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NEWS CONFERENCE

#548

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 3:50 P.M. CDT

JULY 30, 1976

FRIDAY

(Jackson, Mississippi)

MR. NESSEN: Let me quickly give you about three items.

As far as the President's meeting with the delegation went, the format of it was that, first of all, the President and Mrs. Ford went around and shook hands with the delegates and chatted with each one briefly. The President was introduced and went up behind a little podium and gave some brief remarks in which he outlined his record as President.

He outlined his record as President which is the reason, he believes, he should be nominated and elected. He then took questions for the remainder of the time, and I think it would be fair to say the questions covered a very wide range of subjects, and I think some of them were quite tough.

Q Can you give us a tough one?

MR. NESSEN: It was a private meeting at the request of the delegation, and I think I ought to probably follow the wishes of the delegation, since the President was the guest of the delegation.

The President believes that the reception he received was warm and friendly. At the end of the meeting, he was given a standing ovation. After that, he posed for pictures with each of the delegates.

Helen asked me about a remark that one of the delegates made concerning the selection process for his Vice Presidential running mate, which the President did talk about. He also made some similar remarks last night to the Pennsylvania delegation.

We will be announcing them more formally tomorrow at the White House, but just, I think, probably to really confirm what the delegates have told you, the President will be asking the views of all the delegates and alternates to the convention in writing. He will be sending them a letter, and he will also ask for the recommendations and views of the Republican Members of Congress and other Republican elected officers like Governors and mayors and other leading Republicans who do not happen to hold office at the moment.

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Q When will that go out, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: That will be going out over the next few days and I will have more details for you tomorrow at the White House.

Q When you say "formally," you mean you are going to do this or the President will make this announcement?

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q The letters will go to everyone, the delegates, alternates, Members of Congress, other elected public officials and party leaders?

MR. NESSEN: The Members of Congress -- the President has asked Senator Scott and Congressman Rhodes to spread the word on the Hill and make the request.

Q Letters will not go to Members of Congress?

MR. NESSEN: Not as far as I know.

Q Ron, can you also confirm what several of the delegates said he told them, that he did not know if he would announce his preference before or after the nomination vote?

Q Question.

MR. NESSEN: Jim was saying, would I confirm what some of the delegates had said, which is, the President, at this time could not say precisely when he would announce his choice of Vice President. I don't think that really represented any change, Jim. The President reiterated what he has said all along, which is, he would make his recommendation known at the appropriate time.

Q What is the appropriate time?

MR. NESSEN: He has not said yet, but I cannot elaborate on it.

Q Can they wait until after they have the Vice Presidential nomination?

MR. NESSEN: No. You can't wait until after that, Dick.

Q Ron, how is it going to work? First, second and third choices, or how is it going to work?

MR. NESSEN: I would rather wait until tomorrow because I don't have the letter in front of me and I don't know the full text of the letter. But, if some of you recall, this is not a dissimilar method from the one he used prior to the selection of his present Vice President.

Q Ron, how many delegates and alternates are there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I guess there are 2,259 delegates. If every delegate has an alternate, you double that.

Q Ron, will this be a binding poll, will he go to who gets the most votes?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is not promising that, Howard. He is asking for the views of all people all across the spectrum of the Republican Party, but, obviously, all along he has made clear that the recommendation is going to be his.

Q So, he will make the final decision.

MR. NESSEN: Was that ever in any doubt?

Q Ron, does the letter set any deadline by which he has to have the results?

MR. NESSEN: I believe he told the Mississippi delegates there was a deadline of Tuesday for the Members of Congress. Since I have not seen the full text of the letter, I don't know, but tomorrow, you will have the full details.

Q What time tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: When I can get up to the office. Somewhere around 10:00.

Q Ron, didn't he tell one member of the group -- quoting one person in there -- that he did not know if he would name his Vice President before the Convention, he did not know if he would name his Vice President before the nomination, or after the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: No. What he said was what I told Jim, and what he said all along before, Tom, is that he would announce his recommendation at the appropriate time and he did not say what the time was.

Q Did he tell them he did not know yet whether he would name him before the Convention, before the nomination or after the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: He did not change what he said before.

Q Are we still in step one or is this letter step two?

MR. NESSEN: I think this letter is part of step one, which is the consultation and soliciting opinions stage.

Q What is step two?

Q Did he decide on this after Schweiker was named?

MR. NESSEN: No, because as I told you before, we have been talking about step one of the process, which was soliciting opinions.

Q But he never said that before to the delegates.

MR. NESSEN: We are going to announce it tomorrow.

There are two other things. One, as I mentioned to the people coming down on the plane, the Federal Energy Administration expires tonight at midnight, unless Congress takes action to extend it. It now appears that Congress will not take action to extend it today, so the President has extended it by Executive Order and we have the Executive Order. We have a fact sheet and we have a message that the President is sending to Congress.

Q How long is it extended for?

MR. NESSEN: The fact sheet has all the details in it. The President signed this just before he left the White House today in case Congress did not extend it during the day.

Q Is this being put out in Washington?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, but they are having considerable trouble locating people in Washington. I am told AP was not at the White House and they are trying to get hold of AP before releasing it in Washington.

For tomorrow, some of you have asked me about a lunch the President is having because you want to make more detailed coverage plans.

The President has invited members of his law school class fraternity to lunch tomorrow at the White House. It is the Phi Delta Fraternity from Yale Law School, which includes members of the classes of 1940, 1941 and 1942. There will be a reception in the State Dining Room at 12:30 tomorrow, lunch at 1:15 and there will be a group photo on the North Portico steps at about 1:00, which will be open for coverage. There will be about 55 people for lunch.

Some of you may have seen or recall this spread that was in the old Life Magazine back in 1966 showing the members of the fraternity and the fact some of them turned out to have fairly responsible jobs -- Cyrus Vance; the author, Walter Lord, who will be there tomorrow; President Ford; Senator Dominick, who is ill and will not be there; Raymond Shafer, former Governor of Pennsylvania, will be there; Justice White of the Supreme Court, who will not be there because he is on vacation; Sargent Schriver, who will not be there; Governor Scranton, who will be there; Stanley Resor, former Secretary of the Army; Najeeb Halaby; J. Richardson Dilworth, and Potter Stewart of the Supreme Court. I have a list.

Q Will Vance be there?

MR. NESSEN: Vance will not be there, but I do have a list of the 55 or so people who will be there. Kennerly has, in response to some requests from people, made some photo copies of this, if anybody wants to get a hold of it.

Q Do you think, on the other subject, you might have someone read you the letter so we will have the full letter?

MR. NESSEN: What I will do today is leave it with the delegates, telling you what the President told them, and we will put out the full details of the announcement tomorrow as planned.

Q When, tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: The delegates are the ones who reported it to you and I am just trying to respond to some questions.

Q Will they be made public -- the results?

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean the poll results?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I believe when he did it before, he did not make public the numbers.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 4:02 P.M. EDT)