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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 11:53 A.M. EDT

JULY 19, 1976

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: Some have asked some questions about the New Jersey delegates coming in this afternoon. The meeting is at 5:00 p.m. and those who have been invited are the 67 delegates from New Jersey and the 67 alternates.

All of these are not expected to attend for a variety of reasons. One gentleman has died. Two are in the hospital. Some are on vacation. Some can't get off work, and so forth.

Q How many will be here?

MR. NESSEN: We anticipate about 100 and the format will be that the President will talk to the delegates, thank them for their support, outline his policies and accomplishments and then take questions.

Q Will we be able to cover this?

MR. NESSEN: No, you will not.

Q Will we be able to get pictures of them coming in the gate, whatever gate it is?

Q Why can't we cover this? What is the problem?

MR. NESSEN: There are just no plans for coverage.

Q The last time we made a request and you said you would look into the possibility of us getting some pictures of them coming in some place, the South Lawn, out here, wherever they come in.

MR. NESSEN: I think the decision is not to have any coverage.

Q Are you ashamed of it?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly not.

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Q Well, why won't you allow coverage?

MR. NESSEN: It is a great American process, Phil. It is how we pick our Presidents.

Q I am not talking about interviewing them. I am talking simply about getting some pictures of them as they come in. You act like you are ashamed of it.

MR. NESSEN: I certainly am not.

Q Where will they be meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I think over in the East Room.

Q How many actual delegates do you expect, not alternates?

MR. NESSEN: There will be about 100 altogether, Fran. I don't know what the breakdown is between alternates and delegates.

Q Can you provide a list of those that did actually attend?

MR. NESSEN: I think we can get that.

Q What is the official reason for no pictures?

MR. NESSEN: There are just no plans for press coverage.

Q What is your count at this point of the 67?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a count actually, Dick. I think probably Jim Baker or Rog Morton or one of those folks at the campaign headquarters could help you with that.

Q There is something bizarre about going all over the country to go after delegates and then when they arrive here at the White House, we can't cover them.

MR. NESSEN: There are just no plans for press coverage, Helen.

Q May I ask whose decision that was?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really know whose decision that was.

Q If we promise to stay behind the crab-apple tree, could we?

Q Does it fall in the category of barring us from watching the takeoffs and landings at the White House?

MR. NESSEN: I don't quite understand.

Q The helicopter departures?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q The same thing?

MR. NESSEN: I said clearly, I think, that was my decision.

Q You said you don't know who made the decision on this. You are the Press Secretary, aren't you?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Didn't someone say to you, "We are not going to have press coverage," or do you think we ought not to have press coverage?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans for any press coverage, Tom.

Q I am going back to the question. You said you don't know who made the decision?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that the question came up for a decision. I just think it was never contemplated there would be any press coverage.

Q Then you made the decision?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall that there has been, for instance, coverage of Carter meeting with delegates, or Reagan.

Q He doesn't live at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Q What do you mean? When they go out to a State Convention, or anything, they are covered fully.

MR. NESSEN: So is the President.

Let's move along.

Q Are they being brought at Government expense?

MR. NESSEN: You know better than that. Of course not.

Q Who pays? Is it New Jersey or the PFC paying for this?

MR. NESSEN: They are paying their own way.

Q Do you feel you are misusing the White House?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, let me say this: The President is not the first incumbent President who has run for re-election. There have been lots of them. Sometimes I get the feeling that President Ford is looked upon as the first incumbent President who has ever sought re-election. He isn't.

All of these problems are not new and unique to this President. It is all being handled in the proper manner in terms of paying their own way down here.

I think, Fran, one time this question came up about who pays for the physical facilities and so forth, and I told you that the PFC does. So, these are not new things.

Q There is a difference here because Gerald Ford set the standard --

Q Ron, when was the last time an incumbent President invited handfuls of delegates to the White House?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall, Sid.

Q Do you know of any instances of it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what happened in the Nixon Administration, or the Johnson, or previous Administrations where incumbent Presidents ran for re-election.

Q There is a difference here. If I can point this out for the record, Gerald Ford set the high standard for openness, forthrightness and candor. If he hadn't set that standard, perhaps we would be willing to stay out of the East Room. But inasmuch as this is an open Administration and you preached that from that rostrum and Gerald Ford preached it around the country and you set this high standard, why isn't it being met in this instance?

MR. NESSEN: There are just no plans for press coverage.

Q In response to Tom Brokaw's question, did you make this decision?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think any specific decision was made, Phil. I think it was just not anticipated there would be press coverage.

Q Didn't you anticipate, as Press Secretary, the guy who faces us every day, that we would ask that and did you ask anyone about this coverage?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly anticipated there would be interest, or curiosity, about it and there are no plans for any press coverage.

Q So, who made the decision?

Q How come we got Governor Arch Moore out there and we can't have --

MR. NESSEN: Let's move along.

Q Will there be a decision made on the New York delegates and the Pennsylvania delegates and the Maryland delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know anything about Maryland delegates. I just don't anticipate there will be press coverage for any of these meetings.

Q Why do we cover it when the President goes to State Conventions out of town, but we can't cover it in the White House?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a very good answer for you except there are no plans for any press coverage.

Q Has your authority to decide whether an event is open or closed been taken away?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Will there be a reception afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't seen the format.

Q Will the President hold a news conference today?

MR. NESSEN: Let's move along.

Q What is the answer to Helen's question?

MR. NESSEN: Let me cover a number of other points and then we will cover that.

Q She asked a legitimate question. What is the answer to it?

MR. NESSEN: Some of you asked whether the President is going to a fundraiser in Mississippi on Saturday.

Q What is the answer to Helen's question?

MR. NESSEN: The answer is yes, Phil. If you will let me finish my announcements, we will get on to the news conference.

Q That is all we want to know.

MR. NESSEN: A number of you have asked about the President going to a fundraiser in Mississippi on Saturday. The answer is there has been no decision made on whether the President will go to the fundraiser in Mississippi on Saturday.

Q How will he decide? What are the considerations?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the considerations are, Helen.

Q When do you expect to know?

MR. NESSEN: Sometime later in the week.

Q Has the President been talking to Clark Reed?

MR. NESSEN: You mean talking to him?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: He certainly talked to Clark Reed. Clark Reed was at one of the dinners the other night, I believe.

Q On the telephone or in person?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any in-person visit, Dick, and I don't know of any telephone call.

Some of you asked about plans for the President to listen in to or otherwise get involved in the landing of the Viking on Mars tomorrow. I just don't have the exact details of the President's involvement. There presumably will be some.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: I believe around 9:00 or 10:00 Eastern Time.

Q P.M.?

MR. NESSEN: In the morning.

I don't have any other announcements and the President would like to chat with you. Why don't you take a few minutes to file whatever it is you want to file while the cameras get set up.

Q Where, here?

MR. NESSEN: Somewhere out on the lawn.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: Whatever time it takes to get the cameras set up.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:01 P.M. EDT)