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NEWS CONFERENCE

#601

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:45 A.M. EST

NOVEMBER 22, 1976

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: The schedule for today I think you know about, the budget meeting which comes in two parts today, a morning session which is now underway, which is scheduled for two hours, and then an hour this afternoon beginning at 2:00 o'clock.

Today's meetings will deal with budget items for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, as well as some related smaller agencies. As has been the case in the week or so of budget meetings we have had so far, the President will be reviewing line by line the issues that need to be decided and will be making tentative decisions.

As we have announced previously, Governor and Mrs. Carter will be coming to the White House at 3:30 this afternoon. They will arrive on the South Driveway at the walkway that goes up to the Oval Office. They will be greeted there by President and Mrs. Ford. There will be a press area there for photos and so forth.

Then the President and Governor Carter will go into the Oval Office, and Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Carter will go over to the residence area. We will have a photo in the Oval Office of the President and President-elect Carter.

The meeting is expected to last about an hour. There is no format or agenda. It will simply be an unstructured meeting in which the President and President-elect will discuss general subjects of the transition.

Q Ron, could I ask a question about the arrival on the South Driveway?

Q Will anybody else be in there?

Q Will anybody else be meeting the President there? Will there be any group?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean?

Q In other words, will anybody accompany the President on the South Driveway in meeting the President-elect?

MR. NESSEN: Mrs. Ford.

Q I know, but anyone else? Will there be an honor guard or any kind of ceremony at all?

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MR. NESSEN: No.

Q In the Oval Office will anyone else be present?

MR. NESSEN: I would think that during the course of the hour that part of the meeting will be the President and President-elect Carter by themselves, and then part of the meeting could at least involve some aides on both sides. But the meeting is unstructured and those kinds of things will be decided by the two men.

Q Will they happen to have remarks to make after the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Then, Lou, after the meeting, which is expected to last an hour or so, while that is going on in the Oval Office, Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Carter I expect to be looking over or through the residence where the Carters will live.

Q Will there be coverage of that, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: At the moment there isn't any, although I am aware of the interest in it and perhaps we could put something together by then.

After the meeting, Lou, the Fords and Carters will walk out of the White House from the South Portico or South Diplomatic Entrance, and there will be press coverage there. The President has indicated that he would like to say a few things at that point, and perhaps Governor Carter will, also.

Q What time are we talking about?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are talking about 4:30 to 5:00, in that area.

Q To avoid a mob scene, could you have one Signal Corps microphone, and a mult?

MR. NESSEN. Yes. We will have a mult and one microphone.

So that is the story.

Q I have a question on the meeting, please.

MR. NESSEN: Yes?

Q Last week I was told, when I asked about the meeting, that the President was really going to let Mr. Carter take the initiative in this meeting because the meeting was at Carter's suggestion originally. Do you know of anything President Ford intends to or would like to bring up at this meeting, or is he, in fact, going to let Carter take the initiative?

MR. NESSEN: It is really hard to say, Walt; you know, to guess ahead of time how the meeting is going to go. As I say, it is unstructured, no agenda. I think it will flow along as the two men want it to.

Q Let me follow up. Do you know of anything the President wants to bring up at this meeting for discussion?

MR. NESSEN: No. As I say, there is no agenda; it is an unstructured meeting.

Q There will be an opportunity to ask questions at that point?

MR. NESSEN: When they depart?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. The plan was not to, Ted.

Q What time do you want us here?

MR. NESSEN: So you can get in on the arrival? I would say certainly no later than 3:00 o'clock.

Q Ron, will there be an opportunity for Governor Carter to say something at that point?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I have said that. I said that the President had indicated already that he wanted to say a few things, and certainly if Governor Carter wants to, there is the opportunity.

Q But you don't think there will be an opportunity for asking questions of either one?

MR. NESSEN: That was not part of the plan, no.

Q Ron, at the beginning of the meeting in the Oval Office, there will be just the President and the President-elect?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Will there also be a stenographer?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Will their wives stay with them in the Oval Office for a while?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. You know, every last movement is not planned down, Sarah. The way I see it is that the four might walk up the driveway to the Oval Office, the men would go in the Oval Office and the women would go over to the residence. But every last minute is not planned, so they could stop in the Oval Office.

Q Is Mrs. Ford going to have tea for her?

MR. NESSEN. I don't know exactly what the plans are over there.

Q Ron, can you clarify at this point who requested this meeting? Was it Governor Carter or did the President ask him to come by? Is it in some respects a courtesy call on the President-elect's part inasmuch as it is being described as a get-acquainted session?

MR. NESSEN. I don't know that I can describe it any more clearly than it has been, Dick. I think when they do speak after the meeting they will probably give you a little better idea of what was discussed.

Q Can you tell us who initiated the meeting?

MR. NESSEN. In the initial phone call after the election there was some discussion of getting together. It wasn't one or the other. It was mutually agreed, I would say.

Q Ron, haven't you said that this meeting grew out of a phone call from Governor Carter to the President asking clearance for Mr. Carter to meet with various Cabinet members?

MR. NESSEN. There were a series of phone calls and discussions, John. There was the phone call the morning after the election in which the subject of a meeting was discussed, but it was left simply that at some point there would be one. Then Governor Carter called to indicate that he was going to be in Washington the first days of this week. So it was decided then, through a series of other calls with the staff people, that this would be the right time to have a meeting.

Q Do you know whether this is the first of a series or will this be it?

MR. NESSEN. I don't know of any other plans now to have an additional meeting.

Q Is this thoroughly conventional and traditional for the two to meet like this?

MR. NESSEN. I don't know what the history of other transitions has been. This transition, I think everyone involved will tell you, has been smooth and the President has indicated he wants it to be that way. So this would be part of that smooth transition.

Q There hasn't been another one like this in the last 36 years anyway. I can remember that far back.

Q How about Johnson and Nixon? Johnson turned everything over to Nixon.

MR. NESSEN. I have one other announcement with respect to the Thanksgiving plans of the Fords. As I indicated previously off the record, but will now announce to you, the President and Mrs. Ford plan to go to Camp David for Thanksgiving. They will go up on Wednesday night and will stay pretty much through the weekend and at this point at least it looks like they will return on Sunday night.

The President will do some work there. He is likely to have a budget meeting on Friday. It is not 100 percent sure, but it is likely that he will; perhaps on Saturday also.

Q How many of the kids will be there?

MR. NESSEN. As to which members of the family will be there I don't have that ready to announce yet, Walt, but there will be family members there. Nor do I have at this point any details of church services on Sunday. If the Fords leave the grounds to go to church I will let you know when they make that decision.

Q Is there any church service up there that they would attend like on Thanksgiving Day? Is there any church up there they go to? Many churches have Thanksgiving services.

MR. NESSEN. I don't have any plans to tell you right now about either Thanksgiving Day or Sunday. My plan was, as usual, not to have any press office people up in Thurmont or in Camp David. If the Fords do plan to go outside the grounds, obviously we would make the proper arrangements. But since they don't at the moment, I didn't plan to have anybody up there and the office will be open here obviously.

Q Why is he going to Camp David?

MR. NESSEN. What do you mean?

Q A holiday, five days or solid four days, why isn't he just staying here at the White House?

MR. NESSEN. The Fords want to go to Camp David for Thanksgiving.

Q No particular reason?

MR. NESSEN. No.

Q Last Thanksgiving, as I recall, they were here.

MR. NESSEN. Yes.

Q Will there be any guests from outside of the family up there that you can anticipate?

MR. NESSEN. I don't anticipate any. If there are any, I will let you know when it is all arranged.

Q Ron, are you finished with your announcements?

MR. NESSEN. I am

Q You saw the President this morning?

MR. NESSEN. Yes.

Q Was there anything that you discussed with him that you have not told us and we have not asked you? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN. You haven't asked anything yet. We just started. No. I discussed with him mostly the plans for the Carter visit.

Q Do you have any comment on Mary Louise Smith's resignation?

MR. NESSEN. No, I don't.

Q Will you have some later, do you think?

MR. NESSEN. Perhaps.

Q Did you discuss this with the President? Did he mention anything about Mary Louise Smith?

MR. NESSEN. No, we didn't talk about that.

Q Is the President planning any conference or maybe he has already had one with four or five leading Republican candidates for that job of Mary Louise Smith?

MR. NESSEN. I don't have anything today on the Republican National Committee.

Q Does the President plan to play a role in the selection of the new chairman?

MR. NESSEN. At this point I am not prepared to discuss that, Ted.

Q You did not discuss that with him?

MR. NESSEN. No, I did not.

Q Ron, I was wondering, you say this is an experiment, why is this, I think if I am not mistaken, the first time you have ever allowed filming of a briefing? What is behind this, Ron?

MR. NESSEN. I guess I am getting mellow.

Q Ron, is there no other reason besides your alleged mellowness? Is this going into a documentary? Is Jody Powell in your office again? What is the reason, Ron? There must be some reason besides your being mellow.

MR. NESSEN. That is not enough of a reason?

Q No, Ron. I am terribly sorry. I am a little suspicious that there is more to it.

MR. NESSEN. ABC, among others, asked for an opportunity to take some film of a briefing, I suppose for a piece discussing press coverage at the White House. I saw no problem with doing it.

Q Why did you not have briefings last week and have vacant days?

MR. NESSEN. Mostly because I didn't have anything particularly to announce and got the impression from talking to reporters in the morning that there were no major issues and, as always, of course, myself and all the people who work for me were ready to answer questions, which we did.

Q The GAO has recommended that the Department of Defense and specifically the Navy not spend \$700 million on a new 8-inch gun. Has the President taken a stand on this and in view of what we have heard about good management all during the campaign, is he planning to become involved in this decision-making process?

MR. NESSEN. I understand that Secretary Rumsfeld is looking into it at the moment. I don't have anything to say beyond that.

Q Does that mean the President is not yet involved in the decision-making process?

MR. NESSEN. To my knowledge, he has not become involved in that at this time.

Q Can you tell me when the President last spoke to Governor Reagan?

MR. NESSEN. I don't know. I will have to check on that.

Q Do you know when he last saw Mary Louise Smith?

MR. NESSEN. I don't. I mentioned last week an occasion when they talked, about two or three or four days after the election. I know that Mary Louise Smith was at the meeting with the Republican Finance Committee people over here in the residence last week. But again, I would have to check the phone logs and so forth to tell you more precisely when they spoke last.

Q Was it November 16th?

MR. NESSEN. Was that the day that the Republican Finance Committee was here?

Q I don't know. It is the day a whole lot of Republicans were here, Tuesday night.

MR. NESSEN. We will check the date of that.

Q When did the President learn Mary Louise Smith was going to retire?

MR. NESSEN. Since I didn't talk to him about this this morning, I really don't have any answers to the Mary Louise Smith questions.

Q Can you go back in there and talk to him about this and give us some answers? We need this.

MR. NESSEN. I know you do, Sarah. I will endeavor to get some answers on the questions relating to Mary Louise Smith.

Q Has the President said anything, made any comment about Senator Helms' speech last week about reforming the Republican Party as a conservative party?

MR. NESSEN. I have not heard any comment on it, Phil.

Q Since election day the President spent an awful lot of time, 8 days, in California. The first weekend he would have been theoretically back at the White House when he went up to visit Rockefeller's estate, and now he is going away, as Dick points out, for four days to Camp David. He is spending very little time in the White House. Is that a pattern that he intends to establish? Will he be away from the White House most of the rest of the year?

MR. NESSEN. I wouldn't say it is a pattern or it has any special meaning to it. These are some things he wanted to do. He is obviously keeping up with his Presidential business and you see all of these budget meetings he has had and others.

Q I didn't mean to criticize.

MR. NESSEN. I didn't mean it that way.

Q The follow-up question: Is he uncomfortable here? Does he not like the White House any more now that he is leaving it? He has been gone a lot and he plans to be away a lot.

MR. NESSEN. Maybe he is trying to wean himself away. You already know about the remaining travel that is planned.

Q So there will be no more travel after Camp David, between Camp David and theoretically Vail?

MR. NESSEN. I can't swear he is not going to be gone, but I don't know of any other trips that are planned other than the Christmas holiday in Vail.

Q When does that begin, Ron?

MR. NESSEN. Slightly after the middle of December, about the 18th or 19th.

Q Ron, as long as we are asking you for Presidential reaction to various speeches -- if you have been asked this before when I wasn't here, I will withdraw it, of course. But Senator Ribicoff's speech on the Middle East in which he suggested that President-elect Carter might appoint Henry Kissinger as some kind of super Ambassador or roving Ambassador with special responsibilities for the Middle East, this, I believe, had a rather favorable reaction from President Sadat. Have you talked to the President about this? Does he know about it? Does he have any reaction to it? Does he think it would be a good idea for the new President to do this; anything for us on that?

MR. NESSEN. He does, of course, know about it. Jim, as I said before, it is going to be a policy not to comment on views expressed by Governor Carter or his people or to comment on ideas suggested to Governor Carter. It would just not be correct to express a view on that matter.

Q Ron, is the tax reform on the agenda of the meeting between Mr. Carter and the President?

MR. NESSEN. Since there is no agenda, it would be hard to say taxes are on the agenda.

Q On Mary Louise Smith, can you recall the last conversation, to your knowledge, that the President had with her and his views on whether or not she should resign, since this has been a possibility for two weeks at least?

MR. NESSEN. The two occasions that I know of, without really checking in depth, were a couple of days after the election and at the Republican Finance Committee meeting here last week, but as I told Sarah, there are obviously a good number of questions on Mary Louise Smith and I will try to get what answers I can for you.

Q For the moment, since it is a running story, can you recall what his feeling was at those two meetings, whether or not she should resign? Did he encourage her to stay?

MR. NESSEN: I just do not want to shoot from the hip on this, Cliff. I would rather have facts and not just offer opinions.

Q Has the President talked to Secretary Kissinger since he came back from Plains?

MR. NESSEN: They have talked, I am told.

Q Do you have any idea? Did the Secretary report back to him, give him a briefing on that?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check what the nature of the meeting was. I don't know myself what was discussed.

Q What is the President's reaction to the continuing Geneva conferences and which one of those four nationalist leaders does he feel would be the best for the Smith regime to negotiate with?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it is proper to offer that kind of opinion from here, Les. We have, as you know, tried to help in whatever way all the parties involved wanted us to, to deal with that, and they are talking to each other. I don't see what could be accomplished by supporting one side.

Q All right, fine. What I would like to follow up is, does the President still feel this is a breakthrough, or does he feel that it is bogged down, or what is his general feeling about the kind of drawn-out procedures of this Geneva conference?

MR. NESSEN: I just do not see what purpose is served by offering day-to-day assessments on it.

Q Have you given any assessments any other day on this issue?

MR. NESSEN: No. I do not intend to.

Q In other words, there is no comment at all on Geneva? Is that it, from the President?

MR. NESSEN: I would use my own choice of words rather than yours. I do not think it is useful to give a kind of daily temperature reading on the talks.

Q You haven't for quite a while.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Understandably the President took the loss of the election hard. How does he feel about this meeting with Governor Carter this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: He will tell you himself, I believe, when the meeting is over.

Q We need an early lead. (Laughter)

Q An advance text. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: As Howard says, and other people who have been around Washington for a while, this transition is going smoothly, in accordance with the President's orders to his staff to make it go smoothly. His own meeting with Governor Carter, so that he can share with Governor Carter the experience that no staff person has had, is, I think, part of the smooth transition that he intends to oversee.

Q Can you tell us how he personally feels about meeting with the man who defeated him, though?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will let him answer that question.

Q Ron, as the President has worked on the budget, does he bring in lesser officials or bigger officials from the department to talk to him about specific things?

MR. NESSEN: The people from the departments have already had their meetings with OMB to identify the issues and the decisions that have to be made by the President. The stage that the budget is in now is that the OMB brings, agency by agency and department by department, the budget, with the decisions that need to be made. The President meets with people from the OMB and from the White House staff who deal in those areas.

Once the President makes these tentative decisions, then the next step is the appeals process in which people from the agencies and departments, after they have been told what tentative decisions the President has made, if they disagree with him they have an opportunity to come in and make their arguments. But at this particular stage in the process he does not meet with people from the agencies and departments.

Q Are any of the Carter people involved anywhere along the line in the budget talks?

MR. NESSEN: As I indicated to you last week, the Carter people, as I understand it, are working on a kind of parallel document in conjunction with the Congressional Budget Committee. The President has also made clear that the Carter people should be provided with all of the information they need or want so that they can go ahead and do this. But since the President is the President, with full responsibility until January 20th, it was felt not proper to have the Carter people actually take part in the budget-making process.

Q Ron, did the President talk to Rockefeller about Rockefeller's future?

MR. NESSEN: Sarah, it was really a private weekend. As you know, I didn't go on the trip, so I am not sure what they talked about.

Q Is this the first time the President-elect has been privileged to stay in Blair House during his visit to Washington?

MR. NESSEN: In my memory, it is, Howard.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:05 P.M. EST)

AT 12:30 P.M. EST

MR. NESSEN: I was not prepared with answers to the Mary Louise Smith questions, mostly because her resignation was announced after the briefing started.

In answer to the questions as I remember them: Did the President know she was going to resign? Yes. She asked for a meeting with the President last Thursday, came in toward the late afternoon and notified the President that she had decided to resign. As I understand it, the wire services say she has agreed to stay on until the middle of January, at which time the Republican National Committee will meet and pick her successor.

Q Is that at the President's urging, that she agreed to stay on through mid-January?

MR. NESSEN: Basically, Walt, she was coming here to notify him of her decisions. That was the way the meeting went.

As far as the President's views on Mary Louise Smith's service, he believes she did an excellent job as chairman of the party. He feels that she was an outstanding chairman. He feels gratitude toward her because she did accept this job at his request and urging, and he believes that she carried out the job in a dedicated and skillful way.

As for the future and what role or views the President may have on a successor, I just am today not prepared to say anything on those subjects.

Q Has he worked toward a successor, toward the selection of a successor?

MR. NESSEN: I just really am not going to be able to say anything.

Q Do you know if he and Governor Rockefeller discussed this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Tom. I really don't.

Q Has he had any meetings with any other Republican Senators on this, or Republican leaders on this?

MR. NESSEN: President Ford? He has not, Sarah.

Q Do you know whether he has talked to Governor Connally since Thursday afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: I do not know.

Q Were you able to find out about Reagan?

MR. ROBERTS: For when?

Q Ever since Thursday.

MR. ROBERTS: Last Thursday?

Q Ever since Mary Louise Smith told him she was leaving.

MR. NESSEN: We will check.

Q Was that meeting last Thursday on the public schedule?

MR. NESSEN: No, it was not on the public schedule.

Q For my information, can you tell me if, after the President goes out of office, he is still considered the titular head of the Republican Party?

MR. NESSEN: He considers himself -- I don't think titular head is an official job -- but he certainly considers himself to be the head of the Republican Party.

Q After he leaves office?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q In her resignation statement, Mary Louise Smith said she hopes that the party will not go to either fringe for a new chairman. Does the President share that opinion or that view?

MR. NESSEN: Ted, I think the President is going to have something to say about this, but I just do not have anything today to tell you, either about his role or his views on who the new choice should be.

Q Do you expect a press conference with the President this week?

MR. NESSEN. I do not. I don't have any plans for one.

Q When, then, will he have something to say on this?

MR. NESSEN. I can't give you a timetable when he will say something about that.

Q Ron, if he is going to be the leader of the Republican Party he is almost going to have to say he is going to be chairman, isn't he?

MR. NESSEN. Today, Sarah, I don't have anything to enlighten you in terms of who he would favor if he wants to make a choice or what role at all he will play in the selection.

Q Is he going to interview people? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN. The President has not talked to either Connally or Reagan since Mary Louise indicated her decision to resign.

Q Are you suggesting that the President will have no more press conferences?

MR. NESSEN. I am not suggesting that, Les, no. I just say I don't have any plans for one this week.

THE PRESS. Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:34 P.M. EST)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 5:00 P.M. EST

NOVEMBER 22, 1976

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President and President-elect Carter met alone from the time that they first went into the Oval Office and after the pool photograph was over, until 4:25, at which time they asked that they be joined by Dick Cheney, Jack Marsh and Jack Watson. Those three gentlemen met with them for 15 minutes, from 4:25 to 4:40, at which time they left, and the President and President-elect met alone again for another four or five minutes, I would say, until the time that you saw them walk out the door of the Oval Office and walk down the walkway.

Just to switch over to the meeting between Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Carter, as you saw after the greeting at the South Diplomatic Entrance, Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Carter went into the ground floor of the White House, and before going upstairs Mrs. Ford showed Mrs. Carter several of the rooms on the ground floor, including the room where there is an exhibit of china used by various First Families.

They then took the elevator up to the second floor where they had tea in the Yellow Oval Room. During the tea, various members of the household staff came into the room and were introduced by Mrs. Ford to Mrs. Carter.

At the same time, Mrs. Ford presented to Mrs. Carter some albums of color photos. These albums of color photos depict the furnishings and floor plans, and so forth, of all the rooms in the White House from the ground floor up through the state floor, the second floor living quarters, and the third floor living quarters.

Q You say there are photos of the floor plan?

MR. NESSEN: Color photos, and what each of the walls look like in each of the rooms, and a floor plan of each.

While there on the second floor, Mrs. Ford also showed Mrs. Carter some of the rooms, including the Lincoln bedroom and the Queen's room.

As you know, Mrs. Carter left a bit before Governor Carter because she was going to the airport to catch a plane to go back to Georgia.

I would say that you could describe the meeting between Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Carter as a friendly visit. I don't know if I made it clear, but Mrs. Carter was given the color photo albums to take with her so that she could study them and think about any changes she might want to make in the White House.

Q There is a station wagon from an Atlanta decorating firm parked outside. Were any furnishings brought in?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, is he a decorator who has had a long-time contract here?

MR. NESSEN: Sheila, you had better come up here. I am getting in over my head.

Q This fellow Brown from Atlanta, isn't he a long-time contractor with the White House?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: I believe so.

Q He has been here before?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: That is right.

MR. NESSEN: Sarah says the gentleman who is the decorator, or identified as a decorator, is someone who has worked before at the White House.

Q Ron, can you tell us anything about what the President and President-elect discussed, the subject matter?

MR. NESSEN: Beyond what they said themselves outside, Phil, I think the meeting is going to have to remain private.

Q Are they going to meet again?

MR. NESSEN: At the moment there are no plans for a further meeting.

Q Ron, they seemed to go into the other office. Did they go into both the other offices? We could see through the window. They vanished back there.

MR. NESSEN: I will check with Terry to see whether they went into the other office.

Q Were you able to ascertain if this was the first such meeting between the President and President-elect since Williamsburg?

MR. NESSEN: They have not met since they met at Williamsburg on the third debate.

Q I didn't mean between these two persons, but between the President, a President and a President-elect.

MR. NESSEN. I have not done that historic research. I am sorry, Ted.

Q Ron, had either one of the Carters been at the White House before?

MR. NESSEN. Shiela, do you know if the Carters have been here before? We will have to look into that, Maggie. I don't know.

Q Ron, the pool reporters gave some fragments of conversation in which apparently the President was recommending that the President-elect first see the NATO ministers and heads of government before going into an international economic meeting. Can you clarify whether that was what he was saying because we only got a fragment of it?

MR. NESSEN. I couldn't get close enough. All the poolers were in the way, Bill. I think it would be fair to say that certainly a portion of the meeting was taken up with a discussion of foreign policy. But I don't want to go into any more detail than that.

Q Ron, can you tell us about some plans that your Administration will have some sort of economic meeting early next year?

MR. NESSEN. I don't know anything beyond what was said at the time of the Puerto Rico meeting, Sarah, which is that the leaders of the industrial nations had rough plans to meet on a periodic basis and it had turned out to be in about 6- or 7-month intervals.

Q Will there be an early transcript of the remarks outside?

MR. NESSEN. We will get the Reynolds folks to work on it as quickly as possible. Do you want to give a time estimate, Bill?

MR. ROBERTS. I should think we could have it in half an hour.

Q Has the pool report appeared yet?

MR. NESSEN. What pool report? You mean the transcript of the verbal pool report?

Yes.

Q Ron, did Mr. Ford plan to give him any advice?

MR. NESSEN. Sarah, I am not going to talk about what was said at the private meeting other than what the two chose to say themselves when they came out.

Q If the President made some policy about arms or initiative in SALT, or economic matters between now and January, will he expect Mr. Carter to remain silent on the issue?

MR. NESSEN: I think you can see yourself realistically that the SALT talks, the technical level talks at Geneva have recessed pending the new Administration taking office and the other part of it really is also hypothetical.

Q Ron, can you give us any discussion between Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Carter, dialogue?

MR. NESSEN: Again, the two of them were there alone except for the occasions when the staff came in to be introduced. Perhaps Sheila could give you some more detail.

MRS. WEIDENFELD: Mrs. Ford said Mrs. Carter was very curious, had a number of questions. When I asked Mrs. Ford about that, she said Mrs. Carter was very curious, had a number of questions to ask ranging from entertainment at the White House, both on an official and unofficial basis, the East Wing staff, how it was set up. They had discussed different rooms in the House. As Ron pointed out, Mrs. Ford presented her with an album of pictures and layouts of all four floors in the White House. That would be the ground floor, the State floor, the Residence, which is the second and third floors. So she thumbed through that quickly and glanced at it and had a few questions. Mrs. Ford said if there are any other questions, call. She asked about uses of different kinds of rooms, such as the Yellow Oval Room, the room they were in. It was really a very friendly, nice conversation.

Q Did they walk into any other room except the oval room? Did they go anyplace else?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: They went into the Lincoln bedroom and the Queen's bedroom.

Q Did they go to the private quarters?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: No, they did not.

Q What kind of questions did Mrs. Carter ask?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: Such questions as did Mrs. Ford entertain much in the Yellow Oval Room and Mrs. Ford answered that saying only officially because it was too formal, that kind of conversation, that kind of question.

Q Were there any personal questions asked about how to deal with living in the White House?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: Not really.

Q Sheila, the staff who were introduced by Mrs. Ford to Mrs. Carter, are they more or less career, permanent?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: Yes, they are the chef, maitre d', people who are serving, who are the household staff.

Q Chef?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: The chef was downstairs.

Q How many people were introduced?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: I would say there were four or five.

Q Did Mrs. Carter make any statements about her opinion of the current style of decorating?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: No. She wants to study the book first.

Q Do you have any comments?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: No. I think she is going to go through. Then the questions will come.

Q Did Mrs. Ford have any specific advice?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: I asked her that question. She said she really didn't need any advice. She has been in a similar position as wife of a Governor.

Q Who said that?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: Mrs. Ford.

Q Said that to you?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: Said that to me when I asked her about any specific advice. She has been in a position that is somewhat comparable as the wife of a Governor, but Mrs. Ford told Mrs. Carter not to hesitate to call if there are any questions that come to mind.

Q Did they go into any rooms on the third floor?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: No, they did not. That is all in the book.

Q Did they talk any about the cost of upkeep, the budget?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: No. Just basically the kind of entertaining, square versus round tables.

Q What was the verdict?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: Mrs. Ford prefers the round tables. Mrs. Carter will have to make that determination.

Q Did they say anything about inauguration?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: No.

Q Were the press secretaries with them?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: No. I was with the press secretary.

Q What did you talk about? Did you have any advice for the press secretaries?

Q Ron, could you explain why it is that the Carters were not invited to dinner? Was there some problem they had to go, she had to go back early? What was the reason?

MR. NESSEN. Because Mrs. Carter has to be in Georgia. She had to leave early to catch her plane to Georgia. She has a commitment.

Q That is the reason?

MRS. WEIDENFELD: That is right. I know she had that commitment.

Q Ron, was there an agreement between the President and the President-elect not to give a readout? Is that something they usually agreed was necessary?

MR. NESSEN: No. I think they each decided what they were going to say.

Q Ron, you say that they met alone. From the time the photo session ended until 4:25, what time --

MR. NESSEN. I would roughly say probably -- and we can get this from Nell's log -- but just estimating, I would say probably from about a quarter of four until 4:25. That is a guess.

I think we are going to put a lid on for the day. I appreciate your coping with our unusually crowded schedule today.

END

(AT 5:10 P.M. EST)