

This Copy For _____

NEWS CONFERENCE

#490

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:30 P.M. EDT

MAY 10, 1976

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: We are going to pass out here in a moment copies of a very short statement outlining the steps the United States has taken under the President's direction to aid the victims of the earthquake.

I think you know the President met this morning with Ambassador Meloy who is about to leave for his new post as Ambassador to Lebanon. The President wanted to talk to him about the current developments in the Lebanese crisis and to underscore the President's feeling that Ambassador Meloy is undertaking a very important mission as he goes to Beirut.

At 12 o'clock, the President began a meeting with Mary Louise Smith who is the Chairwoman of the Republican National Committee. The purpose of this meeting is to receive from Mary Louise Smith her views on the long-range political effects on the two party system of the proposed Federal Election Commission legislation. He is not talking to Mary Louise Smith about the effects of that legislation on the 1976 election, but rather her views of how it will affect the two party system ten, fifteen, twenty years down the pike.

Q Why won't he discuss with her about the effects of the 1976 election?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the purpose of it is to hear her comments on the long-term effects of it.

Q Isn't the bill designed to put the Commission out of business next year anyway and do a complete study again?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so. I think that was the President's proposal -- to extend the Commission and have it expire next year and then have a whole new look at it.

But my understanding is that this legislation -- does it have an expiration date on it, John? I am not sure.

MORE

#490

Q Just to help him decide whether or not he will sign or veto?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it is.

Q And will he also talk to the Democratic National Chairman?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure whether he will or not. At one time there was some talk of doing it. I am not sure how that got resolved.

Q When does he hope to be in a position to decide on the bill?

MR. NESSEN: As quickly as possible.

Q No particular day?

MR. NESSEN: No, but he is going to talk tomorrow to a number of Congressional leaders to get their views on how it will affect the Congressional election process and so forth.

Q Are you ruling out any action on it tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: No, he wants to act on it as quickly as possibly, but he wants to get these views also.

Q Will he talk to Democratic Congressional leaders?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the plans are for any formalized meeting with the Democratic leaders.

Q Is there a formalized meeting with the Republicans?

MR. NESSEN: There will be tomorrow morning, yes.

Q You don't know of any formalized plans for the Democrats?

MR. NESSEN: I do not.

Q Ron, do you anticipate action this week on the legislation?

MR. NESSEN: Just as quickly as possible, Russ, but I can't give you the exact timetable. It is a very important piece of legislation with very far-ranging and long-term implications and it is something he wants to make sure he has heard from all sides on.

Q But not from Democrats, evidently.

MR. NESSEN: As I said, at one time there was talk of getting in touch with Bob Strauss and I have to check and find out where that stands now.

That is the schedule for today.

Q Ron, is there a possibility it won't be this week?

MR. NESSEN: Just as quickly as possible, but I don't have a date for it.

Q Well, it has to be this week, ten days --

MR. NESSEN: There is a deadline on when he must act and that is the 17th, which is a week from today.

Q Ron, will you be having anything for us after he meets with Rogers Morton?

MR. NESSEN: You mean in the way of a readout or a report?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No, I would not.

I do want to tell you that tomorrow the President and Mrs. Ford are going to give a luncheon here at the White House in honor of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe of Denmark and His Royal Highness Prince Henrik. As you know, the Queen is here beginning today to take part in Bicentennial festivities, and after the visit to Washington, the Queen and the Prince will travel extensively throughout the United States.

The luncheon will be the President's only opportunity to meet the Queen. We were going to try and get ahold of the guest list. Did we get the guest list?

Larry has checked and found that the FEC legislation contains no expiration date, so if he signed it, it would become a permanent law and affect elections down the road.

While we are waiting for a little further information on the luncheon for the Queen tomorrow, I will mention that at 10:30 tomorrow the President will sign the National Science and Technology Policy Act of 1976. Margaret Earl has made herself something of an expert on that piece of legislation and will be able to help you.

Q Has he decided on a science advisor?

MR. NESSEN: Will you talk to Margaret about that? I have not kept up with that as well as I should.

It is 10:30, and if the weather is good, the signing ceremony will be in the Rose Garden.

Do you have a guest list?

MR. CARLSON: It is not finalized.

MR. NESSEN: I understand Sheila is going to put out additional details of the lunch for the Queen tomorrow so she can give you the guest list and other details of that.

Looking ahead just a little bit, I think you know about the trip to Michigan on Wednesday. The major event of the trip will be a speech to the Detroit Economic Club at 4 o'clock Detroit time on Wednesday. It is taking place in Roma Hall, which is in South Pontiac, Michigan.

The President will spend the full day there, leaving the White House probably at -- well, I would look for the press to have a take-off time of about 9 o'clock on Wednesday, and I would look for the President to get back somewhere between 11:00 and midnight, so there are obviously going to be other events, but they are not all tied down yet so I cannot give them to you at this time.

Q Ron, will we have an advance text.

MR. NESSEN: I certainly hope so.

MORE

#490

Q When you say advance -- this is, you say, 4 o'clock in the afternoon -- are you thinking of a p.m. release on that for Wednesday?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we would be able to do that for a speech that late in the day. I think we will have to make it --

Q It will be on the economy?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it will be on the economy, correct.

Q A.M. release?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think 4:00 p.m., release upon delivery.

Q Are they on Central Time?

MR. NESSEN: I think they are on the same time we are.

Q Is the President going back to Michigan on Saturday?

MR. NESSEN: Then, on the weekend, I would look for the President to be visiting Tennessee and Kentucky on Friday, and then back to Michigan for Saturday and part of Sunday. I don't have specific cities or events to give you right now.

Q Does that mean we come back to Washington Friday night and go back Saturday and Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is a trip.

Q There is no chance of those two trips being tied together with something on Thursday?

MR. NESSEN: No, the President will be back here after an out-and-back to Michigan on Wednesday and then we will set off for a Friday, Saturday and part of Sunday trip.

Q Where does he spend Friday night?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to give you the exact cities and events when I get them.

Q Can you say whether he is going to address some sort of an Armed Services Day dinner in Louisville Friday night?

MR. NESSEN: I just have to wait until we get all the schedule put together.

Q He leaves here on Friday and goes to Kentucky and Tennessee?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q And Saturday he will be in Michigan?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q And possibly Sunday he will be in Michigan?

MR. NESSEN: Part of Sunday he will be in Michigan.

Q Saturday, we are overnighing in Michigan but you don't know whether it is Kentucky or Tennessee Friday night?

MR. NESSEN: I am just saying that when we get all the cities and stops and events together we will put them out.

Q Ron, is Michigan the last stop on Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Then coming home?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q So he will be home early on Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: During the day on Sunday.

Q And he will be here Tuesday and Thursday?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean here on Tuesday and Thursday?

Q In the White House in Washington. You are saying Wednesday he is going to Michigan, and Friday and Saturday and Sunday out again, so Tuesday and Thursday he will be here?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Why does he fly all the way back, Ron? Why not tie it together? I mean, is there some pressing thing on Thursday or what?

MR. NESSEN: There is always plenty to do around here, Les.

Q I know, but I mean is there anything special that would require all this expense of coming back from that area?

MR. NESSEN: Just a day's work in the White House.

Q Are you open to questions now?

MR. NESSEN: Let me see. I think I am open to questions now.

Q How does the President think he is going to do in Nebraska tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: He thinks he is going to do well. He is optimistic and thinks it will be a close fight.

Q Has he been in touch with anyone out there to get any kind of late reading?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he was just there on Saturday, wasn't he? Weren't we there on Saturday?

Yes. He talked to Senator Curtis and others about it.

Q Ron, were you talking about Michigan or Nebraska?

MR. NESSEN: I was talking about Nebraska.

Q Anything special tomorrow night? Is he just going to stay home, the usual election night routine?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q He has called both Nebraska and Michigan critical, crucial and so forth. If he lost both -- and I know that you can't predict -- but is there any thought that he would withdraw from the race?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to accept the premise that he is going to lose both or either.

Q That is not a premise; that is an "if." "If" is not a premise.

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to accept an "iffy" question, then.

Q At least be precise.

Q He would pull out?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President told you the other day when you asked him the question -- I forget what strong language he used but it was strong language -- and I think you have heard from all the people who have talked to the President over the past few weeks that he is going to go to Kansas City and is confident he will win the nomination in Kansas City.

Q How does he think he will do in West Virginia?

MR. NESSEN: He has generally the same view of West Virginia that he has about Nebraska, that he is optimistic but it is going to be a close fight.

Q Did he expect to lose as many primaries as he has lost, and what kind of impact has that had on him?

MR. NESSEN: On?

Q On the President? I mean, has he started talking to pictures yet? (Laughter)

Q Seriously, did he ever tell you how many he could expect to lose and still --

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

Q Ron, has the President had any reaction from you or any of the staff with regard to the kitchen cabinet's feeling that Cheney is politically naive, that you are inept and that Kissinger is better in Africa than here?

MR. NESSEN: Well, first of all, I would suggest you make sure that you have an accurate report on what the Advisory Committee --

Q That is not accurate?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to speak for the Advisory Committee, Phil.

Q Well, I have talked to some and I have received that word and the President, I am told, received their feelings, also. Is that wrong, that he has not heard this?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to speak for the Advisory Committee.

Q I am asking, has the President heard that many members of the Advisory Committee, the kitchen cabinet, had that conclusion of the staff?

MR. NESSEN: Well, as I say, I am not going to report publicly on what the Advisory Committee discussed.

Q Well, let's put it this way: Did the President get a report from the Advisory Committee, and is this meeting today sort of a follow-up for Ford or what is it all about? There are two questions.

MR. NESSEN: Well, the Advisory Committee meets periodically and the meeting the other day, I understand, was one of its periodic meetings. As always with these periodic meetings, there was no formal report.

Q But did the President hear what they said?

MR. NESSEN: I think Rog Morton has given the President a general overview on some of the things discussed over there and if there were any useful ideas turned up, Rog Morton will put them into effect in the campaign.

Q Are you able to share any of those with us?

MR. NESSEN: No, I am not.

Q Ron, the President meets with Morton and Cheney all the time.

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Why is it listed on today's schedule?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really know how it got on today's schedule. I mean, I don't know why it would attract any great attention because, as I say, it is a routine weekly or twice-a-week meeting that they have.

Q Did the President broadcast a message to some West Virginia radio stations that you can tell us about?

Q It attracted attention because it is posted on the schedule.

MR. NESSEN: I am not clear why it was put on the schedule myself.

Q We are glad it did. We think that those things ought to be on whether they are routine or not.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, they are routine staff meetings.

Q Could I ask again, did the President broadcast a message on some West Virginia radio stations prior to tomorrow's primary there, asking for votes?

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, he didn't make anything in the way of a tape for West Virginia. Larry thinks it might have been one of the routine get-out-the-vote public service messages but, as far as I know, he has not recorded or broadcast any vote-for-me messages.

Q No telephone call messages to any PFC type?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q What was the President's reaction to the results of the weekend caucus selection of delegates which ran against him?

MR. NESSEN: I don't even know what the rundown on those caucuses was, Dick, but, as I say, the President is confident he will win the nomination on the first ballot in Kansas City.

Q Ron, how come there has been so little reaction to Secretary of State Kissinger's return to the United States? I can recall other trips when Kissinger has come back when the President has gone all the way out to the airport to shake his hand and pat him on the back. There didn't seem to be much of a ceremony when he got back from Africa. Is there any reason for that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President was away, of course, at the time, which would make it somewhat difficult to go to the airport. Then, immediately upon returning, Kissinger went to Hot Springs to make a speech to the Business Council and almost immediately after that, I think, he went to Baltimore to make a speech to a synagogue. So the first opportunity for them both to get together was yesterday afternoon, which they did, and then they had their sort of regular Monday meeting this morning.

Q I noticed when I called in on the telephone -- I don't think they even listed that on the telephone, that he had met with him.

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, they did, yes.

Q I may be wrong, but I do know there were no pictures allowed; the whole thing was played very low key.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, I would disagree with you if you are putting any particular interpretation on how that meeting was handled. As we have said all along, the purpose of the trip was a fact-finding mission on the President's behalf and to go and enunciate the President's policies in a number of places. Kissinger has now begun to brief the President on the facts he discovered there and will be briefing other top people in the Administration on what he had found there.

Q Did the mission really amount to very much? I mean, it seems to me that if the Secretary of State can go off for as long as he was, come back, go off and make a couple of speeches and then drop back in and meet the President a couple or three days later, I just wonder how important was a trip like that? Normally on these things, he would go to wherever the President was and give him the benefit of what he found out, if indeed it was a critical diplomatic mission.

MR. NESSEN: Well, it was a fact-finding mission and he has now begun to outline the facts he found for the President.

Q He was sitting next to the President in the special chair there this morning. He normally sits on the couch. This morning he was sitting next to the President. Was this to make up? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: We are going to have the entrails laid out here on the dish and we will read those and see what they indicate.

Q Did the President think this mission was a successful mission? He has made no statement on it at all.

MR. NESSEN: It was a fact-finding mission, Helen, and a mission in which he enunciated Presidential policy and he did gather a lot of facts on the mission, and he is now bringing them back to the President.

Q Ron, speaking of Presidential policy, what was the meeting with Scranton all about today?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check on that.

Q Ron, why did the President feel that the MAYAGUEZ, with a crew of 39, needed naval protection when it was 7 miles off that Cambodian island but no such naval protection was needed for the Kali and the Voyager, the crews totaling 34, and they were 45 miles off Panama?

MR. NESSEN: Would you explain that to me?

Q Yes. In other words, here are two American vessels with a crew totaling 34. They were 45 miles off the coast of Panama when the Panamanians went into action and we did nothing except allow them to pay \$43,000, but the MAYAGUEZ was 7 miles off that Cambodian island and we sent in an armada.

I was wondering why the President feels that one ship should be protected and the other one should not?

MR. NESSEN: Les, I honestly don't have the vaguest idea what you are talking about.

Q All right, then, could I ask this --

MR. NESSEN: I would like to be helpful but I don't know what you mean.

Q Ron, here is an American ship. The MAYAGUEZ was 7 miles off Cambodian territory and we sent the Navy and the Marines in there to rescue that ship that was seized. When American fishing boats with almost the same component of crew are seized 45 miles off Panama, we do nothing except allow them to pay a fine.

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware there were any fishing boats seized off Panama.

Q They were threatened. They were held for ransom, in other words, for \$43,000 in fines. I mean, why didn't we provide naval protection? The American Tuna Boat Association has been asking for that for years. Why can't we give them protection?

MR. NESSEN: Les, this is a story which I have not ever heard of before.

Q Can I get back to the Advisory Committee? You said, as usual there was no formal report.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Was there a written report?

MR. NESSEN: No. I said that there was no report.

Q You said there was no written report.

MR. NESSEN: There never is.

Q I understand. Are you acquainted with the contents of the verbal report?

MR. NESSEN: I said that Rog has given the President a brief view of what was discussed there and if there were any ideas that Rog feels will be helpful in the campaign, he will implement them.

MORE

#490

Q I understand. That is not what I asked. Do you know what the contents are of the report?

MR.NESSEN: Rog's report to the President?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it was a report to the President, it was kind of a --

Q A report. (Laughter)

Q A retort.

Q Was the Advisory Committee critical of Cheney and yourself?

MR. NESSEN: I told Phil I am not going to speak for the Advisory Committee.

Q I am not asking you to speak for them. I asked you if you knew what the substance of the report was and I don't think you have answered that.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it was a report, for one thing. I think I know in broad outline some of the things the Advisory Committee talked about.

Q Did they make any recommendations about you or Cheney?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to speak for the Advisory Committee.

Q If they didn't, Ron, you would obviously deny that they had made any such report, isn't that a logical conclusion?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q It isn't?

Q Were your feelings hurt by their report?

MR. NESSEN: Do I look like my feelings are hurt?

Q Yes, you do, Ron. You seriously do. (Laughter)

Q Ron, the President is behind in the delegate count.

MR. NESSEN: In addition to the entrail reading we have now added psychoanalysis.

Q On what does the President base his optimism?

MR. NESSEN: On what?

Q In trailing behind in the delegates.

MR. NESSEN: You mean his winning the nomination on the first ballot?

Q Can you give a more factual --

MR. NESSEN: I think you asked me the same question last week, and if you look up in the transcript, the answer is the same.

Q I will not be asking you this question again.

MR. NESSEN: The answer is the same.

Q Ron, is Arkansas now out for any campaign appearance?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, it is not on the schedule for a visit this coming weekend.

Q It might get on at a later time?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to give you behind this weekend.

Q Ron, you said you would check on the President's position on the Byrd Amendment when he was a Member of Congress and I was just wondering. The vote, as I understand it, rather than the speech was November 10, 1971, in which he voted for the Byrd Amendment. What about this?

MR. NESSEN: What is the question?

Q Well, the question is what does he feel is the effect, considering the fact that until he became closely associated with Dr. Kissinger he was a strong supporter of the Byrd Amendment, which Dr. Kissinger says that the Ford Administration will push for the repeal. What has happened between 1971 and now that makes it necessary for Mr. Ford to support it?

MR. NESSEN: The President supports the repeal of the Byrd Amendment as I have mentioned in here many times before.

Q I know that. Why does he do it now when he opposed it when he was in Congress?

MR. NESSEN: I suggest you maybe ask him that question yourself the next time you have a news conference.

In answer to Walt's question, there was a 40-second actuality by the President that was relayed to the Clarksburg, West Virginia, radio station, KPDX. This, as I understand it, was in response to a request from the station for a very brief statement by the President on his record as President and then I am told that that in turn was given by KPDX to AP Audio. The contact is Lou Dobbins and he works at the station.

Q Ron, if the President is confident he will be nominated in Kansas City on the first ballot, part A, upon what is he basing this confidence, and part B, does he plan to make any changes at all if not doing as well in the later primaries -- contemplate any kind of change to do better in the primaries from here on in?

MR. NESSEN: Jane, part A of your question is Helen Thomas' question which is last week's question and I can find it in the transcript.

Q Oh, come on, give her the answer. You may as well.

MR. NESSEN: The President, I think, indicated on this weekend trip that his record of restoring prosperity and bringing down inflation, as far as the economy goes, of accomplishing and maintaining peace as far as the international scene goes, and of restoring honesty and candor and openness and the people's faith in their White House. Those three reasons are his record as President, and as he said before, he feels that that record justifies a full four-year term of his own in the White House.

Those are the issues in this campaign and those are the issues and a record of accomplishment which he believes will win for him the nomination and the election.

Part two of your question -- I would say this, Jane. That if there are any changes made in strategy or tactics, we would not announce them or telegraph them from this podium.

Q Could I ask a specific in regard to a change in strategy? When the President was in Nebraska he stopped going up and taking questions at the fence from local reporters or, for that matter, from any reporters. There were no public forums on this last trip.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, there was. There was a farm forum.

Q That was not a public forum as opposed to the kinds of forums in the past where he had a big audience. The farm forum was a relatively screened and limited group of people.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think they were screened.

Q Well, we were given a list of organizations who were represented at that farm forum.

MR. NESSEN: Every farm organization in Nebraska was represented there.

Q I still contend that is not a public forum as such and as it has been in the past, so my question is, has there been a conscious decision to stop holding public forums and stop holding airport news conferences as has been precedent in the past?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Will there be more airport press conferences when he arrives at various airports around the country?

MR. NESSEN: I think so.

Q Can you be a little more precise about that?

MR. NESSEN: I can't because the --

Q Are you saying flatly that there will be more of those?

MR. NESSEN: I think there will be.

Q When will there be a Washington news conference?

MR. NESSEN: There is nothing planned at the moment.

Q Ron, did the President discuss -- or maybe I am a little late on this -- the committee that John Connally is heading, I think it is called Citizens for Freedom in the Mediterranean?

MR. NESSEN: With John Connally?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that John Connally mentioned that very briefly in passing to the President during one of their two latest meetings, but it was not any sort of detailed discussion at all; it was just a very, very casual and brief reference.

Q Ron, to go back to politics for a minute, did the President approve of this venture to, in effect, influence the Italians to vote against the Communists?

MR. NESSEN: It never got anywhere near the -- I mean, it was such a brief and casual conversation that it never even got anywhere near the point where he was asked for an opinion and endorsement or whatever.

Q Now, to go back to politics for one minute --

MR. NESSEN: My bet is we will spend more than a minute, but go ahead.

Q I would like to ask the question --

MR. NESSEN: That, in itself, will take a minute.

Q To avoid an answer, perhaps, but not to ask the question.

MR. NESSEN: Okay.

Q I am going on memory, but my impression is that the Reagan camp is now predicting that both Governor Reagan and the President will arrive in Kansas City with about 800 or 900 delegate votes each or 200 to 300 votes short of the majority. Does the President -- or does the White House, let's say, agree with that numerical assessment?

MR. NESSEN: You have to take that over to the PFC, Jim. I just don't keep up with it that much.

Q You have no opinion here in the White House on a matter that crucial?

MR. NESSEN: I think you can get a much more detailed and factual answer over at the PFC.

Q I thought you were saying last week the President was saying he still expects a first ballot victory.

MR. NESSEN: I said that this morning, yes.

Q Then you are not agreeing with that assessment.

MR. NESSEN: You ought to take it to the PFC, Jim. They have all this stuff on politics in much greater detail than we do.

Q Do you know what a first ballot victory requires numerically.

MR. NESSEN: 1,130 votes, if I understand it correctly.

Q Then you are saying he is going to have more than 1,130 and you are not agreeing with the 800 to 900, right?

MR. NESSEN: When the balloting starts, on the first ballot at Kansas City, the President will have over 1,130 votes.

Q Okay.

Q Ron, for the first few months of the campaign this year, the President stayed on the job here during the week and confined his campaigning almost exclusively to the weekends. Now, in the last few weeks he has been gone much more during the week, starting with Texas, and now we have got a couple more weekday ventures next week.

MR. NESSEN: When?

Q This week.

MR. NESSEN: Weekday ventures next week?

Q This week.

Does he feel that this at all cuts into his functioning as President?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q How does he justify doing this?

MR. NESSEN: It does not cut into the amount of time and attention he gives to the office of President.

Q Ron, the President had a slight change in his speech down at the Washington Monument grounds today. Were you aware of that?

MR. NESSEN: I was not. What was the change?

Q He added a couple of phrases that suggested he might be talking about Ronald Reagan.

MR. NESSEN: I have to look at them. I am not aware of the changes. I will look at them.

Q If it does not cut into the amount of time and attention that he gives to being President, then what would he be doing on the days that he is traveling in Michigan and Kentucky and Tennessee and Texas? Would he be doing something that is not Presidential? You know, would he be swimming or golfing or what?

Q Burning Tree has now -- (Laughter)

Q Excuse me. It is not funny.

MR. NESSEN: No, it isn't.

As you know, the President takes a lot of Presidential work with him and does a lot of Presidential work on the plane and in the hotel.

Q Then, why does he have to come back to the White House, Ron? (Laughter) I think that is just a little bit of a contradiction, Ron. Why does he have to come back, particularly, Ron, when the other candidates are absolutely bleeding and strapped for funds and he is using Air Force One to go out on this travel? Does the President feel that is really fair?

MR. NESSEN: The PFC pays for the airplane when it is used for political purposes.

Ted had a second part, I think, to his question, which was, what would he be doing if he were not -- what was the other part of it?

Well, I mean, it is obvious that when he is traveling he does not -- I am sorry.

Q I said, how does he justify it?

MR. NESSEN: Okay. Number one, he never stops being President; he can never get away from the job and the paper and so forth.

Secondly, it is the American system, Ted, to judge its leaders periodically -- every two years in the sense of the House Members, four years in the case of a President, and six years in the case of a Senator. The President is putting up for judgment under the American political system his record as President for the past 21 months or so and asking people to decide do they want to continue with that President. That is our system and there is nothing wrong with doing it.

Q Nobody is saying there is anything wrong with it, but I don't see how you can possibly fit in a full-time job and a full-time campaign -- it is becoming almost a full-time campaign -- and say that you are not squeezing something somewhere unless you are staying up all night.

MR. NESSEN: Well, he is working very hard here in the White House.

Q The other thing, there may not be anything wrong with it, but it is true, isn't it, that you are getting some criticism from voters who think that he should not spend time campaigning, that he should stay on the job?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard that.

Q Ron, his speech today, would you characterize it as completely nonpolitical?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to make any characterization of the speech at all. The words speak for themselves, I think, John.

Q Let me ask you this: In pointing out what a strong defense we have, is he doing that partly because he feels there is a need to because he is concerned not just Republican voters but foreign governments, et cetera, may be worried?

MR. NESSEN: I will let the record speak for itself.

Q In other words, if Reagan was not going around making these charges, would the President's speech have been different?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Does the President welcome Hubert Humphrey's endorsement?

MR. NESSEN: Did he get it?

Q Yes.

Q Ron, what is the status of the pardon for the now late Judge Kerner?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that somebody has filed or had filed some time ago with the Justice Department a request for a pardon. The first step in that process was to -- you can't have a pardon in the type of case that involved Governor Kerner until a five-year period has gone by, so the Justice Department had to decide, first of all, whether to waive that five-year rule. Then the next step is to consider the matter on its merits and send a recommendation over here to the Counsel's Office of the President, and so forth.

There are quite a few steps ahead. It is somewhere over in the Justice Department and they can tell you exactly where it stands.

Q Well, they have all the time in the world now.

Q I mean, you would not expect it before the November election, would you?

MR. NESSEN: You have to ask the Justice Department where it is in their process.

Q Does the President agree with Kelly's remarks over the weekend that an FBI Director should not serve more than 10 years?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't ask him about it, Phil.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 1:06 P.M. EDT)

#490