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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

8/3/76

RH

Ron,

I've just read the transcript
from yesterday's press briefing.

They don't pay you enough.
They couldn't pay you enough.

Pat Butten



AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12 NOON

AUGUST 2, 1976

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: You all think I have a surprise for you today, right?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: And the surprise is, I do not have a surprise.

Q What is your excuse?

Q Why are you delayed?

MR. NESSEN: I was trying to prepare myself.

Q You were attending the Harold Stassen press conference?

MR. NESSEN: Actually, I was looking at this example of the new spirit of brotherhood that is sweeping our country and our press room. A great example of ecumenism, I think. (Laughter)

Q Admit who asked to pose for that picture, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: The lion shall lie down with the lamb.

Q Will you identify from right to left?

Q Who is that to the left of Mondale? (Laughter)

Q Schweiker.

MR. NESSEN: We do not have any changes in the schedule. The schedule consists today entirely of meetings with the President's staff and sometime this afternoon in which the President indicated he wanted to do some paperwork, so that is why the schedule appears to be rather slim today, but it actually is quite crowded with staff meetings.

MORE

#550



Q Ron, doesn't he have an appointment with the Secretary of Transportation this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, that meeting has been put off.

Q Put off?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Ron, could you read us that private schedule so we have an idea who he is meeting with?

MR. NESSEN: It is just staff people.

Q Could you read it?

MR. NESSEN: Bush and Scowcroft, Hartmann, Cheney, Marsh, Rumsfeld, Nessen, speechwriters, et cetera.

Q Is that an acceptance speech?

MR. NESSEN: That is one of the purposes of speechwriters' meetings, is to continue work on the acceptance speech.

Q To continue it, when did it start?

MR. NESSEN: It has been underway for a couple of weeks now, two weeks, I guess, 2-1/2 weeks.

Q What is the subject? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: This is one of those occasions when I will break my rule and say it will be a major speech.

Q Who is leading the team of writers?

MR. NESSEN: Bob Hartmann is the head of the speechwriters, as always.

Q He doesn't think he is a little ahead of himself, does he?

MR. NESSEN: In this particular case, Bob Hartmann is playing a very important role in writing it.

Q Is anyone writing a competing version of this speech?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q That seems like a long time for writing a speech.

Q What was Barnes' question, please?



MR. NESSEN: Fred wanted to know whether there were any others in the building who were writing competing speeches. The answer is that the President asked a number of people to send to Bob Hartmann suggestions and ideas of what ought to be included in the speech, about 2-1/2 weeks ago. And they have since gone to Bob and Bob is putting a speech together.

Q Doesn't he think he is premature?

MR. NESSEN: No. It is an important speech and the President wants to devote plenty of his time to it.

Q Who were the people he asked to send in ideas to Hartmann?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know all the people. Some in the White House, some outside.

Q Ron, is he going to draft his own speech or is he just going to let other people write it and is he going to get up there and read it?

MR. NESSEN: I think the procedure will be pretty much the same as it is on all speeches, Walt, except the President will play a greater role in this one than he normally does. Drafts are brought to him and he rewrites the drafts and then rewrites the rewrite and rewrites the rewrite of the rewrite until he gets it as he wants it.

Q Has he selected the people he wants to nominate him yet?

MR. NESSEN: He has not, Helen, no.

Q Ron, do you know how many people he asked for suggestions on what is to go into the speech?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the number is.

Q Can you give us a ball park figure?

MR. NESSEN: I can't guess.

Q Is the Cabinet involved?

MR. NESSEN: I think there are some people outside the White House who were invited to submit ideas to Bob Hartmann.

Q Ron, you may have discussed this on Saturday. Why did the President not promise to abide by the results of that polling that he has made?



MR. NESSEN: He certainly wants to get the views and consult with his very wide group of people, but the choice of a running mate, I think, quite properly belongs to the President.

Q What if the delegates took some umbrage to this, Ron, and proceeded to elect as Vice President someone that the President did not want? What do you suppose would be the reaction there?

MR. NESSEN: I think as the President has said, he will make a recommendation to the Convention at an appropriate time and he expects his recommendations to be accepted.

Q In the event it doesn't, how would he react to that?

MR. NESSEN: I would rather not take on a hypothetical question.

Q Will he disclose the results of the poll?

MR. NESSEN: No. As I indicated on Saturday, we don't expect to put out a tabulation of the results.

Q Why not?

MR. NESSEN: The President promised the people who he is consulting with confidentiality.

Q Does the President have any comment on Senator Schweiker's suggestions that it was a charade since George Bush led in the first poll and Nelson Rockefeller was selected?

MR. NESSEN: First of all, I don't know that that is the case; but secondly, I think we dealt with that pretty much on Saturday.

Q You don't know for sure that Bush was the leader in that --

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the relevance is, John.

Q These are not tax returns. Why would the delegates care about confidentiality? Wouldn't they like to know what the results of the poll are?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. The President, in his letter, said he would keep the results strictly confidential in an effort to have the people be as forthcoming as possible.

MORE

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Q Did he say the results or keep their names out of it or --

MR. NESSEN: I have to read precisely what the letter said.

Q Why couldn't he keep their suggestions confidential?

Q Why couldn't he just release the tabulations with no names?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think there is any plan to do that.

Q Why not?

MR. NESSEN: The purpose is not to conduct a public opinion poll, Ed. The purpose is to give the President the benefit of the views of a very wide section of the leaders and workers in the Republican Party. I am sure Mr. Harris or Mr. Gallup can provide a public opinion sampling. Really, this is a survey for one client in order to help him choose a running mate.

Q Doesn't the President feel that the people that take the trouble to send in answers to his questionnaire would like to know before it is all over where the person the President ultimately chooses ended up in the poll amongst themselves and their peers as delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that they do.

Q Ron, isn't one reason the fact that he will not be bound by the poll? Didn't he make that clear?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have said that from the very beginning, Ted, that this is a method of soliciting the views of a very wide range of people in the party, but it was not meant as a sampling for publication. It was meant to help the President make his decision.

Q There is probably a good chance, though, Ron, that if the results are to his liking that he will mention this when he does make a selection.

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

The plan is not to publish the results because that was not the intention of the consultation process. The consultation process is for the President's benefit. Suppose the President picks the top one, won't he then announce the results as a way of showing something or another? The answer is, to my knowledge, there is no plan to publish the results one way or the other.



Q Ron, can you say whether or not this poll might be also intended to give the President a reading of opposition to people he has in mind?

MR. NESSEN: I think the consultation process is a consultation process. I don't know how you separate it. Some people will have wider support than other people would have.

Q I think you understand what I am getting at.

Q Is he looking not so much for new names, new ideas as he is a feeling for sentiment of the delegates on people that he has in mind at this point?

MR. NESSEN: It is a consultation process and that is all I can --

Q Is he going to see any delegates this week?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen any plans at this point for delegates coming in.

Q Ron, are letters now in the mail to the delegates and alternates?

MR. NESSEN: Let me find out what the details are. I guess the mailing goes out today.

Q He probably won't get them back before the Convention. (Laughter)

Q Who is in charge of the tabulation once the returns start coming in?

MR. NESSEN: I think I mentioned on Saturday, Russ, that all the letters will come in to Dick Cheney. There will be a return envelope addressed to the "President Ford Delegate Questionnaire, The White House, Washington, D. C." The purpose of including the envelope was to keep the Vice Presidential questionnaire mail separate from the rest of the White House mail so it wouldn't be opened down in the mailroom but would be sent to Dick Cheney unopened.

The return envelope does not have a stamp on it. The delegates and alternates will have to put their own stamps on it. The expenses of printing and mailing, of course, and stamping the outgoing mail is being paid for by the PFC. The deadline, so to speak, as mentioned in the letter, is August 11th. As I said, because of the special envelope that is being enclosed, the letters will be brought unopened to Dick Cheney's office.

MORE

#550



Q Does Secret Service allow that?

MR. NESSEN: I think they will probably go through the normal x-ray machine, or whatever kind of security the Secret Service has over incoming mail, I guess. You ought to talk to Jack Warner about that.

Q Ron, how many of these are going out?

MR. NESSEN: Approximately 4,500. I don't know the exact number. The reason I cannot give you an exact number is I am not exactly sure how many alternates there are to the Convention. There are virtually the same number of alternates as delegates, but I think in some cases, not exactly the same number.

Q Will the questionnaire identify the State that the delegate or alternate is from, and will the questionnaire identify whether or not this is a Ford or Reagan delegate?

MR. NESSEN: I think if you read the letter here that went out on Saturday, Ted, you will see that the President says, "I request that you sign your letter, and I assure you that your response will be handled in complete confidence."

Q What about anonymous replies, those that do not accede to his request? Will he take those into consideration?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he will.

Q How would he know who it was, though? It might be a prank.

MR. NESSEN: I think if you get hold of the envelope, it is pretty much --

Q Would the President welcome letters from other Republicans around the Nation on their preferences for the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: Absolutely. In fact, not only would he welcome them, he sought it out, Phil. As far as Members of Congress go, Senator Scott and Congressman Rhodes are going to bring in the results of their views later this week. Mary Louise Smith will be getting the recommendations of all the State chairmen and National Committee men and women of the RNC and bringing those in, and then the PFC State chairmen, and others, will send their recommendations in through Rog Morton. Then, there will be certain other categories like Cabinet and prominent Republicans who don't happen to hold public office at the minute.

MORE

#550



As for other Republicans which are not on any of these lists, my own experience, over the past few days and weeks, almost everyone that comes to see the President these days offers an idea or two. And he, of course, accepts those and I know he would if they were mailed in or he encounters people.

Q Would he like to have Republicans from all over this country write him letters telling him their choice. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I think he has indicated that he is anxious to consult widely on this.

Q Is that a yes?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, if you are thinking of going on the air and saying the President invited millions of Republicans to write him, I don't know of a plan to do that, but obviously, he has received the views of --

Q Ron, when is he going to make his choice public?

MR. NESSEN: At the appropriate time.

Q What is the appropriate time?

MR. NESSEN: It is not the appropriate time to tell you what the appropriate time is.

Q So, if it comes out in advance of the Convention, can we assume that was sooner than the appropriate time was planned to be?

MR. NESSEN: No, because I never announced what the appropriate time is.

Q The next time you talk with the President, will you ask him whether or not he would like to have Republicans writing in?

MR. NESSEN: I will, Phil.

Q Ron, suppose an unscrupulous Reagan delegate got hold of one of these inquiries and reproduced it so that the President got, say 5,500 responses for this, how would he know which ones are valid and which are not?

A second question, Ron. The President, I believe, refreshed my memory. In one of his press conferences, he was being pressed by the press about who might be it, and he said, use your imagination, it might be elsewhere, I think. In other words, what would happen if several of these delegates suggested Betty Ford as the Vice Presidential candidate? They don't live in the same State, they reside in the District. I just wonder, has he said anything about ruling out Mrs. Ford?



MR. NESSEN: He has not ruled out Mrs. Ford.

Q He has not?

MR. NESSEN: No. (Laughter)

In fact, that would be quite a strong ticket, I would think.

Q Ron, seriously, he has not ruled out Mrs. Ford, right?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think he has ruled out anybody.

Q He has ruled his wife out, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: Did he?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: When?

Q Constitutionally, she cannot run.

MR. NESSEN: But Les said they live in different States.

Q They reside. That is a Constitutional question. They reside in the District.

Q Ron, who will see the results of this tabulation other than the President and Dick Cheney?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of anybody else who will see them.

Q Those two people are the only ones who will know who actually received the greatest number of recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding at the moment, yes.

Q Ron, could you give us any idea on what the President will base his decision on besides this poll and besides the criteria that he gave? Can you give us anything on what he will base his decision on besides the poll?

MR. NESSEN: I think the views of all these people whose views he is soliciting is a factor. The various criteria he listed in the letter, and I think, in talking to Time and Newsweek Magazine in the interviews that they have printed today, he expanded a bit on what he thinks about the reasons that will go into his selection.



I think it is possible there will be some delegates coming in to see the President this week, in response to an earlier question. I don't have the precise day or who they will be, but I think it is a possibility.

Q Ron, is he going any place this week? I understand he is going to Philadelphia Sunday.

MR. NESSEN: On Sunday, the President has been invited to take part in the closing ceremonies of the Eucharistic Congress, which he will do.

Q Will he be going to any other State conventions?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q What part is he going to take, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: In the Eucharistic Congress, first of all, there is a brief meeting with Cardinals and with church leaders -- a brief, informal meeting.

Then, the President will go to the stadium and he will speak very briefly at the beginning of what they call the concluding liturgy.

Q What time does this take place, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Roughly, about 4:45 Sunday afternoon, to approximately 6:10.

Q Is this a campaign trip or a political trip?

Q Is it a campaign trip or a Presidential trip?

MR. NESSEN: That is a silly question.

Q I don't think it is a silly question because Jimmy Carter is reported not to be doing too well amongst the fish-eaters. (Laughter) I inject that seriously.

Q How about that again, Richard?

Q Amongst my fellow fish-eaters. I want to call attention to that. That is a serious question, Ron. Here, the President is going to the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia, which is, as you know, the major Catholic event in 1976. Jimmy Carter has been widely reported as not to be too popular amongst my fellow Roman Catholics. Now, the thing is, did the President decide to go on this trip, which I think was the question basically, for political or for other reasons and, if so, what were they, sir? I think it is a serious question.



Q I agree.

MR. NESSEN: As a serious answer, Dick, I would say the invitation to attend the Eucharistic Congress came from Cardinal Krol, the Archbishop of Philadelphia, and the Board of Governors of the Congress invited the President to attend this concluding liturgy.

I would say, first of all, that you should address the question to Cardinal Krol and see if he felt that he wanted to invite the President as some sort of political gesture or for some political motive, and also, the Board of Governors of the Eucharistic Congress which is bringing together, I guess, 500 Cardinals, Bishops and other members of the hierarchy of the church, and find what their political motive, if any, was in inviting the President.

Q What is the President's view of the trip?

MR. NESSEN: From what point of view, Fran?

Q Does he consider it in any way a campaign trip or is it part of his Presidential --

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to answer the question in a way that will allow you to write that the President today denied this, that he was going to Philadelphia as a political trip. I am just not going to do that.

Q Who is paying for it?

Q Would you equate it similar to his appearance before the Southern Baptists?

MR. NESSEN: I don't equate it as similar to anything, Fran. I equate it with an invitation from Cardinal Krol, the Archbishop of Philadelphia, and the Board of Governors of the World Eucharistic Congress. They invited the President and the President has accepted.

Q Ron, Carol asked who was paying for the trip.

MR. NESSEN: The Government will.

Q Is the policy of arms aid to Iran open-ended?

MR. NESSEN: Let me go back and finish my announcements, which I haven't quite done yet.

Q Ron, could you clarify one thing? Krol said yesterday -- I asked the question of his representative, was Governor Carter invited -- and he said no, because Mr. Ford was invited only as President of the United States, not as a candidate.

MORE

#550



MR. NESSEN: That is a very good answer by Cardinal Krol. (Laughter)

Q Can I ask about the brief remarks? When you say "brief remarks," do you mean something like one page or is this apt to be, as Fran inquired, a two or three page speech, as was made at the Southern Baptist Convention?

MR. NESSEN: Incidentally, I have Cardinal Krol's letter here which is dated April 12th, if that helps you any.

Q Are you ignoring my question?

MR. NESSEN: I am looking up the answer. I just happened to come across Cardinal Krol's letter as I was looking up the answer.

The remarks are scheduled for five minutes.

Q In Spanish or Latin? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: The other announcement that I didn't have a chance to make earlier was, the President has approved Federal disaster relief funds for the area around Loveland, Colorado, that suffered severe rainstorms and flooding over the weekend. The President signed the relief declaration this morning after receiving the request for aid from Governor Lamm, of Colorado, and the Federal assistance is being made available immediately.

The Federal Disaster Assistance Administration has already set up centers in the area to provide temporary housing and for other personal needs, and to begin providing information on the kinds of Federal aid that are available.

We have, I believe, an announcement of this. If it hasn't already gone out, we can put it out. The additional information can be obtained by calling the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration at 634-6666.

Q Ron, just one question. Which one of the speechwriters is writing the President's address to the Eucharistic Congress? Is it the Southern Baptist you have on the staff? He wrote most of the ones to the Southern Baptist Convention. He is a clergyman and I wonder, is he the one that is going to do it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who is writing that speech, Les.

Q Are you through with your announcements?

MR. NESSEN: I am.

MORE

#550



Q Is the President continuing the policy of open-ended arms aid to Iran?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot speak for the Nixon policy because I do not know what the Nixon policy was. I would not use your characterization of open-ended arms sales to characterize President Ford's policy toward arms sales.

Q What is it, then?

MR. NESSEN: First of all, the question is pretty academic at the moment, since the recently passed security assistance legislation provides a legislative formula for approving overseas arms sales. The security assistance legislation has a set of requirements in it, so the whole question is pretty academic.

Q But it does not affect already made agreements to sell arms to Iran; is that correct? There is no review --

MR. NESSEN: No, I think it has to do with proposals of arms sales beginning with the passage of the legislation, but in the past, certainly arms sales to any foreign country were reviewed by this Administration.

Q Has the President approved them as they are now?

MR. NESSEN: It all depends what the level was, Fran. I mean, if it was six old trucks to somebody, obviously, that is not something that got to the President. Others did. There are arms sales of that level.

Q The story is, they have gotten unlimited flow of various sophisticated weapons. Now, is that continuing?

MR. NESSEN: Every arms sale to any country up until the passage of this new legislation has been reviewed on its merits at the highest level of the Administration, and this is true of arms sales to Iran and other countries, and they were approved or disapproved on their merits. There was no such thing as, I think, what you referred to as an open-ended arms sales policy to any country.

Q Ron, there was this memo, apparently, according to the Senate staff report, in May of 1972. Nixon and Kissinger sent out a memo saying, the Shah could get virtually any arms he wanted. The question really is, did Government agencies consider that memo was still in effect after the Ford Administration came to power? Did you people do anything to rescind that memo to say that is no longer operative?



MR. NESSEN: I don't know if there was a memo and, as I say, I don't know what the arms sales policy of the Nixon Administration was. I know what the arms sales policy of this Administration is up through the passage of this legislation and it was, each major arms sale to any country was reviewed at the highest level and approved or disapproved on its merits.

Q Has that bill been signed, by the way?

MR. NESSEN: I think it went into effect quite some time ago.

Q The Nixon Administration could have said the same thing, and did.

MORE

#550



MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Phil. I can't speak for the Nixon Administration.

Q The President ordered it. That is about the highest level you can go. It sounds to me up until this legislation was passed it sounds like you had the same policy as Nixon had.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the Nixon policy was. I know what the policy of this Administration was -- to review every major proposed arms sale on its merits and they were approved or disapproved on their merits.

Q When did that policy come into effect?

MR. NESSEN: The day President Ford came into the office.

Q How do you know?

MR. NESSEN: Because I checked.

Q Do you have a memo to that effect?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that it was reduced to memo form, Helen. It certainly has been the policy.

Q Can you give us a list of what arms are now being provided to Iran?

MR. NESSEN: I am sure the State Department or the Defense Department can.

Q Is it a matter of concern to the President that so many American technicians are in Iran?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how many American technicians are in Iran.

Q 60,000, I believe.

MR. NESSEN: I do not know the number.

Q Ron, did the President have a reaction to the Gallup match-up showing him 33 points behind Governor Carter at this time?

MR. NESSEN: I think we made a policy not to react to each poll that comes out, John.

Q When you saw him this morning, did you ask him about it?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Could you ask about it?

MORE

#550



MR. NESSEN: I know his feeling on polls is that the one that counts will be the one on November 2, which he expects to win.

Q Ron, do you have a fix yet when the President is going to go to Kansas City?

MR. NESSEN: He has not made the decision yet.

Q What will that be based on? Why is he holding up on it?

MR. NESSEN: There are a number of considerations that he is weighing and how much business he has here that week.

Q How many delegates he has?

MR. NESSEN: I guess one of the considerations would be what his activities would be if he went to Kansas City.

Q Ron, excuse me. Can I pursue that a little further? I think in one of the interviews that was published yesterday he said he expected to go Sunday or Monday.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so because I know for a fact he has not decided when to go yet.

Q The words "Sunday or Monday" I know appeared in quotes.

MR. NESSEN: That is one of the options, is to go Sunday or Monday and another option is to go Tuesday and another option is to go Wednesday.

Q The story I saw said he will probably go Sunday or Monday. He didn't say that?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't seen the quote. I know for a fact he has not made the decision.

Q You aren't trying to leave the impression on the Gallup Poll the White House is indifferent to those results, are you, or that it doesn't really matter what the poll said?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is the same position we have had all through spring, Walt, which is, there is only one poll that counts and that we are not going to react to every poll, which we haven't. The one poll that counts, the President expects to win.

Q Ron, is the President concerned about the evident failure of the involved parties to reach any agreement on the swine flu program? HEW, as I understand it, had hoped to announce an agreement last Friday, and they didn't because the various sides can't agree. Is the President monitoring the issues?



MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that checking with HEW this morning that they are continuing their negotiations with the drug companies and with the insurance companies, and the Secretary has sent word over that he is optimistic that an arrangement acceptable to all can be reached shortly.

Q When did he do that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he did when I checked by telephone this morning.

Q Optimistic that --

MR. NESSEN: That an agreement can be reached which will be acceptable to everybody and that it can be reached shortly. He is optimistic of that.

Q Ron, on the Iran thing, are you saying that the arms sales to Iran are subject to the same interagency check that all sales are? In other words, arms sales to Iran are no different to any other place?

MR. NESSEN: That is absolutely right.

Q Ron, you were not referring to, I think, proposed legislation which would make it easier for Congress to stop arms sales above amount X? It used to be \$25 million. I think they dropped that sum down.

MR. NESSEN: I am saying, the whole question of the review process which has been in effect from the beginning of the Ford Administration to the passage of that legislation provided a review at the highest level.

Now, there is a legislation in place which Congress mandates a form of review.

Q Yes, but there is a revision of that. You were referring to the one that has been in place for a year or more, for several years, in fact.

MR. NESSEN: No, I think it was passed here about a month ago.

Q That has become law and has been assigned by the President. Is the President going to have a news conference this week?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans for one.

Q Ron, is the President making telephone calls to delegates now and has he called Mississippi delegates since he came back from the trip?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, frankly, because I have not kept up that much on his phone call list.



Q Can you elaborate in any way on the President's comments in the interview, I believe it was with Newsweek, where he was discussing Governor Connally's prospect as Vice Presidential nominee, and where they might be hurt by the charges that were brought against him, and where he said that he was cleared by a jury of his peers and very few people in this country have had 12 good and faithful jurors give them a clean bill of health?

What did he mean by that?

MR. NESSEN: What could he have meant by that? What are the possibilities?

Q I am asking you. Can you explain them? I don't think my views matter.

MR. NESSEN: I cannot expand on it, Dick.

Q Ron, was the President upset by Senator Schweiker's statement yesterday that Ford cannot win in November? Does he feel this is hurting the Republican Party -- this kind of talk?

MR. NESSEN: I think you know the President's views on his confidence that he will win in November.

Q I am asking, did he have any comment on Senator Schweiker's statement?

MR. NESSEN: I did not hear him make any comment, no.

Q Ron, one more question.

The President has said that it does not bother him that reporters and photographers watch him take off in his helicopter.

Can you explain to us why they persist it is the rule they can no longer go out to see him?

MR. NESSEN: We have been through this so many times, Fran, and nothing has really changed.

Q You have never given a reason.

Q What is the reason for it? If the President does not mind and the President is requesting this and this is an open Administration, we are supposed to be able to see him when he is out there in public.

MR. NESSEN: As you know, and this is the same explanation I have given each time you asked about it, in the past there has been no coverage like that in previous Administrations.

MORE

#550



Q That is not true.

MR. NESSEN: Some previous Administrations, and we did institute it, and now we have decided to go back to the previous.

Q Let's take a few steps here.

In the first place, even in the Nixon Administration where people were limited to the colonnade, the foliage was such that it was still possible to view the helicopter and people boarding it, although not very well.

MR. NESSEN: Well, we are not going to defoliate the Rose Garden.

Q I am not asking you to defoliate the Rose Garden. I am just asking you to let us go where we can see them. I don't understand the reasoning. I think we should have an explanation unless you approve of the policies of past Administrations.

MR. NESSEN: As I have said, every time we talk about this, Fran, we are going back to the --

Q During the Kennedy Administration --

MR. NESSEN: I think, Phil, I don't know whether the Kennedy Administration had any filming of helicopter takeoffs.

Q What has that got to do with it?

MR. NESSEN: I do not like the implication of Phil's question.

Q It is a bit symptomatic of something like, for instance, in Jackson, Mississippi, where a certain member of the White House staff chased away the wire service photographers and where they were positioned. Therefore, they could not get any of the pictures that they needed of the President and Clarke Reed. Both the wire service photographers were a bit upset about it, and I think rightly so, in the way it was done. They are down there to do a job.

I just do not think it was right the way it was done. Without going into details about it, I think somebody should talk to them about it directly.

MR. NESSEN: I think they have been.

Q Ron, I thought it was accepted. The reason was, he kept bumping his head on the helicopter door, isn't that the case?

MR. NESSEN: Not as far as I am concerned.

MORE

#550



Q What is the reason? You have never stated it.

MR. NESSEN: I think I have stated the reason.

Q No you have not.

Q You stated the decision, but you have given us no reason.

MR. NESSEN: The reason is, we are returning to --

Q That is not a reason.

Q That is not a reason, it is a result.

MR. NESSEN: It is the reason.

Q But why?

MR. NESSEN: That does not keep it from being a reason.

Q That is not a reason.

MR. NESSEN: This is about the fifth time we have done this number.

Q I am wondering if you understand what we are trying to say?

MR. NESSEN. We will take up all of your time.

Q Do you understand what we are trying to say to you?

MR. NESSEN: I think what you want to do, Phil, is go back to the previous system of the protective pool on the South Lawn. It has always been a protective pool in this Administration and former Administrations.

Q So what is your objection?

MR. NESSEN: It is still a protective pool.

Q It is not a protective pool.

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I am sorry. The function of a protective pool, and we all know this, is to be there in case anything happens. Now, if anything happens, it means the helicopter crashes or catches fire or blows up. You are in the position to do that job from where the new location has been placed.

Q That is not true, and there is no reason on God's green earth why we should not be allowed to see the President get on a helicopter.



Q That is right, and it has never been a protective pool. We have been able to film the man as he got in the helicopter and leave.

Q He has invited us on occasions and had groups out there to watch, which we were supposed to cover.

Q Ron, as Fran says, if the President has no objection to this and expressed no objection, why should you interpose? It is not a terribly important thing to me, personally, but I think to all of these people --

MR. NESSEN: That pool is a protective pool, and it needs to be in a place where it can perform its protective function. It is in a position where it can protect --

Q Ron, we were asked for a story on that.

MR. NESSEN: I am explaining it.

Q You don't really mean to stand here and tell us if something did happen on that helicopter that the Secret Service is going to turn around, back over behind the crab apple trees and say, "Come on boys, have at it." You know it is not going to happen just as well as I know that.

MR. NESSEN: It is not a Secret Service function to lead the protective pool. It is somebody from my office who is always with the protective pool.

Q The fact of the matter is, you can't see a thing with that tent up there.

MR. NESSEN: The tent will be coming down.

Q Let me express, as far as I am concerned, a member of this White House Press Corps, I consider it smacking right in the face of your claim that you have an open White House.

MR. NESSEN: I think you have expressed that on a number of occasions, Phil.

Q I think I am expressing it, and I have a feeling most of this press room right now is telling you again.

Q I think it is unanimous, Ron.

Q What is the fear here?

MORE

#550



MR. NESSEN: The protective pool, and all protective pools of this one and back through the years, have been for the purpose, as we all know, of providing the kind of deathwatch coverage which networks and wire services need.

Q So, why have you wiped it out?

MR. NESSEN: This pool is for the purpose of covering the crash of the helicopter. If and when it crashes, I guarantee you that the person from the Press Office --

Q In case something happens, but they cannot report what happens if they cannot see it, so they are no protective pool.

MR. NESSEN: If something happens, Dick, they will be taken to where it has happened.

Q After the fact, Ron?

Q What is your real objection to our covering this?

Q Ron, in making this decision, did anybody on the White House staff ever consider the possibility that they didn't want any member of the First Family to be embarrassed because they might have had an excess of alcoholic beverages, and they didn't want to be seen going to and from the helicopter?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Then, what is the reason?

Q The head-bumping that I referred to before, Ron, it was widely assumed all over the country that is why you did it. He kept bumping his head and it kept getting into the newspapers and on TV. I certainly assumed that was the reason.

Q Is that the reason?

MR. NESSEN: I think I have given you the set of reasons.

Q You have not given us one reason, not one reason, Ron, in all the times you discussed that.

Q How does the White House differ from the Camp David coverage where we can still see the helicopter landing and taking off?

Q I guess the point is, you have no reason that you will express.

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I think I have --

MORE

#550



Q Frances raises a very legitimate question. Are you cancelling that coverage now?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with the Camp David coverage. I will have to look at it.

Q How about if we tell you what the coverage is and you tell us whether it is permissible?

MR. NESSEN: I will look into it, Dick.

Q Do we have an assurance from the Press Office there will be no more manhandling of photographers?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with manhandling, Phil.

Q On the last trip to Mississippi, there was an occasion where you personally pulled two photographers back as they were trying to do their job?

MR. NESSEN: I think I urged them to move back.

Q You put your hands on them. Do we have an assurance that that will cease?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will probably deal directly with the photographers involved, Phil.

Q Don't laught about it. You laid your hands on them. You pulled them off.

MR. NESSEN: I think we probably chatted with them.

Q Did you apologize to them?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will probably deal with the photographers involved, Phil.

Q Do we have an assurance that is not going to happen anymore?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will deal with the folks who are involved.

Q Ron, suppose the photographer slugged you in defending himself. You are keeping one guy out of that share-all because he slugged a press officer who called you a liar. If you are going to lay your hands on people, Ron --

THE PRESS: Okay.

END

#550 (AT 12:46 P.M. EDT)



AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:35 A.M. EDT

AUGUST 3, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: You have seen the arrival ceremony for President Kekkonen of Finland. There will be a State Dinner this evening for the President and there will be the normal coverage of the arrivals, the toasts and the entertainment.

There will be a written readout on the meeting at about 3 o'clock this afternoon.

The other thing is that I wanted to mention to you that after this briefing we can hand out to you a message the President is sending to Congress containing his proposed legislation for dealing with the so-called questionable corporate payments overseas, and this will be embargoed for 2:30, at which time Secretary Richardson will have a briefing on the legislation over at the Commerce Department.

Q That is 2:15, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: The embargo or the briefing?

Q The briefing.

MR. NESSEN: Let's check. We were told 2:30, but I will check and tell you right here before we are finished.

That is all the announcements I have to make.

Q Is there a time on Philadelphia yet? Departure, I mean?

MR. NESSEN: I thought I mentioned --

Q I was not here yesterday. I was told that perfect attendance is not required.

MR. NESSEN: Or even desirable.

Q That is why you have to repeat so often.

MR. NESSEN: I think there will be a tentative take-off time of around 2:30 Sunday afternoon, Jim, and a tentative return time around 7:25 or 7:30.

MORE

#551



Q Are those Presidential times or press times?

MR. NESSEN: Those are Presidential times.

Q Has the President ordered any investigation of these deaths in Pennsylvania?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding, Helen, is that the health authorities in Pennsylvania have requested that the Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta involve itself, and it has, but there has been no direct White House involvement. The health officials called HEW and called the CDC directly.

Q Ron, I inquired of your office earlier and I wonder if you have perhaps had a chance to check on this. Is there any information that the President made a call to Colorado last night?

MR. NESSEN: No. I know of the question and the phone records have been searched and there is no record of any phone call to Colorado by the President.

Q Would someone have called for him?

MR. NESSEN: There was no record of that either.

Q Did anybody ask the President to call?

MR. NESSEN: I asked the President and I checked the phone records and there was no record of a call.

Q Today is the deadline for the Capitol Hill suggestions for nominees for the Vice Presidency.

MR. NESSEN: I know.

Q Do you have them?

MR. NESSEN: Senator Scott and Congressman Rhodes have already sent some over to the President and I don't know what the precise plans are for bringing the remainder in, but I will check for you.

Q Ron, along that line, a group of Republicans from the Northeastern States reputedly have given the President a list of eight suggestions for Vice President, one of whom is Vice President Rockefeller. Does the White House have any comment on that list?

MR. NESSEN: No. I don't think we will have any comment on any of these suggestions that will be coming in, Jim.

Q Do you want to tell us what step two is now on the Vice Presidential selection process?

MR. NESSEN: Not yet.

MORE

#551



Q When would you like to tell us about the next step?

MR. NESSEN: I will tell you about it when we get a little closer to it.

Q At an appropriate time?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Are there more steps?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, there are more steps.

Q Are Scott and Rhodes coming over to the White House this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: They are not on the schedule that I know of for today.

You are right about the Richardson briefing. It is 2:15.

Q If the President gets the additional names from Scott and Rhodes, they will be sent over by courier, is that the idea?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check to find out what the plan is for getting that.

Q Ron, is the President considering possible running mates who have said they don't want to be considered?

MR. NESSEN: Well, Ted, I will tell you. I think since the process is underway of consulting and receiving opinions and suggestions, that I think I indicated the other day I just didn't want to stand up each day and say he is in or he is out or he is under consideration or he is not. I just think we are too far along to get into that.

Q Has he not made up his mind yet?

MR. NESSEN: No. I have said before, Helen, that he has certainly not made up his mind yet and I don't anticipate him making up his mind for a while.

Q Ron, you will give us a tally on this eventually, right?

MR. NESSEN: Wrong.

Q A few days before the Convention?

MR. NESSEN: No.



Q You mean that all this great testing of people and delegates and all that, we won't know what they said?

MR. NESSEN: Well, as I said yesterday, Sarah -- I think you were not here -- but as Jim said, perfect attendance is not required.

Q Thank you.

MR. NESSEN: The purpose of this is to provide advice and suggestions to the President for his own private decision on who he wants for his running mate.

Q I am well aware you said this since Saturday, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: It is not designed to be a public opinion poll meant for publication. It is strictly for the President's advice.

MORE

#551



Q I am well aware that you have said this, but the point I am trying to bring out here with some emphasis is that the people have a right to know. This is kind of a new process of picking a Vice President and this is, at last, some input on the part of the people or their representatives.

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Why would it not be a good thing to be really democratic about this and let the public know what the people's representatives have said?

MR. NESSEN: I think, as I said yesterday, the purpose of it is to provide suggestions and advice to the President as he makes his choice and it is not meant as a public polling device.

Q Not speaking now of this poll, but rather, speaking of the stages in the process the President is going through, why do we have to get our information from delegates to the members of the Mississippi delegation to the Republican Convention rather than from the President's Press Secretary?

MR. NESSEN: We had planned all along to announce the letter and process on Saturday. The President, in the course of talking, first of all, to the Pennsylvania delegation Friday night, I guess it was, and then to the Mississippi delegation on Saturday, described to them in his private meetings, the process and some of them passed on the information, but our intention all along was to announce the process on Saturday.

Q Right. My question goes to the matter of your timing and acumen. You knew the President was going to talk to the Pennsylvania delegation on that Friday night, I guess it was, and you knew he was going to Mississippi on Saturday. Didn't you have some concern, trepidation, or whatever, that he might indeed put this out and it might leak out before your carefully arranged scenario and, you know, where is your flexibility here? Why don't you put the stuff out first?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Jim, how to answer that question.

Q Ron, can you respond to some of the criticism from the Reagan camp that by not disclosing his choice for a running mate that the President is not being as open and honest with the delegates and prospective voters as Reagan is by announcing who he would run with?



MR. NESSEN: The process of selecting a Vice Presidential running mate has several stages to it as you know, we have all discussed it here. The stage that the President is in now is seeking the advice and opinion and suggestions of all the delegates and alternates, all the Republican Members of Congress, all the officers of the RNC through the State level, and others.

The President feels that that is a good method of consulting widely and hearing who the leaders of the Republican Party want to represent them as a Vice President and he believes that is a good process.

Q The President said several times himself that he knows the people under consideration. He knows their records. He does not have to go through the sort of thing that Carter did to find a running mate and you said the poll that is being taken is not a public opinion poll.

MR. NESSEN: I would not even call it a poll, Rudy.

Q How can we conclude anything other than that this is just a delaying tactic to keep people off his back a little while?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard anybody raise that until you did. I know what the President's purpose is and I know how this fits into his process and I know how important he feels it is to get the leaders and representatives of Republicans to indicate who they would like to be their --

Q Ron, did the President promise the Mississippi leaders that he would not pick a liberal as a running mate?

MR. NESSEN: I think he said in exactly the words that he has used publicly and that is that the criteria are, number one, the person he picks will have to be totally capable of assuming the Presidency; and secondly, he said to the Mississippi delegates that the person would be compatible with him on a personal basis and in terms of his major views on the issues.

I heard it and I didn't hear any difference in the words he used than the words he used that very same day in talking publicly to reporters.

Q Can I pursue my question, or follow up on my question?

Q Did you listen in on the conversations with Reed on the telephone, and so forth?



MR. NESSEN: I heard his two-hour session with the Mississippi delegation.

Q I don't think you really responded to my question. The Reagan people, in effect, are saying that the President is not being as honest as their candidate is by declining to name his choice ahead of the Convention. In effect, the process that you are describing could have been begun a month ago very easily.

The President still could have come out and said who it was that he was picking on the basis of this advice, or whatever. You have repeatedly declined to say that the President would even be bound by the suggestions that he got. How do you respond to the Reagan criticism?

MR. NESSEN: I don't, Dick. I don't respond, but rather I tell you the process the President intend to follow and why.

Q Ron, could I ask you this: I gather that your statement that the results of this survey are not going to be made public applies not only prior to the Convention and during the Convention, but after the Convention. In other words, there are no plans to make these results public at any time; is that right?

MR. NESSEN: But Jim, I think if you think of this as some kind of poll or some kind of contest or --

Q I don't know what you call it.

MR. NESSEN: -- like the voting for the All Star Game, it is not that at all. It is an effort by the President to get to all these categories of people and ask their advice.

Q Right. I will call it an effort.

MR. NESSEN: He calls it consultation.

Q The results of the consultation effort will not ever be made public; is that right?

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, there is no intention to.

Q Then, the people who are taking part in the consultation effort will never know whether the person who had the highest number of mentions or the second highest, or at least a large number, was actually the person the President chose; is that right?

MORE

#551



MR. NESSEN: I think, based on what I have said over the last few days, which is that it is not a poll, it is not a contest, it is not a voting for the All Star Game, it is to seek suggestions from the leading Republicans.

Q They are never going to know whether the person with the largest number of suggestions or how many -- they are never going to know how many suggestion- the person he finally picks had; is that right?

MR. NESSEN: I think that follows from what we have said.

Q Then, how are they ever going to know that they had any part in this process at all, that it was not a complete charade? They might pick someone who got no suggestions at all, or very few.

MORE

#551



MR. NESSEN: As I told Bob Pierpoint on Saturday when he raised very much the same issue, I know of no justification to question the President's integrity to the degree that that question, I think, does.

Q Ron, what will become of these things when they come in? Are you going to have somebody sit and compile them, and put them on a list and put down the numbers for various candidates?

MR. NESSEN: I do not know what exact form a chart or graph will take, but --

Q Is he going to read them and add them up and throw them away or what?

MR. NESSEN: Burn them.

Let me find out exactly what his involvement will be, but they will certainly be compiled.

Q Ron, just what is he looking for? Does he want to see how broad some people's support is within different layers of the Party? Is he looking for names that he has not thought of himself?

MR. NESSEN: I think both of those certainly as well as other reasons.

Q What other reasons?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think the word he uses which is "consulting" is a good description, I think, to, as you say, have names brought to his attention which he might not otherwise have thought of, to get the degree of support that one possibility has over another, and these will also -- I mean, if the pattern is at all similar to the pattern at the time that he asked for suggestions when he named his present Vice President, people don't just turn in a list of five names.

Based on the meetings I have sat on lately at which people offer suggestions, they offer not only names, but they offer ideas of the general direction the President ought to go in, what role the Vice President ought to play in the campaign, and in the Administration and so forth.

So, it is more than just getting a list of five names and adding them up.

Q Ron, would you agree with the statement that in this consultation the President is looking for the sense of his Party with respect to a Vice Presidential choice?

MR. NESSEN: Among other things. I would think that would be one purpose of it.

Q How, then, will his party know whether he followed its sense?

MR. NESSEN: Well, again, I think that the President, of course, as I said the other day, will make the final choice after having been consulted very widely and having consulted very widely with the member delegates of his party.

Q It is conceivable that he will not follow the party's sense?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I think if you start from where I think you are starting from, which is that somehow the President is bound and determined to, as Tom said, add these up and throw them away and ignore them, I think, perhaps, you could reach that conclusion or reach the point where you could ask that question.

If you start from the point where I have seen the President starting from and from the point where I have seen him consulting verbally with people who come in, and if you start from the point where I know he is vitally interested in knowing what this cross section of people thinks, then I think you get to a different conclusion, which is why I think we probably are having trouble seeing eye to eye on the process.

Q I just wanted to ask you, is it not the case, then, that you and the President in effect are asking the Republican Party and the reporters and anybody else who is interested to take this on faith on his and your say-so?

MR. NESSEN: Again, Jim, I think we start from two different perspectives here. I think you perhaps are starting from the perspective of what is wrong with this thing, where is the catch here, where is the beginning?. I am starting from the point of view of having seen the President sit down with people and listen to them and see the people offer their ideas in a very serious and constructive way, because they believe that this person or that person or this direction or that direction is the best for the party to take this year.

Q You have seen that and we have not. Let me just ask you: Is there any way at all, any one thing whereby the Republican Party will ever know what the results of this consultation were?

MR. NESSEN: You mean in the sense of a tabulation of ---

Q I don't care, anything at all.

MR. NESSEN: -- the winner was so and so with so many votes and on down through a list like that?

Q Anything at all.

MORE

#551



MR. NESSEN: I do not anticipate, as I said all along, that we would put that out because the purpose of it is to provide advisory consultation or ideas to the President.

Q Ron, quite apart from the survey, a number of Mississippi delegates --

Q Did anybody from the HEW talk to the President yesterday about these deaths in Pennsylvania?

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe that the HEW people have talked directly to the President. I think the Domestic Council has made some inquiries and requested it be kept advised on the findings of the CDC.

Q What was the President told yesterday about that matter, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think what he was told was precisely what has been published, which is that there have been these deaths in Pennsylvania, that the State health authorities have asked the CDC to help find the cause and that is really about all that is known at the moment.

Q Ron, was there any check on whether or not it is safe for the President -- has anybody even asked whether it is safe for the President to go to Philadelphia after the American Legionnaires suffered their deaths and so on? Did anybody even bother to check whether it is safe for him to go?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure that question has come up, Dick.

Q I am not aware that it has come up, actually.

Q Ron, they are having a pretty big meeting up there right now.

Q Do you think with 18 people dead after attending a convention in that same city that this matter is going to be looked into before --

MR. NESSEN: Well, the matter is being looked into by the people who are best qualified to look into it.

Q No, with respect to whether it is safe for the President to go.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think you can make that determination and I don't want to even leave the impression that that is a burning, active issue at the moment. I mean, the President is going to Philadelphia.

Q He is not going to eat there, is that it?

MR. NESSEN: The CDC at the request of the State authorities is looking into the cause of these deaths.

Q You don't think it would be a good idea to close Philadelphia like they used to? (Laughter)

Q Ron, is the CDC examining the possibility of whether this might be swine flu?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is, and I really should not speak for the CDC -- but at the moment, there is no known evidence that this is the swine flu, but that is only to say that the CDC is in the middle of or in the first day of an investigation to find out what it is.

Q Ron, late last week, were some of the papers of former President Nixon removed from the Executive Office Building storage and placed in a depository in Suitland, Maryland?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that that was done last week. I know that a month or so ago there was some movement that the court directed for the purpose of making room, I think, but that was a while back, a month or two ago, if I remember. I have a vague recollection that that happened.

Q Ron, movement of what?

MR. NESSEN: Of some of the stored materials over in the EOB.

Q And the court directed that to make room?

MR. NESSEN: I assume so.

Q Or did the White House request it?

MR. NESSEN: The White House does not have anything to do with the papers. It is the GSA.

Q Would that include tapes, too, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: Tom, I don't know any of the details; I just have the vague recollection of having heard that.

Q Can we find out what the details are?

MR. NESSEN: I think the GSA can probably help you with that, Helen.



Q Ron, if the President is seeing all these people about the Vice Presidency now and talking to them and taking their views, why doesn't he give an appointment to Congressman Railsback of Illinois, who wants to talk to him about some Vice Presidential nominees?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am sure that Tom Railsback has certainly been solicited by Congressman Rhodes for his views and --

Q No, Mr. Railsback asked last week to have an appointment with the President for himself and one or two others.

MR. NESSEN: I had not heard that, but I will look into it.

Q Would you check on that and see if he is going to be given a chance to come down and help the President?

MR. NESSEN: I will look into it.

Q Ron, to follow up Jim's first question about your role in this, Editor and Publisher Magazine in a two-page spread on Jody Powell quotes him as saying that he and Governor Carter have discussed the White House Press Secretary's role "usually after reading about an incident involving the Press Secretary dealing with the press."

Powell is also quoted as saying the following: "There should be more frequent press conferences to take the tension out of the relationship between the President and the press. The feeling by many reporters that a Press Secretary is only feeding them bits and crumbs must be eliminated."

What is your feeling about such a statement?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any particular feeling.

Q Can you imagine Jody Powell forbidding reporters from watching Governor Carter board a helicopter?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any particular view on it, Les.

Q Will the President look over Connally's file in relation to Watergate before he makes any decision on the Vice Presidency?

MR. NESSEN: Well, Helen, the stage that the selection process is in now is to receive a lot of suggestions and the second or next stage when we get to it, I will give you some details on how that works.

Q The President said in two interviews that an FBI check on his part for a political person would be illegal.

MR. NESSEN: He has been advised by the Attorney General that that is not a proper function of the FBI.

Q Now, you didn't quite conclude or I didn't understand your conclusion to my first question about the Connally file. You say now the stage is to get suggestions. Then what will happen, exactly?

MR. NESSEN: We will let you know when we get there.

Q You will let me know when you get to the point of Connally's file?

MR. NESSEN: When we get to the point of what comes after collecting all of the suggestions.

Q That is very vague.

Q Ron, does the President have any plans to ask prospective running mates for a detailed report on their health and their financial situation as Governor Carter did?

MR. NESSEN: Well, as I say, after we get through with the stage of getting ideas and names, the President will go on to the next stage of his selection process and I will tell you the details of that when we get there. I will get you that when we get there.

Q Ron, why does the President not say now whether he will announce his Vice Presidential choice before the Convention?

MR. NESSEN: The President has said he will announce his choice at the appropriate time.

Q I know, but I am asking why he has taken that view since the Reagan forces have already announced their choice and there has been a lot of flak about that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know about the flak part, but I know that this is the President's procedure that he now has launched and is well underway, and it will continue.

Q Sort of a secrecy proceeding, that he won't tell what he is planning to do?

MR. NESSEN: I would say that probably you would get a pretty stiff argument from some folks who would say it is an amazingly open procedure of asking over 5,000 people to suggest --

Q But not telling what he plans to do with that or answer it?

MR. NESSEN: Names and ideas.

THE PRESS: Thank you.



AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:10 A.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 24, 1974

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: This is my first briefing, and since I hope I am among friends, we have taken down the bullet-proof podium and put up something simpler.

Before we start, let me tell you there is a photo session in the Oval Office at 12:30 with the Patrolman of the Year and ten runner-up patrolmen, and we probably are not going to be through here, although I hoped we would be, but probably won't. Somebody will take the pool in. The pool has been posted and they will go out the side door and into the Oval Office.

There is a lot of stuff today, so I want to go through some of it before we get to the questions.

We are not going to have any radical changes here for the time being, but we have started one new thing this morning which you have probably noticed, and that is that we gave you a packet of routine announcements, nominations, appointments and so forth. We plan to do this on a regular basis as close to 11:00 as we can every morning.

These materials will be for immediate release, so when you get them you can go and file your stories. Obviously you may have some questions on them, which we will answer in the main briefing. This will give you a chance to get started on the routine stuff while you are waiting for me.

I am sorry about this morning, but I do feel that you would probably rather wait a little while for me and make sure I know the answers to your questions than to have me come out here on a timetable and not know the answers. So that is going to be the policy we are going to follow.

MORE

#34



Q Can I ask a question about these routine announcements?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q On these things we have here that the President accepted --

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute, Les. I thought you mean the procedure of the routine announcements. Let me get through all the stuff and then we will go to questions. There is a lot of stuff to do.

Q Ron, will you still be trying for a briefing at 11:00?

MR. NESSEN: We may want to officially move the briefing to 11:30, but we haven't decided yet. We will have the packet of routine announcements at 11:00.

Now let me go to the announcements of today.

We made an announcement yesterday late in the afternoon when we got back from Detroit, and I want to call your attention to it in case some of you were not around to see it.

We released the text of the President's letters to the Chief of State of Honduras, and a review of the assistance that the United States has made available to the victims of the hurricane there. I am not going to take time to read that letter, but it is available and there is also some background material available.

Quickly through the President's schedule for today which is posted, he was in the office at 8:00. He met with the staff members. Then he went over to speak at the Washington Hilton, as most of you know, to the International Chiefs of Police.

The staff members who met with him today included General Haig, General Scowcroft, and myself.

At 12:30 the President will greet the Patrolman of the Year and the runners-up. This year's Patrolman of the Year is Paul Skillings of St. Paul Minnesota.

Have we got a list of the others posted? We will have if we haven't already done it.

MORE

#34



At 3:30 this afternoon, the President will meet with the Advisory Committee on Federal Pay. Now this is a meeting at which the Advisory Committee will present to the President the recommendations on the amount of the Federal employees' pay increase to go into effect October 1. This is provided for by law.

This evening at 5:30 the President will host a reception in the Residence for about 150 aides to the Republican Members of the House and Senate. The President wanted to host this reception to recognize the important work that these Congressional aides do in the Government process.

Of course he worked on the Hill for 25 years, so he knows the value of these aides.

MORE



Q Is that open coverage?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have that yet.

At 5:30 this afternoon, the President will meet with the British Foreign Minister, James Callaghan. He is here in the United States, as you know, to attend the U.N. General Assembly session. This will give the President and the Foreign Minister an opportunity to exchange views on American and European relations and other international interests of common concern. Secretary Kissinger had breakfast with the Foreign Minister this morning.

Q Excuse me, Ron, that is so fast we can't take it down.

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry. I thought you had this.

Mr. Callaghan is in the United States for the U.N. General Assembly. It will give them an opportunity for an exchange of views on American and European relations and other international interests of common concern.

Q What was the time on that?

MR. NESSEN: I am used to trying to get all the news in in 30 seconds, that is why I read so fast. (Laughter)

Q What was the time on that meeting?

MR. NESSEN: 5:30.

Q Doesn't that conflict with the reception?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, 4:30. I misread my own schedule. It is 4:30.

Q Which one?

MR. NESSEN: The Callaghan one. I have a couple of personnel announcements this morning.

Q On Haig and Rumsfeld?

MR. NESSEN: One of the better kept secrets in Washington, I think, only after my own appointment.

The President asked me to announce today that he will appoint Donald Rumsfeld as Assistant to the President to coordinate White House operations. Ambassador Rumsfeld will have Cabinet rank, and he will assume his duties here on Friday. The President is very pleased that an individual of Donald Rumsfeld's stature and wide-ranging experience has agreed to take on this important assignment in the White House.



Prior to becoming the U.S. permanent representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in February of 1973, he served from 1969 to 1973 as Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, as Counsellor to the President, and as Director of the Cost of Living Council.

From 1962 to 1969 he was a Member of Congress from the 13th district of Illinois, and we will have a more complete biography of Don Rumsfeld for you.

Q Ron, are you avoiding purposely calling him Chief of Staff?

MR. NESSEN: Let me finish the formal announcements and we will get into it if you have questions about the appointment. I can't imagine that you would.

For the time being, Donald Rumsfeld will continue to serve as NATO Ambassador. The President plans to nominate a successor at NATO very soon, but I don't have a name for you today.

As Assistant to the President, Mr. Rumsfeld will succeed General Alexander Haig, who will be departing this week for a short vacation, and then he takes over command of American and NATO forces in Europe.

I have one announcement in connection with the Press Office staff. I want to tell you that I have only been here a few days, and I am just learning the operation, or trying to learn the operation. I don't have a full grasp of it yet, but all the people in the Press Office have been asked to stay in place.

I am announcing the President's appointment of Tom DeCair as Assistant Press Secretary to the President, and I couldn't agree with it more.

Q What was he before?

MR. NESSEN: Actually, this appointment of Tom was made about three weeks ago, and we have had some other problems here, and didn't get around to announcing it until today.

Q Ron, when you say all the people on the press staff, we were told by Jerry terHorst that that includes a certain clergyman.

MR. NESSEN: Could we get to that later, Les? I will talk to you on that later, but let me finish the formal announcements.

MORE

#34



Q Could you do it before the pool leaves?
I would like to be here for the answer.

MR. NESSEN: Tom is going to work as kind of a personal assistant to me. He is going to deal with special projects and long-range planning and, for the time being, since I am trying to get a hold of the office and the paperwork involved, and he has been around a while, he is helping out to administer the paperwork and administer the office.

Q He is a Diane Sawyer?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he doesn't look like Diane, and that's the problem. (Laughter)

One other announcement. The President is accepting with sincere regret the resignation of Jerry W. Friedheim as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. In accepting the resignation, the President expressed his thanks to Jerry for his valued counsel to three Secretaries of Defense during his five years as Deputy Assistant Secretary, and then Assistant Secretary of Defense.

I think you probably all know Jerry, and he is joining AMTRAK in their public affairs department. I do not have a successor to announce at this time.

Are there any questions?

Yes, Helen?

Q When exactly does General Haig leave?
And the President is high in his praise of Ambassador Rumsfeld. Does he have anything to say about the service of General Haig?

MR. NESSEN: General Haig is still here, and is only going on his short vacation before he goes over to the new duties, and I am sure you will hear something from the President about General Haig before he leaves.

Q Will there be a farewell ceremony?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have any plans yet to announce.

Q Ron, are you deliberately avoiding Chief of Staff? Will Don Rumsfeld be the Chief of Staff without portfolio?

MR. NESSEN: Don is going to have the responsibility for the administration and the coordination functions that General Haig has performed for the President.



Q Will he be a funnel like General Haig has been?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by a funnel.

Q Will everyone have to go through him before they get to the President?

MR. NESSEN: I think you probably know that this President wants to have access to a lot of people and does have access to a lot of people. He gets advice from a number of his senior counsellors and advisers and he gets advice from outsiders, too.

But there does need to be a coordination of the activities of the senior advisers and all the senior advisers are equals. Also, the coordinator has to make sure that best use is made of the President's time.

Q Ron, I am not sure what you mean when you say he will continue to serve as NATO Ambassador, even after he comes here Friday. Is he going to commute between Brussels and Washington?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think he will have to go back to Brussels at some point because, as you know, Ambassadors have to have some time to sort of say farewell in an orderly way, and he will also have to make sure his successor understands the job, and to brief his successor. The successor should be named shortly.

Q Ron, can I rephrase the question? I think the transition plan indicated that the new Alexander Haig, if you will, should not have the centralization of power in his desk that Haig and Haldeman had before him. Now, will Rumsfeld have the power that his two predecessors did?

MR. NESSEN: I think Don is going to organize that job, obviously, in his own way. It is a Ford White House now; it is not a Nixon White House. Don and the President will work out how they want the job organized.

Q If I could ask these questions I referred to before. First of all, you have different degrees -- the President today accepted with regret and grateful appreciation -- and here's one with deep regrets for dedicated service. Here's one, a special sense of regret, with regret, and then with regret and appreciation.

Is there any significance or is this just the writing techniques of variety?

MR. NESSEN: There is no significance.

Q There is no significance. The second question, then, is all of the people on the press staff -- Jerry terHorst -- we have had two Press Secretaries that say that Father McLaughlin is going. Is he still here as of this morning?

MR. NESSEN: Wait. You have to add a third Press Secretary who says Father McLaughlin is going.

Q Could you give us a date because we have been told this 11 times. You know, I would really like to ask the last Father McLaughlin question. When is he going?

MR. NESSEN: I heard you say that to terHorst a couple of weeks ago.

Q I know, but McLaughlin is here and terHorst is gone. (Laughter)

McLaughlin's secretary said this morning there are no plans for him to leave. Now this leaves something of a credibility gap.

Ron, if you could give us a date, I would be so grateful.

MR. NESSEN: I would like to make you grateful, Les, but I can't give you a date. He will be leaving soon.

Q Well, Ron, levity aside, what is the problem?

MR. NESSEN: He will be leaving soon, Jim.

Q That is the problem? Can you elaborate on this for us at all, as to why there should be this difficulty or confusion, or whatever it is?

MORE

#34



MR. NESSEN: For guidance, obviously I have just come aboard here and I am trying to get ahold of the administration of the Press Office, which is quite large.

This is for guidance. What transpired before in terms of the tenure of McLaughlin and the others, I am now trying to find out, and as soon as I do find out, we can make some progress.

Q Ron, could you give us any idea of the frequency with which President Ford communicates with former President Nixon?

MR. NESSEN: There was a phone call last Tuesday, a week ago today, in the evening, from the former President to the President. It primarily dealt -- not in any deep or substantive way -- with foreign policy. The former President asked how were the SALT talks going, for instance, expressed his support for Henry Kissinger's continuation as Secretary of State, which President Ford said he agreed with.

It was a brief conversation, ten minutes or less, and as far as I can determine, that is the only time that the former President has called the President.

The President called Mr. Nixon about two days after he took office and that was a courtesy call. He received a message of congratulations from the former President after his initial speech to Congress and he returned the call to thank him for the message of congratulations.

Q Was there any discussion Tuesday night about pardon in that conversation, or was it strictly dealing with foreign affairs?

MR. NESSEN: At the beginning of the conversation -- I don't want to get lost here now, because we have sort of stopped this process in the middle. Let me come back to that if I may.

We have talked of two phone conversations so far, right? Now, the third phone conversation -- and these three were all initiated by the President -- was a few minutes before he announced that Nelson Rockefeller was his choice for Vice President, and he called to inform the former President of that. Those are the three phone conversations initiated from this end.

MORE

#34



Q No, I think there were only two. The first one was from Nixon.

MR. NESSEN: I said a couple of days after he took office responding to the message of congratulations from the former President and telling him about Rockefeller. That was three from this end and one from the other end.

Q Was the message from Nixon telegraphed or telephoned? How did it arrive?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q What was the conversation about a couple of days after he took office?

MR. NESSEN: That was just a courtesy call.

Let me answer this. You don't care anymore for the answer to your question, right?

Q I would like to hear the answer to that.

MR. NESSEN: Well, let me answer that question. It is a fair question.

At the beginning of the conversation of last Tuesday, the former President made a brief passing reference to a reaction to the pardon.

Q Can you characterize what kind of reference was made by the former President?

MR. NESSEN: I really think that I shouldn't paraphrase or quote the former President's remarks.

Q Ron, did he thank him for the pardon?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to quote the former President's remarks.

Q Now, Ron, from these conversations, particularly this last conversation which the President had with Mr. Nixon, was the President able to make any kind of judgment on the former President, the state of his health?

Before, all he has said with regard to Mr. Nixon's health, all he has known, I guess he has gotten secondhand from the papers and so forth.

MORE

#34



He has had a firsthand conversation now. Has he been able to make any kind of assessment on the former President's health?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't ask.

Q Do I understand you correctly to say that there was no discussion between the two of them about the pardon itself, but only a reference to the reaction to the pardon?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q A general reaction or his personal reaction?

MR. NESSEN: You know I do want to stay away from even paraphrasing the former President's remarks and I think I will leave it the way we have left it.

Yes, Bill.

MORE



Q Ron, there seems to be a certain inconsistency here. You were perfectly willing to say that he asked about SALT specifically and foreign policy, but you are not willing to talk about it.

MR. NESSEN: Bill, I told you the subjects of the conversations. They were SALT, Kissinger, and a passing reference to the reaction to the pardon. I am not going to quote the former President's conversation. I am not going to quote the President's conversation either.

Q Does Mr. Nixon consider himself an adviser to the President on SALT and Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: I think you will have to ask the former President, Helen.

Q Well do you think he took his advice, or do you know whether he took his advice?

MR. NESSEN: What advice?

Q Ford, did he take Nixon's advice to keep Kissinger or something?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it was advice. I said he expressed support for Kissinger continuing.

Q When?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask the former President.

Q The timing was very interesting because the next day the President made a dramatic announcement before the U.N. that he was going to stay on.

Q Should we conclude from what you said about reaction that they were talking about general reaction?

MR. NESSEN: Bill, you know I am not a spokesman for the former President. We had some queries about this yesterday, and we made an effort to find out as much as we could, and I don't think we ought to get any deeper into quoting the former President.

Q Ron, to follow up Helen's question, you answered and said you will have to ask the former President. We are paying \$42,500 for a Press Secretary out there in San Clemente, and our colleagues have been left out in the 120° outside Annenberg's place. They have to jump on butlers and so forth.



Why, if we are paying \$42,500 a year for a Press Secretary named Ziegler are we not getting our money's worth? That is under President Ford's direction, Ron. Can you give us any clarification on that? Why isn't Ziegler doing the job of a Press Secretary, for which he is being paid, or somebody out there?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask Mr. Ziegler.

Q We can't get to Mr. Ziegler.

Q Ron, do you know if the former President in any of his conversations with President Ford complained, as some members of his staff have, about the treatment he is getting as a former President?

MR. NESSEN: I lost you there in the question.

Q Do you know whether former President Nixon complained in any of his conversations with President Ford about the treatment that he is getting as a former President? Some members of his staff have complained rather bitterly about it. Ziegler had something to say about it yesterday on television.

MR. NESSEN: Again, I don't want to be in the position of quoting the former President, but let me say that I don't know of any.

Q Ron, one of the leading candidates, or possible candidates, to run against Mr. Ford withdrew yesterday, and we tried all day yesterday to get Mr. Ford to address the subject of how he felt about Senator Kennedy's withdrawal. Have you been able to get anything out of him on that?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, is the courier plane continuing to go to San Clemente with briefing material for the former President?

MR. NESSEN: I think so.

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: Is the courier plane still taking the briefing material out to San Clemente, and the answer is I believe it is.

Q Ron, the first question is, did you ask the President for reaction or comment on the Ted Kennedy announcement, and my second question is, can you ask the question, during these four conversations did the President ask the ex-President on health and if the President recalls what the response was?

MORE

#34



MR. NESSEN: I will ask. And in response to your first question, I talked to him about the Kennedy withdrawal and he had no comment. I say no comment not in quotation marks, but he just didn't have any reaction to it.

Q Ron, if the President goes to California, is he likely to visit the former President in the hospital?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that.

Q Since Ken Clawson is on your staff, what was he doing in San Clemente last week?

MR. NESSEN: He is helping with the transition.

Q In what area?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, but I will try to find out.

Q Is he still on the White House payroll, and do you know how long he will remain?

MR. NESSEN: The answer to that is yes.

Q And do you know how long he will remain?

MR. NESSEN: I don't.

Q Ron, could you get some information for us on the procedures for briefing the former President, and how often this courier flight goes out, and why it is necessary to send a courier flight?

MR. NESSEN: I think Jack said last week they go out every week or ten days, is that right?

Q Is it a week or ten days?

MR. NESSEN: Whenever there are papers accumulated to send to him.

Q What kind of papers are these? Are these NSC, foreign policy documents, or what sort of papers are they?

MR. NESSEN: I thought all these questions had been answered last week. I may be wrong.

Q When Mr. Rumsfeld arrives --

Q I am sorry, but let him answer this, would you?



MR. NESSEN: The fact is that I don't know the answer.

Q Could you find out?

Q I think that is where we left it last week, that somebody was going to find out.

MR. NESSEN: How often do they go and what are they?

Q Yes, if they are just simply sending papers out, why couldn't they send them in the mail.

Q Ron, as long as you are making inquiries on that kind of thing, would you endeavor to find out how long this particular procedure is likely to continue? My memory is--although this kind of thing may have been done with former President Johnson--if a courier plane was used, it wasn't used very long, and after that, these things were done either by telephone calls or else at very rare intervals a staff member might go down to Texas.

The question is: How long do you plan to continue to use a plane to take out this material.

Q Ron, when is the President going to activate the Council on Wage and Price Stability? There was a report that he is going to name the administrator this week. Is that true?

MR. NESSEN: If you will give me a moment to leaf through my notes, I will see if I have an answer for you. We are going to try to get answers to things.

I think we will be ready to announce an Executive Director of the Council on Wage and Price Stability in the next few days, but I can't give you anything more on that at this time.

MORE

#34



Q Might that come during the economic summit Friday and Saturday, for instance in the opening remarks of the President to the assembled group, or anything like that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that, Jim. In the next few days, we hope.

Q Can we expect when Mr. Rumsfeld arrives that more former Nixon men will go out of the White House pretty fast? In other words, can we expect a faster house cleaning?

MR. NESSEN: They are each going to be handled on an individual basis.

Q Ron, going back to what you said on the day you were named, which is that you would never intentionally lie or never intentionally or knowingly deceive, what sort of understanding do you have with the President on that? What sort of guidelines or assurances or whatever you want to call them, can you tell us, that he has given you, and therefore us, on that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, all of the things I said to you on that day I had said to him in my conversation with him on the day before. And since he offered me the job after hearing all those things, I assumed that he understood why I was taking the job.

I must say, on a personal basis that in my four or five days here, I have not encountered any problem along that line and in fact I would say the access to the President and the other senior advisers is greater than I had anticipated. And they are, as far as I can tell, keeping me informed of all the major things going on here and, if I have questions, I am able to reach them without any problem and get my questions answered.

Q Ron, if this question has already been asked -- I wasn't here yesterday -- forgive me.

MR. NESSEN: I wasn't here yesterday, either. Nobody was here yesterday. We were all in Detroit.

Q Fine. Then I can ask it. Based on the words of Secretary Kissinger yesterday and the President yesterday, certain Arab newspapers and other sources are reading between the lines and extracting what they call war talk. I wonder if you would address that.



MR. NESSEN: Would you say the last part of your question beginning with the war talk again?

Q Yes, certain Arab newspapers are reading between the lines of the Secretary's and the President's speeches yesterday and interpreting between the lines to discover what they claim to be war threat or war talk by the leaders of this country, and I wonder if you would comment on that.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think the President's speech and also Kissinger's speech speak for themselves. I would say that the President's speech and the Secretary's speech were candid and very practical speeches which address the realities facing the world.

In connection with the reports you talk about, I do want to call your attention to the paragraphs in the President's speech in which he said that the theme of this Administration's foreign policy is international cooperation and that in the nuclear age there is no rational alternative to international cooperation.

Q As long as we are on that subject, Ron, Secretary Kissinger in his speech in New York said again, as he had before, that the world faced the possibility of a depression and he specifically used that word "depression" as he has at least once before, and he used it several times.

But the President told us at his last press conference that there would be no depression. Can you reconcile those?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall what the context of the Secretary's reference to depression was.

Q It was that if the situation confronting us on oil prices and inflation resulting from oil prices was not solved, the world faced the possibility of a depression, or words to that effect.

MR. NESSEN: I think we will have to let the Secretary's speech stand by itself, Jim.

MORE

#34



Q By itself, without reference to the President's press conference?

MR. NESSEN: In those references that you made, I think the Secretary obviously said what he wanted to say. The President believes there won't be a depression. As I recall the question to the President -- I don't recall exactly the question, and I am not sure I see the conflict between the two.

Q Some people were talking about depression and the President said there would be no depression in the United States. My question is: Based on the fact that even though they may have been talking from different viewpoints, the image goes out of the Administration speaking with two voices on this quite important matter, and I am wondering if there is a way in which you choose to try to reconcile the Administration's two voices?

MR. NESSEN: I don't accept your premise that it is speaking with two voices, but if we can say anything that will help you reconcile what you see as a difference, I will try to find it for you.

Q What participation does the President have in the energy meeting at Camp David this weekend, and will that be open for coverage and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President is not going to the meeting at Camp David, and this is a meeting that Secretary Kissinger is having, and I am going to have to ask you to contact the State Department for the arrangements on the meeting.

Q All I wanted to know was, is he going to attend?

Q Will the President be sitting in for the entire economic summit all day, both days?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q All day, both days?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, Saturday is a half day, as you probably know, winding up at approximately 12:30 or 1 o'clock.

Q When will the agenda for the economic summit be given to us?

MR. NESSEN: It will be out in a day or so.

Q Will the same people handle this that handled the pre-summits?



Q Ron, during the Arab oil embargo, very strong words were used by both Secretary Kissinger and then President Nixon, and Secretary of Defense Schlesinger about the consequences to the world economy, and even possible military consequences. Why does this President now think that strong words about depression and about war will work on the Arabs now when strong words did not work before on the embargo?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that, Mark.

Q Ron, the Times reports this morning rather flatly that President Ford has chosen a gent named Albert Reese, a Princeton University economist, to be the Executive Director of the Council on Wage and Price Stability, is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't deny or confirm that name, Pete. We will have an announcement in the near future, possibly this week.

Q Ron, a week or two ago the President asked Dr. Lukash to keep him posted on the condition of Mr. Nixon's health. Can you tell us whether there has been an updated report for the President from Dr. Lukash, and can you say anything about it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Russ, whether there has been.

Q Back on the oil subject, does the President have in mind some kind of retaliation that the oil producing countries failed to cooperate in the way he would like?

MR. NESSEN: I think we will just stick with the words of the President's speech.

Q Ron, specifically, is he considering the possibility of asking the other industrialized nations to raise the prices of their armaments and their, what you might call heavy exports, heavy industrial exports to the Arab nations; steel, construction steel, that kind of thing?

Is he considering asking the other industrialized nations to join him in a concerted program of raising these prices if oil prices don't come down?

Q What was the question, roughly?

MR. NESSEN: Roughly, the question was about various kinds of retaliation that might be considered if the oil prices --

MORE

#34



Q I didn't use retaliation, I merely asked --

MR. NESSEN: I thought you did. I certainly don't want to use it. I thought you had used it.

Q I think it was the previous question. I merely wanted to ask whether the President is considering asking the other industrialized nations to join in our effort to raise prices of armaments and heavy industrial exports to the Arab nations if oil prices are not brought down.

MR. NESSEN: I think again I will have to call your attention, Jim, to the portion of the President's speech and the Secretary's speech in which they both called for cooperation rather than confrontation.

Q Ron, are you trying to get away from the implications of the possibility of a confrontation which was loud and clear in both speeches and has aroused a lot of world concern, I would say, in terms of what are their intentions? Are you ruling out war?

Q Rule out war on your first day, will you?
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: That is a great start.

Q It is very, very strong language. The President said he was using doomsday language.

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I think we have to stick with the language that the President used and that the Secretary used and the additional comments that I have made here today that it was a candid and practical speech addressing the realities of the world. At the same time, the President and the Secretary both emphasized the need for cooperation because there is no alternative to it.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:48 P.M. EDT)

