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

#489

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:40 A.M. EDT

MAY 6, 1976

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: You saw the beginning of the Social Security meeting. The President had some remarks, I understand, at the beginning of that meeting, while the pool was in there. We will have a transcript made of that, and it should be available by the end of this briefing.

Q Could you briefly tell us, for those of us who were not there at the beginning, what was the purpose of the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: To review the status of the legislation that the President sent up, which the Democratic Congress has not acted on, and to just simply consider and review his -- the President's -- feeling that the integrity of the Social Security system needs to be maintained, and there will be a discussion of those issues.

You know this afternoon the President is going to have a reception for the editorial cartoonists. It is the Editorial Cartoonists Association or the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, and over the years the President has met with this group, both as President and as Vice President, so they are here for a kind of annual three or four days of briefings that they get around the Government.

The way this will go is that the President will speak very briefly in the East Room and then have a coffee and cookie reception in the State Dining Room. Now, I don't expect that his remarks in the East Room are going to be any startling news --

Q No Q and A?

MR. NESSEN: -- or any news, for that matter. There will be no Q and A, but if you want to cover it, you certainly may.

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Q Would you pipe it in here for us?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it will be piped back.

Q Is he going to pose for them, do you know?
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Maybe some of them will sketch him.

Q How many of them?

MR. NESSEN: Counting wives, there are, I think, 250 or 225, something like that.

There is an event this evening, a brief event which was not on the schedule. The Michigan Association of Broadcasters comes down to Washington every year and meets with the Congressional delegation and also gets briefings and so forth, and over the years, as a Member of Congress, Vice President and President, the President has seen this group in various settings.

If you will recall, last year he dropped in at a reception for the group given at the Tayloe House by the Press Office. Anyhow, this year's dinner is being held at the Madison Hotel tonight by the Michigan Association of Broadcasters, and the President is going to drop in before dinner, during the reception time, and is going to receive an award from the Association. I believe it is Michigan's Outstanding Man of the Year Award, or something like that.

The President leaves the White House in a motorcade at 6:55 and gets to the Madison at 7:00 and will probably be there altogether a half-hour. The conditions are not great for coverage in that room, as far as TV goes, but if you do want to cover it, you can. The President will have some remarks after the award.

Q Are they the kind of remarks we would be interested in covering, looking forward to the Michigan primary, or is it going to be the Mother's Day type remarks?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think it would be some reference to the -- I don't know. Is your mother interested in politics?

Q Yes, she is a Republican.

MR. NESSEN: Good, we need all we can get.
(Laughter)

Q She is a Reagan Republican, (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Anyhow, the answer to your question, I think, is yes.

Q What was the question? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Do you remember what your question was?

Q Is it the kind of thing we would want to cover for political coverage for the Michigan primary?

Q Is it a campaign appearance?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not.

For tomorrow, we have a summary schedule all done and printed up, and I will just hand it out at the end of this briefing, which will save some time. The press check-in is at 1:00 at Andrews. If you want to, you can leave your bag at Room 87 of the EOB until 10:30 tomorrow morning.

Just a few quick highlights. Overnight will be at the Holiday Inn West in Omaha. The President is staying at the same hotel. The return on Saturday night I would look for in roughly the 9:30 to 10:00 area. I hope that we will have the bibles ready tomorrow, and I also hope that we will have perhaps some speech texts available.

Q Briefing tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I think because of the hour of our departure, we won't have a briefing, but you should check here either late this afternoon or first thing in the morning because I think we could well have some developments here in the morning -- not a briefing, but some news.

Q Will the military aid be vetoed?

MR. NESSEN: That is a real possibility.

Q And the signing of the FEC bill?

MR. NESSEN: Probably not.

Q Probably today, maybe?

MR. NESSEN: Probably not today, either, although the President has -- the situation on that is if I could just take a break here and deal with that and then go back to my announcements since you raised the question -- the FEC bill did arrive here late yesterday from Congress and --

Q They told you about that arrival?

MR. NESSEN: The President gave instructions to his staff to move as quickly as possible to review the legislation and to send their recommendations to the President. He also has asked for a review and recommendations by Congressional Republican leaders and also as quickly as possible so he can act as quickly as possible.

Q Who has purview over that here, is that Buchen?

MR. NESSEN: I think there will be various members of the staff, certainly the Counsel's Office, and the OMB, which reviews all legislation, and so forth.

Q Is he going to meet with the leaders on this next week?

MR. NESSEN: It is a possibility.

Q Did he ask the Democrats as well as the Republicans, or only the Republicans?

MR. NESSEN: I have to check on that, Bob. That is a good question. I don't know.

Q You don't anticipate a decision on that before next week?

MR. NESSEN: The way the President worded it was to have the bill reviewed and the recommendations in as quickly as possible. I don't know how long that is going to take.

Q Ron, did you intend to leave the impression a moment ago that he will sign it? I have been away the last few days.

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, the question of signing or vetoing really depends on the review and on the recommendations and on his own decision, which has not been made.

The Wholesale Price Index, that came out today for the month of April --

Q Before that, what is going to be announced here tomorrow morning?

MR. NESSEN: I said among other things there is the possibility of the foreign assistance authorization veto, possibly.

Q Are you ruling out that veto today, then?

MR. NESSEN: The foreign assistance?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't look for it today. I really don't.

Q Ron, can you say more about the text for tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: There are two events. There is the ground-breaking at the hospital and the Farm Forum, and it could be that we will put out brief texts of remarks.

Q When would that be?

MR. NESSEN: Tomorrow, not tonight.

Q What time is that Farm Forum?

MR. NESSEN: The Farm Forum is 8:00 in the evening, Central Daylight Time, which would be 9:00 in the East.

Q Ron, isn't he also going to drive by or stop at the house where he was born?

MR. NESSEN: I thought he told me one time it was not there anymore.

Q He would drive by where it used to be.

MR. NESSEN: I am told it is possible.

The Wholesale Price Index went up eight-tenths of 1 percent today. Just to give you a six-month cut at that, going back to November, there was no change, December the Index went down four-tenths, January no change, February down five-tenths, March up two-tenths, April up eight-tenths, which is what is announced today.

As the Labor Department announced, this is largely attributed to an increase in farm products and processed foods. The industrial price increases were moderate.

Q What were they?

MR. NESSEN: You really need to get the technical details over there. I just don't have them.

Q You have an overall for the month, but no industrial component?

MR. NESSEN: Here at the White House I don't, Jim. It is, of course, available.

Just to make one other point, the economists here have received some data which came after the cut-off date for compiling the April Index, and that data that came in later indicates that these increases in farm products and the processed food did not rise at the same -- that the rise tapered off after the deadline for the April figures.

Q By how much?

MR. NESSEN: The Labor Department could give you that.

Q In other words, you are saying it could be revised downward?

MR. NESSEN: No, this would show up in the next month's figures.

Q Do you expect the May increase to be less than the April?

MR. NESSEN: The earlier expectations are that the May figures will be less than the April figures.

Q Nevertheless, the April figure annualizes at 9.6 percent. How do you like a 9.6 percent increase in the Wholesale Price Index? Is that something you view with equanimity?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, that is why I tried to give you the six-month cut at the thing, so you will see what the trends are rather than isolate on one month and as we have said all along, there was no expectation here that the very low increases or the zero change or in fact the decrease in some months was something that would continue indefinitely.

We said that all along. The size of the April increase just standing alone as a one-month figure is not a particular cause of concern at the White House.

Q Do you consider it an aberration?

MR. NESSEN: No, I just say you have to look at the six-month figure, you have to look at some data that has come in after the deadline time, and you have to look at what we have really given a forewarning about, which is the really very low increases, zero increase or decline was not expected to go on indefinitely.

Q Ron, do these earlier indicators you speak of suggest a decrease in May?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not enough of an expert on it. The earlier indications are that if there is an increase in May it would not be as great as the one in April.

Q As you read them off, the figures obviously have gyrated somewhat for the past six months, up some, down some, not much of an even thing that we could look at. What do you expect for the 12-month period this calendar year? Putting it another way, I don't really remember whether wholesale price expectations were included in the economic assumptions in the budget or whether they covered only retail.

If they were included in economic assumptions, we could look them up and what I am asking, then, is are those still the same?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think Wholesale Price Index is included in the budget assumption.

Q Then what are your expectations for this calendar year?

MR. NESSEN: I am not enough of a technical expert to know, Jim.

Q When you were referring to the earlier indications for May, were you talking about in general?

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MR. NESSEN: I am talking about the general overall wholesale price index for May. I was not talking about any specific component of it.

Q In general, you do not expect it to be as great?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Let me ask you before you get off that subject, let me ask the White House's reaction to Dr. Burn's testimony of a day or two ago in which he said you were going to tighten up the money supply, the very clear inference being -- and he may have said it -- being he expects a resurgence of inflation next year.

Does the White House agree with this?

MR. NESSEN: Well, as you know, the Federal Reserve Board is independent, its policies are independent. As far as I know, there has been no change in the economic assumptions, including the Consumer Price Index figure contained in the budget.

Q You are not concerned, then, about this inflationary resurgence in 1977?

MR. NESSEN: The President is always concerned about inflationary resurgence and that is one of the reasons why he has tried to persuade Congress not to increase his budget.

Q Well, let's put it another way. Dr. Burns thinks there is going to be one and the stockmarket apparently thinks there is going to be one, what does the White House think?

MR. NESSEN: The White House think about what?

Q Are we going to have a serious problem with inflation next year?

MR. NESSEN: I told you, Jim, that the budget assumptions concerning the CPI remain unchanged, as far as I know. But the President has said from the very beginning that the question of a resurgence of inflation depends, in part at least, on Congress not increasing the deficit any more than it has been increased.

Q Does the White House have a position at the present time on higher rates of interest, which is what Burns seems to be hinting at? Do you have a position on that? Do you want higher rates of interest at the present time?

MR. NESSEN: I am being dragged into an area beyond my competence, Dick.

Q Could I follow Dick's question? Does the President have an economic contingency plan to deal with the question of a resurgence of inflation next year?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to accept the assumption of a resurgence of inflation, Walt, because it does not have to happen and it is not anticipated to happen if Congress will accept --

Q But is the President prepared to deal with it with some specificity?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to get into, behind what I have.

Q Ron, before we get off this, yesterday you said that the President said one of the three points he was going to be stressing now is that his Administration has restored the economy from the recession. But I am wondering what specifically has the President done that has caused the recovery? A lot of people would say that there are certain natural economic processes that evolve. Can you mention anything specific that he has done?

MR. NESSEN: I can mention quite a lot specific and I think the President will, too, as he goes around, but he does have a set of economic policies and these have been criticized, and a Democratic Congress has riled against them and in many cases tried to overthrow them.

The President has been steady in carrying them out, and, as you recall, when the recession was deep and serious, the President was blamed for it and his policies were blamed for it. And it seems only fair that if the economy gets better during a period when his policies are in place, he ought to get credit for it.

He has vetoed legislation which would have increased Government spending \$13 billion and these vetoes have been upheld, so the deficit, the borrowing of the Federal Government in competition has been \$13 billion less.

He proposed a tax cut which Congress approved and he signed. Those I would say would be two of the outstanding examples of his policy.

He held the line against the demands for wage and price controls, demands for very large public works programs, public jobs programs. You know his economic policies.

Q Ron, you said a moment ago " and I think he will as he goes around," in talking about specifics.

MR. NESSEN: He has and he will continue to.

Q You were not saying there was going to be a new emphasis on this?

MR. NESSEN: He has talked about this as he has campaigned and I think he certainly will continue.

Q Have you heard any more? Will he talk about other things?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. It is hard to say.

Q Ron, if I could go back to something -- since I have been away -- the transcript of April 17 --

MR. NESSEN: Let's see if we have all the economic questions answered.

Q I wanted to ask whether one of his basic contentions isn't -- at least implicitly -- that his policy consisted of not interfering with the process of natural recovery that he referred to.

MR. NESSEN: No. I think his policy consisted of stimulating the economy out of the recession without over-stimulating it into a new round of inflation. I would say that would be the most succinct way I could describe it.

Q How did he stimulate it, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Tax cuts which he recommended, Congress approved and he signed.

Q And the Congress approved a larger amount than he asked for.

MR. NESSEN: Secondly, not allowing the Government to compete with the housing industry, with private industry, and so forth, for funds, driving up interest rates and thereby increasing inflation.

Q I want to go back to Dick's question a minute, the question of whether or not Burns' testimony does not point to higher interest rates and, of course, one of the first places it would show up is in the home mortgage sector. Does the President view with relative equanimity or unconcern the prospect of higher interest rates, particularly as they might affect the housing industry.

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I can't read the future, I really can't.

Q You say the Fed and the White House are separate. Nevertheless, the Chairman of the Fed, in effect, warns that higher interest rates are on the way. Does that concern the White House, and, if so, what are you doing about it?

MR. NESSEN: I would like to read Dr. Burns' remarks in full before responding to that question.

Q I am puzzled by the basis for your optimism about May wholesale prices. I assume these figures would have come in not today but yesterday. That was the fifth of the month. Two days were weekend days. Are you doing that on the basis of three days figures?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't know what the technical cut-off period in April is for the April figures. The 25th strikes me as being about right, but, anyhow, the April calculations do not --

Q It is not a calendar month?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so, but again this is something the Labor Department needs to give you on a technical basis.

Q Ron, if I could go back to the April 17 transcript. The record shows you said the President had "basically no reaction" to the NBC Saturday Night Show that you and he were on. Two days later in Corpus Christi Mrs. Ford said both she and the President thought the show was distasteful. How does this square with your promise never to mislead us, and do you think this national telecast had no effect at all on the last few primaries?

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

Q Ron, could you just answer the question, did it have an effect on the primaries or not?

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

Q Ron, if you have no judgment on the matter, why did you appear on it then?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have an answer to that, Les.

Q We have had 24 hours to restudy Ford campaign strategy and as we left yesterday we saw Rogers Morton come into the White House. I wonder if the study has gone far enough so you can give us any new conclusions or any new ideas on the new campaign strategy.

MR. NESSEN: Let me make just one or two points on that. One thing is, as I said yesterday, the campaign strategy is something that has been, from the very beginning, assessed and reassessed and reviewed on a continuing basis, almost a daily basis. So I don't want you to think that the review that is going on now is something that is out of the ordinary. The strategy is reviewed constantly and it is going on as a matter of fact.

Now, as for what decisions have been made, obviously if you are running for public office I don't think you sort of telegraph your strategy, so to speak, and I think if there are any changes, or if there are no changes for that matter, the strategy will unfold as time goes on.

But we would not certainly announce a strategy change from here or anywhere.

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Q You are not suggesting that the strategy is no more intense than it would have been if you had not lost four primaries?

MR. NESSEN: No, of course not, Aldo, but I don't want you to think that the first time the campaign strategy was reviewed began yesterday morning. It was reviewed all along to take into effect many things that have happened, victory in New Hampshire, victory in Florida, different things and strategy is reviewed constantly because of changing events.

As a result of Texas and the Tuesday primaries, it is being reviewed in the light of those things, but it has been reviewed constantly in the light of other things.

Q Are you backing away from your statement yesterday, Ron, in which you gave three serious reasons why the President failed to convince voters?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I gave three serious reasons why the President failed to convince the voters, Ralph. What I think I said was that there are three accomplishments or successes of this Administration of which there was a feeling these had not been adequately gotten across to the voters. Certainly not.

Q Ron, are we right in thinking the President is not laying blame anywhere on Morton or on yourself or anybody else for what has happened?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Ron, the President accused Jimmy Carter of -- I think the term was flip-flopping on the Humphrey-Mills thing. Do you recall this?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Therefore, how does he define his change of status from the time he was a Congressman on the matter of both the Panama Canal and the Byrd amendment? What does he call that? Is that less of a flip-flop because there was more time in it or what?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I have to review the record to see what changes, if any, took place.

Q If I could follow up with another question, is the President going to fulfill what, as I understand it, is an engagement to address the Southern Baptist Convention or is he going to pull out in view of objection from two Southern Baptist editors?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure where or when that event is.

Q Norfolk in the first part of June.

MR. NESSEN: I have to check the schedule. I am not familiar with the event, Les.

Q As a tactical matter, have you heard any discussions which you could disclose to us as to whether we will be traveling more or traveling less as a result of the strategy review?

MR. NESSEN: If there is any change in the travel schedule--as I said before, the travel normally has been arranged only about two weeks ahead of the event, so it is hard to say whether it is going to be more or less or the same, but in any case, as I say, if there is any change in strategy, I would not stand up here and announce it.

Q But is there a feeling that perhaps the President should be out on the campaign trail more now as a result of what has happened in the last five days?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, no decision has been made to change the travel that has been arranged.

Q But I don't think that was quite my question. My question was, is the President being urged to do more campaigning now, that you know of?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of, no.

Q A couple more political questions, if I might. Your continuing study and evaluation that you say goes on almost constantly, has that got to the point of analyzing the Texas outcome and specifically has any evaluation or study shown what the impact was of Secretary Kissinger's trip to Africa on the Texas results?

MR. NESSEN: I tell you, I think a lot of these more detailed political questions really more properly ought to be answered at the PFC.

Q I am sure they are going to be put to the people at the PFC, but I would like to ask you, since you referred to the continuing evaluation, whether or not there has been evaluation of Texas specifically from that standpoint?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with the outcome of any post-election evaluations of Texas.

Q Another question that directly refers to the White House -- and I am asking it with direct reference to the White House -- has the White House received, is it receiving, communications, telephonic, written, or any other way, from various Republican leaders around the country, State chairmen or other political Republican officials urging the President to drop Secretary Kissinger in the very near future?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware of any.

Q You received no communications along that line?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

Q Could you check?

Q You would not, all right, then.

Q Why not, Ron? That is a reasonable request.

MR. NESSEN: I did not answer the question yet.

Q I thought I felt a no.

Q Was it a no or yes?

MR. NESSEN: Just to confound you, I will look into it.

Q Have there been suggestions from elements of the White House staff to the President that Secretary Kissinger has become a definitive campaign liability?

MR. NESSEN: This question has been asked to the President virtually daily, including yesterday, and the President answered it, I thought, pretty thoroughly yesterday.

Q But he has not said anything lately.

Q Ron, could you review for us the standards for consultations that the President had with Secretary Kissinger prior to the trip to Africa and in reviewing that for us, could you perhaps address yourself to how closely Secretary Kissinger stuck to whatever preagreements there were between him and the President prior to his departure for Africa?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a timetable that I can give you on their consultations, but as we have said before in this particular foreign policy venture, as well as all others, the President makes the foreign policy and Dr. Kissinger carries it out. So, you can be sure that in whatever actions Dr. Kissinger announced or took in Africa he was enunciating and carrying out President Ford's foreign policy.

To a great extent the trip was in the nature of a fact-finding mission rather than a decision-making mission, and Dr. Kissinger will be back here, I understand, tomorrow and will see the President either on Sunday or Monday to begin giving him his report on the facts he gathered, but that was the primary purpose of the mission, was to gather facts, bring them back, present them to the President so the President can use those facts in the further development of his African policy.

Q By this, then, it is correct to conclude that the Secretary's statements relative to Rhodesia, for example, and support of the nationalist movement there and the nonsupport of the white majority were the President's own initiatives and not the Secretary's?

MR. NESSEN: Again, I don't feel -- and I have said this for months in the past -- I don't understand the purpose of having each and every sentence uttered by a Cabinet member presented here and said, "Does the President agree with this? Does the President agree with that?"

So, I am going to decline that question because I don't think it is something that we do here. I want you to know that the President makes foreign policy and Dr. Kissinger carries out and enunciates that foreign policy, and that is what he has done on his African trip.

Q If I could just ask this one thing, Ron, about the \$12 million offered to Mozambique. Is that the President's wish? Does he feel the Mozambique Government is such that we should aid it by \$12 million?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that specific proposal in detail, Les.

Q It was announced in all the papers, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I am telling you the President makes foreign policy and Dr. Kissinger carries it out, and enunciates it.

Q Ron, you said basically this was supposed to be a fact-finding trip. Was the President surprised when so much attention was given to the --

MR. NESSEN: We go through this exercise with great regularity, and I have told you always the same thing, Tom, that I don't understand the purpose of presenting a Cabinet member's remarks here, and there, and saying "Does the President agree with that? Does the President agree with this?" I am not going to do that exercise.

I am telling you that Dr. Kissinger and every other Cabinet member is employed by and represents the President in carrying out and enunciating his policies.

Q Quite simply, Ron, the question was, was the President's policy as enunciated by Kissinger when he outlined --

MR. NESSEN: Dr. Kissinger went to Africa to gather facts for the President and to carry out the President's policy.

Q Can I finish my question? So, we can safely assume it was the President's policy when Kissinger made the statement that he did, as Bill raised it, about Rhodesia, "The United States wants a black majority Government"?

MR. NESSEN: I am telling you that Dr. Kissinger carries out and enunciates the President's foreign policy everywhere and every time. I suppose you can bring in Secretary Butz's remarks and ask me whether --

Q I am not bringing in Butz's remarks. It was not just a simple statement. It was a major speech about an area of great volatility in Africa that the whole world is looking at, and I don't think it is fair of you to stand there and describe that as nitpicking sentence by sentence.

MR. NESSEN: I did not say nitpicking, Tom. I just said, as I have said so many times in the past, I don't personally understand the purpose of -- and I don't feel that it is proper -- for me to vouch for or disown, endorse, statements made by Cabinet members. Every Cabinet member carries out the President's policies in his particular area.

Q Ron, what is the President's policy relative to how soon there should be a black majority Government?

MR. NESSEN: Come on, Jim. This is what our friend Peter Lisagor calls, and says, that when briefings get to the point where Nessen is forced to say things which are not news, not stories, and we are at that point on this particular issue, I think.

Q Well, why don't you let us make the judgment as to what is news and you just tell us what the policy is.

MR. NESSEN: Because I can make a judgment on my part, Tom, that there is nothing new to say on this. Nothing has happened in this area today. Semantic exercises may produce a story, but they are not producing any news in my own personal judgment.

Q Ron, you were asked what the African policy context is into which the Rhodesia statement and today's speech at Nairobi on cooperation with the United States developed countries on commodities and so forth -- what is the broad African policy into which those statements fit?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you let me arrange a State Department briefing for you, Bill, by an expert in Africa where you can explore these questions in great depth? I am not an expert on Africa.

Q I don't think you have to be an expert on Africa to reply to a simple question asked by a reporter which was Jim Naughton's question, and let me ask it again. Does the President, whose spokesman you are, support a black majority Government in Rhodesia within two years?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to decline to answer that question, Jim, on the grounds that I have not sat down and explored to the point where I feel myself satisfactorily prepared to deal in depth with American policy in Africa. I will also arrange a briefing for you, if you would like to go, with Bill to sit down with an African expert and get these kinds of detailed answers.

Q You are unable to answer that question relating to a major facet of American foreign policy?

MR. NESSEN: My own view is that I have tried to be very careful to make sure that I am fully prepared to answer questions in areas that we are dealing with here, and I have not had the opportunity to make myself enough of an expert on African policy to feel comfortable answering detailed questions like that.

Q But if Kissinger enunciated this, Ron, how could it be other than the President's viewpoint?

MR. NESSEN: The Secretary enunciates the President's foreign policy.

Q Could you answer the question, Ron? How could it be other than the President's viewpoint if Dr. Kissinger said it?

Q Ron, do you mean to leave the impression which you have left with me, that Secretary Kissinger may have overstepped the limits of U.S. policy?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly do not, and I was about to myself make that point before you asked me to make it.

Q Did Dr. Kissinger say anything during his African trip that did not enunciate --

MR. NESSEN: Fred, I am not going to go through the exercise of approving or disapproving or endorsing each statement that a Cabinet member makes, no matter who he is.

Q Can I get back to the domestic scene?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have a way to go here, Saul, I suspect.

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Q You expressed some mystification at the purpose of the exercise of comparing the President's feelings with the Secretary's. I want to direct the question away from that area to one of substantial policy, if I can, and that is, there is a reason for that question, particularly in terms of African policy on Rhodesian chrome. The people on the Hill, Senators, aides to Senators, say while the White House has given tacit support in the past to repeal of the Byrd Amendment, it has not given wholehearted, all-out legislative support.

In view of Secretary Kissinger's policy statement in Africa, is the White House going to get behind this, because as of right now action on the Hill is stalled because they say they don't know what the White House position is.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who said they don't know what the White House position is because every time I have been asked about it here -- and that goes back almost to the beginning of the time I came here, which was over a year and a half ago -- I have always said that the President favors the repeal of the Byrd Amendment. And I think Dr. Kissinger has restated the President's policy on that in Africa. So there should be no doubt about it.

Q Will the White House get behind a major effort? Will the White House lobby for this repeal?

MR. NESSEN: The President has urged, or the Administration has urged Congress a number of times to repeal the Byrd Amendment.

Q Will you make any new initiatives? Can I just get an answer to that?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, one of the purposes, or the main purpose of Dr. Kissinger's trip was a fact-finding trip and he will come back and report to the President either Sunday or Monday and one of the areas to be discussed will be to discuss how to proceed on the repeal of the Byrd Amendment.

Q Ron, did the President ever explain to you what motivated him to change his position? While he was a Congressman, he strongly supported the Byrd Amendment.

MR. NESSEN: As I said to your earlier identical question, Les, I do want to do some research to find out what his position was as a Congressman.

Q Ron, has the President been able to determine or have you been able to determine, in light of the questions yesterday about his Convention Floor Manager, whether he will now need someone other than Senator Tower, and, if so, who?

MR. NESSEN: The President wants Senator Tower or continues to want Senator Tower to be his Floor Manager. Now, what the rules of the Convention are and how that can be arranged to fulfill the President's desire is being worked on at the PFC, and they can tell you the specific mechanism that would allow that to happen.

Q There is a way?

MR. NESSEN: They are looking into if there is a way.

Q Ron, are you trying to leave us with the impression that the President orders a restructuring or a reappraisal of his candidacy, that he has Rogers Morton over here at least twice on the same day --

MR. NESSEN: Rogers Morton -- if you think yesterday was unusual in the terms of Rogers' presence, you are wrong. He spends most days here.

Q Talking about energy and the economy.

MR. NESSEN: That was in his earlier role.

Q Talking about the fact he is not getting his message through, as evidenced by the triple header on Tuesday and the one on Saturday. You are trying to tell us that is not something out of the ordinary. This is just a routine going-on here at the White House.

MR. NESSEN: I think someone asked the question earlier, Saul, and, obviously, defeats on Tuesday and the defeat in Texas and the primaries are circumstances that require a review of his campaign, which he said yesterday and I said yesterday.

And any further answer was it is not as if this is the first time that his strategy has been reviewed. It has been reviewed constantly in the light of changing circumstances, winning in New Hampshire, winning in Florida, winning in Illinois, et cetera, losing in North Carolina, the uncommitted New York situation, winning in Pennsylvania.

Each time something has happened, the strategy has been reviewed in light of that. Now, what has happened is he has lost these four primaries so the strategy is being reviewed in light of that.

Q Does he believe -- just to follow on that -- that the man who loses California will lose the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: The President believes he will win the nomination on the first ballot in Kansas City.

Q He did not say that yesterday. I was going to ask for clarification because he was asked about the first ballot and he would not make any commitment out in the Rose Garden.

MR. NESSEN: That is what somebody told me, but, in any case, he believes he will win the nomination on the first ballot in Kansas City.

Q He used the expression like "It shakes down that way when there is only two men running,"but that is not so either.

MR. NESSEN: But he expects to win on the first ballot in Kansas City.

Q Ron, is there some delay on the FEC bill? Had the President hoped to take action before going out of town initially?

MR. NESSEN: There was never any special timetable. Like all legislation, it needs to be read and reviewed by the lawyers and the others involved and send their recommendations to the President.

Q There has been no unexpected delay or no departure from any of his plans?

MR. NESSEN: There was no plan and there has been no delay.

Q Then I would like to ask yuu why the President cannot have a decision by now on this legislation?

MR. NESSEN: The legislation only got here last night. Like all legislation, it is a legal document and in this case it is a complicated legal document, and like all legislation, it needs to be reviewed and recommendations sent to the President.

Q Is the President aware that every day of delay that is fleeting is hurting people?

MR. NESSEN: Look, should I go back and review the whole record of Congress' th ee-month delay, two vacations?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't think you wanted me to.

Q I am talking about the delay now.

Q I just want to ask, on Tuesday you said that "I don't think the President thinks he is in political trouble or at least in trouble in terms of getting the nomination." Does he still have that view?

MR. NESSEN: Of course, he said that. Somebody asked him "Is your confidence shaken, do you still expect to win," and so forth, and the answer is --

Q He does not believe he is in trouble?

MR. NESSEN: He expects to win the nomination. We are going to have some tough weekends ahead.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:25 P.M. EDT)