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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:30 A.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 7, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: We have this other bill signing in a half-hour. You saw the signing of the Teton Dam relief legislation and a fact sheet has been handed out.

On the Child Day Care and Social Service amendments, we do not have a fact sheet, but we have a lengthy Presidential statement that explains most of the bill. It will go out at the time of the signing and that should answer the questions about that.

I don't have anything further to announce, so I will take your questions.

Q Ron, could you go over the schedule with us? When do the Bishops come in?

MR. NESSEN: There has been no change in the schedule. I think we said before that the President will speak to the B'nai B'rith Convention on Thursday, probably in the morning. The Bishops will be in on Friday, as I mentioned before, probably in the morning.

The President will go to Ann Arbor to make a speech at the University next week. I am not ready to announce the day or time yet. That is about as much as I can give you.

Q Are there likely to be several stops on that Ann Arbor trip?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't anticipate anything more than out and back.

Q Ron, are they having trouble getting that set up out there? Is the University giving them problems?

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MR. NESSEN: No, it is on track and we are just not ready to announce the date yet.

Q I wonder why?

MR. NESSEN: I think you will see why when we do announce the day.

Q Is that the only trip next week?

MR. NESSEN: That is the only trip next week.

Q And there are none this week?

MR. NESSEN: There are none this week.

Q Is there a news conference this week?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans now definitely to have one.

Q Before the election? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I thought we were talking about this week.

Q Ron, is there any objection on the part of State officials and university officials on kicking off a political campaign on a campus? Is that a problem?

MR. NESSEN: No, that, as far as I know, has never arisen as an issue.

Q But maybe shouldn't it? Don't they get Federal and State funds?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to put them up to it, Sarah.

Q I'm not saying that, Ron. I am pointing out the fact, isn't this inappropriate to do on a campus that has Federal and State funds?

MR. NESSEN: It has never been raised by the University.

Q It may not be raised by the University because they don't have the nerve to do it. But I, as a citizen and a taxpaying reporter, am asking the White House about this?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, it has never been raised as an issue, and to my knowledge it is fairly common. I can think of many occasions over the past few months when all the candidates of both parties have made speeches at universities.

In fact, I think universities seek out candidates to give their students an opportunity to see democracy in action.

Q I think you are wrong. I think this is a question that maybe it should be started. Maybe it has not been in the past, but maybe we should start it and I would like to have this put through the Counsel of the White House, through the President.

Q What are the President's views on that Soviet lieutenant who may have defected to Japan in that MIG-25? Does the President think he should be given asylum here in the United States?

MR. NESSEN: If the pilot requests asylum in the United States, he will be welcome here.

Q Has he?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q Where is the airplane?

MR. NESSEN: The airplane is in the custody of the Japanese and it is really up to them as to how to dispose of the airplane.

Q Is the United States requesting that the plane be given to us?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of it if they have, but I think you should check with the State Department.

Q You mean we don't know whether he has requested asylum?

MR. NESSEN: I do not, but if he does, he would be welcome.

Q Our Government doesn't know?

MR. NESSEN: That is my information.

Q Have any instructions been given to Embassy personnel in Tokyo?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, that if he requests asylum, to grant it to him.

Q Is this the way he would find that out, if he were to find that out?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think he would find it out from the proper authorities if he applied for asylum.

Q Ron, you say what happens to the plane is up to the Japanese?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Are we going to let the Japanese know what we would like seen done with that plane?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that, Ed. I think you would have to check that out with the State Department really to find out whether we have expressed any -- the airplane is in the custody of the Japanese and it is really up to them.

Q If I were President, I would say get those intelligence experts out there with their cameras and have them photograph that.

MR. NESSEN: That is a frightening thought.
(Laughter)

Q That is food for thought, but my question is, has the President taken no direct interest in the disposition of the plane or any intelligence work connected it? Does he know in fact that perhaps American intelligence officers have already gone over this?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have any further answers on the airplane.

Q On what basis does he offer asylum? Does he offer it on the basis of newspaper reports?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean by that?

Q I think you are saying the United States will give asylum to him if he wants it.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Now, how do you get any idea he wants asylum?

MR. NESSEN: I said earlier that he would apply through the proper channels.

Q But are you learning that he might want it from the newspapers?

MR. NESSEN: No, I was responding to a question that said, what would be our reaction if he asked for it, and I said if he asked for it, he would be welcome.

Q Was it the President who made that decision?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q When?

MR. NESSEN: Over the weekend.

Q In consultation with whom?

MR. NESSEN: Proper NSC people and the others who advise him in this area.

Q The Japanese say they would likely give that plane back to the Soviets. Does the United States have a view on that?

MR. NESSEN: It is the choice of the Japanese. The airplane is in their custody.

Q Do the Japanese have anything to say about the fate of the pilot? He did land in their country. Can we spirit him over here if they are unwilling?

MR. NESSEN: You are getting into an international legal area that I am not equipped to handle. If you want to get into that detail, I think you should ask the State Department.

Q You don't want to say much about it simply not to upset the Soviet --

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean, "not say much about it." I was asked basically two questions, both of which I answered -- what would be our response if he asked for asylum? I said he would be welcome. That is an answer.

Ed said, "What about the airplane?" I said the airplane was in the hands of the Japanese. It was up to them to decide. Those are the questions I was asked and I answered both of them.

Q But more details like Walt put to you and other people --

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the information, but I told you where the information is.

Q You didn't say you did not have the information. You said you could not say anything more about it.

MR. NESSEN: I said I would not say anything more about it.

Q Ron, getting back to Joe's question. You said, "in consultation with NSC and other advisers." Did the President talk to Dr. Kissinger at all on this question?

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, he has not talked directly to Dr. Kissinger on this matter.

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Q Was there a State Department consultation on this?

MR. NESSEN: I will check and find out what the consultative process was.

Q Ron, while we are talking about Asia -- you may have answered this over the weekend -- would the release of the information on the 12 missing in action by North Vietnam have any influence one way or the other on whether we veto Vietnam getting into the UN, and has a decision been made to veto them getting in?

MR. NESSEN: I think what we plan to do is to announce and explain our decision on that matter if and when it comes up, before the forum of the Security Council of the United Nations. But on the more general point of our reaction to the 12 names that were released, I think you know what our position is, and that has not changed. That is, that Vietnam is committed in the Paris Accord to account for all the Americans missing, and they have not done that. They have put out 12 names out of several hundred MIAs and that is just not going to change our policy, and it certainly is not going to result in a normalization of relations until Vietnam keeps its agreement and accounts for all the missing.

Q Your answer certainly implies, then, that we would veto the membership of Vietnam.

MR. NESSEN: Just to stick to what our traditional method of operating has been, I am not going to preview or announce ahead of time how the United States will vote in the Security Council, but I want you to know there has been no change of policy.

Q Ron, has the President discussed with Senator Dole the reports of campaign contributions that appear to be irregular?

MR. NESSEN: I think that question and a number of similar ones were asked on Saturday and were answered quite fully by Bill Roberts.

Q You have nothing further?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything further to add.

Q Do you have a copy of what he said?

MR. NESSEN: I can get you one.

Q He is asking specifically, has the President talked to Dole personally in the last few days?

MR. NESSEN: The President has not talked to Senator Dole about anything in the past few days.

Q Is he planning to see Senator Dole in the near future?

MR. NESSEN: There was a filming session that was supposed to take place this week for their campaign commercials but I don't know what the exact date of that is.

Q When are the President's commercials going to start running?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. You have to ask Bill Greener. He is in charge of that.

Q Ron, the story is advanced a little beyond Saturday. Mr. Wild said yesterday that he did indeed pass \$2,000 to Senator Dole which was to be passed out to other candidates. Was the President aware of that, and is he that cognizant of the situation?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that Bill Roberts' answers on Saturday really dealt with the whole range of questions on this matter, and I will dig out what his answers were. Nothing really has changed since Saturday.

Q Ron, that is 1984 "news-speak." How can a man on Saturday answer charges that were raised the next Monday?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't think there had been anything added to the story, Bob.

Q I am telling you, Mr. Wild was interviewed for the first time on the record yesterday and he said indeed that he had passed \$2,000 to Senator Dole.

MR. NESSEN: If I am not mistaken, I think the second part of his sentence was that he had made contributions to a number of Members out of a fund which was totally legal. Isn't that correct?

Q That is correct.

MR. NESSEN: Wasn't that the second part of his sentence? I think it was.

Q As far as we know, those campaign contributions have not shown up anywhere.

MR. NESSEN: I will look into it.

Q Senator Dole continues to say he did not get any money?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct. That is my understanding of what he has been saying.

Q But Wild is now saying he remembers, and he was at least a conduit to pass these funds along to other people. He won't say who the other fellow is.

MR. NESSEN: I will look into that aspect.

Q Also, would you check on whether the President is concerned about this, plans to talk to Senator Dole about it?

MR. NESSEN: I think all of those questions were asked on Saturday and answered by Bill Roberts, Marilyn.

Q Why don't you repeat it for the benefit of the room?

MR. NESSEN: For the benefit of another set of stories when nothing has happened since Saturday?

Q We well understand that your position is you want to get this story killed as fast as you can, but nevertheless we feel we have some reason to raise this question.

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I understand that, but I also say that nothing has happened since Saturday and therefore I have nothing to add to a very full report that Bill Roberts gave on Saturday.

Q Since the President may have read the paper on Sunday and some things did happen in the paper, does the President have any feelings about this that you could disclose to us?

MR. NESSEN: Beyond what Bill Roberts said on Saturday?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't have anything.

Q We are not talking about issues raised on Saturday. We are talking about issues that were raised yesterday. It is an insult to everyone in this room to say the question was answered on Saturday when the issue was raised yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I don't know what issue was raised yesterday.

Q I explained it to you. You must not have been listening.

MR. NESSEN: I pointed out to you what Wild said was that he had made a number of perfectly legal contributions in 1970.

Q That is what we are asking you to comment on.

MR. NESSEN: What? A legal contribution? I don't have any comment on a legal contribution.

Q Ron, this involves the defining of terms. I know this is your new tack, that we go through this to find out --

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not a new tack, Bob.

Q We are simply asking for comments on a story that was raised yesterday. That is a perfectly legitimate request. If you don't want to answer it, that is fine. But why don't you just say "I don't want to talk about it any more"?

MR. NESSEN: I am happy to talk about it, and Bill was, and everybody else has been, and certainly Senator Dole has talked about it any number of times this weekend. If I understand the Wild statement of yesterday, it was that he had made a number of completely legal contributions in 1970. I don't have any comment on what were completely legal contributions in 1970. And, as for the other allegations and the White House knowledge of them and the President's reaction to them, Bill did talk about that on Saturday and I don't have anything to add to what he said. But, if you would like to me see whether there is a comment on this alleged legal contribution, I will be happy to look at it.

Q Ron, we have a statement here of Senator Dole. Senator Dole said he did not take anything from the Gulf Oil Company and Mr. Wild said he did. So, now that alone makes it a new situation.

MR. NESSEN: Not a new situation, Sarah.

Q Yes, it does. Mr. Dole has said publicly on television that the answer was no, that he did not take any money from Gulf Oil. On Sunday, Mr. Wild's statement certainly makes that contradiction.

MR. NESSEN: I said I would look into the new aspect of Sunday.

Q Will you be kind enough to let us know the results of your looking into it?

MR. NESSEN: I always do.

Q Ron, could I ask about the President's signing of this child care bill? My recollection is that he vetoed one of these bills before. Does that fact sheet explain what is different about the one he vetoed and this one? Maybe you could explain why he changed his mind.

MR. NESSEN: You are correct, the President vetoed the earlier version. The Congress voted to uphold the veto. They then passed a compromise version which was supported heavily by both Republicans and Democrats, and this is the compromise version. I will get our new domestic affairs expert to explain the difference to you.

Q Ron, what was the President's reaction to Governor Carter's statement about the captain hiding in his state room and the crew arguing about who is to blame?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear any reaction to that, Les.

Q It is in the Post this morning, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I said I did not hear the President react in any way.

Q There was no reaction? Then, as his spokesman, could you give us some response to this rather odd, rather pointed commentary?

MR. NESSEN: As I said all along through the primary season and through the next 56 days, I am not going to respond from here to each political stump speech.

Q Will you respond to any, Ron? And, if not, would it be possible to have Bill Greener up here with you so he could deal with the political things and you could deal with the statesman issues?

MR. NESSEN: No, we won't have Bill Greener over here.

Q Ron, on the child care legislation, does the President or did the White House and the Administration also support that legislation as the so-called compromise that was being designed?

MR. NESSEN: Margaret doesn't recall whether the Administration witnesses testified in behalf of the bill, but once it got here the President decided to sign it.

Q The question remains, why did he decide to sign it? It is an election year.

MR. NESSEN: It is different.

Q Could you give us the differences now? We asked for that before.

MR. NESSEN: Do we have the President's statement?

MR. SHUMAN: In the President's statement he says, "It embodies a major compromise on a key issue which led to that veto -- the imposition on States and localities of costly and controversial Federal staffing requirements for child day care services," and you will get this in the statement when the bill is signed.

Q Ron, could you introduce him?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry. I thought everybody knew Jim Shuman. Last week when we announced our changes of Margaret Earl moving up to become Assistant Press Secretary we assigned Jim Shuman as our expert on domestic matters. Jim was formerly the editor of the news summary.

Q Is there a replacement for Jim?

MR. NESSEN: Agnes Waldron is going to be the editor of the news summary.

Q Has Agnes given up her other position, or is she doing both of them?

MR. NESSEN: She is handling some research matters, too. The two jobs fit together.

Q Ron, does the President have absolute confidence in Mr. Seidman in view of the revelations of the Securities and Exchange Commission?

MR. NESSEN: We did all that last week, Sarah.

Q I am asking you.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he does.

Q And he is going to keep on doing his job?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, there was a question last week -- and if this has been asked I will withdraw it -- there was testimony on the Hill reported in the Post, for one, a story by Oberdorfer, that North Koreans had warned UN Command twice about that controversial tree and that the warnings were not taken seriously, and they just went ahead and did it, and push came to shove and the result was the slaying of the two military officials. Do we know about this warning that was given? This is testimony by the State Department.

MR. NESSEN: I remember that. I did not get the answer to that, but I will look into it, or Les will.

MR. JANKA: That was dealt with over at State and in the testimony itself.

MR. NESSEN: We will see if we can get a transcript.

Q What was the precise question?

MR. NESSEN: The precise question is, were there any warnings?

Q And what is our response? That puts a different light on the matter. Were there any such warnings and what is our response?

MR. JANKA: The specifics of our exchanges with the North Vietnamese and our assessment of them was dealt with in the public testimony on the Hill. If we can look at that -- and I will see if I can get an answer from that testimony.

Q Ron, I was wondering, it appears now that the Federal Energy Administration is putting off its plans for decontrolling gasoline until after the election. I am just wondering, has the President discussed that with Zarb and so forth? Has there been any contact between the White House and FEA on the timing of that?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check. I have not thought about that for a while or asked about it. I will check.

Q Is there anything more you can tell us about the President's campaign plans?

MR. NESSEN: We are on track. Strategy is on track. We are following it without deviation and expect it will result in a victory.

Q This thing at Ann Arbor is being described as the kick-off of the campaign.

MR. NESSEN: It is being described as that. I am not going to argue with that.

Q You said it will not be on Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it will not be.

Q Are there any other days it will not be on?

MR. NESSEN: It will not be today, tomorrow or the next day.

Q Ron, isn't it a concern of the President to have Senators allege there is a conflict of interest in Margita White's appointment, and then he changes her appointment from seven years to two years? If there is a conflict of interest here, it is going to be present for two years as well as it would be for seven years.

MR. NESSEN: You are mixing together two items: One, an outright political opposition to Margita by Democrats --

Q I don't know whether it is outright political or not. It is a statement of fact.

MR. NESSEN: Let me finish, Sarah. You have two things here; One, an outright political opposition to Margita by Democrats who don't want her on the Commission for seven years; secondly, you have a situation involving her husband's law practice and any alleged conflict. That was dealt with extensively and discussed extensively with the staff and Members of the Committee before the President ever nominated her. The staff and Members of the Committee knew about the arrangement that Stuart had agreed to before she was nominated, and raised no objections to it, as far as I know, at that time. So, that is one thing. It was dealt with forthrightly and openly with the staff and the Committee before her nomination.

The second part of it is, as I say, at least in my view -- you probably disagree -- it is outright political opposition by the Democrats who don't want to see that seat go to a Republican for seven years.

Q It may or it may not be, but it still is a valid question of fact raised here, and it is a matter of judgment. Isn't the President concerned about the fact there is even a taint of any conflict of interest about somebody that he appointed to the job?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what "taint" is, Sarah.

Q The taint is clearly her husband's work, and this sounds very much like a deal that was worked out between him and some Democratic Congress.

MR. NESSEN: You are suggesting that the Democratic Committee would accept a taint for two years but would not accept a taint for seven years?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: If that is the case, you ought to ask the Committee why it is willing to accept a two-year taint and not a seven-year taint.

Q I am. They will say to me "Go ask the White House." So, I am asking both.

MR. NESSEN: You allege the Committee is willing to accept a taint for two years but not for seven. If that is your allegation, you better ask the Committee whether that is true or not.

Q I am asking the White House, and the Committee, because both apparently have accepted it.

MR. NESSEN: I told you they are two separate matters, Sarah.

Q You say so. That is just your judgment. That is not a statement of fact.

Q Ron, I am curious about something. You say President Ford has not had any direct communication with Senator Dole. Will that be typical during the campaign? Will they communicate basically through their staffs?

MR. NESSEN: The staffs are in very close consultation.

Q I realize that, but will that be typical for the campaign, where the President does not feel he needs to contact his running mate directly?

MR. NESSEN: It is not a rule that is supposed to be followed for 56 days -- that they don't talk to each other. They will talk to each other when something comes up that they need to talk about.

Q Ron, will he give to Senator Dole the same time that he has been giving regularly to Vice President Rockefeller, or will Vice President Rockefeller continue to have the weekly meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Vice President Rockefeller will continue to have the weekly meeting, which concerns Domestic Council business and other matters that are assignments of the Vice President during which he reports and discusses his official assignments with the President. Obviously, Senator Dole is a candidate for Vice President at the moment. After January 20, he, too, will have his regular weekly meeting with the President.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 11:55 A.M. EDT)

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