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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:50 P.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 29, 1976

WEDNESDAY

Q Ron, I requested permission to film a little bit at the beginning of this briefing, which is normally granted for local television stations anytime they come in. I wonder if you can explain why we can't do that?

MR. NESSEN: Bill mentioned it to me as I was coming down. Let's just stick to the regular briefing rules.

Q I would like to know why local television has the prerogative of doing this and the rest of us who are here everyday are not allowed to do this?

MR. NESSEN: I think we will stick to the regular briefing rules.

Q What is the reason?

MR. NESSEN: It is a question we never quite resolved as to filming and taping at the briefing, and I think until we do get it resolved we ought to --

Q Do you have two different policies, one for local news and a different one for people here every day?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall when we have had local news people filming.

Q You don't ever recall that?

MR. NESSEN: I vaguely remember we have had some filming. Anyhow, let's stick to the regular rules today until we get it all resolved on a permanent basis.

Q Are you considering letting us tape this at all times?

MR. NESSEN: Ever since I came here we have had various proposals and discussions about coverage of the briefing and we have never resolved it.

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Q Are you going to resolve it unilaterally or in consultation with --

MR. NESSEN: One of the reasons we have never resolved it is when we have had consultations the opinion among your colleagues has been badly split.

Q Wait a minute. I can recall a whole year of consultations with you on this matter in which opinion was never split. All the reporters involved in the consultations unanimously said that if the networks wanted to film, they should be allowed to film.

MR. NESSEN: Look, gang, let's start the briefing, do the announcements. Let's go through the briefing and then if there is going to be a discussion of filming and taping the briefing, we will get the bureau chiefs down here because that is the way it has been conducted before.

Q That is academic. When we have covered Mr. Greener and that bunch at the PFC, we were always allowed to cover.

MR. NESSEN: We will have the regular briefing rules today, Phil, and the briefing rules will be changed after the consultation with the bureau chiefs. After the briefing this morning we will have a printed readout on the President's meeting with the Foreign Minister of Italy.

Q In the consultation with the bureau chiefs, at one time you expressed the policy that you would repeat after the briefing for cameras and microphones any newsworthy statements that reporters wanted that came up during the briefing --

MR. NESSEN: I indicated that I would be receptive to requests like that on occasion, yes.

Q Receptive on occasion. That doesn't mean you will do it when we want it?

MR. NESSEN: Not always.

Q Is this one of those occasions?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't said anything yet, except there will be a readout after this briefing on the President's meeting with the Italian Foreign Minister.

You have seen the signing ceremony, and I think the paperwork is out on the signing ceremony.

The President has noted that the House Armed Services Committee has tabled further consideration of the Administration's \$1.2 billion shipbuilding supplemental appropriation, virtually foreclosing action during this session of Congress.

The President is very disappointed by this lack of action and feels that the American people have not been well-served on this issue. The President intends to press this issue in the next Congress, but in the meantime valuable time has been lost.

That is the end of my statement on this matter.

By way of background for you, in the budget that the President sent to Congress in January, there was a request for \$6.3 billion for 16 new ships. Then last May, after a study of long-range naval requirements and based on the results of that study, the President requested an additional \$1.2 billion for six more new ships.

Now, what the President is referring to today in this statement I read to you is the supplemental of \$1.2 billion for the six more ships. The so-called Seapower Subcommittee of the House supported the supplemental request. It was not, as the President said, carried through by the full committee.

Q What happened to the \$6.3 billion?

MR. NESSEN: The \$6.3 billion is part of the defense appropriation bill. That was pretty much approved as requested.

Q What was the meaning of your implication of the so-called Seapower Subcommittee? That is not the official name?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, the Seapower Subcommittee.

Q Of the House Armed Services Committee?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q What sort of ships were these?

MR. NESSEN: Les can provide you with that additional information.

Q When will these six new ships be built?

MR. JANKA: It started in FY 1977.

MR. NESSEN: This would provide the start-up money?

MR. JANKA: Right.

Q Does this provide part of the President's thinking as he prepares for the national defense and security debates with Governor Carter?

MR. JANKA: Do you mean saying this?

Q No.

MR. JANKA: Do you mean asking for the money?

Q I mean the whole issue. Does this figure in his planning for the debate?

MR. JANKA: No, because the supplemental was sent up in May and was based on a long-term study.

Q His view of the Congressional --

MR. JANKA: I understand. Do you mean will it be an issue in the debate? I think it would depend on whether the reporters ask any questions on this matter.

Q So far as he is concerned --

MR. NESSEN: If he is asked about it, he will certainly give his views, sure.

Q Will these ships be built along the Gulf Coast?

MR. NESSEN: I am not that much of an expert, but I think the Defense Department --

Q How can we get in touch with the President to ask him about it?

MR. NESSEN: I think the kind of factual information you are asking for, Bob, in terms of which shipyards and what the start-up dates are and the composition of the six supplemental bills --

Q I thought you were talking about somebody else. I thought you said if the President was asked about it, what he would say.

MR. NESSEN: He was replying to Dick's question-- would this shipbuilding question be an issue in the next debate, which is on defense policy and foreign policy. I said if the President was asked about it in the debate he would certainly reply.

But, for the kind of factual questions, where the shipyards are, the start-up dates and the composition, I am sure the Pentagon can help you, or Les, after the briefing.

Q Will he take a question on it?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, he is prepared to answer questions on any subject of foreign and defense policy.

Q Will he have a news conference soon?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans now for the President to have a news conference.

Q This week?

MR. NESSEN: Right now there are no plans.

Q There might be one later?

MR. NESSEN: I have no plans right now, Phil.

Q What about in the Texas primaries when he called for the building of these shipyards?

MR. NESSEN: It may well have been, Saul, but I don't know what the connection is.

Q As I recall, there was something from Reagan at the time.

MR. NESSEN: The supplemental request was based on a long-term study of naval requirements and the President obviously believes that is needed for the defense of the United States in the face of the growing Russian navy.

Q You said there are no plans for a press conference. Does that "no plans" extend as far as the next debate?

MR. NESSEN: I am just going to stick to what I know at this particular moment, which is there are no plans for a news conference.

Q Is one reason there are no plans for a news conference that the President does not now wish to face questions about these reports on the investigation in Michigan?

MR. NESSEN: There are just no plans right now, Dick, for a news conference. As I do each day, as you know from lots of talks we have had, I believe the job of the Press Secretary is to respond to questions for the President and for the White House, so I am here.

Q Senator Mondale has suggested that one way this whole thing might be resolved is to have the man who knows what he did or did not do come out and face reporters. I wonder if the President is aware that Senator Mondale has said this and what he thinks about that approach to resolving the controversy?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, he has, of course, read the papers -- and he always does -- but I don't think that the idea should be accepted that the President or the White House have remained silent on this issue, because each time I have been asked about it -- and I assume we are talking about the Kent County Special Prosecutor matter --

Q No, we are talking about U.S. Steel, and all of them.

MR. NESSEN: Let me talk about one at a time. I don't think you can say "all," Phil. I think there are two.

Q As far as we know right now, there are two, and that is why Senator Mondale was suggesting maybe we could go over all of them.

MR. NESSEN: Are there others?

O You suggested yesterday Bethlehem, Alcoa and Firestone.

MR. NESSEN: I think it is the so-called golf issue, isn't it?

Q Anyhow, let's hear what else you have to say on this question.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think the idea should get around that the White House has not had anything to say about the two issues because indeed it has. On the Kent County investigation --

O The White House is not a candidate, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: The fact of the matter is, as I have said each time I have been asked about this issue, these matters were checked out by the House Judiciary Committee, and according to -- we didn't say this until Leon Jaworski mentioned himself publicly yesterday that he, too, had looked into these issues and we have had no contact with the Special Prosecutor or the Justice Department, as I have said before, on this matter, and nobody has said the President is under investigation or is the subject of an investigation. Nobody has asked the White House for any papers or documents.

So, it is not as if I haven't said anything. I have said something every day, and it is an answer, Phil, that these matters have been checked out by reputable people of integrity and found nothing. I have said before, too, that the President has no reason to believe that any new investigation, if he is under investigation, will turn up with any result other than the previous serious investigations.

Q Would you repeat that last sentence? I want to get that down.

MR. NESSEN: I have said this before. It is in the transcript day after day.

Q Would you say it this time? The President has no what?

MR. NESSEN: This is not a new story, Helen, and to go out and print this as if I am saying this the first time today is a mistake.

Q Would you say it again?

MR. NESSEN: I will get it out of the transcript from where I have said it before and show it to you.

Q Will you repeat that statement?

Q Will you have it read back?

MR. NESSEN: I have said this before each day I have been asked about this, Dick, and I think it is wrong to act as if I have said something new today when I have not.

What I am trying to answer is Phil's question about why we don't say anything. I am trying to point out we have said something.

Q You misunderstood my question. I am not saying, as you put it, not as if I, being Ron Nessen, haven't said anything.

MR. NESSEN: As spokesman for the President, though.

Q What I am suggesting and Senator Mondale apparently suggested is that the President of the United States is not saying anything.

MR. NESSEN: I am certainly reflecting to you, as I do always on all these issues, his responses and views on this matter.

On the second thing, this so-called golf matter, there again, I think we have taken lots of time at these briefings to explore this and I raised with you last week, you know, voluntarily, the fact that the President had accepted invitations and been the host on other occasions at golf games, and I raised with you the matter here yesterday.

So, it is not a question of not responding to this, either.

Q Ron, you are not the candidate for President. President Ford is. That is what we are talking about.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear your whole question. I think you said I am not the candidate and he is.

Q That is right.

MR. NESSEN: And there has been a big sigh of relief over that, too.

Okay, Phil, that is obviously true, but the fact of the matter is I do speak for the President, that is the Press Secretary's job, and that is why I have dealt with this and have tried to deal with it at length and completely each day it has come up.

Q Senator Mondale did not say that the White House had not said anything on it. What he did was call upon the President to make himself available to answers on it, and both he and Carter have charged that the President is not being accessible. Do you have any response to that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I would only have two responses. One, I think the more direct response is that there are not now plans for a news conference by the President; and secondly, it would be incorrect to suggest that the White House spokesman, or the President's spokesman, has not dealt with both of those issues in a fairly extended way over a fairly extended time.

Q Ron, since you are ready to deal with them, you had said today you would have or try to get more details on the financial arrangements of these various golfing invitations, and you said you would try to have a full report for us today.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Then that voice came out yesterday over the loudspeaker and said you wouldn't be able to get it yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: That was no voice. That was Bill Roberts. (Laughter)

Q I assume you have it today; is that right?

MR. NESSEN: We are trying to locate the records, whatever records there are.

Q Does that mean you don't have them?

MR. NESSEN: We are looking for the records, that is right.

Q How about the list you mentioned yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: That was the golf games the President has played since he has been President.

Q Did you talk to the President about his recollection of the financial arrangements of those trips?

MR. NESSEN: I won't do it piecemeal, because I think that is the reason for some of the imprecision on my part in the past.

Q How are you going about this process of reconstructing exactly what happened?

MR. NESSEN: I said we are looking for the records.

Q What kind of records?

MR. NESSEN: The records any executive secretary keeps of her employer's activities.

Q Would you repeat that? There is a lot of talk in here.

MR. NESSEN: Sorry, Dick, I said we are looking for whatever records there are, and that is where it stands.

Q How long will it take to find them? About a month? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Marilyn, how long it will take to find them.

Q That is a fair question. How long do you think it will take?

MR. NESSEN: It is a fair question, and the fair answer is that I don't know.

Q Do you know that records exist?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is fair to say every Congressman, every executive of any kind has a secretary who keeps records of his activities, so I assume there are records.

Q You assume?

MR. NESSEN: That is right, because until we find them we don't know what they show, and how complete they are.

Q Are you asking help from the corporations involved and the corporate executives who were his direct hosts?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Why not?

MR. NESSEN: We are looking first for the records. We want to find out first what the records are; whether we have any records, and what they are.

Q These will be the Ford records, period?

MR. NESSEN: That is right -- not records that go around on a record player. I mean the written down records.

Q Ron, all the committees and FBI people and staff people that you have mentioned of having cleared him of everything, did they ever ask for his golfing records?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I would have to look in the Judiciary Committee report.

Q (A), if they have asked, they must be readily available, and (B) if they have not, then you cannot claim he has been cleared.

MR. NESSEN: Well, we are looking for the records and that is as far as I can go today.

Q Can you describe what kinds of records you are looking for?

MR. NESSEN: I think I have several times, Dick. I think that most people have some kind of desk calendar or secretary's diary in which their boss' activities -- his or her activities are kept on a daily basis. I do, in terms of what appointments I have, what time I come out to brief, who I have lunch with, and so forth.

Q Do you expect to find records which would demonstrate not only when and where the President might have gone for his golf games, but who might have paid for what in these instances?

MR. NESSEN: I think we will just have to see what is in these records first.

Q Will these be out-of-town outings or will that include playing golf on a Wednesday afternoon at Burning Tree or Congressional?

MR. NESSEN: I think most of the interest has been in out-of-town trips.

Q That is what you are looking for?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Will they be finding dates, times, and places Congressman Ford addressed the Seafarers Union as a speaker?

MR. NESSEN: I suppose they might.

Q May I make that request, for that information?

MR. NESSEN: All right.

Q Ron, will your search include or are you pulling together copies of the President's income tax returns during that period to determine whether or not -- if his expenses were paid to and from various golfing vacations and if his lodging and things like that were paid -- to determine if he reported those on his income tax returns as gift income?

MR. NESSEN: As I said yesterday, I am not a tax attorney and I don't know what the tax requirements are for showing a golf game on your tax return, if any.

Q I am trying to find out whether you are governed to find out that and, if so, whether they were reported.

MR. NESSEN: I have not asked about that aspect, if it is an aspect, of it.

Q On the other aspect of the investigation, have you issued a categorical statement, yes or no, as to whether the President personally received any Maritime Union money from these committees and whether he either diverted it to his own personal use or gave it to some other candidate?

MR. NESSEN: Mort, what I have said before is, I don't see the need to answer a charge which hasn't been made.

Q Ron, in quoting Leon Jaworski earlier, did you quote him to the fullest? You mentioned he had looked into reputable people of integrity. Didn't he also say he has the utmost confidence in the Special Prosecutor and something could have come up since the investigation?

MR. NESSEN: All I know about Leon Jaworski's statement is what I read in the paper. But he did indicate in the paper he had looked into these matters.

Q Ron, you made reference to the fact the President also entertained the golf partners, whether lobbyists and so forth. Is it your impression from preliminary examination that the President entertained the lobbyists at his club at his expense while a Congressman as much or anywhere approaching the number of times he was entertained? Is it anywhere near approaching even or not?

MR. NESSEN: Let me pick my way through that. First of all, as I have tried to make clear from the beginning of this discussion, the people the President has played golf with are friends of the President and fellow golf enthusiasts, and it is that description, it seems to me, which certainly to him forms the context of the various golf trips.

Q Did he entertain them as much as they entertained him?

MR. NESSEN: I have no way of knowing because the records are being looked for.

Q Who is looking for them, who specifically?

MR. NESSEN: The people who would know where they are.

Q Who are they?

MR. NESSEN: Look, I am not going to name secretaries and so on who are looking through file cabinets to see if there are any records.

Q May I ask you a broad question?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Maybe you can get an answer for us, and it seems to me this is the key question. Did the President, when he was a Congressman, was it his lifestyle to let other people pay for his vacations? Was that his practice, his lifestyle? Was that something he always did? If indeed that is so -- and I have no reason to believe it is -- but if it is so, then it seems to me you can ask him and he can say, hell no, it wasn't that way.

MR. NESSEN: I can say "hell no" for him right now, Bob, because as far as I know --

Q But you said yesterday --

MR. NESSEN: Wait a second, Bob. Again, it seems to me -- and I notice everybody scribbling wildly that the White House today said "Hell no, the President didn't" --

Q That is right.

MR. NESSEN: Everybody's got their lead. Okay, is that about it now?

Obviously, Bob, after I have stepped in the hole --

Q I don't see why that is a hole.

MR. NESSEN: I think Bob has raised a very legitimate question, but it seems to me that nobody, in anything I have read or heard, has said that he did. I mean, what we are talking about here is a couple of golf games with a friend, a friend of over 20 years, and a couple of other golf games which we have not sorted out yet as to their length and so forth.

But, Bob, to my knowledge, no one has said that the President made it a practice or a lifestyle to accept free vacations. So, when I gave everybody his lead --

Q That is not my lead.

MR. NESSEN: I am dumb. (Laughter)

Q Ron, is there no way to ask in any form the Special Prosecutor's Office to help clear the air on this, to get any enlightenment from them?

MR. NESSEN: Every day we have had the same question and I have given the same answer, and Dick Cheney has given the same answer when he has been asked. To ask the question implies it needs to be asked, or that it needs an answer, and to my knowledge, the White House's knowledge, and to the President's knowledge, nobody has suggested that there is any need to ask the Special Prosecutor to answer that question. I have said that every day for 10 days or however long this has been around. The answer is still the same.

Q Ron, you said you would ask the President today to help get answers on this thing. Did you discuss it with him?

MR. NESSEN: As I started out saying when we got to this topic, Marilyn, my own imprecision in talking about the golfing issue I feel has been caused by the fact, which I mentioned yesterday, that it is difficult to re-create 26 years of golf games, or 8 years of golf games.

Q But did you ask him about it?

MR. NESSEN: What has happened is that the records are being looked for so that we have hopefully a precise list of --

Q I understand that, but did you ask the President?

MR. NESSEN: My own discussions with the President I think are going to remain private, as they always do.

Q The President doesn't know if there is an investigation going on or not, is that what you are saying?

MR. NESSEN: I have said every day, Helen -- look, there is nothing new on this.

Q There is, though.

MR. NESSEN: No, there isn't, Helen, and every one of these questions has been asked every day for 10 days, and the answers are the same.

Q The answer is befuddling. We would think the President would be damned curious about these new stories.

MR. NESSEN: Helen, there is nothing new on Kent County, so I don't have any new answers. I have to give the same answers each day when the same questions are asked.

Q One part of that answer, Ron, that you give -- and it has been given several days now -- is there has been no contact between the White House and the Special Prosecutor?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q When you give that answer today, is that on the basis of a check you made today or on the basis of something you had told originally?

MR. NESSEN: Lou, I wouldn't dare come out here, knowing that question would be asked, without checking today.

Q Because that is the current --

MR. NESSEN: Absolutely.

Q Why was Attorney General Levi in today?

MR. NESSEN: For the bill signing of a bill that affects the area he deals with.

Q Was there a private conversation between Levi and the President on any subject today?

MR. NESSEN: There was not.

Q Ron, the President's campaign lieutenants are polling on the question of the public impact of these discussions, whatever you call it. Now the question they are asking the voters--it seems to be that if they are asking, it seems to imply it needs to be answered.

MR. NESSEN: I read that story or saw it or heard it, but to my own personal knowledge I do not know about the polling operations or what questions they had. I have not checked with Teeter, so I can't confirm that question is being asked.

Q Ron, why can't you say the President never diverted campaign funds for his own personal use?

MR. NESSEN: Ted, it is the same question and the answer is the same.

Q It is not the same question.

MR. NESSEN: It is the same question you ask every day.

Q If it is not true, why can't you say no?

MR. NESSEN: I have already given everybody the chance to write that the White House said "Hell no, the President didn't take paid vacations." Now everybody wants to write "and the White House also said, hell no, he didn't take any campaign funds out of his" --

Q Why can't you say that?

MR. NESSEN: Because nobody has made the charge and I won't reply to a charge that hasn't been made.

Q There are stories in the papers every day saying --

MR. NESSEN: Saying what?

Q -- saying there is an investigation to determine if, two things, one --

MR. NESSEN: Ted, we go around the same track every day, the same questions and the same answers.

Q I have a new question. These corporations that entertain --

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute. Phil is going to give me a chance to retract something.

Q Phil has asked six questions and I haven't asked any.

MR. NESSEN: He is going to let me retract something.

Q You seem very worried about the fact we are going to go out here and prove to you what you said. Do you want to retract something? Have you changed your mind?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly not, Phil. The context of it was that Bob asked me was it the President's practice to take paid vacations, and --

Q I wasn't quoting Bob. I was quoting you.

MR. NESSEN: I know, but you have to look at the question before the answer can be understandable. Nobody has ever suggested the President did take paid vacations, as I think Bob said, a "lifestyle". I should never have answered the question because my practice is not to answer charges nobody has made.

Q This is not a charge. I am just asking you, these corporations that have entertained Mr. Ford have obviously taken a tax deduction for the amount they spend on him. Has the President done anything about going to the corporation records to find out what their books show?

MR. NESSEN: He has not.

Q Why not? If you have a record, why don't you go to that obvious place?

MR. NESSEN: First, he is going to have his own records looked at to see what they show in terms of golf games.

Q Does he have a record to show what was spent?

MR. NESSEN: We will see what the records do show, Howard.

Q Where are the records located?

MR. NESSEN: We don't know. We are going to find out.

Q Who has been told to do that?

MR. NESSEN: You asked me that before, and I gave you an answer before.

Q At least at the Firestone Company, Mr. Floberg has gone through and looked at his records and found, if he is telling it straight, that tax money was not involved, that there was no tax deduction.

MR. NESSEN: Nobody said there was. This is the point I am trying to make, Mort. When a lot of these golf games are looked at, you know, they don't fall into the category of paid vacations and that kind of thing. They are an afternoon of golf. I have tried to say that each day since we started talking about this. It is the context of it, a couple of friends playing golf.

Q It is not just a couple of friends playing golf. Rod Markley of the Ford Motor Company, for example, says on occasion, on some of those social occasions, including golf, he has talked about the Clean Air Act and other pieces of legislation and activities going on in the Administration and in the bureaucracy affecting the Ford Motor Company.

Have you asked the President whether on occasion -- it is not just a golf game we are talking about, I hope, but these people are friends but they also work for various people -- have you asked the President if he has talked about Administration policy, legislation, or other matters affecting these corporations?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot speak for Rod Markley or any of the President's other friends he has played golf with, but I can tell you, as I have tried to from the beginning, how the President views his golf games. I know Marilyn wonders why I always say he is an avid golfer and start every answer that way. I start every answer that way because I am trying to convey to you how the President views the golf games.

He views them as something he delights in, and he likes to play golf. He likes to play golf with friends. It is in that context these golf games have been played, and he does not look upon them --

Q Ron, does the President have a personal view that he will not discuss substantive matters on the golf course with these people?

Q Hell no? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Boy, will that haunt me.

Q It is not as bad as the Playboy interview, is it, Ron?

Q Let him answer it.

MR. NESSEN: The answer is, I don't know, because I never asked the President whether he has any ground rules for what to discuss when he plays golf.

Q If the President hadn't paid for these occasions, why would he keep records?

MR. NESSEN: First, we are trying to find out exactly how many golf games there were, who they were played with, where they were played, how he got there, and how he got back and so forth.

Q Do you know who the transportation was paid by, to and from, at this time?

MR. NESSEN: We have to find the records first. We can't establish anything until we know what the records show.

Q Ron, along those lines, yesterday you referred to three additional companies and courses, and you said those were three you knew of.

Can you give us any feeling today as to what kind of dimensions we are talking about here; in other words, to the best of your information, would there be a good deal more in the way of similar trips or are we --

MR. NESSEN: I think to talk about this in terms of my guessing or giving an impression or whatever is too imprecise for what we are talking about, and I am not going to say anything further about it until I have seen what records can be found.

Q Has the President set a deadline for the finding of these records?

MR. NESSEN: Look, the records are being --

Q Has he said they have to show up within a week, eight days?

MR. NESSEN: The records are being looked for.

Q When did he decide to search for the records?

MR. NESSEN: When I told him of your interest in the matter.

Q Yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Does the President feel the various continuous stories on both the golf games and this investigation by the Watergate Special Prosecutor are unfair or harmful to him? Have you talked to him about that? Could you give us some idea of how he feels about that?

MR. NESSEN: Lou, I said before when similar questions were asked I was not going to make any judgment along those grounds, that I was going to try to deal and dig up as much factual information as I could find to answer factual questions but don't want to deal with the kind of interpretation that you ask about.

Q I was not asking you to characterize the stories. I was simply asking what the President's response has been. We have asked for his response on a lot of different things and sometimes you give it.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any response to give in that area. As I have said before, we have the House Judiciary Committee conclusions, we have the statement by Mr. Jaworski the other day, and so I don't want to suggest anything, and he doesn't.

Q Ron, has the President expressed himself on these stories, is all Lou is asking. I think that is a fair question. Does he think they are harmful? Do they disturb him? Has he said anything?

MR. NESSEN: I will stick to the facts. I have not heard him say anything along the lines Lou suggested.

Q I was just asking --

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard him talk on those subjects.

Q You mean the President has not assessed the political impact of stories in the paper day after day?

MR. NESSEN: Stories are stories, Helen, and facts are facts, and there is a difference.

Q Do you think it is likely he will have a press conference before the election, and can you tell me precisely whether he feels he has an obligation to meet with the press before then?

MR. NESSEN: All I can say right now is there are no plans for a news conference.

Q Does he feel he has an obligation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to go beyond the fact that there are no plans for a news conference.

Q Surely you don't mind if I change the subject?

MR. NESSEN: I think there may be a few more questions on this subject.

Q Did you get a chance to check whether the President had any personal involvement in the placement of Roger Whyte?

MR. NESSEN: I did. Roger Whyte has served as a volunteer on the staff of the Vice President, Gerald Ford, doing advance work. That was as a volunteer, unpaid. After the President became President, Roger Whyte continued to do advance work as a volunteer through most of 1974. Most of his work during that period was on the economic conferences which were held around the country, if you will recall, in the fall of 1974.

After Vice President Rockefeller was confirmed as Vice President, Whyte went to work on the Rockefeller staff, again as an unpaid volunteer. On February 10, 1975, he joined the Rockefeller staff on salary.

Q What was the date?

MR. NESSEN: February 10, 1975.

Q Do you have the salary?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the salary.

Q It is \$16,000.

MR. NESSEN: I think we did check that last week. As the Vice President's office will tell you, if you call, the personnel office that handles the personnel for the Vice President received no recommendation from the President concerning Whyte.

Q Why did he make the transition from the President's staff to the Vice President's? On whose recommendation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. You will have to ask over there. As I say, the Vice President's personnel office received no recommendation from the President concerning Roger Whyte.

Q Does that mean from the White House, from anyone in the White House, from anybody acting for the President, from anybody?

MR. NESSEN: He received no recommendation from the President.

Q You don't know whether the President made any kind of verbal recommendation to Vice President Rockefeller. You are talking of some kind of communication to the personal office. You don't know whether the President and the Vice President discussed this?

MR. NESSEN: I think the Vice President's office about ten days ago said Roger Whyte was employed by them because of his own merits and not as a result of any recommendation from anybody outside. He had been over there I guess for about a year before he went as a volunteer before he went on salary, so he had a chance to prove himself.

Q Ron, you say there has been no basis in fact upon which the White House could go to the Special Prosecutor and say is there any fire where the smoke is being raised. Isn't it a fact in addition to the stories that have appeared in the newspapers, the Democratic candidate for Vice President, the Democratic National Chairman, have commented on this as part of the Presidential campaign? Isn't this enough basis for the White House to ask the Special Prosecutor, "Are you investigating the President?" That is all. Not, "Is he guilty?" Not "What can we do?" "Are you investigating the President?"

MR. NESSEN: Saul, I think the answer has got to remain the same because it is the answer; that is, we have not been told the President is under investigation. These matters have been checked out before and you know what the results of the previous checks were.

As I said yesterday, all we know is what we read in the paper. The feeling is that --

Q Ron, can I ask a question?

MR. NESSEN: As I mentioned to some yesterday, Saul, think of what the recent history has been --

Q I am not implying President Ford should tell the Special Prosecutor what to do or even fire him if he doesn't do what he says.

MR. NESSEN: On a Saturday night? (Laughter)

Q Exactly. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: All I am saying is -- for two reasons: One, because we see no reason to ask a question about a charge that has never been made and, secondly, because of the recent history of White House dealings with that office and other investigative offices, we don't think it would be proper to do.

Q What was your answer to Dick's question about the story in the paper this morning that the President Ford Committee has instructed its questioners to ask in their polls what the implication is --

MR. NESSEN: I said I have not talked to Bob Teeter. I don't know myself that that is a question. I just haven't checked on it. I don't know that that is a question.

Q Did you ever check on this at all?

MR. NESSEN: No, I didn't.

Q Will you check on this?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you call Bill Greener and ask him?

Q Former President Nixon claims he was innocent of any wrongdoing. Does the President feel he has pardoned an innocent man?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President's statements in that area are pretty clear, including last week in the debates.

Q Could you go over that for us?

MR. NESSEN: I will get the citations and help you find the transcripts.

Q Has the President told the Congress what he is going to do about the jobs bill yet?

MR. NESSEN: The President is having a meeting on the jobs bill today.

Q What will they decide today?

MR. NESSEN: HEW-Labor. Today is the last day for the decision. I expect we will have one later this afternoon.

Q What about anti-trust?

MR. NESSEN: Anti-trust -- I don't have anything on that. Anti-trust is tomorrow.

Q Can I get an answer to this? We will not find out about anti-trust until tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: You will find out about anti-trust when he makes the decision. I just don't know when that will be.

Q Will there be a ceremony in connection with HEW, or do you have an announcement?

MR. NESSEN: Mort is asking about the Labor-HEW. I don't know exactly what the plans are -- well, we have not made the exact plans yet or decided upon the exact plans yet for announcing a decision on Labor-HEW.

Q When is he going to tell Congress about the jobs bill?

MR. NESSEN: He has to make the decision first, Fran. The meeting was about to begin when I came out here.

Q Who is he meeting with?

MR. NESSEN: His advisers.

Q What about the tax investigation, if he looks for records? Did he sign the Privacy Act? Would this be illegal? Is the President immune from going into that?

MR. NESSEN: We are getting awfully far ahead of a couple of golf games.

Q Tomorrow a group of Evangelical church leaders are coming in to see the President. Do you know what they are coming for? Did they invite themselves or did the President invite them?

MR. NESSEN: John is our scheduling expert.

MR. CARLSON: They are coming in. (Laughter)

Q Why are they coming in?

MR. CARLSON: I don't know that much about it.

Q Are they Southern Baptists, by any chance?

MR. CARLSON: I don't know. I will have to check.

Q Ron, when is the President going to act on the tax bill?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a date yet, or decision on that, either.

Q Can you answer my question?

MR. NESSEN: The Evangelicals tomorrow, is that your question? John, who takes care of the scheduling meetings, doesn't have all that much information right now. We will try and get it for you later this afternoon.

Q Ron, what is the feeling -- is it true the Republican leadership are blocking the Export Administration Act from being voted upon in the Senate?

MR. NESSEN: I have never heard that. I don't know the details.

Q Let's have the answer to that question repeated.

MR. NESSEN: I said I have not heard of that before and don't know the details of it.

Q What about the anti-boycott legislation? Has the President approved a new compromise that can be turned over to the Treasury Department? They need an answer, like, in an hour.

MR. NESSEN: This is still being --

Q We can't hear the question.

MR. NESSEN: Marilyn is asking about the anti-boycott legislation. Which one are you talking about? The one that is to go in the export control bill?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know our latest position on that. I know the overall position is that the President does not in general feel that legislation is required because he has dealt with the issue administratively.

Q An allegedly acceptable compromise was sent up yesterday and they need an answer today. It was sent to Treasury. Can we find out something on that?

MR. NESSEN: I will check.

Q How about California? That meeting was supposed to be held this morning. Have you got a departure date?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what meeting you are talking about.

Q Never mind that. Have you got a departure date for California?

MR. NESSEN: The departure date for California is still either the 4th or 5th. The exact date has not been settled on yet.

Q Is the President aware -- obviously he is aware, I suppose -- has he taken any action, any comment, on the plight of Britain and its pound? Is he going to support a British move for a multi-billion dollar loan from the IMF?

MR. NESSEN: The President is being kept informed on all those developments involving the British pound. Prime Minister Callaghan phoned him this morning to discuss the situation. As I understand the procedure in the IMF, it is basically a British application, I believe, to the IMF and the United States would support whatever action the IMF decides to take to help the British support their pound.

Q That is not quite the answer. What decision the IMF decides on is pretty much up to the United States since we hold the majority vote. So, the question is not how the IMF will react but how we will react. We have to initiate that.

MR. NESSEN: That is all I have to give you on that.

The President is being kept informed on this and did have a phone call this morning from Prime Minister Callaghan.

Q On what basis? Did he ask for money?

MR. NESSEN: No, just to discuss the situation and explain the situation.

Q Did the President indicate basic support for Britain in this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I can spell out the details.

Q Didn't you say the United States would support the application --

MR. NESSEN: Would support the decision of the IMF.

Q Do you know whether it was a long or brief conversation?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't.

Q Is the President going to spell out for Congress before they leave Friday, Saturday, or whatever, what he is going to do on legislation so they can decide whether they should come back to try and override?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if this has any interest for you, but it will give you an idea of the current situation in terms of legislation, and it is as follows, and I don't know how much interest you have in this:

During the past two weeks -- that is up through last Saturday -- in the two weeks prior to last Saturday the President signed 14 bills. This week -- that is, this calendar week we are in right now -- there are 11 bills due for Presidential action. That means the last day for action for 11 bills falls within this calendar week.

Now, some of those have already been acted on. He has signed two of those. That leaves nine and -- let's see, he signed one this morning, that is eight, and I think you know about two of the major outstanding ones, anti-trust, and today is the last day for action on HEW-Labor.

There are an additional 41 bills -- on top of everything I have told you about there are 41 more bills for which the last day for action falls in the next calendar week, next week.

Of course, he could sign or veto some of those before next week, but the deadline is next week for 41 bills.

Q That includes the original nine?

MR. NESSEN: No, this is on top of everything else I have given already.

Beyond that, it is hard to tell precisely what Congress is going to end up doing, but there could be -- on top of everything I have told you about -- another 75 bills. So, you see, there is a bit of flurry of activity here at the end of the session and we are going to get decisions made and announced as quickly as we can.

Q Ron, did the President feel that President Nyerere's demand for a turnover in 4 to 6 weeks was helpful in the Rhodesian or Zambabwean settlements?

MR. NESSEN: I think Henry conducted a briefing on the Hill yesterday --

Q I am not interested in Henry. I would like to know the President's reaction to President Nyerere's demands.

MR. NESSEN: Dr. Kissinger enunciates the President's foreign policy, and he spoke on that matter yesterday. I won't go beyond it.

Q Has the President asked Dr. Kissinger about these conflicting reports that have now come out that he appears to have given each side a different impression?

MR. NESSEN: Has the President asked Henry about those reports?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the President has asked Henry in their private talks, but the American position has been stated, the President's position on this has been stated ever since the weekend.

Q Is he concerned that this might look like a situation where people were claiming a great foreign policy success and it looks a little murky at times?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to say beyond what Kissinger said yesterday and Secretary Rogers said yesterday.

Q Ron, when Mr. Kissinger briefed the House yesterday, Mr. Nyerere's statement had not been made.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, but he was asked a more general question about various statements being made by African leaders, and I think he answered in the general terms.

Q That was general. I asked a specific question. You say the President is an avid golfer as well as an avid newspaper reader. Undoubtedly he avidly read the statement by President Nyerere. Undoubtedly he had an avid opinion. Could you share it with us?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to add to what Dr. Kissinger and Secretary Rogers both spoke about yesterday at great length.

Q Before Nyerere's statement?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure if Secretary Rogers' was before Nyerere's statement.

Q Could you deal with one more question on this before changing the subject?

MR. NESSEN: On Rhodesia? Yes.

Q Do you have any knowledge of whether the President is aware of any deviations on what Secretary Kissinger may have told either side in the Rhodesia situation?

MR. NESSEN: I think Bill Rogers was asked about this 84 times yesterday and dealt with it.

Q I am asking if you have any knowledge of any awareness on the part of the President?

MR. NESSEN: I won't add anything to the questioning that Bill Rogers responded to yesterday, which was that very line of questioning.

Q Any reaction to Britain's announcement today calling for a conference as soon as possible?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't essentially have anything to say beyond that. You know that what Administration officials said yesterday was that the next step -- in fact, I think Bill Rogers was asked what is the next step, and he said the British will organize a conference to settle the details and the structure and the processes of the interim governments. So that is the anticipated next step.

Q Ron, it appears, based on what the black African leaders are saying about 4 to 6 weeks, and based on President Kaunda's statements to Secretary Kissinger when he was in Africa, that this bloodshed you talk about Kissinger having avoided by going over there, appears to be a little closer than the Administration is saying.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what that conclusion is based on.

Q It is based on the fact they are saying they won't wait two years for black majority rule; as a matter of fact, they want it in 4 to 6 weeks.

MR. NESSEN: As Dr. Kissinger said, "We are very hopeful that progress toward the negotiations is going to be made rapidly by the end of the week," and I would think that within a week or so this would become evident.

Q Back to the Export Administration Act, you said when I asked a question about whether it is true the Republican leadership is trying to block the bill -- you said you hadn't heard of that.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Yesterday, Senator Tower, who happens to be the Chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee and has been for four years, said he was going to block it. Presumably, the Senator and the President are in pretty close touch on what happens on legislation. Has the President agreed with Senator Tower that the Export Administration Act should not be voted upon?

MR. NESSEN: I will look into it. I am not familiar with the progress of that legislation.

Q Also, since there are only three days left, will you ask also whether the President is doing anything to have the bill brought before both chambers of the Congress since, as you said earlier today, the President was disappointed by lack of action and feels the American people are not well served by inaction by a Senate subcommittee on another issue? Isn't that the same thing? Shouldn't both Houses have a chance to vote on a bill as important as this, which includes nuclear energy as well as the boycott provision?

MR. NESSEN: I am not, as I said, familiar with the progress of the legislation, but I will look into it.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.