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N E W S C O N F E R E N C E

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:37 P.M. EST

APRIL 19, 1976

MONDAY

Q Ron, we had a ceremony in here and we decided that since Kimo the clown has presented the Tall Pickle Award --

MR. NESSEN: The what?

Q We have decided since you may not get the Tall Banana Award we will give you the Top Pickle Award.
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Well, I will certainly wear it with pride..

Q Very good.

MR. NESSEN: Does it have a pin on it? Oh, this is a gherkin.

Q Now he is complaining.

Q He wants a Kosher pickle.

Q You know what we really meant, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: Okay. Thank you very much. I am proud and honored to wear this.

Q Ron, appropos of this there was an ominous no comment reported by the President after he watched this Saturday night thing and I just was wondering, what was the President's reaction?

MR. NESSEN: Let me do the announcements. I have a feeling that you have been saving up all weekend, Les.

Q Give him a chance to warm up.

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MR. NESSEN: I know it is hard to restrain yourself, but try.

In addition to what you saw on the public schedule, today the President had an interview with a chain of newspapers located primarily in Texas but with newspapers in some other States called the Harte-Hanks Newspapers from 11:00 to noon today. They plan to use the interview in their A.M. papers and so we will put the transcript out later this evening with a 6:00 A.M. embargo on it, if you would like that.

Q What papers?

Q This evening with a 6:00 A.M. embargo?

MR. NESSEN: No. Let's give you the transcript but embargo it for use until 6:00 A.M.

Q They have an advantage.

MR. NESSEN: I know, but that is what we have tried to do, give the people who do the interview a one cycle advantage.

Q What are some of the city newspapers?

MR. NESSEN: I am looking here now.

The Corsicana Daily Sun, the Marshall News-Messenger, the Dennison Herald, The Wichita Falls Times and Record, Hamilton Journal-News -- that's the Ohio paper, Hamilton, Ohio Journal-News -- Greenville Herald-Banner, Corpus Christi Caller-Times, Anderson Daily Mail --

Q That is South Carolina, the Anderson Daily Mail.

MR. NESSEN: There is one South Carolina paper.

Q That is the Anderson Daily Mail.

MR. NESSEN: The Big Springs Herald, the Yakima Herald-Republic, Huntsville Item, the Commerce Journal of Commerce, Texas, and the San Angelo Standard-Times, the Paris News -- Paris, Texas -- the Bryan Eagle and the Abilene News-Reporter.

Q Did you sit in on it?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I did.

Q Did the President predict that he would win the primary?

MR. NESSEN: No, he didn't. He said he was still behind, he was still hopeful of being able to close the gap.

Q Did they ask for the interview or did he propose it?

MR. NESSEN: Have we got the letter?

Margita is bringing over the letter which contains their original request which I will have for you in a minute.

Q Did he break any new ground? Just tell us yes or no to that.

MR. NESSEN: I think -- well, I will let you read it yourself and you make that judgment.

Q You can say yes or no.

Q Ron, you said the transcript would be available this evening. Do you have any closer target on time? Will it be after 6:00 P.M.?

MR. NESSEN: It should not really take us this long to get it out because I think what we will do is we will make Xeroxes of a bond copy, so I would say mid to late afternoon.

Okay. Now let me just go on a little bit here and talk about the rest of the week.

Tomorrow the President is going to attend the dedication of the General George C. Marshall Corridor at the Defense Department at 2:30 P.M. A small travel pool will go over.

Frankly, I don't have all the details of the ceremony. I think if the President speaks at all, it will not be a major speech. It will be just very brief remarks, will it?

MR. CARLSON: I don't know.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the details of the President's participation. It is 2:30, though, at the General George C. Marshall Corridor at the Pentagon with a travel pool.

Q Is there open coverage of this?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is the corridor big enough?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you know, I don't think the ceremony will be in the corridor.

Then on Wednesday at 10 o'clock in the morning at Constitution Hall the President will speak to the --

Q Before we get to Wednesday, may I get to a Tuesday question?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is there an Indiana basketball team coming in here tomorrow morning?

MR. NESSEN: There is an Indiana basketball team coming in here tomorrow but what time it is coming has not been decided.

I am sorry. They are coming at 8:30, but whether the President sees them before their tour or after their tour hasn't been decided.

Q Is there a Rose Garden ceremony associated with that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that has all been worked out yet, has it? It was discussed. The Indiana basketball team.

Isn't it the Indiana basketball team?

Q The University.

MR. NESSEN: Aren't they the champions?

Q They beat Michigan, didn't they?

MR. NESSEN: They beat Michigan.

Q Does that have anything to do with the Indiana primary?

MR. NESSEN: No, because it is pure coincidence that they won the basketball game. (Laughter)

Q Would they have been here had they lost?

MR. NESSEN: No, they would not.

Q Michigan would.

MR. NESSEN: Wednesday the DAR is meeting at Constitution Hall and the President will make a speech over there at 10 o'clock in the morning.

Q Subject?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really have any further details of the speech.

Just to go back a moment, on March 31, 1976, Gregory A. Favor of the Corpus Christi Caller and the Corpus Christi Times, the editor, wrote a letter saying, "I want to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to President Ford to meet with the combined editorial boards of the Harte-Hanks Newspapers in Texas which includes 13 newspapers. I fully realize the President's time is precious and that he receives numerous requests, but I hope that because the Harte-Hanks papers do represent all sections of Texas and all size communities that he would look kindly upon this one," and so forth. It is in response to an invitation request.

Q What happens to your embargo, for example, if the wires get ahold of this through some affiliation of this newspaper chain and they start writing the stories at 4 o'clock in the afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am just going to put out the transcript embargoed and you have to let your conscience be your guide.

On the Indiana-Georgia trip -- haven't we announced that trip?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Thursday and Friday. Now Larry has got a summary schedule all printed up and it would be just as easy to hand it out. The highlights are leaving sort of mid-afternoon on Thursday and going to Indianapolis where there is basically one event which is a Q&A speech at Butler University and then staying overnight in Indianapolis.

The next day the Indiana Broadcasters Association Convention in Indianapolis.

Q Is that a press conference?

MR. NESSEN: It is a speech and Q & A.

Then going on to Evansville where there is a public forum -- that is the public Q & A -- a parade in Evansville. That is the conclusion of the Indiana portion.

Leaving early afternoon from Evansville and going to Marietta, Georgia, where the President speaks to the Military Order of the World Wars at the Peachtree Presbyterian Church. Then in the evening a Q & A and remarks at the Peachtree High School and then back home, arriving at the White House at about 11 o'clock.

This is all in writing so you can see it.

Now you know the Gross National Product figures for the first quarter came out this morning and showed that the Gross National Product increased during the first quarter at an annual rate of seven and a half percent. This compared to an annual rate increase in the last three months of the calendar year 1975 of five percent. The figures also showed that when you analyzed the increase in GNP to find what portion of it was inflation, the annual rate of inflation in the first quarter was 3.7 percent.

So the reaction of the White House to that is that we are gratified because these figures indicate the recovery is continuing in a solid way.

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Q Is that rate of inflation at 3.7 a quarterly 3.7 or 3.7 annual?

MR. NESSEN: No, annual.

Q And this 5 percent was comparable to the first quarter? In other words, that was the first quarter of 1975 as compared to this, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Or the whole year of 1975?

MR. NESSEN: No. The GNP went up in the first three months of this year at an annual rate of 7-1/2 percent.

Q Right.

MR. NESSEN: The three previous months -- that is, the last three months of calendar 1975 -- the GNP went up at an annual rate of 5 percent. The annual inflation rate as measured in the first quarter of 1976 was 3.7 percent. As I say, we are gratified that these figures indicate the recovery is continuing in a solid way and the President is especially pleased by the figures indicating a continued reduction in the rate of inflation.

The increase in GNP in the first quarter is greater than had been anticipated.

Q What was the GNP reduction or the rate of inflation reduction or level in the fourth quarter compared to that 3.7?

MR. NESSEN: I will get that for you, Tom. I don't have it right in front of me.

I really don't have anything else.

Q Were those revised figures?

MR. NESSEN: Which ones?

Q For the GNP.

MR. NESSEN: The ones put out today?

Q Yes. Or is that preliminary?

MR. NESSEN: This is the first time they have been announced.

Q You know, they revise them.

MR. NESSEN: I know, but these would not be revised for the first quarter.

Q Ron, about the question I proposed, what was the President's reaction to the Saturday night show?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't really talk to him that much about it, Les.

Q He just had no reaction at all, is that it?

MR. NESSEN: Basically no reaction.

Q Did the President see all of the show, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I think he saw most of it, Sarah.

Q Was he seeing it with Mrs. Ford or anybody?

MR. NESSEN: They were up at Camp David. I don't know who --

Q Do you think they saw it all?

Q In mixed company?

MR. NESSEN: He indicated that he had seen most of it.

Q And he didn't say anything to you about whether he liked it or didn't like it or whether he was surprised about what the content of it was?

MR. NESSEN: We just didn't talk about it that much.

Q Did you know or have any idea what all the content was going to be before you went on?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by that.

Q I meant just what I said. Did you know what the content of all the show was going to be before you went on?

MR. NESSEN: I had seen the script a couple of days before, yes.

Q Did the President know that, too?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so, no.

Q You didn't tell him?

MR. NESSEN: Didn't tell him what?

Q You didn't tell him what all was going to be on the show?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't talk to him after I went to New York.

Q After you saw the script, you didn't talk to him?

MR. NESSEN: I did not.

Q Didn't you think it was your duty to tell him?

MR. NESSEN: I did not.

Q Ron, did you think any part of that show was tasteless, that you should not really lend your name to that kind of an enterprise?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I will let you make that judgment.

Q Ron, what kind of public reaction has there been?

MR. NESSEN: I have no idea.

Q You don't know whether he got phone calls or anything? Did he say anything to you?

MR. NESSEN: My mother called. (Laughter)

Q What did she think?

MR. NESSEN: I have not had a chance to call her back yet.

Q What did she say?

MR. NESSEN: I have not talked to her yet.

Q You better not.

MR. NESSEN: I have not talked to her since I got back.

Q Do you think she will talk to you?

Q Did the President's advisers say anything about whether they thought this would affect his campaign?

MR. NESSEN: No, they have not. I don't even know. I don't know that they are thinking in those terms, Sarah.

Q Are you going on the Indiana and Georgia trip?

MR. NESSEN: I am probably going to go to the Lyndon Johnson library in Texas this week, as I think you are. (Laughter)

Q Let me get her off the hook.

Before we leave the Saturday night show, since the President didn't know what the script was, he apparently didn't give much thought to any connection between his own tape-recorded appearances and the content of the show, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: What?

Q Well, he appeared --

Q You know what he means, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I know. He has got to scabble for this kind of stuff. He needs a follow-up story.

Q Really, this is the first chance we have had to ask about it and I am just checking.

MR. NESSEN: I don't understand the question.

Q Was it X-rated?

MR. NESSEN: I will let you make that judgment.

Q If you don't understand the question, some of the material in the show is certainly controversial and the President's appearance in a tape-recorded way identifies him, in some people's minds, with the questionable content. Since the President did not know the script, does he now have any reservations about his appearance?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, we just didn't talk that much about it.

Q Ron, as the President's advisor on public relations, press and so forth, is it your feeling that this was any more appropriate for you and him to participate in than, say, Congressman Mills to be on stage with a close friend of his? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I never actually thought of that, Les. (Laughter)

Q Now that I have stimulated your thinking, do you think you could think fast on this one and tell me where you think this is more appropriate? I mean, you know, hemorrhoid jam and carbonated douches and that sort of thing?

Ron, I just wondered, do you think this identifies with most of the American people, or what? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I am no TV critic, Les, so I would leave that.

Q Ron, are you open for a series?

Q Ron, you required script approval. Was there anything in that script that you scratched? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: That is terrible.

Q Like the jam.

Q Like copulating with dogs.

Q I am serious. Was there anything you thought should not go on the air?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously, the things I did were the things that I felt comfortable doing.

Q Well, does that mean that you did or didn't scratch something?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, Sarah, look, the thing was Saturday night and this is Monday morning and it strikes me that there must be more important issues in the world than my appearance on Saturday night.

Q I am serious about this, Ron. This has to do with you and the President, but mainly the President being in on a show like this. Is this the type of thing that the President believes that the Federal Communications Commission should allow general audiences in the United States to see?

MR. NESSEN: Sarah, as I say, I --

Q I am very serious about this.

MR. NESSEN: I know you are.

Q I think that this is the type of thing that the American people should know. Does he approve of the Federal Communications Commission permitting mixed audiences to see this?

Q Mixed?

MR. NESSEN: I just didn't frankly talk to him about this. I didn't anticipate that there would be this vast amount of interest.

Q There is some real sensitivity about this.

Q Did the President chide you about it?

MR. NESSEN: He did not.

Q Ron, do you have absolute knowledge that
Lyn Nofziger has not asked for equal time?

MR. NESSEN: I have no idea.

Q Ron, you said you didn't discuss it with
the President. Did you try to and have him say, "Don't
talk to me about it?"

MR. NESSEN: No, I think both of us had the feeling
that there were some issues in the world today I would
probably get asked about that were unrelated to this
Saturday night TV program.

Q Ron, has the White House had time to go
over the FEC bill sufficiently to decide whether it, too,
is going to get vetoed?

MR. NESSEN: It has not.

Q Is there any sort of preliminary view on it?

MR. NESSEN: Not enough to really take a public
position on.

Q Ron, over the weekend the Soviet Union
through Pravda accused the United States of violating the
spirit at least of the Helsinki Accords by issuing warnings
to governments in Europe, Western Europe, against flirtation
with Communism and Communist majorities in parliament and
so forth. Would you care to respond to that?

Q What is the question?

MR. NESSEN: Walt asked about the Pravda
editorial over the weekend commenting on America's
position on Communist participation in Western European
governments.

It is something that I am not going to comment
on. The Pravda editorial is something that I don't want
to comment on.

Q Then, let me phrase the question this way:
Does the President believe that the United States has
violated the Helsinki Accords with warnings from the
Secretary of State, and even here at the White House, to
the effect that the United States should not be warning
governments in Western Europe about Communist parliaments?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't recall, Walt, any
warning issued on this matter. I know that the United
States has a view of the matter but I can't recall an
occasion when warnings have been issued.

Q Well, I think both Secretary Kissinger and the President have said the United States viewed with grave concern at the time of Portugal and, more recently, with the Italian Government any Communist majorities or major roles for the Communist Party either --

MR. NESSEN: As I say, the position of the United States is that either a Communist-dominated government or Communist participation in governments in Western Europe would cause serious problems for NATO. Again, I mean that is the publicly stated position of the United States but it is not --

Q Is that a violation of the Helsinki Accords? Is the United States through such utterances --

MR. NESSEN: Of having a position on that question?

Q Those are more than positions, Ron. Those are thinly veiled threats that the United States would look --

MR. NESSEN: I don't agree with that.

Q By that same token, isn't that a violation of the Helsinki Accords?

MR. NESSEN: I disagree that it is a warning or a thinly veiled threat. It is a position and it is not a violation of the Helsinki Accords, in our view.

Q Ron, does the U.S. Government approve of the action taken so far by the Lebanese, both sides, in settling the dispute -- in other words, clearing the way for the resignation of President Franjijah? And also, what part has the U.S. played in this whole thing in view of the Assad communique with the PLO that -- exercising any U.S. part in the peace making?

MR. NESSEN: What was the last part?

Q What is the U.S. exactly doing to further peace in the Middle East?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President sent Ambassador Brown there to serve in whatever way he can to help the parties involved resolve their differences, and he has been in touch with all the parties.

As for the first part of your question, the United States favors a peaceful settlement and is opposed to outside military intervention that could lead to a military confrontation or to a Middle Eastern war.

Q Ron, there is a change in this, isn't there, from what you said before about military intervention that could lead to a Middle East war? Wasn't the United States just against any military intervention?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think if you look at the nature and intent of what Syria has been doing in Lebanon -- even though we are opposed to outside military intervention that would lead to a confrontation--if you look at Syria's intent and the nature of what they have done, I think overall you would have to say they have played a constructive role.

Q Against their playing a constructive role?

MR. NESSEN: Why? Has something happened that I don't know about?

Q No, the threat up until now.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I do want to emphasize that we oppose military intervention that could lead to a confrontation.

Q Didn't Syria cross a border?

MR. NESSEN: What?

Q Didn't Syria cross a border?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't think that this is the place to give a report on military movements in the Middle East.

Q What is the Sixth Fleet doing in the area?

Q Would you please expand on what you mean by a constructive role?

MR. NESSEN: We have all along favored a political settlement there and I think we have said for many weeks now that Syria seems to be playing a constructive role in helping to reach a political settlement.

Q Is the PLO playing a constructive role?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that much about their role, Dick.

Q Was Ambassador Brown aware of the steps that Syria intended to take before they were taken?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't think we can go into the details of what exchanges have or have not taken place between the United States and the other countries involved.

Q Have there been exchanges, though, between the United States and Israel concerning the Syrian intervention?

MR. NESSEN: There have been exchanges between the United States and all the parties involved with the exception of the PLO, but what was said in the exchanges I am not going to say.

Q Has Ambassador Brown been in touch with the PLO?

MR. NESSEN: He does not have the authority to be in touch with the PLO.

Q But has he been in touch with the PLO?

MR. NESSEN: I have not checked today or recently, but the last time I did check he had not been.

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Q Ron, what is the President's view on the present march of Jewish right wing militants through the West Bank of occupied territory? Does the President think it is a constructive move or did he make his views known to the Israeli Government on this matter?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Ron, is the President planning a more extended campaign trip to Texas next week than was originally scheduled?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q Did he make any comment to you about the apparent intensity picking up in the campaign down there?

MR. NESSEN: In what way?

Q Use of Reagan flyers about going back to the Safer interview and Mrs. Ford's views and things like that.

MR. NESSEN: No, I didn't even know that myself.

Q Ron, will you help the speechwriters when the President goes the next time when he addresses the Panama Canal to try and clarify these things that you have mentioned might be improved upon, to clarify the President's position? Do you ever help the speechwriters?

MR. NESSEN: No, that is not my function.

Q Will you suggest that they readdress this question of Panama? Do you expect he is going to readdress this Panama issue?

MR. NESSEN: I would expect so.

In answer to Tom's question on the GNP and the inflation figure, the annual inflation rate in the first three months of 1976 was 3.7, the comparable figure time for the last three months of 1975 was 6.8 percent annual inflation rate. The 3.7 figure is the lowest inflation rate since the third quarter of calendar 1972.

Q Ron, on the Panama issue, can you tell us if the President talked about that at some length in this interview that we are going to get for 6:00 A.M. tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: He was asked about Panama, yes.

Q Do you think he made any new ground or said anything here that is not going to be just repetitive?

MR. NESSEN: My feeling is that -- yes.
(Laughter)

Q New ground?

Q Oh, Ron.

Q Ron, on what looks like today's schedule we had a press conference. Is there anything in the wind? No public appearance?

MR. NESSEN: I don't expect a press conference this week other than the question and answer sessions along the way as he goes on the trip and a couple of other interviews here in the White House this week with groups and papers from Texas which have requested interviews.

Q Who are these groups, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have it in front of me, Sarah. I have to look on my calendar.

Q Ron, has the President, as Commander-in-Chief, made a decision yet on what becomes of Lieutenant Calley? He has got the final say on him.

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that -- why would the President be involved in the Calley matter?

Q He has a right to pardon him. He has the final word.

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that what the Supreme Court did had to do with habeas corpus and filed by his lawyer and so forth. There is no plan for the President to become involved in the Calley matter.

Q The President has every right to become involved as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, he can pardon any soldier.

MR. NESSEN: I mean if you are relating it directly to the latest Supreme Court ruling --

Q No, I am relating it to the future of Lieutenant Calley.

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans for the President to become involved in the Calley matter.

Q Ron, I am not at all sure on this and you can rebuke me, please, but didn't at one time the President say that he would have the final say so on the Calley matter?

MR. NESSEN: I am telling you right now that I don't know what has been said before but I think there are a couple of things to keep in mind. The Supreme Court's recent decision on the Calley matter was not, you know, like the ultimate end of the military justice system and that if the President does not do something --

Q I realize.

MR. NESSEN: Let me just finish explaining -- and if the President does not step in, then that Supreme Court ruling is the end of the process. That was something entirely separate from the military justice system. His lawyers took the case outside of the military justice system, I understand, and asked for a habeas corpus decision releasing Calley and so forth, so it was a separate track from the military justice system.

Then, as I say, there are no plans for the President to become involved in the Calley matter.

Q But did not the President at one time -- and my memory is hazy on this but I think this is right -- didn't he at one time say that he would have the final say so on the Calley matter?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my recollection. I think that may have been another President.

Q Ron, does the President intend to pursue his intention to seek sharp reductions in military fringe benefits?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean by that?

Q Well, he said on several occasion, and I believe the budget reflects, that he intended to reduce sharply what he called fringes that the military get.

MR. NESSEN: All right. What is the next question when I say yes?

Q Will the Defense Manpower Commission issue reports to him and to Congress saying it has recommended against him doing that? Does the President have any thoughts on that?

MR. NESSEN: That report has not gotten here, as far as I know, but it will be looked at when it gets here and the President will ask the appropriate people to look at it and see what action, if any, should be taken on its recommendations.

Q Ron, he has not changed his judgment on that subject?

MR. NESSEN: On the military --

Q Fringes.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know what you mean by fringes. I think he said before, and he means it and will stand by it, that there is not going to be any fat in the defense budget any more than there is anywhere else, or frills. I think he has referred to frills.

Q Military privileges --

MR. NESSEN: I mean all of these are dealt with in the budget so certainly he knows where he stands on it.

Q Ron, last week Bradley University in Peoria got a letter not from the President but from Jim Lynn saying that they were sorry but the ROTC program does not meet standards and is being phased out. Don't you think that that University, after what the President says, is owed a letter from the President?

MR. NESSEN: Well, look, Jim Lynn is his OMB Director and I don't know what difference it would have made. I think what he promised at the time was to --

Q Do his darnedest.

MR. NESSEN: -- to find the information, or an explanation -- whatever it was -- and get back to them, and he did through his own OMB Director.

Q Can I just pursue this Calley thing for one second?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. There is nothing to pursue.

Q You say there are no plans.

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Well, are you suggesting or saying that the President will not serve as a last resort appeal for Calley?

MR. NESSEN: All I am saying is that there are no plans for the President to intervene.

Q At this moment?

MR. NESSEN: There are just no plans.

Q You are not precluding the possibility at a later time?

MR. NESSEN: Well, if you write a story saying the White House left open the possibility, you are going to be terribly wrong.

Q In other words, Nixon did say --

MR. NESSEN: What I am saying is there is nothing new here and that you are snooping around trying to get something when there is nothing. There are no plans, period.

Q Ron, whether you have plans for this or not, doesn't it routinely, automatically come up to the President for final decision?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Ron, is there any talk in the White House about --

MR. NESSEN: Where did all this Calley stuff come from all of a sudden?

Q Georgia.

Q Is there any talk in the White House about the President acting on a plea for commutation of the jail sentence of E. Howard Hunt?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that there is such a plea.

Q And if that comes up this month, and it is reported to, has Mr. Buchen or anyone else in the White House talked about such a place?

MR. NESSEN: I have never heard of it before today.

Q To clarify, are you saying that the President is foreclosing any option of involving himself in the Calley matter?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, there are no plans for the President to become involved in the Calley matter.

Q You are not really answering the question.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the question is because --

Q Well, he asked it very well, I think. Is the President foreclosing the possibility? Can you say yes or no to that?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans to become involved in the Calley matter.

Q So he will not rule on a pardon, is that what you are saying?

MR. NESSEN: What pardon?

Q His Constitutional power to.

MR. NESSEN: Well, look, I am not going to be dragged into a non-story. There are no plans for the President --

Q Don't tell us what stories are. You tell us every day what the story is.

MR. NESSEN: I know whether there is a story or not, Helen, so I will tell you it is a non-story.

Q Ron, Helen is writing the story. You are not writing the story. Jim is writing the story.

Now, Ron, you are suggesting that there is an opening here, there is a code word. Why don't you answer Jim's question yes or no? It is a legitimate question, a sensible question, a reasonable question.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I can answer it yes, there are no plans to become involved in the Calley matter and no, there are no plans to become involved in the Calley matter.

Q That was not the question.

Q Ron, that gets back to what I asked. I am not talking about plans, I am talking about doesn't it automatically routinely come up to him finally?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. You have to ask the Judge Advocate General that question.

Q Are you saying when Calley exhausts all appeals within the military the President at that point will not intervene in the Calley matter?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know where it stands at all, Jim. All I know is that a couple of weeks ago at the time of the Supreme Court ruling somebody asked me --

Q I am not --

MR. NESSEN: Let me just tell you how I come to my state of knowledge: Somebody asked me, was the President now going to step in, and I did a little research and I found that the Supreme Court case had nothing to do with the military justice system and that the President simply at that time did not plan any involvement in the Calley case.

Q Ron, a question we asked here a long time ago about, was the President going to permit Amtrak to have to close down half of the passenger line service in this country --

MR. NESSEN: Yes?

Q -- and much of that goes through Texas, or the part that is going to have to be closed --

MR. NESSEN: Yes?

Q -- and if they don't give them some more help, which they didn't help in the budget, it is going to have to be closed. Now that time is drawing near and also the expansion of travel service in connection with the special passes for tourists in the Bicentennial. Have you ever found out?

MR. NESSEN: I carried all that stuff around with me for weeks and weeks and never got asked about it.

Q Somebody from your staff called about a preliminary report that didn't quite apply.

MR. NESSEN: I think it did apply because what it did was --

Q Could you find out now what the President is going to do about this because it is a very important issue in Texas?

MR. NESSEN: I think what happened was we found out what the Federal subsidy to Amtrak was for the last five or six years --

Q That was not the question.

MR. NESSEN:--and it increased sort of steadily over the years and it will increase again this year.

Margaret, did you call Sarah and give those figures? Did you mention to her that our analysis does not indicate any cutback?

Is there anything beyond that?

Q Can you tell me now, is the President going to permit Amtrak to cut back half of the passenger service in the country, including a great part of that which goes through Texas?

MR. NESSEN: I think as Margaret told you a couple of weeks ago, two or three weeks ago when she gave you the figures on the Federal contribution to Amtrak which has increased steadily over the years, so our analysis does not indicate the need for any 50 percent cutback in Amtrak.

Q Did you take this up with the President? Did you discuss it with the President?

MR. NESSEN: No, I did not.

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Q That is what I was afraid of. Now my question to you is will you please find out from the President whether the original query was put through you to the President? Is he going to allow them to cut back this service in Texas and other places?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, our analysis does not indicate that that will happen.

Q In other words, you may just be wrong as the dickens but you aren't going to let the President in on this question, are you? You are not going to let the President answer this question.

MR. NESSEN: I think if you could tell us what additional information you need, Sarah, we will --

Q I need the answer to the original question which is, is the President going to permit Amtrak to have to cut back half of the service in the United States?

MR. NESSEN: We will dig the figures out again and give them to you.

Q No, she never had the answer, Ron. She is talking about something that is partially related but not really related to the question.

MR. NESSEN: Our analysis does not show that the --

Q Your analysis is not the answer to my question.

Q There is an understanding among people in Texas that there are a number of railroads down there that face closings. Now is that inaccurate? Are you saying that that is inaccurate?

MR. NESSEN: You know, I don't know -- I mean this is the wrong place to ask is this railroad going to close or be curtailed or is that one going to be curtailed or closed down. You know, the annual Federal contribution to Amtrak has increased steadily, and as we told Sarah a couple of weeks ago, with the amount of money that Amtrak will be receiving this year there is no contemplated 50 percent curtailment in Amtrak service.

Q That is not what the President of Amtrak said, Ron. The President of Amtrak knows what he has got and he said for Congress' sake -- and I don't think he is lying to them -- that we are going to have to cut back half of these lines, including those lines that go through Texas. I think he knows what he is talking about. And she discussed it with somebody other than the President, she discussed it with somebody in Transportation who does not run Amtrak. They run freight yards and other things.

Q Ron, will you answer a question on India?
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ambassador Saxbe reportedly reported today or announced today that there would be some \$60 million in aid going to India plus 400,000 tons of wheat, 100,000 tons of rice. Can you confirm that and what does that mean in terms of better relations with India?

MR. NESSEN: Can you ask the State Department that question?

Q Ron, what is the President doing the rest of the day?

MR. NESSEN: The President for the rest of the day -- I don't have his schedule in front of me -- among other things he will be working on his speech for the DAR part of the afternoon, and part of the afternoon he will be doing paper work with Dick Cheney and part of the afternoon he will be talking campaign business with his campaign advisers.

Q Do you expect to have a text in advance of the DAR speech?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q When? Tomorrow morning?

MR. NESSEN: Probably not that soon.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 1:16 P.M. EST)