

This Copy For \_\_\_\_\_

N E W S    C O N F E R E N C E

#611

---

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:35 A.M. EST

JANUARY 3, 1977

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: I thought maybe today I would wish you a happy new year and also give you a little thought about some of the things that are coming along here in the next 18 days.

First of all, you notice that we inadvertently, through a clerical error, left off the name of Arthur Fiedler from the list of Medal of Freedom winners. That is not a late decision or an addition to the list; it was something that should have been on it, was on the original list, and got left off because of a clerical error.

The other thing is, there is one addition to the President's schedule today. Secretary Coleman is coming in at 11:30 to talk about a number of things involving the Transportation Department, including giving the President a short report on some of the oil spills.

Q Are we talking to him afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: There is no plan to do it here. I think he can be contacted at his department.

Q Excuse me. Is that at his request or at the President's?

MR. NESSEN: His request.

Q Does he have any new ideas?

MR. NESSEN: In no particular order, the tax cut proposal which the President has promised possibly will go up to Congress later this week. The question of what to do about the continuing --

Q Could you pause between these things? For example, in this case you say "possibly will go up to Congress later this week." I thought we had been hearing that it would be, in effect, waiting on their desks.

MR. NESSEN: When they go to work, yes, but it will take a few days for them to get to work.

Q You are leaving open the possibility it won't even go this week; is that right?

MR. NESSEN: Possibly, yes.

MORE

#611

Q What is it going to be?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to tell you that today.

Q Can you give us a general idea?

MR. NESSEN: I would rather not, Fran. I would rather just wait until it goes and then you can see it in its entirety.

Q I tried to get into a pause there because I wondered if Mr. Coleman had any ideas of chemical clean-up that we hadn't heard about, or licensing of pilots that we haven't heard about.

MR. NESSEN: I will tell you frankly, obviously I am not in that meeting and I didn't have any chance to talk to him before the meeting. I think the best thing to do is wait until after the meeting and then contact him at his department.

Q Ron, does the delay in sending the tax cut proposal up suggest that it still is not quite put together?

MR. NESSEN: No. The major decisions are made. It is just a question of drafting the letter, and so forth. So we have that.

Then the question of what to do with the remaining controls on gasoline. Quite possibly there will be a proposal in that area within a few days.

Q Is this a pause, because there is a question on this, too. It takes two weeks for Congress to make up its mind --

MR. NESSEN: Fifteen days.

Q Is this 15 working days?

MR. NESSEN: Fifteen calendar days.

Q Carlson said last week he thought it might be Tuesday.

MR. NESSEN: That is a real possibility, Howard. I just don't want to absolutely commit to it, but I think it is a strong possibility.

Q Is this like the other one, just a matter of writing a letter? It is all decided?

MR. NESSEN: The President's decision on that has been made; right.

Q He has already made up his mind what he is going to do?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q But yet he is not going to do it right away?

MR. NESSEN: No. He is going to do it, I said, in the next few days, Sarah. Again, that has to be drafted and transmitted. It will be. And let me say that --

Q It won't be a matter of waiting until the last day?

MR. NESSEN: No. It is going to be done. Let me say in that case -- well, the decision has been made. I don't think I will say any more about that.

Q By saying the decision has been made, you are saying that he has decided to do that; is that right?

MR. NESSEN: But what I was going to go on to say was to caution you against thinking that the decision is a very simple one. It is somewhat complex. I think really you will just have to wait and see the form it is in when it is announced, which should be shortly.

Q You don't mean to suggest we would be wrong if we had been reporting that he will, in fact, propose a lifting of the controls?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't say you would be wrong, but you would be incomplete.

Q Ron, is it the President's desire to see this thing brought to a conclusion while he is still in office?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. On what, gasoline?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean. You mean bring the controls to a conclusion?

Q Either lift controls or have Congress reject his proposal.

MR. NESSEN: This is one of the items that he intends to deal with before he leaves office, because he believes in what he is going to propose.

Q My point is, if we are talking about 15 calendar days, he has to do something by Wednesday.

MR. NESSEN: I thought I said in the next few days.

Q Next few or next two?

MR. NESSEN: Few days.

Moving right along, amnesty. As the President said out in Vail, he would have a response to Mrs. Hart's request that this be looked at again in about a week, so in about a week I think will mean sometime this week, sometime later this week. What form his response will take I cannot tell you at the moment.

Q The week was up yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: In about a week.

Q Ron, the President said several times that he is looking into it; the process had begun. What is he doing to look into the issue of amnesty?

MR. NESSEN: I think what he told some people at Vail was that he had asked the Justice Department to pull together some of the factual material and the number of people involved and how many had taken advantage of his amnesty program, and so forth. He will then examine the figures and think about the matter and make a decision.

Q You might have been asked this at Vail, but inasmuch as he is reconsidering the Vietnam question, is he also including anybody else in this, like some of the Watergate figures who have asked for pardons, and this sort of thing?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are getting a little far now from what actually happened. Mrs. Hart asked that, and the President said he would look into it, which he is doing. He is looking into it.

Q Which brings up the question of pardon. I am just asking --

MR. NESSEN: I don't see how it does bring that question up.

Q Will the President pardon the Watergate figures before he leaves office?

MR. NESSEN: The answer there is the same as it has been every day since I have been asked that question. Anybody interested in a pardon should file a pardon request in the routine way with the pardon attorney at the Justice Department. That is today's answer, yesterday's answer, last month's and last year's answer.

Q I have been out of pocket, so I could have missed this.

MR. NESSEN: You have to ask the Justice Department pardon attorney whether any were filed.

Q Why can't we ask you?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any that are over here. You will have to ask the pardon attorney.

Q This is usually done. I asked you this the first part of December. It is usually done the first part of December and by the Justice Department sending a list to the White House.

MR. NESSEN: That is right. Wasn't that list published; 96 names, something like that?

Q There is another list?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any other list.

Q There are supposed to be.

MR. NESSEN: If there is, I haven't heard of it.

Q When you talked with the President this morning on this business of amnesty, was there any comment about Mrs. Ford's remarks last night?

MR. NESSEN: No, there wasn't.

Q Is the President aware of what Mrs. Ford said to the press on Air Force One?

MR. NESSEN: I think so.

Q Did they plan this between the two of them before?

MR. NESSEN: As the President has said many times, it is very hard to. Mrs. Ford speaks for herself.

Q This time she sort of spoke for him, too, didn't she?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know yet. We will find out when the President makes his decision.

Moving right along, the pay raise for Federal, Congressional and Judicial figures: If you recall the background on this, it was Pete Peterson's report that arrived here I guess about three weeks ago, roughly. I expect that the President's decisions on this question will be reflected in his budget, which is due out, I think, roughly the 17th of January. I am not ruling out the possibility that the President would issue a separate statement spelling out what his decisions are and why. I don't rule that out, but I would anticipate rather that the decision on pay would be embodied in the budget.

The process, just to recall it for you a moment, is that Congress then has 30 days in which to veto the pay proposals. If Congress does not act in 30 days, then whatever pay proposals the President will make in the budget will take effect, too late for us.

Q Do both houses have to act on this?

MR. NESSEN: One house can veto it.

Q Does that mean, Ron, that Mr. Ford has made a decision on the pay raises already as to whether or not he will give them or not?

MR. NESSEN: I lost track of where that one stands. The last time I attended a meeting on the subject he had not made a decision, but that was some time ago. But due to the fact that the budget has gone to the printer and the proofs are beginning to come back, let me check and see if all the decisions have been made.

Q That question has been kicked around in the last few days in Vail, too, because he said when he was last asked about it that he had not made a decision and clearly left open the possibility when asked that he might let Carter make the decision on this. That was after you came back, I think.

MR. NESSEN: Let me check. This is my understanding of where it stands, that it will be in the budget. But let me find out.

Q Which would mean, in fact, he had made a decision?

MR. NESSEN: Of course, the decision may be not to do anything which would also be embodied in the budget.

Q Excuse me, but that is a decision.

MR. NESSEN: Of course. I say, the decision may be not to do anything about federal pay and to leave it for Carter.

Q Except -- excuse me. I am sorry. I thought he had a deadline to do it. Never mind.

MR. NESSEN: You include in the budget everybody's salary at the same level it is now, then that is a decision, Ted. John is going to double check for you.

Q Ron, can't you give us that budget before the 17th? That is going to be an awful jam of burdens on the people who have to cover the budget.

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is the budget submission date is set by Congress.

Q Within a timeframe, I think.

Q Within 15 days after Congress convenes.

MR. NESSEN: That would be the release date. So, obviously, we have the normal procedure of getting it several days in advance, briefings, that kind of thing.

Q You will do that?

MR. NESSEN: Sure. John is checking on the pay raise question.

Statehood for Puerto Rico: The Interior Department, the people over there are, I understand, working on legislation. It is quite a complicated subject and it may be that the legislation will not be completed in time for this Administration to submit it to Congress.

Q What is going to happen then?

MR. NESSEN: Then it would be up to the next administration to submit it to Congress.

Q Could you elaborate a little bit on just why the President decided to do this?

MR. NESSEN: First of all, as you know, it is a plank of the Republican Platform. So, his party committed itself last summer to this. It is something that he personally believes in and wanted to make that clear that it is his personal belief that people of Puerto Rico and the Congress ought to begin the process now of moving.

Q Ron, if he was serious about advocating this, should he not have checked with the Interior Department people earlier and get moving because if it is not ready for submission while he is in office we know that it will not

be ready for submission when Governor Carter becomes President.

MR. NESSEN: Not on the date.

Q Therefore, it is meaningless.

MR. NESSEN: I don't agree with you that it is meaningless, Ted. This is, as I say, something the President personally believes in as a proper course.

It is something that the Republican Party through its platform went on record favoring last summer and he is putting it out as an item for the public agenda to be considered.

Q Except he is not putting it on the public agenda because his Administration will not -- I gather you are telling us -- submit legislation on this.

MR. NESSEN: There is a question of whether, I think, the legislation can be completed in time. But it is a matter of the public agenda because it is something the President has brought up and presented as a matter for public discussion.

Q Ron, excuse me. Could we pursue this?

Q When did the President realize it would not be, could not be submitted? I take it he did not realize that when you made the announcement in Vail.

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure whether he did or not, Allan.

Q Could we pursue the timing of this a little further?

We were told in Vail that it would be submitted before he left office. He said he would do that.

MR. NESSEN: If the legislation can be completed, it will be.

Q Obviously, if it can't be, then it may not be submitted at all. I mean, I don't mean to belabor this question. But you seem to be suggesting that, in fact, this whole step may not be taken after all, if I understand you correctly.

MR. NESSEN: Dick, the facts are fairly simple. The President has come out and said publicly that he believes in statehood for Puerto Rico. The Interior Department and the gentleman over there who you may want to talk to about the details, named Mr. Austin --

Q Do you have a number for him?

MR. NESSEN: The legislation is being drafted. If it can be completed in time, it will be submitted. But in any case, it has been presented as a matter for public discussion and consideration.

Q Ron, on the day the President made his public statement did he know then that it was very complicated and they might not be able to get it out before he leaves office?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Ted.

Q Could I try it a different way?

MR. CARLSON: The statement we issued said the President proposes the enactment of legislation. It doesn't say the President proposes legislation.

Q I am sorry. Didn't the statement say he would propose -- "I will propose legislation to the 95th Congress"? That is, I think, quite accurately what it said.

Q Ron, when did he ask the Interior Department to start drafting legislation?

MR. NESSEN: We will have to check the timetable for you. I don't know.

Q That could explain a lot of things.

Q Was it a gesture or a serious proposal?

MR. NESSEN: Serious proposal.

Q Was this occasioned because of some briefing he had had with the Department of Defense people about a very serious situation in Puerto Rico?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge, Sarah. As I said, it was in the Republican Platform last summer. So, his party went on record last summer as favoring statehood for Puerto Rico. It is, as I say, a matter of personal conviction with him and to my knowledge that was the primary spark for the recommendation was his personal conviction that that was the proper relationship.

Q It is four months since the Republican Convention.

Q Would you please check for us to see if there was an intelligence report that he received shortly before he did this?

MR. NESSEN: On the subject of?

Q Of Puerto Rico and security.

Q Castro of Cuba.

MR. NESSEN: I will check that.

Q Did he ever mention this during the campaign?

MR. NESSEN: I would have to check the record and find out.

Q He had not talked with the governor, the new governor of Puerto Rico before he did this?

MR. NESSEN: As I understand it, the new governor is the leader of the Statehood Party, if I am not mistaken.

Q That is not my question. Before he did this, had he discussed this with the new governor?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Sarah.

Q Can you find out for us?

Q How is the President reacting to the considerable criticism that has come out from Puerto Rico and Congress and other sources in regard to statehood at this point?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware of the considerable criticism, Fran. As I said, it is a matter of personal conviction, a matter that is a plank of the Republican Platform. He believes in it. And obviously, there are a number of steps which I think John went over with you last week in Vail that must precede statehood, including an expression of opinion by Congress and by the people of Puerto Rico.

So, that is where the decision will be made, rather than -- as I say, I am unaware of the considerable criticism. But if there is any, if there is that much criticism, this proposal I think sets in motion the process that the President believes in.

Q Ron, has the President received any comment from the government of Puerto Rico from the new governor?

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

Q Ron, look, I don't want to beat this thing to death. But are you now saying, in fact, the President may not submit this legislation after all?

MR. NESSEN: I say that the legislation is complex, Dick.

Q We know that. He knew that when he issued his statement. Obviously, that possibility now exists and it did not exist --

MR. NESSEN: The President said in his statement last week, "I will recommend to the 95th Congress the enactment of legislation providing for the admission of Puerto Rico as a State of the Union."

To me that means that in his State of the Union speech or in some other form, he will recommend that Congress enact legislation to provide that Puerto Rico be admitted to the Union.

Whether the legal document is ready to hand over to the Interior Committee on January 20th, I don't know. But the President will stand there or send in writing a recommendation that Congress pass such legislation.

Q Is that the date of the State of the Union?

MR. NESSEN: The State of the Union -- FOR GUIDANCE -- .  
I would look for around the 12th.

Q Ron, if he believes as strongly in it, why did he wait until last week to make a statement about it?

MR. NESSEN: Again, he ran on the Republican Platform. This was a plank of the Republican Platform. This was the time when this came up for proposal and he has made it.

Q Ron, will he deliver the State of the Union message personally?

MR. NESSEN: I anticipate he will.

Q Also, in the Republican Platform, as you know, there is very strong support of Israel and when Dr. Joseph Churba, Chief of the Air Force's Middle Eastern Intelligence criticized General George Brown's statement on Israel, his special security clearance was removed and he was urged to resign which he did.

My question is this: Since the Vice President-Elect has publicly stated that General Brown isn't fit to be a sewer commissioner, will the President help ease the transition by urging General Brown to accept retirement?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with the case, Les.

Q You are not familiar with General Brown's case? Both times he has issued statements and has been reprimanded. Mondale, Senator Mondale has said that he is not fit to be a sewer commissioner.

This man who was in the Department of Defense was edged out. I am wondering if the President is suggesting he could ease the transition by asking General Brown to retire?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President's views of General Brown have been stated publicly a number of times.

Q Yes, but that was before Senator Mondale termed him not fit to be a sewer commissioner. I just wonder, has the President given any thought to General Brown, asking him to leave with him or not?

MR. NESSEN: I think his views of General Brown have been stated publicly a number of times.

Q Could I ask you a question on another subject?

Q On Puerto Rico, before we change the subject, in view of the fact the President has these strong convictions and he wants to discuss it publicly, is there any special reason why his personal representative to the inauguration yesterday made no mention of it in her text, in the message she brought from President Ford?

MR. NESSEN: I don't attach any special significance to that. The President clearly last week, in his statement issued at Vail, indicated his views of this and his promise to recommend that Congress begin this process. So I don't know what you are suggesting in Mrs. Hill's speech.

Q At the inauguration of the Governor or the President of the territory

MR. NESSEN: The Governor of the Commonwealth.

Q It would be an auspicious occasion, or at least one in which it would be very appropriate at least to make mention of statehood.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what your question suggests.

Q I am not suggesting anything. I am asking is there any special reason why there was no mention in the President's message of statehood?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of a special reason, no.

Q Ron, has the President been in touch with any of the congressional leaders about initiating an enabling act on this statehood question?

MR. CARLSON: Jim Cannon, in behalf of the President, has contacted a couple dozen leaders about the legislation.

Q Do we know who will introduce the enabling act?

MR. CARLSON: I don't believe so.

Q The Interior Department, are they drawing up draft legislation or simply a set of guidelines on which they hope Congress eventually will act?

MR. CARLSON: Interior, since they deal with territories and so forth, has the most expertise, so they are drafting legislation in conjunction with the White House and then the White House will transmit it to Congress.

Q It will be draft legislation and not simply guidelines?

MR. CARLSON: It will be legislation. We hope to complete it by the 20th.

Q Ron, there has been talk about the Soviets gaining military superiority over the U.S. or may be gaining it in the future. Now Major General Keegan, retiring Air Force Chief of Intelligence, says they already have superiority and they had it four years ago. I wondered what the President's view is of the balance between the two superpowers.

MR. NESSEN: I think both Don Rumsfeld and George Bush answered questions extensively on that subject yesterday I don't have anything to add to what they said.

Q You couldn't tell what George Bush was talking about. He didn't say one thing or the other.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to add to what they said on TV.

Q Ron, one final question on Puerto Rico. I am sorry. This story, if I read correctly what you are saying, that whole story may be right now out the window. Carter has said that he disagreed with the President on this question. I don't want to misrepresent what you are saying here, but obviously you are leaving open the possibility and clearly leaving it open that you will not have this ready in time. You have given us no indication why it won't be ready in time if the President felt so strongly about this, why he chose to wait so late in this Administration to do it. He explained that he was doing it then because it wouldn't raise questions about his motives, his political motives, but certainly some of the legislation could, the drafting process could have been started earlier.

Is the President going to ask Carter, for example, to submit the legislation if it is not done in time?

MR. NESSEN: Let me see if I can clarify this, Dick. Certainly nothing that was in the President's statement last week, issued at Vail, has changed a whit, nor has anything to my knowledge really been added today at this briefing beyond what John and others told you last week at the time this was announced.

It seems to me the operative sentence in the President's statement last week is, "I will recommend to the 95th Congress the enactment of legislation providing for the admission of Puerto Rico as a State of the Union." The President said that last week. I will reiterate it today and he will do that before January 20th.

What I tried to say, Dick, is whether the legal document, the draft legislation, is finished down to the last period and comma on January 20th, I don't know right now. We hope so. But regardless of whether it is or not, that operative sentence in the President's statement remains. It is his position. That is what he will recommend to Congress and that is what he believes Congress should do. If the Interior Department and the White House have finished drafting the particular piece of paper that would carry this out, it would be introduced, but I am not sure that this is a major factor.

Q If it is not --

MR. NESSEN: Then the President will still recommend that Congress enact legislation to admit Puerto Rico to the Union. No change.

Q Does the President hope the new Secretary of the Interior will direct his solicitor's office to draft the legislation?

MR. NESSEN: Legislation, Phil, as you know, can be introduced by any Member of Congress. I would only as a guess say there are Members of Congress who favor statehood for Puerto Rico and they could introduce the legislation.

Q Will the President ask some Member of Congress to have hearings on this right away?

MR. NESSEN: If the legislation --

Q He can do that. He doesn't have to draft legislation. He knows the legislation is coming. They can go ahead and start having hearings on it anyway if the President wants to push this.

MR. NESSEN: I know no reason not to, Sarah. The President wouldn't tell Congress what kind of timetable.

Q Is he conferring with any particular Member of the House?

MR. NESSEN: I think John said Jim Cannon has conferred with several Members of Congress on this proposal.

Q Tell us some leading person that the President has talked about this with.

MR. NESSEN: We can get that.

Q Can you answer the second part of my question, which is, if in fact the legislation is not ready by the 20th, will the President ask Carter to submit this?

MR. NESSEN: My consensus of how the thing works is -- not how the thing works--that the President will stand up there in front of Congress as he stood up in front of the public and say, "I think Congress ought to pass legislation. I can recommend they pass legislation to put Puerto Rico in the Union." If the legislation is ready by the 20th, fine; it will be introduced. If it is not ready by the 20th, then it can be introduced by a Member on the 21st, 27th, 1st of February, or whatever.

Q Ron, except perhaps someone trained as a lawyer, anybody else would read that as implying he is going to introduce legislation.

MR. NESSEN: And will.

Q Does he, in fact, intend to introduce legislation when, since he made the announcement, he has learned it is more difficult than he anticipated? Is that wrong?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are arguing about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.

Q Let's leave theology out of this one.

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry. I didn't mean to get into your business, Les. (Laughter)

Q Why can't you arrange to have a briefing for us by the Interior Department men?

MR. NESSEN: I think John told the folks at Vail last week and Larry told the people who called here last week, Mr. Austin at the Interior Department is the expert on this subject and is dealing with the legislation. My problem is that I haven't said anything here today that John didn't say last week at Vail. Nothing has changed. The statement remains the same. The intention remains the same. I don't quite get the drift of what all the questions are about.

Q Why is it so difficult?

MR. NESSEN: It is not difficult for me.

Q Ron, what is the difficulty?

Q Is he going to include this line definitely in the State of the Union message? That is what you seem to be saying to us here.

Q Didn't you say he would?

MR. NESSEN: I said in the State of the Union or in some form he will let Congress know what he said in the public statement.

Q What is the difficulty with the drafting of this legislation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. You will have to ask Mr. Austin. I don't know.

Q Did the Puerto Rican Government ask the President not to make any mention of statehood in his message?

MR. NESSEN: In Carla's statement yesterday?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of. No.

Q Ron, did the President, while he was at Vail, talk to any Texas oil men about offshore oil deposits off Puerto Rico?

MR. NESSEN: I wondered how long it would take us to get to that. If anybody has done any research on this, you know that under the present commonwealth status, if there were any oil off of Puerto Rico -- I don't have the vaguest notion whether there is or not -- it would be far more advantageous to the Federal Government than it would be under statehood status.

I did check up on that this morning because I had some rumblings like that over the weekend. But I am told that if there is any oil, and I don't know if there is or not, the Federal Government would be better off under the current status rather than changing it to statehood.

Q You didn't answer my question. Did the President talk with any Texas oil men while he was at Vail about this?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q Congressman Andrew Young --

MR. NESSEN: Are we finished with Puerto Rico?

Q -- strongly criticized the statement that Field Marshal Amin is a racist murderer, which as you recall was made by President Ford's appointed Ambassador to the United Nations and who is now the junior Senator from New York. Does the President have no comment on this denunciation of his appointed Ambassador?

MR. NESSEN: The question was, does the President have no comment?

Q I just wondered. Does the President have a comment or is he going to just have no comment whatsoever on the fact that his own Ambassador has been denounced?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Ron, is the President going to meet this week again with Connally, Reagan and Rockefeller?

MR. NESSEN: He will. I don't have the exact date. I saw the schedule proposal come through.

Q When do you think it is going to be? Isn't it supposed to be tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: That soon? Later in the week.

Q Can we say later this week?

Q Does the President have a recommendation now for Chairman of the Republican National Committee?

MR. NESSEN: No, not to make today.

Q They meet on the 6th, don't they, the Executive Committee?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is about the 13th or 14th, isn't it?

Q Anyway, has he decided whom he is going to back?

MR. NESSEN: He does not have a single name.

Q Will we get a name from him?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to speculate on what may happen in the future.

Q Ron, seriously, do you have any information yet on the pay raises?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean "seriously"? I thought it was all serious.

What did you find out about pay raises, John? Can they make them retroactive 28 months?

MR. CARLSON: The President has not made a final decision on the pay raise.

Q I thought you said the budget had already gone to the printer.

MR. CARLSON: There are still portions of the budget that are not completed.

Q That would be in every department, thought, wouldn't it?

MR. CARLSON: Not the separate section that goes in.

Q Ron, I have a housekeeping question, if that is in order. The President, I gather, still of course is in command of all the Secret Service; is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: Let me reserve judgment on that answer until I hear Question No. 2. (Laughter)

Q Ron, there was yesterday a prank played on the press in Plains where they had gotten 70 miles an hour out to the airport.

MR. NESSEN: A prank?

Q A prank similar to a reporter for the New York Times being sent all the way to Camp David and similar to our being told that the White House party that you didn't tell us about, the whole thing was a joke, about going to Michigan. What I am wondering is, if any of the press, segment of the press, decided to reciprocate this frivolity, will the President see that they are --

MR. NESSEN: Shot? (Laughter)

Q I mean, fair is fair, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I agree. Fair is fair.

Q What if these guys had done the same thing to the Secret Service? Seriously, fun is fun.

MR. NESSEN: Fun is fun.

Q What do you say about that? Suppose somebody got hold of some NBC letterhead and wrote you a letter saying "We do want you back on Saturday Night live"?

MR. NESSEN: I would know that is a prank, Les.  
(Laughter).

Q Can we have that question repeated?

MR. NESSEN: I agreed with Les that fair is fair and also that fun is fun.

(Laughter.)

Q Can you tell us where things stand now regarding the President's future plans? Has he sold his house in Alexandria? How close is he to buying a permanent home in the Palm Springs area? What are his plans?

MR. NESSEN: Fran is wondering on a number of future Presidential plans, things like has the house in Alexandria been sold. I don't know the answer to that. I haven't checked. How close is he to buying a house in Palm Springs? I don't know the answer to that.

Can I tell anything more about the plans after January 20th? Other than the plans already announced, I don't have anything to announce today.

Q Do you have any staff announcements of people who will go with him that he will keep?

MR. NESSEN: I think you know Major Barrett has resigned from the military and will stay with the President as his more or less Chief of Staff. I don't have any other names to give you today.

Q Did you have any more items on this list of issues?

Q When is the economic message going to go up?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the date on that.

Q Is that the end of the list?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is he going over a large list of unfinished business, commitments and things and deciding what he will do?

MR. NESSEN: I think it would be fair to say that the President hopes to, as in the case of the Puerto Rican independence proposal in the time remaining, for him to at least talk about it, and in some cases propose steps that he has a deep personal commitment to.

Q Ron, there is a very interesting paper put out here. Had you finished on that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q There is a very interesting paper put out here state by state, a very interesting book as far as I know. It is the first time we have ever had this in the Federal

Government, maybe I am totally wrong -- probably am -- but anyway, it is from the Community Action people. It was a study, county by county, state by state, of how much federal money is being spent in that county.

Was this used in the Presidential campaign?

MR. NESSEN: I have never seen the Community Action list.

Q It has now been put out to the general public, printed in handsome copies and all that. Was this material used in the campaign?

MR. NESSEN: I have never seen it before.

Q But Ron, you might not have been just -- were you working on what the President knew just before he went to each county?

MR. NESSEN: I never left his side.

Q That is not an answer, Ron.

Q You wouldn't have known anything about it. It may have been done.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any document that the President carried around with him or referred to that dealt with Community Action programs county by county.

Q This is all of the federal programs, this is a Community Action problem, project summing up all the federal money being spent county by county.

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with that.

Q Can we find out if the campaign people had it?

MR. NESSEN: I will find out. I have not evidence that they did.

Q Can you say anything about a separate State of the World or a farewell address?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything on that, Russ.

Q On either one?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q How long will the Coleman meeting last?

MR. NESSEN: We will find out for you.

Q Ron, may I ask a question about his residence in Vail? Will he move in the condominium? Is he going to sell that, is he going to continue renting in Vail?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what his plans are. His next trip out there, I guess he told some people yesterday, will be in March. Where he will stay during that period, I

don't know.

Q He doesn't have his condominium in Vail up  
for sale?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(at 12:15 P.M. EST)

#611