a major foreign policy address?

MR. NESSEN: I never said it was major. I never characterize the speeches, no. It is a foreign policy speech but I never said it was a major speech.

Q Will there be an advance text here, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: There will be an advance text either Thursday night or early Friday morning.

Q Is that a release on delivery?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I have not even thought about the release time on that one yet.

Q Are you suggesting that there won't be a major speech?

MR. NESSEN: I only suggest that I never characterize speeches as major or minor.

Q I think you did say that.

MR. NESSEN: I said I never characterize speeches.

Q When it came up was the other day we were talking about Reagan's comments down in Florida. You didn't use the word "major" but you suggested at the time that it was more than an ordinary campaign speech.

Q It might be a replacement for the State of the World address?

MR. NESSEN: It is certainly going to be a speech outlining the President's views on foreign policy and military policy.

Q Is it in fact going to be his version of the State of the World Message.

MR. NESSEN: I am not clear yet whether there is going to then be a separate Message to Congress or not. I don't think that has been decided yet.

Q Is that farm speech any big deal?

MR. NESSEN: You mean the one at the Farm Forum?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the text of that yet.

Q Well, you told us that other farm speech was going to be a --

MR. NESSEN: Big deal?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Did I say it was a big deal speech?

Q No, that was my interpretation of it.

Q Is this one going to make news?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I would like to look at it first. I have not seen the draft.

Q Brought the sheep off the farm. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: How are you going to keep 'em down on the farm when they've seen Tom DeFrank's room.

Q Is there going to be a substitute word for "detente" in this Chicago speech, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: No. As you know, Peter, the whole process of what has been encompassed in that word is too complex to reduce to a single word, either Anglo-Saxon or French.



Q Is the President consulting Secretary Kissinger in preparation for this?

MR. NESSEN: Let me mention one other thing. As you know, Wright Patman died and the funeral will be Wednesday in Texarkana, Texas. The President has designated Jack Marsh, Counsellor to the President, as his personal representative at the funeral.

I guess that is all.

Q Is Max Fisher seeing the President today?

MR. NESSEN: He is tentatively scheduled to come in and see the President at 4:30.

Q Tentatively? How is that?

MR. NESSEN: What?

Q Why tentatively?

MR. NESSEN: It just shows on the schedule as a tentative appointment.

Q Was this at his request?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q At Fisher's request?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Joe.

Q Is he coming alone?

MR. NESSEN: It shows him coming alone on the tentative schedule, yes.

Q Is there anything as to why he is coming?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. He is an old friend of the President's. He works on the fund raising activities for the President Ford Committee. I assume it has something to do with that.

Q You do?

MR. NESSEN: I do, yes.

Q You don't think it has anything to do with the sale of planes to Egypt?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I have no idea what they are going to talk about. My assumption has been they were going to talk about the President Ford fund raising activity.

Q Well, are you in a position to say whether he is bringing a protest from the American-Jewish Committee over the proposed sale of planes to Egypt?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard about it.

Q The President is not going to give that 1500 bucks to Bonds for Israel, is he?

Q Will we get a rundown on the meeting afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so, it is a private meeting.

Q Is the President aware of the arrests of political opponents in Seoul, sort of a round-up of some former officials and also opposition leaders, and is he doing anything about it?

MR. NESSEN: That is an internal Korean matter.

Q We have no reaction?

MR. NESSEN: That is an internal Korean matter, period.

Q Ron, has the President been involved in any way with the revelation of disclosures of classified materials in the Foreign Policy Magazine article?

MR. NESSEN: He knows about the article and has read excerpts from it and knows that the State Department is conducting an investigation to find out who did it and if there was anything improper about the disclosure to take disciplinary action. That is what Bob Funseth said yesterday at the State Department.

Q Did he talk with the Secretary about this?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure if he has or not, Joe.

Q Would you like to condemn the leaks and apparently classified information that came from the State Department as a self-serving matter to help the Secretary of State as you have condemned previous leaks?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I will accept any of those characterizations, Walt. The President feels confident that the State Department is dealing with this matter in a proper manner and has said through Bob Funseth yesterday that the person or persons, if there was improper leaking, will be disciplined.

Q Saturday I guess it was in Marion, Illinois, the President condemned in the strongest terms the leak of information, the leak of the Pike Committee's report, saying it was a great disservice to the country. Does he consider that the leak by the State Department or from within the State Department of these classified matters was also a great disservice to the country?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, the President is aware of the fact that this was published. He is aware that the State Department is investigating and promises to take disciplinary action and he is confident that the State Department is handling it in the proper way.

Q Why doesn't he apply the same -- he or you --

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I am not going to say any more about the thing no matter how long we go around about it. The State Department is handling it and the President knows the State Department is handling it. I don't have anything further to say about it.

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Q Ron, can I ask my question, please?

Q Ron, you were quoted in the paper as saying someone mentioned to the President who the leaker was in a private meeting.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't say precisely that. I think I was quoted as saying that at a meeting Sunday on another matter the President mentioned he had seen this in the paper and another member of the staff told him that there was a guess as to who the source was and that guess was mentioned to the President, and then the President was told pretty much what Funseth said yesterday, that the State Department was going to get to the bottom of it and take disciplinary action.

Q Was that guess Secretary of State Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: It was not.

Q Who told him that? General Scowcroft?

MR. NESSEN: I think these are little internal staff discussions.

Q Will the Secretary be disciplined if he turns out to be the leaker?

MR. NESSEN: I think Bob Funseth has dealt with that at tremendous length yesterday, Helen.

Q I want to get back to the Koreans.

Q Helen, could I just go on with another question?

The President, on two occasions, Ron, asked the State Department to rebuke the Government of Israel for leakage in the Israeli press of some conversations that the Secretary had with Israeli officials. In this magazine article I counted 21 extracts of transcripts or what appears to be transcripts -- not all Israeli, some were Arab and some others -- but extracts of apparently U.S. information; in any case, referring in general to the Secretary of State and to two Presidents on this occasion.

Is the President going to ask the State Department to apologize to these Governments which have been handled in this way or is he forgetting the fact that he twice rebuked Israel perhaps on similar stuff?

MR. NESSEN: Joe, all I have to say about it today is that it is being investigated, that the person found to have leaked it improperly will be disciplined by the State Department.

Q This does not touch the point I am trying to make.

MR. NESSEN: Well, it is a State Department matter and I suggest you direct your questions to the State Department.

Q May I ask my question that you kept talking during the course of?

MR. NESSEN: Over or under?

Q I would like to know why the White House does not apply the same terms and the same criticism to a leak in the Executive Branch that it applied to a leak in the Legislative Branch?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know what terms there are, Jim. Obviously, the Administration is opposed to the improper leakage of any information that damages American security or interests.

Q Does the White House believe that this leakage damaged American interests?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know enough about it. That is one of the things the State Department is looking into.

Q The problem is, here it appears the Administration has double standards relative to leaks.

MR. NESSEN: It may appear to you, Walt, but it does not appear to me.

Q Let me finish my question, please. When a leak is embarrassing to the Administration, you come out and condemn it and condemn those you believe to be the source of the leak. If, however, the leak places the Secretary of State toward the apogee of his skill and maneuvering adroitly and in the most self-serving manner, then you don't condemn the leak and you just refer it to the State Department.

MR. NESSEN: Walt, if I may go ON BACKGROUND for a moment, when you find out who the leaker was and what the discipline is, I think you will withdraw that statement.

Q Will we?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Then you already know that someone has been disciplined, is that true?

MR. NESSEN: No, there has been no discipline and there has been no final determination as to who the leaker was.

Q Is this background at this point, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it is.

Q One of us identified the leaker this morning by name, specifically, Ron. Was that correct?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, I didn't --

Q Bill Kraft identified Assistant Secretary of State Alfred Roy Atherton.

MR. NESSEN: I think the State Department is in the process of conducting this investigation and I am not going to take anything further from here.

Q Ron, can we assume, then, that once the State Department makes a statement about this disciplinary action or the investigation then the State Department will decide whether or not to apologize to the Governments concerned?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know anything about apologies, Joe. You need to take that up with them.

Q Is the President leaving this question of rebukes to the State Department, or is he himself going to take it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I am not exactly clear how rebukes come into it but --

Q Well, the rebukes came in because the President on two occasions directed the State Department to rebuke the Government of Israel for leakage.

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with those instructions.

Q Well, the record will show it.

MR. NESSEN: Okay. BACK ON THE RECORD.

Q Back to Korea.

MR. NESSEN: Back to Korea.

Q Is the President not concerned that a country which we have sponsored for so long, poured our money into their economy and their military status, should take what seems to be offensive moves against the opposition?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I am not going to comment upon --

Q Is the President aware?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, the President is aware of the reports that you refer to.

I am not going to get in the business of commenting on the internal affairs of another country. I think the President has repeatedly spoken and the Administration has spoken on its views of civil rights, but beyond that I am not going to talk about the internal affairs of another country.

Q Ron, in the President's speech today he says once again we can cut taxes again. Is he referring to a general tax cut and, if so, when would he be ready to?

MR. NESSEN: He has talked about the idea that if Congress will go along with the restraint in the growth of Government spending that he has recommended and if the economy continues its recovery, that he believes another tax cut would be possible in 1979.

Q I realize he said it before but I mean, how far has this process got to go before he will propose one?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I will have to check for you.

Q Ron, is there any chance that he will propose some sort of an immediate tax cut when he revises his budget figures?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I talked to Alan Greenspan yesterday after the questions we had in here about the budget revisions. Alan wants to wait another week or two and look at some other economic statistics other than the drop in unemployment before determining whether and if so how to revise the economic assumptions in the budget.

Q Ron, the gun control bill was resubmitted last week to committee. Is the Administration doing anything to resuscitate it?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check that.

Q Did he discuss it with Railsback?

MR. NESSEN: Did the President discuss it with Railsback on this trip? Not while I was around.

Q Is the President growing more concerned about the failure of the Congress thus far to act on the Federal Election Commission?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it looks like this 20-day extension period is running out without action yet. I think the President's views on the need to have the Commission reconstituted so Americans can be assured that the election is run properly and without abuse, you know his views on that and they remain the same. Congress is just letting the time slip by.

Q Has he gotten any late readings on the primary, and does he have any more confidence today that he is going to win?

MR. NESSEN: Florida?

Rog Morton talked to him a little this morning. Rog has been down there. Rog expressed some concern this morning. The weather is not good in Northern Florida -- it is raining.

Q Florida is not as strong, or is it?

MR. NESSEN: But, as you know, the Florida primary is run so that there are a certain number of delegates from each district regardless of the number of voters in the district.

Rog, I would not say, had flipped all the way over to the pessimistic side but, on the other hand, he was extremely cautious this morning and gave the President I would say the most cautious appraisal that I have heard in the past few days.

Q All because of the weather?

Q He was quoted yesterday saying he was going to win bigger than New Hampshire.

MR. NESSEN: Who said that?

Q Rogers Morton.

MR. NESSEN: It does not take much to win slightly bigger than New Hampshire, you know. The margin there was less than two percent.

Q Does he still think he will win?

MR. NESSEN: The President still thinks he will win.



Q Does Rogers Morton think so?

MR. NESSEN: Rogers Morton still thinks he will win but he is extremely cautious on the outlook.

Q Are you engaged in an exercise of poor-mouthing now?

MR. NESSEN: I am engaged in an exercise of trying to report to you accurately what Rog said to the President within the hour.

Q Is he more cautious because of the weather?

MR. NESSEN: That was the one thing that he cited -- the weather -- and the fact that Reagan has done a lot of campaigning down there in the past few days and hit out very hard.

Q Ron, how is the weather in places where the President is strong like St. Petersburg?

MR. NESSEN: Rog mentioned only the weather in Northern Florida.

Q Which is where Reagan is strongest, is that not true?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. That is my understanding.

Q Ron, there was a wire service story this morning to the effect attributed to the United States intelligence sources that the Government of India was restrained by the Soviet Union from selling engines for MIG planes to Egypt. Can you confirm this report that the intelligence services are putting out?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know anything about it, Jim.

Q You have no information?

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

Q Ron, can I go back to the bad weather in Northern Florida?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is Morton assuming that Reagan's supporters are more zealous and therefore would go out in the bad weather more so than Ford's?

Q Ford has fair weather friends.

MR. NESSEN: He didn't spell it all out that way but my assumption is that he was saying that bad weather would hold down the turnout and perhaps would hurt the President in Northern Florida.

Q Ron, to get back to your discussion with Greenspan yesterday, did he indicate to you that if in fact the economic assumptions are revised this would also mean some policy revisions in terms of the size of the tax cut?

MR. NESSEN: It is too premature to talk about that yet because he has not decided what kind, if any, revision to do.

Q When will he make that decision?

MR. NESSEN: He has gone this week overseas to some economic meeting and will be back toward the end of the week and then he wants a week or two to look into some other economic statistics before making that decision.

Q He says April.

MR. NESSEN: Two weeks.

Q You said April 10 the President revises it.

MR. NESSEN: The first revision is required April 10.

Q Ron, has the President received any busing recommendations from the Justice Department yet?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he has, from Justice and HEW combined. It was a combined list of proposals. The President looked at the list and asked for additional information on several of the ideas and has sent it back for additional elaboration on some of the proposals.

Q When do you expect that to be done?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a date on it.

Q Has he heard from the State Department yet on a report by the former President on his visit to China?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Would you give us any of the recommendations that were included in the busing report?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't think I should.

Q Will you give it to us when they send it back to the President?

MR. NESSEN: Well, let me check and see what the plans are for publishing that, if any.

Q Ron, to go over the drill tonight, it is going to be pretty much the same as last time?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. There will be a very small group here, mostly myself and Dick Cheney, I think.

Q You would not put out a victory statement while we are at the hotel with you?

MR. NESSEN: No, I wouldn't.

Q Or concession statement or whatever?

MR. NESSEN: Not any kind of statement, certainly not.

You know, I think the drill has been pretty well established now that if and when the results seem definite we have been putting out a written statement. We have also been supplying a certain amount of color and details of what is going on and I think we will do that again tonight. The only difference is that the President will be going up there briefly but, again, I don't expect him to speak at any length on the Florida situation.

Q Ron, are you confident that, assuming things go well for the President in Florida, that he being a block or two from the headquarters at 9:30 he might not decide just to drop by there?

MR. NESSEN: That has never been mentioned as a possibility, ever.

Q Ron, who will be watching the returns with him? Does he plan to have anybody in?

MR. NESSEN: I think Mrs. Ford is away and --

Q Liberty?

MR. NESSEN: Susan is here.

Q Max Fisher or somebody like that?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard that plan. I will check it out by the end of the day and find out who he is going to have in, if anybody.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:08 P.M. EST)

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