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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:03 P.M. EDT

MAY 28, 1976

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: All right, the schedule today is as you see it.

I think you know that the President of Sierra Leone, Mr. Stevens, is making a private visit to the United States, and he is meeting with the President this afternoon at 3:30. This will be the first time the two Presidents have met. President Stevens has been to the United States on several previous occasions.

O Did you say it was the first time?

MR. NESSEN: The first time President Ford has met with President Stevens.

Also, we are announcing today that the President has invited President Urho Kekkonen of Finland to make a State visit to the United States.

O Spell that full name, will you please, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: The first name is U-R-H-O and the last name is K-E-K-K-O-N-E-N.

O Thank you.

MR. NESSEN: The State visit to the United States is on August 3 and 4. President Kekkonen has accepted the invitation with great pleasure. The two leaders look forward to reviewing bilateral issues and international developments of interest to Finland and the United States.

A Federal Judge today has issued a temporary restraining order to block implementation as scheduled of the President's reforms in the food stamp program. The Administration is disappointed to hear that news. These regulations were supposed to go into effect June 1. The Administration is determined to seek a reversal of this decision by the courts. The President feels that he has the responsibility to make these important reforms which Congress has refused to make.

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The President has been urging Congress to act on food stamp reform quickly ever since December of 1974 and this is the end of May of 1976 and Congress still has not acted, and for that reason the President feels that he must carry out the reforms that he himself has proposed.

Each day that the implementation of these new regulations is delayed, it costs the American taxpayers \$3 million. And, further, each day that the implementation of the regulations is delayed--in addition to costing \$3 million to the taxpayers each day--it denies four and a half million people who are truly in need from getting extra help, which the President has proposed for them.

Just to recall to your attention, the President met yesterday afternoon with Agriculture Secretary Butz and Attorney General Levi. The President emphasized his determination to push forward with these reforms as a way of helping the truly needy and of saving the taxpayers' money and instructed the two Cabinet officials at that time to pursue very vigorously their efforts in the courts to implement the reforms.

Q Ron, on what grounds will he repeal the decision?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask the Justice Department. I am not enough of a legal expert.

Q Ron, who are the four and a half million that will get the help? What sort of help is that?

MR. NESSEN: The four and a half million who are truly in need under these reforms will receive extra or increased food stamps.

Q Through this?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. I don't have in front of me the exact details --

Q This is not that the money would go to other programs or something like that?

MR. NESSEN: No, the four and a half million who are truly in need would get extra stamps, and the people who don't really need the help would not.

The only other matter is yesterday Dave Myhan --

Q Before you move on, I was under the impression the Judge had merely issued a restraining order.

MR. NESSEN: That's right.

Q Well, you said, I think, that the Administration was determined to seek a reversal of that decision?

MR. NESSEN: Of the restraining order--to have the restraining order lifted so that the reforms can go into effect.

O There has been no decision.

MR. NESSEN: There has been a challenge to the reforms, Dick, and while he is hearing that challenge, the Judge has issued a restraining order. What I am talking about is, first of all -- you have to check with Levi for the exact legal steps he plans to take but the ultimate effort is to have the reforms carried out.

Now how he challenges the restraining order and so forth you have to check with Justice.

O Then you don't mean reversal of the decision?

MR. NESSEN: To have the restraining order lifted so the reforms can go into effect is what we are talking about.

Yesterday Dave Nyhan asked me if I could cite for him the President's civil rights record. And it took me a while to pull together all the material, but I would be happy now to go through it for you.

I think the best way, probably, is to start with the Congressional years and go through that.

O Ron, I just asked for one instance, just one would be plenty for me.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think, Dave, there is a wealth of material and I think probably you would rather hear the full record rather than have me just pull out one isolated effort. So why don't I --

O Ron, he asked for just one.

MR. NESSEN: Well, when I suggested that Dave see me later a number of people said, no, we all want to hear it.

O We all wanted to hear one, Ron. Now how long is this going to take? Can we time it or what?

MR. NESSEN: Sure you can time it.

Going back to 1949 --

O Why don't you just distribute the information, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: Well, its quite a lot to mimeograph.

Q Why don't you just release it?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I assume the question was raised because of a true interest in getting an answer to the question and I have the answer to your question.

Q Ron, could the networks film this?

MR. NESSEN: Fine with me.

Q It seems to me that is a sudden break with precedent if you are going to permit us to film this.

MR. NESSEN: Well, it was a suggestion by one of your colleagues here.

Q Let's not.

MR. NESSEN: Well, then, let's not film it.

Q Why don't you be reasonable about it and distribute it in mimeographed form? You have the printing equipment here.

MR. NESSEN: I assume Dave asked the question because he wanted the answer.

Q He asked for one, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I have the answer. Do you not want to hear the answer?

Q Just one he asked for, Ron. One, that is all he asked for, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't want to pull out an isolated case, I would rather give you the full record.

Q Come on, Ron, we are not sitting here for a lecture. What is the point of this?

MR. NESSEN: I have the answer to Dave's question. If you want to stop and see me later, Dave.

Q Thank you, I will. (Laughter)

Q You terrified us, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: That's a treat.

Q Can you give us anything about the hour long conversation between the Attorney General and the President yesterday afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot other than what the Attorney General said on his way out.

Q Ron, you said that he hasn't made his decision yet, yet this week he has found time twice to go up to Philadelphia to receive honorary degrees. Does the President feel that the Attorney General is taking a little bit too long in making his decision and he would like to see it made faster?

MR. NESSEN: He gave him the direction last November, Dave, and as far as I know the Attorney General has been pursuing that direction ever since, and when he finds a case that he feels is proper and appropriate, I am sure he will make his decision.

Q Ron, he said he discussed the Boston busing case. Was there any other busing case discussed?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't attend the meeting and I have to refer you to what the Attorney General said when he left.

Q Did he give you any indication that he would make that decision today, this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: I think he was asked that by reporters yesterday -- that question.

Q What did he say?

MR. NESSEN: I wasn't there.

Q Ron, there is a report out of Washington this morning that says Levi has made his decision not to intervene in the Boston case and will intervene in the Wilmington case. Do you know anything about that?

MR. NESSEN: All I know is what the Attorney General said yesterday when he left the meeting.

Q Does the President have any plans to go back to California, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: There hasn't been any decision made yet, John.

Q Is there any decision on Ohio, New Jersey or any other State?

MR. NESSEN: No, there is no decision on any other travel. I mean there isn't any other travel.

Q Is he holding a strategy meeting today with some of his campaign people? If so, how long? What can you tell us?

MR. NESSEN: You mean this morning?

Q Or any time, if it is scheduled for later?

MR. NESSEN: There is none that I know of.

Q Ron, do you have any reaction today to what the Senate Finance Committee did yesterday on the tax bill?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President was especially disappointed that the Finance Committee action did not give the taxpayer the additional tax cuts which the President had requested. Especially disappointing was the failure of the Committee to follow the President's recommendation and increase the personal tax exemption for individuals from \$750 a year to \$1000.

As you know, the bill has many complicated provisions and they are now being studied at the White House, and when the study is completed, I may have a more detailed comment on it.

Q One other question, Ron. The President last year kept saying he would veto any bill that didn't meet his specifications. Are you prepared to make any kind of threat like that at this point?

MR. NESSEN: Not at this point.

Q Ron, yesterday Mark Moran, the staff assistant to Senator Tunney who is sponsoring the repeal of the Byrd Amendment along with Senator Clark, he said, "We feel that if this legislation is introduced before the California primary, it might cost votes." He also said that if the White House does anything to help "We hope it will be more this time than last time but we understand there were rumblings about Kissinger's promises on this from people in the White House like Cheney." End of quote. The question is can you cite one thing, one, that the White House was done or will do before the June 8 primary to promote the repeal of the Byrd Amendment or is the public to conclude that the White House is not following through on Dr. Kissinger's promises?

MR. NESSEN: I would say, since you ask for only one, that I would cite Dr. Kissinger being sent to Congress by the President to testify in favor of repeal of the Byrd Amendment.

Q Okay.

Q Ron, has there been any exchange of messages between Chairman Brezhnev and the President over the signing of this that we haven't been informed of?

MR. NESSEN: John will check on that, Bob. I don't know the answer to it.

Q Ron, is the President going to do anything about the request for additional women delegates among those still unchosen in the primaries?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of the request, Fran.

Q You haven't read about that?

MR. NESSEN: I have not, no.

Q Will you ask the President if he is going to personally do anything to see that more women are represented among the delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I will check.

Q Ron, just to follow up, there is no, in other words, no truth in the fact that the White House is holding off until after the June 8 primary, is there?

MR. NESSEN: You asked me the same question yesterday in another form and almost every day ask the same question in other forms, Les, and I always give you the same answer.

Q It is a little like Boston, you know, a little like the Boston question and it is a little important to Virginia.

MR. NESSEN: The Administration, from the very first days, has favored the repeal of the Byrd Amendment.

Q Then there is no truth in this June 8 thing which Mr. Moran has pointed out?

MR. NESSEN: Secretary Kissinger was up there, I guess, two weeks ago testifying.

Q Is the legislative machinery of the White House working full time on this?

MR. NESSEN: The Administration is in favor of the repeal of the Byrd Amendment and has so testified and stated publicly --

Q Is there a lobby working on it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the so-called lobby is doing, but if you are looking for someone as the villain of the piece, I suggest that since it is Congress that will not put the United States in compliance with the U.N. resolution on this matter, I suggest that is the place you raise some of these questions.

Q Ron, the question about the tax bill in the Senate Finance prompts me to ask you a question on a related matter. At his press conference in Columbus, the President issued a statement urging Congress not to take a summer vacation because of important pending legislation, including the tax bill and other bills.

I am curious about that now. What did the President have in mind that he thought Congress was going to do because as far as I can determine, Congress doesn't have any plans to take a summer vacation. They plan to take time off at the time of both conventions -- the Democratic and Republican Conventions -- and of course the President himself is going to go to Kansas City, one presumes, for the Republican Convention, so he will be taking time away from Washington for that.

So, when he urged them not to take a summer vacation, what did he think they were going to do?

MR. NESSEN: I have to check what particular timetable he thinks Congress should follow. I understand they left today or yesterday on another vacation. I will check and see what he has in mind for the summer.

Q I know what the term "summer vacation" means to me, and it doesn't mean one day.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think this is their summer vacation they are on now. I think this is another one of the sort of periodic holiday vacations.

Q Was the President implying that Congress is going to take some kind of substantial summer vacation and he didn't want them to do it?

MR. NESSEN: I will check and see which of the vacations he feels it is they should cancel.

Q Ron, can you give us any updated plans for the President this week?

MR. NESSEN: I would say the guidance I gave you yesterday at the moment looks like it is -- it is going to be about the way I gave it to you yesterday morning, which is, for guidance, the President will work in the office tomorrow morning and hopefully play some golf in the afternoon, go to Camp David in the evening, stay Saturday night, Sunday, Sunday night, come back Monday morning and then go to Arlington Cemetery on Monday to participate in the wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at 11:00 a.m. The President will leave the White House by motorcade at 10:45 on Monday. The President will speak briefly at the amphitheater at 11:00.

Q Are you going to give us some kind of a travel schedule?

MR. NESSEN: No, I can just read it to you.

Q Why is it the weekend plans are only for guidance, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Because they are not absolutely set, Fran.

Q What are his plans for the rest of that day?

MR. NESSEN: He will return to the White House at 12:15. There will be open press coverage at the wreath laying and the amphitheater. For cameramen, the throw at the wreath laying ceremony is about 40 feet and the throw at the amphitheater is about 70 feet. The travel pool is a protective pool and because of the difficulty you may have getting into the press area for the travel pool, you should probably have somebody else covering the event for you and there ahead of time. The press advance team has checked these arrangements and makes that suggestion.

Q That somebody other than the person in the travel pool could cover the event?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Are you going to have any kind of advance text on this?

Q That is kind of a Catch-22, isn't it, when the press protective pool can't cover the event, or something?

MR. NESSEN: No, you know the travel pool in town, Bob, has always been a protective pool, as the name says, and in this particular case, because of the advance arrangements and so forth, the advance team suggests that it might be difficult to get from the motorcade into the press coverage area. I think it is only a suggestion and if there is a feeling --

Q I think we might have difficulty covering it. I mean, we always do, but it just occurred to me that that is kind of unusual.

MR. NESSEN: I think it was an attempt to be helpful.

Q I am not saying anything about the suggestion, I am just saying how it came about.

MR. NESSEN: I think because of everybody being in place when the President arrives there is a feeling that those in the motorcade and the protective pool may not be able to get into the coverage areas in time or without causing too much commotion.

Q Will you have an advance text?

MR. CARLSON: They will get it tomorrow.

MR. NESSEN: If you want to set up cameras and sound equipment at the cemetery before the 11 o'clock arrival, you should have your cameras and so forth in place by 10:30. We will have copies of the President's text available sometime over the weekend. If you keep in touch with the office, we will let you know and it will be for release at 6:00 a.m. Monday.

Q Ron, are you finished with that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. For the rest of Monday, I don't have any specific plans, and I don't know right now how much of Monday the President will spend in his office before he goes and after he returns.

Q Is it likely he might play golf again Monday afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: It is possible.

Q What was the President's reaction to the delegation from Kansas and Missouri about the cutting off of Richards-Gebaur, or whatever, at the airport?

MR. NESSEN: John can give you a fill afterwards.

Q Ron, in Tokyo yesterday Secretary Richardson said in a press conference that he knew no reason why the United States would not discuss the sale of arms to Communist China if the Chinese raised the issue. Is there anything new in this area at all?

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

Q On that same line, Ron, there are renewed reports today quoting Members of the House International Relations Committee to the effect the Administration is prepared, after the election, to extend full recognition to the People's Republic of China. Are those suggestions erroneous?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know where they are coming from. I mean, I know where they are coming from, but I don't know where they are coming from.

Q Wait, I want to get that down. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: There is no time-table and there is not even an understanding as to the method by which the United States would normalize relations with the People's Republic of China.

Q Ron, would you explain the apparent conflict between your recent insistence that the White House never raises the busing issue, it always is to questions, you said, and statements by the Deputy Campaign Director that busing is a major element of the strategy to the campaign?

MR. NESSEN: Is that a Stu Spencer statement?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I have not ever heard of it before you mentioned it.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

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