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N E W S   C O N F E R E N C E

#560

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:05 A.M. CDT

AUGUST 16, 1976

MONDAY

(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. NESSEN: I guess we will have the regular White House briefing rules for this, which is no tape or film, because I really don't have that much to say, anyhow.

For the President's schedule this morning, one is a compilation of, I think, about 36 pieces of legislation that the President has signed. Most of them are private relief bills. I think the only two that will be of much interest to you are the Pennsylvania Avenue development project and the Transportation Department appropriation. There is a little package being passed out right now, even as we speak.

Q Will we receive as delivered texts of statements that the President makes, such as the one to the welcoming committee last night?

MR. NESSEN: As far as we know, they are as delivered texts. We made an as delivered of that, and I also saw an as delivered of his remarks to the Presidentials this morning.

Q Where are they?

MR. NESSEN: The press release table is in the back of the room. You will find it all in the back there.

The other press release handed out today was by Bill Greener, and the PFC, and it has to do with the PFC officials and Cabinet officers and Governors and so forth and their assignments to talk to various State delegations. Bill is around here somewhere.

Q We haven't gotten that one, either, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: Ask Greener where it is. Maybe it is just in the process of being handed out.

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Q Is this being filmed, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly hope not. I said a while back that we will have regular White House briefing rules.

Q Then can we have the lights turned off?

MR. NESSEN: I have been trying to get them turned off.

Q Ron, let me ask about the PFC releases. Are they going to be available in here on the White House release desk?

MR. NESSEN: There is a table back there of people from the PFC that will be manned all the time and there is a table for the White House Press Office that will be manned all the time and their press releases will be available here.

Just to briefly go through the schedule, I think you have all seen the schedule for yesterday and for today.

The President's meetings last night concluded at about 10:30. He went to bed at 11:15. This morning the President was up at 6:45. You know about the meeting with the Hawaii delegates and Guam at 8:30. Then the President has made the trip over to see the Presidentials at the Trade Mart.

This afternoon, he will be meeting with some delegates.

Q From what States?

MR. NESSEN: I will try and get that for you after the meetings are held, Helen. It is somewhat uncertain now because we don't know exactly what time the morning session of the Convention is going to conclude.

Q At home or away?

MR. NESSEN: It will be the visiting delegates.

Q Are they uncommitted, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't like to characterize them. They, I think, fall into different categories.

Q They are not all from one place, are they?  
They are from various places?

MR. NESSEN: They are various, from various  
States.

Q Who are they?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a complete list. I  
am going to try to get that for you after the meetings  
conclude.

Q Ron, are some of them Reagan delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I can't characterize them for you  
right now, Gaylord. I will try and get more information  
after the meetings are held.

Q What time will the meetings begin?

MR. NESSEN: It all depends on what time the  
morning session concludes.

Q What is the purpose, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: To talk to them, answer their  
questions and hear their views on the Vice Presidential  
nominee and so forth.

Q They must be either uncommitted or  
Reagan delegates, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to characterize  
them ahead of time, but I will try and get more  
details after they are through.

MORE

Q Can you give us an indication of what the President said to the Hawaiian delegation?

Q Question.

MR. NESSEN: Phil asked what the President said to the Hawaiian delegation. He opened with a statement of about two or three minutes in which he talked about his record and his ability to win in November and pointed to the latest polls as an example of his already narrowing the gap.

Q How about explaining that?

MR. NESSEN: Then, he took questions for about 15 or 20 minutes on a whole array of subjects.

Q Did they ask about the Vice Presidential choice?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Did he talk to them about it?

MR. NESSEN: He was asked about it.

Q What did he say?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't say anything more than we have said publicly, Gaylord.

Q There are three uncommitted delegates in the Hawaiian delegation. Were any of them snared as a result of the President's efforts?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask them.

Q Ron, will the President be meeting with these delegates individually or in groups this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: In small groups.

Q Ron, was there any talk about the polls showing the President closing the gap?

MR. NESSEN: As I understand it, there was a Harris Poll out this morning in some newspapers which indicates --

Q Can you give us the figures from that?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, I am not going to give it from here obviously, Walt.

Q Why not?

Q Will there be three or four meetings this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: It is hard to say because the exact schedule at the Convention and when it will break up is not certain, so it will depend partly on that.

Q These were invited by the President to come see him?

MR. NESSEN: And some have asked for an opportunity to see him.

Q Will there be some there who had not asked to see him but who he asked to see?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know exactly how it breaks down between the two groups.

Q But there are some of each?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding, yes.

Q Is it likely there will be an announcement after the delegates come out -- a trophy-type announcement?

MR. NESSEN: It is not intended, no.

Q We were told by some of the Hawaiian delegation that Ford said something about it is now down to five or six people?

MR. NESSEN: No, he didn't, Bob. What he said was, as he continues to review the results of the solicitation of views that he made, that five or six of the possible Vice Presidential running mates were sort of bunched at the top. They got most of the recommendations. And then, there was a scattering support for a lot of others. That is the point he made.

Q Who were those five or six?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't name them.

Q Will you?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Did he speak to Governor Connally last night?

MR. NESSEN: He did not, to my knowledge.

Q Will he be meeting with these five or six today or tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge, he won't.

Q Ron, does that or does it not necessarily mean that he will choose one from those top five or six?

MR. NESSEN: It doesn't necessarily mean that.

Q Then why did he say that? I mean, what is the point? He wasn't saying it was narrowing down?

MR. NESSEN: No, it certainly wasn't. It was in response to a question, Helen.

Q Two of the delegates quoted the President as saying that his survey had boiled this thing down to five or six. He didn't identify them, true, but they quoted the President as saying, the survey boiled it down to five or six.

MR. NESSEN: A survey -- well, look, Phil, let me make a point because I think it will be a valid point for really until Thursday. That is this: Specifically on this morning's meeting, what the President said was what I told Bob, which is, in the survey he took, five or six people attracted the big majority of the recommendations and the other recommendations were scattered among a lot of other candidates.

Now, on the Vice Presidential question, in general, there is only one person who really knows where the President stands in his selection and that is the President. He hasn't shared it with any members of his staff or any friends or delegates at all. That is exactly where it stands.

Now, anybody who comes -- you know, all of you have been to conventions before and know the high rumor quotients in a convention. There are a lot of them this week and a lot have to do with the Vice Presidency. But anybody who tells you they know who it is or they know who the five or six are, or they know who is in or who is out, or who is up or who is down, is either number one, deliberately misleading you -- and it is probably a better story to find out why they are doing that -- or they are just sort of hoping you will think they know more than they really know. But the only person who really knows isn't talking, and that is the President.

Q We don't need this lecture every day.

MR. NESSEN: I was hoping by giving it today I wouldn't have to give it every day.

Q But the President said there were five or six that were top heavy.

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean "top heavy"?

Q Isn't he going to take that into consideration?

MR. NESSEN: He is going to take all of the recommendations into consideration.

Q Would you kindly read the list of people who are under consideration for the Vice Presidency?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Why not?

MR. NESSEN: Because the President has indicated that he wants to handle it this way, and he is.

Q What is the status, official or unofficial, of all the lists that we have been reading of people who are under consideration? Does that have no standing at all, those lists?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by "standing".

Q There have been various press lists compiled of people being considered.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Why can't the White House, in the interests of eliminating rumors, put out a list of people who have been asked for financial reports? Why is that such a big deal?

MR. NESSEN: Look, we can talk all day about the Vice Presidential lists. I don't have anything new to say about it. You know, lots of questions are going to produce nothing new.

Q Ron, the survey that has been taken, someone is tabulating the results. Who is tabulating it?

MR. NESSEN: Some members of the President's staff have been assigned to tabulate it.

Q What I am trying to find out is how many people are involved in this for the President? Is it Cheney who is involved in tabulating this?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have said that Dick is involved in compiling the information.

Q Does it go beyond that?





MR. NESSEN: There are some others obviously involved.

Q Ron, who are those people?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to name them.

Q Ron, you say a survey. I am not sure I understand what you mean. Is this X number of people --

MR. NESSEN: This is the 5,000 or so people, I forget the exact number of people who were solicited, to send in their recommendations.

Q Last night, either you or John said there would be someone from the President Ford Committee would be here to brief this afternoon. Is that still the plan?

MR. NESSEN: Jim Baker has indicated that he is tied up with other matters. He won't be over here in the middle of the day, but he may get over here later in the afternoon. Bill will post the time when he will get over here.

Q I would like to ask a question -- one I would have asked at that subsequent briefing. Last night, I was told that President Ford delegate hunters were polled to see if they would be able to beat 16-C. Can you give us the result of that poll?

MR. NESSEN: I will get somebody from the PFC to give it to you.

Q Ron, who is going to nominate President Ford?

MR. NESSEN: It hasn't been decided yet.

Q When will it be decided?

MR. NESSEN: Later in the week.

Q Isn't that odd it hasn't been decided who is going to nominate him?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not odd to me.

Q Ron, has he asked Ford headquarters to go ahead and start writing speeches?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Phil. Not that I have heard of.

Q Ron, Reedy said the President would be talking with some party leaders today on his ideas of Vice Presidential selections.

MR. NESSEN: Some of these delegates who are coming in --

Q Party leaders?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think -- well, the delegates are delegates.

Q Are any party leaders coming in to talk to him today?

MR. NESSEN: It is not on his schedule, no.

Q Will you tell us who he met with last night? You were supposed to put out a list of that, and I never saw it.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't bring my complete list with me, but as I said last night, you can figure out who it is. It is Morton, Spencer and --

Q No, please tell us.

MR. NESSEN: I am telling you.

Q We can't make it up.

MR. NESSEN: Where is that list I had of the attendees? Ask John for that list of people who went up.

Q While you are looking for that, you also mentioned that he had the Guam delegation?

MR. NESSEN: The Guam delegation and Hawaii. They were together.

Q They were together?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q So, what he said to the Hawaii delegates, he also said to the Guam people?

MR. NESSEN: It was one meeting, one caucus.

Just to finish my announcements, I was up to this afternoon on the schedule.



This evening you know the President will be going to the reception that Congressman Rhodes is giving. It is at the Radisson Muehlebach.

Q Is that only pool?

MR. NESSEN: Travel pool; no coverage inside.

Q What time is he coming back?

MR. NESSEN: At 6:30 he will return.

Q Is it a private party?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Then the President will have dinner upstairs and watch television this evening.

Q Is it a private party?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q What happens after that?

MR. NESSEN: Then the President will have dinner upstairs and watch television.

Q He is not going out tonight?

MR. NESSEN: He doesn't plan to go out tonight.

Q Is he seeing anyone tonight?

MR. NESSEN: Various staff people.

Q No more delegates?

MR. NESSEN: No, not tonight.

Q What will he do tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: We will be posting the full schedule for tomorrow --

Q What is on television tonight? Kojak, M\*A\*S\*H\*, and what else?

MR. NESSEN: We will post the full schedule for tomorrow about 6:00 this evening.

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Q Ron, is he meeting with any full delegations? Is he meeting with the Wyoming delegation this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: It is not my understanding that he is meeting with the full delegation, no.

Q What else is he doing besides having dinner and watching television? He could have stayed home and watched television. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: He will watch the Convention on television, and he will have his various managers with him, and he will be in touch with the trailer at the Arena, so he can relay to them his decisions on any matters.

Q Can you discuss the way they are surveying the Vice Presidential thing? Are they just ranking them at the top, or possibly pulling out the good points or bad points, that sort of thing?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't think we are going to elaborate anymore on the Vice Presidential process until it is time to name him.

Q Is that survey completed? Have they gone through all the responses?

MR. NESSEN: They are just about through all the responses now.

Q Do you have a number?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: Have all the responses solicited been tabulated, and I said they are just about finished now. Can I give a number, a total number of responses? I don't have that.

Q Ron, let me ask you about the meeting with the Hawaiian delegates this morning. Did the President indicate that his choice would be from among those five or six?

MR. NESSEN: No, he didn't

Q Did you talk to the President about the Reagan people trying to push hard on the Convention floor for naming the Vice Presidential running mate early? Will you all strongly oppose that? What will be your stance? You opposed it in the rules, of course.

MR. NESSEN: We are pleased with the outcome of the vote in the Rules Committee.

Q So, what will be your position on the floor if they do get it to the floor?

MR. NESSEN: We don't favor any change in the decision made by the Rules Committee.

Q So, you will do everything you can to keep that from coming about?

MR. NESSEN: We favor the stand taken by the Rules Committee.

Q Ron, in regard to Rules Committee votes, have you made a count of what the vote would be if it came to the floor of the Convention?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to forecast the vote on the floor.

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Q Do you all have any reading on how many votes the Reagan people would be able to get on the floor? Are you confident you can win on the floor?

MR. NESSEN: I will check to get someone from the PFC to give you a better rundown on that.

Q Ron, can you tell us whether the President personally read over the keynote speech of Senator Baker that he will deliver tonight?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q Ron, while we are on that, will an advance text be available of that?

MR. NESSEN: I will check. I haven't heard of it.

Q At breakfast this morning with reporters, Rog Morton said that chief White House speechwriters had edited the keynote speech of Senator Baker and have deleted what he felt were extraneous and offensive references to Watergate. My question is, is it the proper role of a White House speechwriter to be editing the speech of a Senator who is delivering the keynote speech at a Republican election Convention?

MR. NESSEN: I hadn't heard of it before and I don't know the details of what took place.

Q Do you know that Mr. Gergen has not edited it, or has edited it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I hadn't heard of it until you just --

Q You won't comment on it in any way?

MR. NESSEN: I just heard of it for the first time.

Q Ron, when do you expect the President will make his first appearance on the Convention floor?

MR. NESSEN: On the Convention floor?

Q When do you expect him to go over there the first time?

MR. NESSEN: As I indicated last week, the plan is for the President to go Thursday night and accept the nomination.

Q You don't think there is any chance he might go before that?

MR. NESSEN: I know of no plans for that.

Q Ron, are there any plans for a meeting between the President and Governor Reagan before the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: None that I know of.

Q Ron, is any meeting set up for afterwards, or any arrangements on how they will get together afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: I am sure that the President will want to see and talk to Governor Reagan after the nomination is decided and among other things, get his view on the Vice Presidential choice. I think the President said that last weekend, but I don't have any exact details to give you today.

Q I am not talking about the survey. I just want to know the number of persons being considered.

MR. NESSEN: We are not going to name it.

Q What is your delegate count today?

MR. NESSEN: Jim Baker will be here sometime this afternoon and bring you up-to-date on the delegate count.

Q On the one hand, you warn people to stay away from rumors. On the other hand, you are asked perfectly legitimate questions which you have every reason to answer but you just stand up there and won't answer them.

MR. NESSEN: The President is in the process of picking his Vice Presidential running mate. And when he has done it, we will announce the name and then afterward, we will help reconstruct how he reached that decision.

Q Ron, none of us are asking who the nominee is, we are not trying to break into the President's own personal process. We are asking you to confirm things that have been in the public press, the number of people, their names, that kind of thing. We are not breaking into the Presidential process. We are asking you legitimate questions and we are unable to understand why you won't respond to them.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I just don't have anything further to say today on the Vice Presidential process.

Q I see the President is citing these polls. Does he believe in polls?

MR. NESSEN: You know we don't talk about the polls when they are down and we are not going to talk about them when they are up.

Q But you are talking about them.

MR. NESSEN: I was asked what he told the Hawaii delegation, and I told you what he told the Hawaii delegation, but I am not going into a long thing about polls here because then you would say I only talk about the good ones.

Q I asked you, does he believe in the polls?

MR. NESSEN: He believes that he is going to win the only poll that counts, which is November 2.

Let me just finish the day's activities.

We got up to tonight, where he is going to be up in his office monitoring the Convention, making whatever decisions have to be made. You know that Jack and Steve Ford went to the Convention this morning and Mrs. Ford and Susan went to the Convention slightly later. Mrs. Ford will go to the Convention tonight.

Bill Greener or Peter Kaye will let you know at what time they will have Jim Baker or somebody else from the PFC to give you some of the information you have been asking about, delegate counts and polls and so forth, surveys.

Q When will that be, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Bill and Peter indicate that it would be safe for you to take a lunch break now. It is not going to be before sometime in midafternoon. I will post at 6:00, which should give you the schedule for tomorrow and any other activities that we are announcing.

As you know, there is a desk in the back for the PFC and the White House. I am going to be in the office for most of the afternoon.

Q Will you brief every day at 11:00 or reasonably close?

MR. NESSEN: Reasonably close, yes.

Q During his sojourn in Kansas City, approximately how much of his time will the President spend on political business and how much of his time on managing the Government?

MR. NESSEN: He is spending a good deal of the morning on Government business, and obviously will spend whatever amount of time is required.

Q Can you clarify that further? Half and half?

MR. NESSEN: I can't quantify it any further.



Q Ron, didn't you say last week that the President would not be making up his mind on his Vice Presidential choice until Wednesday or so?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly not until Wednesday night or possibly Thursday morning.

Q Ron, who was there last night and I would like to know what strategists he is meeting with today.

Q Can you tell us anything about what they discussed at the strategists' meeting this morning at 8:00?

MR. NESSEN: Strategy.

Q Why is Mrs. Ford cancelling many of her appointments today?

MR. NESSEN: I wasn't aware that she was cancelling anything. She has a very full schedule. If you look at it, you will see that she is occupied almost every minute.

Q Why isn't she keeping that printed schedule?

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: John had some feeling that Mrs. Ford had cancelled portions of her schedule. My understanding is that she is at the Convention this morning and she will be there again tonight.

Q Ron, this morning the President met with the Hawaii-Guam delegation. What Presidential business did he conduct?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, Brent is here, Cheney is here, Cannon, Marsh and all those people.

Q Did he see them this morning?

MR. NESSEN: He saw some of them this morning.

Q When will he see Secretary Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what his arrival time is.

Q Ron, will he see all those people?

MR. NESSEN: No. I said all those people are here. You know if the President needs to consult with them on White House people, they are here to be consulted with.

Q You said he saw some of them?

MR. NESSEN: He is devoting his mornings -- primarily early mornings -- to those kinds of activities.

Q You mean before 8:00?

MR. NESSEN: He got up at 6:45. I don't think there has been very much this morning in the way of Government business transactions.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 11:33 A.M. CDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 7:10 P.M. CDT

AUGUST 16, 1976

MONDAY

(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. NESSEN: I was asked by various people today what the reaction was to this -- what did they call it -- amendment to prologue of foreign policy national defense and international economic policy section of the platform.

I think you are familiar with this proposal. All I am going to say tonight is that the platform, as approved by the Platform Committee today, is acceptable to the President. He looks forward to running on that platform. If any amendments are offered on the Convention floor, we will study each proposal and determine our position.

That is all I really have.

Q     So, you haven't determined a position on this?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q     You will not determine until the amendment is offered?

MR. NESSEN: If it is offered on the Convention floor.

Q     Do you have any reason to doubt that it will be?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any idea. You will have to ask the people that are talking about it.

Q     Obviously, it is a slap at the President's foreign policy. He can't be very happy with it.

MR. NESSEN: I have heard people who make that interpretation. I have heard others, including your colleagues, who make the exact opposite conclusions.

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Q The President is happy with the platform?

MR. NESSEN: As written and approved by the Platform Committee, that is correct.

Q Does the President think this is a political ploy or a statement of principles by his worthy opponents?

MR. NESSEN: He hasn't had time to study it, Dick.

Q Can you say whether the President has read the final draft of the keynote speech.

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, he has not.

Q Does he know what is in it?

MR. NESSEN: I think I told some others earlier today that Howard Baker, apparently as a courtesy, sent a copy of his speech over here and somebody told me, as a courtesy he sent one over to the Reagan office, too. But the White House certainly did not make any changes, additions, deletions, or editing of Howard Baker's keynote speech.

Q What about what Rogers Morton said this morning?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear what Rog said this morning.

Q He has since confirmed that he read it and said it was too long and made reference to Watergate and he asked him to refine it a little bit and take the Watergate stuff out.

MR. NESSEN: Was Rog talking about himself?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I was talking about the White House.

Q He said it himself.

MR. NESSEN: I think Howard said he sent a copy over. In fact, he may have sent an earlier copy over.

Q Will we be able to get a comment from the President on the speech afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: I doubt it, Helen.

Q Who is going to nominate the President?

MR. NESSEN: It has not been decided, yet.

Q Obviously, it has been decided because Jim Baker knew about it.

MR. NESSEN: We are not ready to announce that yet.

Q Are there any additions to the schedule tonight?

MR. NESSEN: No. He has some friends in to eat dinner with him.

Q Who?

MR. NESSEN: His brothers are up there with him.

Q What are their names?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to get all the names.

Q Do you plan to brief tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I will.

Q What time is the President due back?

Q About 11:50.

MR. NESSEN: Let's brief at noon.

Q How many Virginia delegates is he inviting up tonight?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't see any up there. There are no delegates up there.

Q I didn't say there were any up there. I said, how many delegates will he be inviting up there tonight?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think any more delegates are going to be invited tonight.

Q Are you sure about that? We heard the West Virginia delegates were coming.

MR. NESSEN: No. As far as I know, there are none. He is going to have dinner with his brothers and a couple of old friends.

Q It is firm, no more delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I will double check for you, but I am almost positive there are none.

Q That proposed plank is under study now?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean, under study?

Q They announced their intention. They have their 25 percent. It has been offered as an amendment?

MR. NESSEN: Well, we have a copy of it, obviously, and are looking it over and will determine our position.

Q But not necessarily oppose it?

MR. NESSEN: We are just studying it.

Q So, you are not necessarily opposed to it, you are just in favor of what is in?

MR. NESSEN: That is right. The President will be happy to run on the platform as written by the Platform Committee.

Q He has no opinion on the Reagan proposal?

MR. NESSEN: He has no opinion yet on that.

Q What is the President's reaction to the various uncommitted delegates today who came up, in one case an uncommitted who now says he is pledging to Mr. Ford and he believed that Mr. Ford would pick a Ford-Reagan ticket?

MR. NESSEN: As I told you and a lot of other people, Phil, nobody knows who the President is going to pick. The President doesn't know yet who he is going to pick.

Q I guess my question is, does he see a new emphasis, or new pressure, to get Reagan on the second spot?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard him talk about anything like that.

Q Is the President aware of Ogilvie's accusation that Reagan people offered bribes to two Illinois delegates to vote for Reagan on the first ballot and, if so, does he have any reaction?

MR. NESSEN: I am told that is being handled in some regular manner. I think somebody mentioned the FBI and the Justice Department.

Q Is he aware of a statement by Reagan this afternoon -- I think it was made before the Young Republicans for Reagan -- that there was no way on earth he would accept the Vice Presidency?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if he is aware of that or not.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

#861 (AT 7:18 P.M. CDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:26 P.M. CDT

AUGUST 17, 1976

TUESDAY

(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. NESSEN: I think this is going to come as a total surprise to many of you, and even a shock. We actually have some news today. I know it is unprecedented.

At about 10:45 this morning, the President telephoned Governor Milliken of Michigan, who was in a room here at the Crown Center preparing for one of his caucus sessions, and the President asked Governor Milliken to deliver his nominating speech and the Governor said that he was delighted to be invited to do this, was pleased and would certainly accept. They talked just briefly about a few of the mechanics. So, that has happened.

Q      What do you mean, the "mechanics"?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President said it should be about four or five minutes long, that sort of thing.

Q      Who will second?

MR. NESSEN: The seconding speeches, there will be a number, or a series, of short seconding speeches from the floor of the Convention and the specific people I don't have to give you right now.

Q      Not from the podium?

MR. NESSEN: No, from the floor.

Q      About 20 of them?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the exact number, but I think that is too many.

Q      Do you know the names of any of them?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any of the names. Each candidate is only allowed 15 minutes to have his nomination and seconding, so if you take four or five minutes for Governor Milliken's nomination speech and then all the seconding speeches have to fit in the remaining ten minutes.

Q Do you know any names at all?

MR. NESSEN: I don't, Helen.

Q Do you have a count of the uncommitted delegates or how they are being chosen?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how they are being chosen, Aldo, or who they are at the moment.

Q Why did he pick Milliken?

MR. NESSEN: First, because he knows Governor Milliken well. He is a friend. Governor Milliken knows the President's record and accomplishments. He is an articulate, dynamic, popular Republican Governor. It seemed like a good choice to the President.

To bring you along on the schedule, the President spent the evening with various aides and advisers, watched the Convention and went to bed shortly after midnight. He was up at 6:45 and had breakfast at 7:15. I think the pool has probably given you a report on the meeting that was covered with the regional whips of the Ford campaign. Then, there was a larger meeting of the regional and State whips. There was a small addition to the schedule this morning. At about 10 o'clock, the President met with a small group of delegates from Mississippi, then at 10:45 was the phone call to Governor Milliken and then the trip to the Illinois caucus, which you saw.

In between, the President sent a message to President Marcos of the Philippines. As you may know, there was an earthquake in the Philippines. It struck the island of Mindanao and the President sent a message to President Marcos offering assistance to the Philippines and offering condolences to those who lost their lives in the Philippines.

My plan is to have a posting at 5:00 today.

Q The meeting with the small group of delegates from Mississippi, will you elaborate on that? How small a group? How long did it last?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a breakdown on what their preference was on candidates. The meeting lasted about 30 to 35 minutes.

Q Who was there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the list of participants.

Q Was Clarke Reed there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the list of participants.



Q Do you know how many were there?

MR. NESSEN: A little over a half dozen.

Q Why did he meet with them?

MR. NESSEN: It is part of a series of meetings with delegates.

Q Did he ask for the meeting today?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure, Sarah.

Q Ron, Mr. Cheney said the President will go to Reagan's hotel Wednesday night to discuss with him the selection of a Vice President, on a consultative rather than an announcement basis. What can you add to that?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing.

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Saul said that Dick Cheney told the Sperling breakfast this morning that the President would go and visit Governor Reagan Wednesday night after the nomination and consult with him on the Vice Presidency and did I have anything to add. I said no.

Q We have been told that the President is going to fight the foreign policy plank.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who is telling you that, Helen.

Q Is it acceptable to you then, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I think, at this stage, what I want to say is that the Committee version of the platform is a good one. We expect to support the platform as written, but I am not going to speculate on what planks or amendments or substitutions may be offered on the floor.

Q I believe a substitute has been offered.

MR. NESSEN: Is that the foreign policy morality plank?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: My position is I am not going to speculate on what planks may be offered or what the position will be.

I don't know who told you that, Helen, but this is the position of the campaign.

Q It was by one of the supporters before you came in.

MR. NESSEN: Who?

Q A Ford supporter?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who the supporter is but, as I have said many times, if you want the authoritative--

Q If you have a position on 16-C, how come you aren't taking a position on this?

MR. NESSEN: I just won't speculate on what might happen in the way of amendments to the platform.

Q Ron, you said that Secretary Kissinger was coming to the Convention. Where is he and is it possible that he might be one of the seconders?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the plans are for Secretary Kissinger.

Q You said that he was -- (Laughter)

Q Question.

MR. NESSEN: Les' question was, I said in Washington I thought Secretary Kissinger would be coming to the Convention. Where is he and might it be that he would be one of those seconders from the floor tomorrow night.

My answer is that I don't know exactly when Secretary Kissinger would arrive but I don't expect him to be one of the seconders.

Q You don't think he is going to arrive at all?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know when he will arrive.

Q Do you expect him to arrive?

MR. NESSEN: The last word I heard in Washington was the whole Cabinet would be here. The State Department said he would arrive on Thursday.

Q Jerry Parske announced it yesterday at that youth thing. (Laughter)

Q Can you tell us what happened in the Illinois delegation caucus, including the questions asked of the President?

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Saul is wondering what happened in the Illinois delegation caucus.

As is the normal procedure for these caucus meetings, the President began with two or three minutes of remarks. He said that he is absolutely convinced that the Convention is moving in the right direction from his point of view:

"The Rules and the Platform Committees have made an honest effort to bring the Republican Party together and that must be done. When we leave here Friday, the Republican Party needs to be unified behind a program and a candidate which will be good for America. I hope that we will eliminate divisiveness."

Then he talked about the programs and policies and accomplishments of his two years. He talked about turning the economy around, talked about peace in the world and maintaining a strong defense, and he said we have restored confidence and trust in the White House.

Then he talked about the grounds on which Jimmy Carter can be attacked and then he said that --

Q What were the grounds, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: He said that Jimmy Carter had embraced the Democratic platform that tries to be all things to all people. It is costly and inflationary, and seems to want the United States to withdraw from its responsibilities in the world. He said Carter also has embraced the record of the Democratic Congress, which also has passed big spending bills and so forth.

He said he has been in Illinois many times, that "our candidates must win from the court house to the state house, from Congress to the White House. I appreciate your welcome" and he sent Betty's regards.

Then he was asked a series of questions. Some of them had to do with his position on issues and some were more to do with strategy and so forth. A gentleman named Sheehan stood up and said he was from the 41st ward of Chicago.

He said that there were polls in his ward showing that the President's popularity was surging since the Democratic Convention, and he asked the President whether that was true all over the country. The President said, "Yes, we have gained in the polls," and he mentioned the two polls that came out this weekend, the Gallup and the Harris, showing a considerable drop for Carter and said he also had seen some private polls taken quite recently. He said the gap is narrowing and the momentum is growing.

Q Excuse me. That is the Ford-Carter gap?

MR. NESSEN: That is right. "Our momentum is growing and we can win this election."

Q Ron, will the President support the ticket irrespective of who is nominated?

MR. NESSEN: That was one of the questions he was asked and he said -- as he has before -- he will support the ticket. He expects to be the nominee and will support the ticket.

Q If Governor Reagan offered him the nomination for Vice President, would he accept it?

MR. NESSEN: He doesn't expect to have to face that question. He expects to be the Presidential nominee.

Q Was he asked questions about the Vice Presidency?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. "What are you looking for in a Vice President," someone asked, and he said, "I have gotten a lot of advice," and he has listed all the people he has solicited views from. He said "someone compatible with me ideologically and personally. We have to have a team."

Q Did Governor Ogilvie ask any questions?

MR. NESSEN: No, he didn't. He was asked, "Will you campaign in black communities?" He said, "I always have. I will." Then he was asked about his program for the cities. He was asked, "Are you willing to take on Congress to push Carter out into the open?" He said, "If you listen to my acceptance speech, you will have an answer to that question." There was laughter and applause. He said, "All the points you made will be very well taken care of in the speech."

O What did he mean, he has always campaigned in black communities? Do you mean in Grand Rapids?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

"Why don't you tell us who your Vice Presidential choice is?" He said, "I don't believe the contest between me and Governor Reagan should be determined on the basis of a running mate. It should be between the two of us." Then he was asked about his program on senior citizens -- Medicare, catastrophic insurance, campaign management -- and he said again that he does plan to add additional people to the campaign staff. He didn't name any, and he said, "I believe we have a campaign that will win in November."

That was about it.

Q Was the alleged bribery mentioned?

MR. NESSEN: No, it wasn't.

O Did he narrow it down? He spoke yesterday of five or six sort of people at the top end of the delegate preference. Did anybody ask him about that?

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute. You know this five or six people at the top end of the delegate preference is something very different from narrowing down, and I tried to make that clear yesterday. I don't think I was too successful. What he told the delegation yesterday was that of all the suggestions, the 5,000 letters or so he sent out asking for suggestions, the ones that have come back, the majority of the recommendations have been centered on five or six candidates with a scattering of support for others. He has not indicated that he has narrowed his choice at all, to anybody on his staff at all. So, anybody around town telling you he has is misleading you.

Q What was the President's reaction to Mrs. Ford's statement that if he loses the nomination he will move back to Alexandria and practice law? You may have already been asked this, but if so, I missed it.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear about it, Les.

Q It was in the Washington Post?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear about it.

Q Will you ask him?

MR. NESSEN: He expects to win the nomination and win the election, so it is sort of academic.

Q Should we be looking for comments or reactions to whatever happens on the floor tonight, will you be available?

MR. NESSEN: I will be here in the hotel all evening.

Q Will you be around here?

MR. NESSEN: I will probably be upstairs, but John and I will work out some sort of arrangement. Why don't we do this: I will come down and be here or in my office shortly or immediately after the conclusion of the session.

Q Will the President watch it on television?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Why don't we just take a pool up there?

Q Ron, the position on the foreign policy plank, is it contingent in any way on what happens on 16-C?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going to speculate in any way on what our position might be in a plank that might be voted on.

Q Will the President release the financial and medical data on his running mate?

MR. NESSEN: One of the questions asked during the initial contact with the people was, "Will you commit yourself to having a set of information on health, tax returns and liabilities and assets made public?" Those called had to make that pledge before they would be considered as his running mate.

Q Is the disclosure so far made by Governor Reagan considered satisfactory?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, what was that?

Q Is the disclosure of Governor Reagan's financial, health and tax records, which he has made during his campaign, considered satisfactory by the President?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know exactly what you mean.

Q Does it meet the test you just described?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I never thought of it.

Q Ron, has the President, or any of his aides, consulted, talked to or even informed Secretary Kissinger about the Ford policy platform action here in Kansas City this week?

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, I think, if I can boil down your question, Secretary Kissinger, has he been kept informed of developments in the platform that relate to foreign policy.

Q And has he been asked his advice?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly has been kept informed and I am not sure what role he has played in terms of advice.

Q Does the President consider Governor Reagan compatible with him, ideologically?

MR. NESSEN: It is so late in the game -- I said last week I wasn't going through the checklist and say whether he was compatible, not compatible, and so forth.

Q Ron, a Reagan delegate in Illinois has told the press about what he thought was an improper offer from some Ford people for their support. My question is, in light of this story now and in light of the alleged bribe on the other side, is the President concerned with the image that is going to be created here with all of these stories and any damage to the party coming out of Kansas City?

MR. NESSEN: Bill, you know I have read about and seen on television these cases that you mention and I understand they are being handled by the proper people. I don't basically know enough about them to really comment on them.

Q My question wasn't directed to what you think; the question is, has the President discussed it?

MR. NESSEN: I am not real sure that the President is aware of the stories.

Q Ron, is there any reason why a pool cannot be permitted into the meetings with the President at these State caucuses?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that most of these caucuses make that decision on their own and I think most of them prefer, the ones that are closed -- some are open, some are closed -- the ones that are closed, I understand, indicate they want to have something like a private business session.

Q I understand the decision to close the Illinois caucus to the pool was made by the White House and not by the Illinois caucus.

MR. NESSEN: I heard earlier that the Illinois people had made that decision even before they knew the President was going to come to have a closed caucus and then I heard somebody mention that too, and I haven't had to me to check it out.

Q Could you get them to open some of those up?

MR. NESSEN: I will check to see what the case was in Illinois because I heard both sides say it was the other side.

Q Governor Ogilvie said it was the White House's decision to have it closed.

Q Ron, I want to relate to the Vice Presidency. Mr. Cheney said this morning that several of the possibilities who have been asked to prepare or submit their data have already been interviewed. Could you tell me whether the President personally has interviewed any of them or were their interviews confined to the President's staff?

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Saul wants to know more details of the Vice Presidential selection process and who is doing the interviewing, and so forth.

As I said, the other day I just prefer not to drop a detail here and a detail there each day, but rather, to reconstruct the whole process for you after the person is selected and announced.

Q Ron, what is the President's reaction to Senator Baker's keynote speech last night?

MR. NESSEN: The President thought it was a good, strong speech. He thought that Senator Baker had made a good presentation of the speech and he felt, from watching the response, that it had been well received by the delegates. He also felt that the other speeches last night -- Senator Dole and Vice President Rockefeller and Senator Goldwater -- made good speeches and commented on them.



Q Will the White House be open enough to allow us to know exactly how Senator Baker's speech was altered by David Gergen, as reported this morning in the papers and on the networks?

MR. NESSEN: I think I know what you are driving at, Les. (Laughter) The writers reviewed all the major speeches primarily to make sure there was no duplication, and so forth, and for factual matters.

Q Duplication, was that what they were worried about?

MR. NESSEN: The White House did not make any changes or any deletions in any of the speeches. The White House did make some suggestions.

Q Were they followed?

MR. NESSEN: The White House took nothing out of any of the speeches.

I think, if I may say parenthetically, there is a White House speechwriter named Pat Butler, whom many of you know. Pat is a long-time friend and, in fact, former employee of Senator Baker and as a courtesy, as really, more of a private relationship that they have, I believe Senator Baker did show his speech to Pat Butler and Pat probably made some suggestions on it.

Q Gergen had nothing to do with it? Gergen didn't alter any of it, it was Pat Butler?

MR. NESSEN: Nobody at the White House altered any of the speeches.

Q We are asking, did the White House ask Baker to delete some of the Watergate stuff which he basically confirmed this morning on television.

MR. NESSEN: I saw Senator Baker on television and I didn't get the same confirmation you did, Helen.

I think that is about all I have to say on the speech review process.

Q Ron, did the White House review Governor Connally's speech?

MR. NESSEN: I think all the major speeches were looked at for duplication and factual errors and mistakes.

Q Governor Connally's?

MR. NESSEN: All major speeches. I don't know specifically, but in general, the major speeches were looked at. I don't know specifically on that one.

Q Speaking specifically, have you had a copy of Governor Connally's speech, yet?

MR. NESSEN: I have not.

Q What about the White House? You represent the White House.

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

Q You don't know whether they have seen Connally's speech or not?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Do you know what they suggested come out of Baker's speech?

MR. NESSEN: I don't. Wait a minute, I don't know that they suggested that anything come out of Baker's speech.

Q What were the suggestions?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that the White House suggested that anything come out of Baker's speech.

Q When did the President see the entire Baker speech?

MR. NESSEN: I think what you are driving at, Phil, is that the President saw part of it last night -- most of it last night -- and asked CBS for a tape so he could look at it again this morning.

Q He didn't see the entire speech last night?

MR. NESSEN: He saw most of the speech last night. He saw it in its entirety this morning on the CBS tape.

Q There are two candidates in this race, at least we thought there were. Why is the President given the power to review these speeches when Ronald Reagan is apparently not having that opportunity?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that Baker's speech also was -- I think he said that on TV this morning.

Q I am talking about all the speeches.

MR. NESSEN: These speeches are sent here as a courtesy. Certainly there is no demand or command that they be sent here. They are sent as a courtesy.

Q You mean the White House didn't ask for those speeches to be sent to them?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q If he could go back to the morality in the foreign policy thing, the Reagan people are pushing, you have asked repeatedly this morning about it, and I have answered repeatedly I am not going to speculate on that. One gets the impression if you were confident this effort was going to be defeated, you would say we are confident this effort is going to be defeated. It sounds like you don't know how it is going to turn out.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think anybody knows how it is going to turn out, whether it is going to be introduced, whether it is going to be voted on, what the form of it is. It is too far ahead of the game to say.

I think I have said, you know, to preface that part of my answer, that the committee version, the Platform Committee-adopted platform is a good one and the President expects to support the platform as written.

Q Ron, Governor Reagan has said that he is eager to debate with Governor Carter. Why isn't the President eager to debate with Governor Carter?

MR. NESSEN: There is no change in the position on that.

Q I mean, in other words, am I incorrect in my assumption that the President is not eager to debate with Governor Carter or am I wrong?

MR. NESSEN: I forget what the President said the last time he was asked that. I will dig it out and show it to you, Les.

Q Ron, did Governor Connally clear the preliminaries and is he still up for consideration as the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to say who is up, who is down, who is in, who is out, and anybody who tells you they know is kidding you.

Q Ron, the President said today he has several Vice Presidential candidates. Those are different words from the various numbers --

MR. NESSEN: That is right, and Marilyn said how do you define "several," and he said more than two.

Q How do you define "several"?

MR. NESSEN: More than two.

Q Ron, there was a considerable amount said yesterday about getting a Ford delegate in Illinois to switch, bribery and so forth by the Reagan people and all that. There is a story this morning that went just the other way.

MR. NESSEN: Phil asked about that, Bob, and I said --

Q You said that the President is not aware of these things.

MR. NESSEN: He may not be, as far as I know. It is something that has not come to the White House.

Q Ron, will you ask him what he has to say about this because I understand he is ready to say that he would deny any desire to prosecute these.

MR. NESSEN: It is something that has not come to the White House, wouldn't come to the White House.

Q That is ridiculous. It has come to the White House already because it has been talked about by various and sundry White House staffers.

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with it.

Q You better get familiar with it. Why don't you ask the President if he has any comment to make on this Illinois situation?

MR. NESSEN: I will ask.

Q Ron, is the President thinking about going over to some women worker delegates or women workers Elly Petersen is meeting this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: Is that on the schedule? As far as I know, there hasn't been any change, John. I will double-check. What time is that supposed to be?

Q Between 4:00 and 6:00. He has that 5:00 thing with the black delegates at another hotel.

MR. NESSEN: It is not planned, John, that he would go.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:55 P.M. CDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:24 P.M. CDT

AUGUST 17, 1976

TUESDAY

(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. NESSEN: The President asked me to come down and tell you how grateful he is to the delegates who supported his position on this vote and how appreciative he is of the orderly process followed by the Convention in determining this issue.

Obviously, the President is delighted by the victory and he believes it is a good indication of how the final vote will turn out when the delegates vote on the nomination tomorrow night.

The President watched the vote on television in his office. He watched with Mrs. Ford, with his son, Mike, and Mike's wife, Gayle, with the White House Chief of Staff Dick Cheney, and with the President's Counsellor, John Marsh.

After the vote, the President telephoned his team of strategists at the Convention Hall and congratulated them. He told them it had been a tense but good vote. He asked that his appreciation be conveyed to all those who had helped with this and thanked everybody who had helped to achieve this victory.

Q Does this mean the President is now going to turn his attention to the other major concern he has-- picking a running mate? Did he do anything in that regard this evening?

MR. NESSEN: Not especially this evening, Jim. The President has been working for some time on his consideration of a Vice Presidential running mate, and he will continue that tomorrow.

Q Ron, I know you don't like these rumors, but another one surfaced tonight.

MR. NESSEN: That is the main problem with this Convention. (Laughter)

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Q It is that Baker and Ruckelshaus are now the only two people on the President's list, that Ruckelshaus is on the list by himself now. Do you know anything about that at all?

MR. NESSEN: As I told you ever since we got to Kansas City, anybody who tells you they know who is on the President's list, who is up, who is down, who is in or who is out, doesn't know what they are talking about because only one person does, and that is the President, and he isn't telling anybody.

Q Has he made up his mind yet?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, he has not selected his running mate yet.

Q Have any of the delegates been told they will know who is chosen before he announces his running mate?

MR. NESSEN: Nobody will know until the President announces it on Thursday.

Q You said the President has not selected his running mate. Do you mean in his own mind he has not made his selection?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Ron, this so-called morality in foreign policy issue will be coming up out at the hall in a few minutes now. Has the President been sending the word out on that? We understand the Ford people are not too happy with that thing as it is written and perhaps with a word changed here or there they might be willing to go along with it.

MR. NESSEN: Bob, after the vote on the 16-C, I came down here to talk to you and I sort of left things and I need to check on what is the next development at the Convention Hall.

Q You don't expect any great concern about that, do you?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to check and find out what is happening or about to happen at the Convention Hall.

Q What is going to make the President make up his mind? At what point and on what basis will he finally decide?

MR. NESSEN: On a Vice Presidential running mate?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: The President's first consideration in picking a Vice Presidential running mate will be to pick the person who he considers to be the best qualified to take over as President should that need arise.

As I said before, the second consideration would be someone who is compatible with the President both in terms of his policies -- domestic policies and foreign policies -- and also personally compatible.

Q Has he talked to anyone personally?

MR. NESSEN: The third factor, or the least important of the three factors, would be someone who could contribute to the President's election campaign.

Q That would be the least factor?

MR. NESSEN: That is the way he has set his priorities for selecting a running mate.

Q Ron, when you say the President feels that the vote tonight was a good indication of how the voting will go tomorrow night on the nomination, you mean the President believes that the numbers will be within the same range, will be pretty much the same?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, we have said for some time now that the President has more than enough delegates to win on the first ballot, and I think many of the news organizations in their independent surveys of the delegates have come to the same conclusion. So, our own count, the news organization counts and tonight, as an indication of things to come, the combination of those three, gives the President confidence that he will win the nomination tomorrow night.

Q Ron, in view of some of the acrimonious debate we saw tonight, what confidence does the President have that he can unite the party now?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing has happened during the primary campaign and nothing has happened here in Kansas City that divides the Republican Party. The party will emerge from this Convention, the President believes, united to begin the campaign for the fall election.

This has been a healthy competition. It has been a competition between two strong, articulate leaders who hold principles very strongly and there has been nothing divisive about this. It has only been healthy for the party to have this kind of competition.

Q Is this the President's views or yours?

MR. NESSEN: Those are the President's views.

Q Is the President going tomorrow after he gets the nomination, if he gets the nomination, and talk to Ronald Reagan about it?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, we have said the President has indicated that he does want to go and visit Governor Reagan after the nomination is decided tomorrow night, and I talked to him about some of the things that Walt mentions, about the unity of the party, to consult with Governor Reagan about the Vice Presidency, but whether he goes tomorrow night or Thursday morning has not been decided yet.

Q Ron, how can you talk about unity at this point when there is a 50-50 split on a near frivolous issue, that the President of the United States, after campaigning nine months, can only get about 55 percent vote on a rather frivolous issue, an issue that his people call frivolous?

How do you call that unity?

MR. NESSEN: The President believes the party will come out of the Convention united and ready to march off to the fall campaign.

Q Is the President going to sit down with his Vice Presidential possibilities or his selection before he announces publicly?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything further to tell you tonight on the selection process, but we will as the President makes his decision.

MORE



Q The President doesn't plan to make up his mind before he sees Reagan, is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q The President called it a tense vote. Did he, at any time, doubt that he might win it?

MR. NESSEN: No, he kept track of the vote on a tally sheet, as a lot of people did, and watched the TV and some of the commentators mentioned that the President was running five votes ahead, or 10; at one point, I think 15 votes ahead of the forecast and he followed that and he followed on his own tally sheet. He said it was tense.

Q Did this tally sheet have some projections on it?

MR. NESSEN: He was measuring what the projections were against what the actual vote was.

Q You mean when he consults with Reagan tomorrow night he will not have made up his mind?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct. He will not have made up his mind at the time he consults with Governor Reagan.

Q Was the total above or below his projections he had on his tally sheet?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't check what his projection was, Dick.

Q On the question of unity, Ron, is the President aware that Senator Laxalt and Senator Griffin, among others, were meeting since the Convention began, on the question of unity; the latest meeting took place today at the Muehlebach Hotel, before tonight.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't catch the point of the question.

Q The point of the question is, does the President know that members of his campaign team, namely, Senator Griffin and Senator Laxalt, had met on the question of unity already, throughout this Convention there was more than one meeting at kind of unusual sites and these discussions were ongoing? These discussions originated before the Convention ever opened in Kansas City and indeed began in the office of John Rhodes in Washington?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously, the President knew about the meeting in Washington, as I think most people in Washington knew about it. It was widely publicized.

Q Ron, did you know those meetings were going on here?

MR. NESSEN: That also was widely publicized, as far as I know.

Q There was a newspaper article, in Alabama, I believe, that appeared today quoting Rog Morton as saying the President could win without the South and wouldn't have to worry about the cotton South. Was that the apparent cause of the consternation tonight on the part of the Southern delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know exactly what Rog Morton said but as we said before, the President is not writing off any part of the country or any State in the Union as he begins his campaign. He doesn't think there is any State that he cannot win.

Q Ron, from what you have said, he is not going to have made up his mind by Wednesday night when he goes to talk to Governor Reagan. He is going there to make up his mind just a few hours before he makes this announcement?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q How do we know he hasn't made up his mind if nobody knows what is in his mind?

MR. NESSEN: That is what he says.

Q Does that mean, at least, Ron, that he has a certain number of people he is working with now? I mean, he is not working with the plethora of candidates he has now?

MR. NESSEN: I know you would love to know who his choice is tonight but we just don't have anything to say about it.

Q You don't have to name them but could you at least narrow it down in terms of a number?

MR. NESSEN: No, I can't.

Q Is he going to meet personally with any of them tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to say tonight. You know, the Republican Governors who are in Kansas City are coming to meet with the President to discuss party unity, the fall campaign, their ideas on the Vice Presidential nomination, and so forth, tomorrow morning.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: Nine o'clock.

Q Are we going to see them?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Some of those Governors have been mentioned as possible Vice Presidential candidates, so I suppose in that sense, you will have to say they will see him.

Q Did the President see Senator Baker today?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, have you announced who the President is having breakfast with?

MR. NESSEN: No. Who is he having breakfast with tomorrow?

Q You do not know?

MR. NESSEN: I don't, no.

Q Then, you wouldn't know whether Howard Baker is coming for breakfast?

MR. NESSEN: No. Somebody asked me that earlier. I haven't checked it yet. I will.

Q You have not checked it?

MR. NESSEN: No.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 11:37 P.M. CDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:10 A.M. CDT

AUGUST 18, 1976

WEDNESDAY

(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. NESSEN: Let me, first of all, tell you two things that are somewhat unrelated to the Convention.

I think some of you know that Senator Jake Garn's wife was killed in a car crash.

Q      Who?

MR. NESSEN: Senator Jake Garn, of Utah. His wife was killed in a car crash. The President sent a telegram of condolence and sent flowers to Senator Garn and about 30 minutes ago, telephoned Senator Garn and reached him in Bloomfield, Colorado, to express his condolences. Senator Garn's wife's name was Hazel and she was killed in a car wreck in Nebraska the day before yesterday, I believe.

The other matter has to do with a story you may have seen on the wires, or heard, concerning the death of two American officers around Panmunjon, and I would like to make a statement on behalf of the President concerning that.

"The President condemns the vicious and unprovoked murder of two American officers last night in the demilitarized zone near Panmunjon, in Korea. These officers were peacefully supervising a work detail in the neutral zone when they were subjected to a brutal and cowardly attack totally without warning. The total responsibility for the consequences of these murders rests with the North Korean Government."

That is the end of my statement. I will tell you, additionally, that the United States is seeking a meeting immediately of the Military Armistice Commission in Korea. I understand that the State Department also has further information and the President is being kept informed of developments by his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft.

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Q Ron, what are the consequences?

MR. NESSEN: Tom, I think, at this point, all I can say is that there are meetings being held in Washington on the situation and I don't, at this time, have anything further on it.

Q Ron, is it the belief of the President and the U.S. Government that this was a deliberate connection with the nonaligned meeting in Sri Lanka and the attacks were evidence of the North Korean's desire to get us off the Korean peninsula?

MR. NESSEN: The Embassy, in its initial assessment, has been unable to determine the motive of the attacks.

Q That was in Seoul?

MR. NESSEN: In Seoul, correct.

The President's schedule you have is unchanged.

Q Excuse me. Before you go further, I would like to ask a question about a line in the President's statement, the "total responsibility for the consequences of these murders rests with the North Korean Government." Can you elaborate on what that means?

MR. NESSEN: I can't, Walt. I think the language speaks for itself. The first step we are taking is to seek an immediate meeting of the Military Armistice Commission, as well as meetings going on now in Washington by American officials, on the situation.

Q When was the President informed, and by whom?

MR. NESSEN: He was informed as soon as the word came this morning, by Brent Scowcroft.

Q Does the President feel that these attacks underscore the need for a continued American military presence in South Korea and the need not to reduce the number of American troops there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I am going to go into a very lengthy discussion of that now, John, other than to give you this statement.

Q What is the purpose of the meeting called in Panmunjon, to demand an explanation?

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MR. NESSEN: You mean a meeting of the Military Armistice Commission?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have precisely what presentation the United States will make at that meeting, but the State Department probably will.

Q Who were the two officers, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the details here, Les.

Q Have they been identified by anybody?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, you will have to check at the State Department.

Q Is anyone checking from here?

MR. NESSEN: I know that Brent was on the phone with Washington.

The President's schedule is unchanged for the day, so far. He slept in just a little later than normal this morning and had breakfast at 7:30.

He arose just shortly before that. He had breakfast alone, incidentally, contrary to all the little things I have been reading.

Then, the first activity that he had was the PFC staff meeting here on the third floor, which I think some of you covered.

Other than that, I don't really have anything.

MORE

Q About the schedule, could you please tell us if that noon trip, the 12:30 trip is all pool coverage, and tell us which events the rest of the day are pool coverage as opposed to those which aren't? Is there any open coverage on the President's schedule today?

MR. NESSEN: It is all travel pool coverage.

Q Ron, has the President heard from the Secretary of State on the subject of the international morality plank?

MR. NESSEN: I know there was a good deal of discussion last night, and the President made his decision that his plank really simply stated the basic principles on which the American foreign policy has been based.

Q Did he talk to Secretary Kissinger about it?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure whether the President talked to him directly. I know the Secretary's views were brought into the discussion.

Q Is there going to be a pool allowed in to watch the President during the nominating tonight?

MR. NESSEN: We are working on that and haven't really finalized the plans yet. I hope so.

Q Aside from this light schedule listed, what else is the President doing today?

MR. NESSEN: He has two major projects, as you know, and one is to select his Vice Presidential running mate. The other is to work further on his acceptance speech.

Q Can you tell us the running mate yet?

MR. NESSEN: He has not chosen a running mate.

Q Is he going to see Reagan tonight?

MR. NESSEN: As I said before, the President would like to see Governor Reagan after the nomination and that could very well be tonight, but it also could be tomorrow morning. There hasn't been a time fixed yet.

Q Could you give us a rundown on the President's meeting with the Governors?

MR. NESSEN: I was in another meeting at the time and didn't attend. I know the intention was to talk about party business, about the fall campaigning and hear their views on the Vice Presidential question and I came in sort of at the end of it, and I know that they indicated, as they were sort of breaking up, that the President had not given any kind of indication who he was considering.

Q One of the Governors said there was a great deal of talk by the Governors, not the President, about the selection or the possibilities of him selecting Ronald Reagan as his running mate.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I was in another meeting and I didn't attend the meeting today.

Q Ron, how will he go about the process of choosing? Will the possible candidate come in and see him or will he talk to them on the phone?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans for that. Some of the Governors who were in this morning have been mentioned by the great mentioners as possible contenders but there is no plan to have people come in and be interviewed and so forth today. I would look for the President to make his decision either late tonight or tomorrow morning, and I would look for the announcement to be made possibly around the noon hour tomorrow.

Q Here?

MR. NESSEN: Here, yes.

Q What will he do today to refine his process of making his selection?

MR. NESSEN: Think.

Q Will the President make his own announcement on that subject?

MR. NESSEN: Will the President come here and announce his running mate?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: That is my anticipation.

Q In this room?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, he indicated he was going to see people today.

MR. NESSEN: That he was going to see Vice Presidential possibilities today?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: That is not on the schedule and not anticipated as far as I know.



Q Who is he seeing today?

MR. NESSEN: Aside from this schedule, I know of nobody who is coming in in addition to the schedule.

Q Did Senator Baker go up to the 18th floor yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Did Senator Baker go up to the 18th floor yesterday?

Q Did he, or did he not?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that he did. I will check, but he didn't see the President.

Q Ron, is the President still going to make his decision only after he meets with Mr. Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Tell us some of the things President Ford will be doing after he returns from the Mushlebach Hotel and before he goes to the New Jersey delegation? He has about a four-hour time period on his schedule that is absolutely blank.

MR. NESSEN: One thing he will do is eat lunch. The three other things he will be doing are, one, work on his acceptance speech; thinking about his Vice Presidential choice; and doing anything that has to be done in connection with this North Korean episode.

Q Ron, now that the test vote has been made and you have won on that, and you have no doubt you will win the nomination, don't you think in the interest of party unity Ronald Reagan ought to consider dropping out of the race at this point?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, you know we are going to go and have the rest of the Convention in the scheduled way, and you know the ball game isn't over until the last out and the President feels that way.

Q Ron, can you tell about that?

MR. NESSEN: We are not taking anything for granted.

Q At what point exactly was the President informed of the assassination of the two officers?

MR. NESSEN: I said the first thing this morning by Brent Scowcroft.



Q Do you expect the President to announce the Vice Presidential candidate tomorrow or is it something you might do?

MR. NESSEN: I mentioned to Andy I thought the President would come here and would announce it.

Q If the President has not made up his mind when he goes to see Reagan, what will he consult with him about?

MR. NESSEN: He will consult with Governor Reagan about the Vice Presidency.

Q What will he do, present him a list and say who do you like?

MR. NESSEN: They will discuss the Vice Presidency.

Q Ron, can you comment on the amount of input Ronald Reagan will have on the President's final decision?

MR. NESSEN: I can't quantify for you, Russ. He will consult with Reagan about the Vice Presidency. Q If he had in mind a particular man Reagan was absolutely and totally opposed to, would that cause the President to change?

MR. NESSEN: That is too speculative, Russ, for me to answer. Q Is Senator Baker still in the running?

MR. NESSEN: We haven't said who is in the running and who is not in the running.

Q What will he do, present him a list and say who do you like?

MORE

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MR. NESSEN: That is too speculative, Russ, for me to answer. Q Is Senator Baker still in the running?

MR. NESSEN: We haven't said who is in the running and who is not in the running.

Q There are some reports that the President has gotten sort of a special communication.

MR. NESSEN: I read the list, Helen, and there is a list of five people out based on the reports. There was a list of four people out and three of the people on the list of five are not on the list of four.

Q There was a list of four in Jack Anderson's column.

MR. NESSEN: I forget how Jack worded it, but the fact is that the so-called reports, and then there is a list of two, and then there is a way, I am told--one story is that if a certain thing happens, it will be one of those two. If another thing happens, it is another one of those two. The fact is, the only person who knows who is on the list, whether the list has been narrowed down or not, is the President. He has told no one, absolutely no one. I can assure you of that.

I know of one gentleman going around town telling people he knows who the President has selected and that gentleman has seen the President for a total of 30 seconds this week and they didn't talk about the Vice Presidency during that brief chat. The fact is, nobody knows.

Q Is he going to confer with his present Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: The present Vice President has been a very active participant in this week's events, as you know, including last night's platform.

Q Will you let me please follow up my question? People are all bellowing. I would like to finish the question. You took off on Rockefeller's activities last night. You said he has been a very active participant. Has he been an active participant in the Vice Presidential selection process?

MR. NESSEN: The President has discussed it with him, yes.

Q Is he going to discuss it with him some more?

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

Q Will the President give Ronald Reagan's word any more weight in his mind-making-up process than anyone else?

MR. NESSEN: I just can't say to what degree that will affect him as opposed to someone else's views and his own views. It is a complex process.

Q Ron, is there any plan to support Rockefeller for National Committee Chairman?

MR. NESSEN: There is no plan to, John.

Q What about coverage of the President tonight?

MR. NESSEN: We are working on what I hope will be a satisfactory pool plan, Aldo. I want to make sure it is acceptable to the President and if he says okay, then I will announce it later this afternoon.

Wait a minute. Are you talking about watching the balloting?

Q Both.

MR. NESSEN: Certainly, if the President goes tonight to see Governor Reagan tonight, there will be a travel pool, and I am working on what I hope will be an acceptable plan for a pool to watch at least part of the balloting with the President.

Q Will that be more than one pool?

MR. NESSEN: Just one.

Q Your comment was very interesting on the foreign policy amendment. You mean to say the Administration doesn't view that as critical?

MR. NESSEN: We have no objection to this. As I say, it is based on the -- these basic principles outlined in this amendment are the ones on which the Ford foreign policy has been based.

Q If you have no objection to it, why didn't you say so in the first place when it was proposed?

MR. NESSEN: As I said when it came up, if it came up we would take a look at it and give a view.

Q Why did it take you so long to make up your mind? Everyone was kept waiting around until around midnight before anything was said.

MR. NESSEN: I mean, Aldo, as I said, what happened was there were other matters to deal with and when it came time to deal with this one, there were conferences held and the President made a decision and sent the word to his aides.

Q Did the Vice President help him in making a decision? Did the Vice President involve Kissinger in this?

MR. NESSEN: The Vice President, I think, spoke eloquently on television last night in explaining why this amendment was acceptable.

Q You said Dr. Kissinger was consulted --

MR. NESSEN: I said I thought his views were certainly brought into this.

Q Were his views supportive of this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know precisely what his views were.

Q Do you know imprecisely what they were?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't.

Q Who will be with the President in his suite tonight?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't got the full list, but I will get it for you. I think the family will be in the arena but the Cheney-Marsh folks will be up there.

Q Can you give us anything further, time-wise, for a departure on Friday?

MR. NESSEN: I would say for your own planning and guidance, you could look for a departure Friday around noon.

Q From where?

MR. NESSEN: From the airport. That is just rough and only for your guidance so you can plan your lives.

Q Will he address the Republican National Committee Friday morning?

MR. NESSEN: I think there is a plan for the President to attend that meeting.

Q When is that and where?

MR. NESSEN: It is traditional, I think you know, for the Republican National Committee to meet on the day after the Convention, so Friday morning is the RNC meeting and I do expect the President to go to that.

Q Will there be a recommendation for the Chairman?

MR. NESSEN: I am not ready to say anything about that, yet.

Q Since the President's floor manager, Senator Griffin, told the Detroit Free Press of trying to work the Reagan supporters, "even if we have to hold our noses," and since this pamphlet issued by Rogers Morton referred to 16-C is not honest and not sincere, I was wondering, how does the President think the terminology by such close associates will help with the unity needed to beat Jimmy Carter?

MR. NESSEN: Is that a multiple choice?

Q We hear a lot about unity. We heard that mentioned yesterday when Griffin said, "we will work with the Reagan supporters if we have to hold our noses," and they say this is dishonest. I wonder, what is the President's feeling about this?

MR. NESSEN: About what?

MORE

Q His close associates are using this terminology.

MR. NESSEN: I will have to look at them, Les. I haven't seen any one of those statements.

Q Ron, the pool this morning reported the President was asked if he was going to have any Vice Presidential candidates coming in to see him today. The President replied, "I might have a lot of them." You said it is not on his schedule for him to see anybody else, but you said that yesterday and I know some people he saw who were not on the schedule.

So, I am asking, can we believe your schedule?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, you can believe the schedule. I don't know of any plan for the President to interview people as Vice Presidential possibilities today. I mean, it is obvious that at the Governor's meeting this morning there were people who have been mentioned but the purpose of that meeting was not to interview them and there may be others the President crosses paths with today in the course of his moving around town or having meetings here that may have been mentioned, also.

Q But coming in to see him, that is the way the question was.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any plans. I will check further.

Q Is he about to do that at all at any time during the selection process?

MR. NESSEN: What, have an interview process?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: It is not planned that he will, no.

Q Ron, what was the President's reaction to the Vice President's tussle last night over the sign? He saw it, didn't he? Did he see this on TV?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think he did.

Q He knows about it. He is aware of what happened. I wonder, has he said anything about it? Did he smile, or was he happy about it or what?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard any reaction from him about it.

Q No reaction at all?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Are there any other briefings planned by the PFC staff?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans for any further PFC briefings in here. Peter doesn't plan to. What I would like to do is if we have anything to post, is to post it about 6:00. That 6:00 posting could well include pool plans for coverage of the balloting tonight. The office is open all the time and you can come in there if you have any questions or problems.

Q Are you planning to get out an advance text of the President's acceptance speech like tomorrow afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: I am aiming to get out a text out of the President's acceptance speech somewhere between mid- and late afternoon tomorrow.

Q How long will it be, would you guess?

MR. NESSEN: I would guess the spoken word would be somewhere around 25 minutes with time for interruptions for applause after virtually every sentence.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 11:31 A.M. CDT)



AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 2:50 A.M. CDT

AUGUST 19, 1976

THURSDAY  
(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an exact schedule for tomorrow. I think what we ought to do is say there is a lid on until at least 10:00 a.m., but don't hold me to 10:00. It could be 11:00, 12:00, 1:00 or whatever. It will be no earlier than 10:00, so let's say we will put on a lid until 10:00.

Q     What will not be earlier, the President's announcement?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q     Is there anything prior to that?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q     Is he going to bed right away or what?

MR. NESSEN: No, he has a staff meeting up there now.

Q     Do you expect him to tell his selection before the Convention?

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

Q     What time did he get up this morning?

MR. NESSEN: About 7:15 this morning.

Q     I apologize if I am wrong, but you told the travel pool you expected the announcement about 10:00 or 11:00.

MR. NESSEN: 10:00 or 11:00 or 1:00; about 10:00 I said.

Q We originally were to get it around noon. Are you revising it?

MR. NESSEN: No, I am not revising it. Nobody knows the time. The time is not arranged yet. It will not be earlier than then.

Q Yesterday you told us around noon.

MR. NESSEN: It may be around noon. It will not be earlier than 10:00.

Q Isn't there a celebration going on up there now, drinks and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, the President is just now beginning a staff meeting.

Q For what?

MR. NESSEN: He is meeting on the selection of a Vice President.

Q Who is there?

MR. NESSEN: Various members of his staff.

Q Is Harlow there?

MR. NESSEN: Just various members of his staff.

Q The staff meeting was on what?

MR. NESSEN: The selection of a Vice President.

Q What time do you think he will get up tomorrow and what will he be doing before 10:00 tomorrow morning?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I will give you that after the fact, Walt.

Q Do you know when he will notify the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I will give you that after the fact, too.

Q Can you or do you rule out the possibility the President will throw the Convention open when he sees us tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I have no indication he will.

Q Did you have any doubt?

MR. NESSEN: I have never heard it discussed, Jim.

Q I gather from what you said the President still has not decided on a running mate?

MR. NESSEN: If he has in his own mind, he certainly hasn't told anybody.

Q Tonight he did.

MR. NESSEN: He didn't say, if he had. I know he hasn't told anybody.

Q Is he making that decision now in the staff meeting?

MR. NESSEN: He will make it sometime between now and tomorrow, late in the morning or early afternoon.

Q Does he have a bed time set for this morning?

MR. NESSEN: A bed time?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what time he is going to go to bed.

Q Ron, when will we have an advance on the acceptance speech?

MR. NESSEN: Probably around 3:00 tomorrow afternoon. I think we have decided to make it for a flat a.m. release.

Q Ron, has phase three started yet? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I think we are probably on toward the final phase, Rudy.

Q What is the word count on the acceptance speech?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a word count. I have an estimated reading time of 25 minutes, not counting applause.

Q Do you know how many words?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Ron, will he bring the Vice President with him?

MR. NESSEN: I expect he will.

Q Will it be down here?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it will.

Q Who was in the staff meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to name them tonight.

Q What about his family? Are they up there?

MR. NESSEN: They are up there, scattered around different places, different rooms.

Q They are not gathered celebrating?

MR. NESSEN: They are not all in one place, no.

Q Did he tell you whether he did ask Mr. Reagan to be his running mate?

MR. NESSEN: I think he was asked that a lot over there himself, Bob, and I guess he gave the answer he wanted to give.

Q I thought maybe afterward he might have told you something.

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean in a fit of conscience for not having blurted it right out, he asked me to go back -- (Laughter) No, he didn't.

Q On the Vice Presidential issue, did he receive or send out any phone calls?

MR. NESSEN: I think I asked Bill Roberts to tell you as the calls were coming in. The first call to the President after the nomination was from the Vice President. The second call was from Barry Goldwater. I don't think there were any others before we left to go over to the other hotel.

I will give you one other little bit of color, if you will let me go after that.

You know there is a procedure in which the Convention formally notifies the candidate that he has been nominated. They send a small delegation over. The delegation arrived, and I can give you the names, if you want. They are Senator Griffin, Congressman Michel, Dick Rosenbaum, Fred Biebel of Connecticut -- I will give you all the names afterwards. Many of them had their red and yellow baseball caps on.

Q How many people were there?

MR. NESSEN: Fifteen people.

Q When did they arrive?

MR. NESSEN: A few minutes before I came down, so say 15 minutes ago.

Q What did Mrs. Ford say to her husband when she got back?

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute. These people came in. All had their baseball hats on. They shook hands with the President and congratulated him. Some asked him to autograph their baseball caps. (Laughter) I told you it was color.

Q Did he comply?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he complied, and Bob Griffin said, "Mr. President, we are here to tell you you were nominated, in case you didn't know it."

Q Did they leave or are they participating in this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Some are participating in the meeting but others have left.

Q What about?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to give a complete run-down on the staff meeting.

Q But isn't there a party going on up there?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, different members of the family and staff are in different rooms and so forth. Some are watching television, some are working, some are celebrating.

Q Why can't you tell us who is in the staff meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I prefer not to.

Q In line with an open Administration?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, has President Ford heard from former President Nixon since Mr. Ford has become the candidate?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q He didn't call him?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q And the President didn't call him?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q Why isn't any of the Ford family not participating in the President's celebration?

MR. NESSEN: What happened was we all went upstairs, the President went into his office to begin this staff meeting, and some people who had seen the group in the lobby came up and explained to the President what a large crowd it was and that they were enthusiastic and they were asking for him.

He said, "Okay, I will just run down for a few minutes." He just literally walked out very swiftly to the elevator and down without any advance preparation to go.

Q Is that why a microphone just happened to be standing on the balcony?

MR. NESSEN: No, there was a stand-by plan to come down and see the crowd.

Q He told us he would stop when he came in.

MR. NESSEN: He didn't. He went straight up and decided not to go and that decision was overturned.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 2:59 A.M. CDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH LARRY SPEAKES

AT 3:12 P.M. CDT

AUGUST 19, 1976

THURSDAY  
(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. SPEAKES: Cheney, Schmults and Nessen will be down in about 15 minutes to brief on the Vice Presidential thing.

For those of you that don't know, I will be handling Senator Dole's press through the next week or so, or maybe longer. While we are waiting on them to come, I can give you a little bit of color on Senator Dole's telephone calls and a little of his plans and take your questions. I haven't had but about 15 minutes with him.

I will take your questions and get some answers.

Q Is he going to Vail?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, possibly next week.

We will start from the top. The President called Senator Dole at the Muehlebach at 10:31 and spoke for four minutes. Senator Dole said, and this is a direct quote, "I didn't expect the call but I wanted to be prepared."

The President opened with greetings about, "How are you," and so forth. The Senator said he was a little nervous when the President came on the line. He said, "I have talked to the President before but not about this matter."

The President said something along the lines, "I would like for you to be on the ticket," I think it was. Dole said, "Certainly." The President said, "I think we will make a good team." They worked out the arrangements for him to come from the Muehlebach over to the Crown Center.

Senator Dole was picked up by one of the President's White House advance men in a Pacer and he and Mrs. Dole came over here. They met with the President in the President's office on the 18th floor for 30 minutes, or more -- I am not certain on the time on that. I don't have any details on the discussion.

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The Vice President was there and there was one or two others whose names I don't have.

Then, they came down and made the announcement here, which you saw. Then, Senator Dole went back upstairs and talked briefly about the people who would place his name in nomination tonight. I don't have those names because they have not all been contacted and haven't been worked out but we will get an announcement on that as quickly as possible.

He talked briefly about his speech, which is now being written. He left roughly 45 minutes ago to go to the Muehlebach. He will remain there. He has an obligation to drop by a reception that Senator Thurmond is giving around 5 o'clock. He will go to the hall tonight. He anticipates going to Washington this weekend. He will be appearing on "Face The Nation" on Sunday. We anticipate him meeting with the President sometime next week in Vail but we don't have an exact date on that. That is something Ron will be announcing.

Basically, that is all I have until I have a chance to get back to him.

Q Where is the reception?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know the location.

Q When will Dole go to Washington?

MR. SPEAKES: Sometime this weekend. I don't know whether it will be tomorrow afternoon or Saturday.

Q Who is writing his speech?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q White House speechwriters?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Does he have agents detailed to him?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, he had agents with him and they are with him now.

Q Was that right after he got the telephone call that agents were detailed to him?

MR. SPEAKES: Apparently, he didn't pick up the agents until he got here.



Q Do you know about the identification of others who were on the list?

MR. SPEAKES: They will cover that in the 3:15 briefing.

Q Larry, are you going to leave the White House staff?

MR. SPEAKES: I probably will. What I am trying to do right now is get him organized.

Q Will you go with him back to Washington?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I think so.

Q Are you going to be permanently assigned to him?

MR. SPEAKES: It hasn't been worked out, Helen. I will just get started and handle his inquiries for a few days and maybe then it will be permanent.

Q Who picked him up?

MR. SPEAKES: Frank Ursomarso.

Q What is he going to be?

MR. SPEAKES: He is the guy that picked him up in the Pacer.

Q His own personal car?

MR. SPEAKES: I think it is one of the cars rented here.

Q Was that car selected to not attract attention? Is that what you mean?

MR. SPEAKES: No, it apparently just happened so quickly that that was the car used.

Q Was he a Secret Service agent?

MR. SPEAKES: He is in the White House Advance Office.

Q This was at the Muehlebach he picked him up?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q A rental car?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Who appointed you?

MR. SPEAKES: I guess Dole did.

Q Did you know him before?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I had known him in passing on the Hill.

Q Did you say what time he got picked up this morning?

MR. SPEAKES: Roughly an hour before he was announced here.

Q Was Senator Dole told he was the President's first choice, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: He didn't tell me that. I don't know that it has ever been ranked first choice, second choice, and so forth.

Q Is Kinsolving going to be your assistant?

MR. SPEAKES: That is right, Walt, and you will be his aide. (Laughter)

Q Dole said he wanted to be prepared?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. He said, "I didn't expect a call, but I wanted to be prepared."

Q Prepared for what?

MR. SPEAKES: If he got a call. I am sure he knew his name was on the list.

Q Is he moving into the Crown Center?

MR. SPEAKES: He has an office and a suite here, but whether he will sleep here, I don't know.

Q He said he didn't expect a call. Did he say that to the President?

MR. SPEAKES: No, to me as he described the call.

Q Did he ask the President to call back on another line? (Laughter)

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Did he have lunch upstairs with the President?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think so. I think he just went directly back and met with his immediate staff there.

Q Did the Senator know Frank? Seriously, when he got there, did Frank toot the horn and say, "I am the one," or how did that work?

MR. SPEAKES: I haven't gotten that yet.

Q Did you say that Mrs. Dole came separately?

MR. SPEAKES: No, she came with him.

Q Was she with him when he got the call?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q What about the release of the data the President said would be made public vis-a-vis medical reports, finances, etc?

MR. SPEAKES: I will have to check and see how we will release it.

Q It would be nice if we could have that fast because apparently that was part of the criteria for choosing him.

Q Will Mrs. Dole resign her regular job?

MR. SPEAKES: She will do whatever is proper and whatever is legal. We have lawyers looking into it, and whatever is required she will do it.

Q Where does she work?

MR. SPEAKES: The Federal Trade Commission.

That is all I have. I will try to keep everybody posted. You can put your inquiries in through the White House Press Office. I am going to hang with him throughout the afternoon.

Q Anything about how was the speech being written? Did Dole talk to someone and say, "Here is how I would like it written"?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Who is doing it?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know the players.

Q Where can we reach you?

MR. SPEAKES: You can leave word for me down here for the time being.

Q Through the next week, can we get hold of you through the White House?

MR. SPEAKES: We will get it established in Washington next week.

Q What time will we get the acceptance speech from Dole?

MR. SPEAKES: We may not have an advance text from Dole. It is being worked on. The guy writing the speech said it may be 6:00 or 7:00 before he gets a final draft.

Q Do you have any guidance on the President's acceptance speech?

MR. SPEAKES: The President's speech is being typed right now. I would give them an hour.

Q It is still 6:00 p.m. release?

MR. SPEAKES: That is where it stood when I left.

Q Is that speechwriter one of Dole's staff members?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know, Marty. I will have to check.

Q What about the Thurmond reception; is that here?

MR. SPEAKES: I am not sure of the location.

Q Was it for whoever was named Vice President?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think so. I think it was something previously scheduled and he accepted.

Q Did the President interview Mrs. Dole?

MR. SPEAKES: She was present, but I don't know whether he talked to her at all. She was present in the President's office when they came over for about an hour this morning, but how much conversation between the two, I don't know.

Q What is wrong with his eye?

MR. SPEAKES: He said when he was making the speech in the hall the other night it was either fatigue, smoke, lights, et cetera. It was a burst bloodvessel. It doesn't affect his vision and not regarded as serious, but it is bloodshot.

Q Did he check with a doctor?

MR. SPEAKES: I think so, right.

Q Larry, has anybody asked you about the acceptance speech?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. It is being typed now. It should be an hour.

THE PRESS. Thank you.

END

(AT 3:22 P.M. CDT)

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

N E W S   C O N F E R E N C E

#567

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 5:07 P.M. CDT

AUGUST 19, 1976

THURSDAY  
(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. NESSEN: I have one or two or three or four little schedule items that I think will be of interest. I will wait just a little bit for everybody to come on up. It has to do with tonight's traveling and tomorrow's traveling and so forth.

Let me just kind of go through slowly some times that will be of interest to you.

The President is going to be leaving to go over to the Kemper Arena tonight to deliver his acceptance speech around 8:45. I can't pin it down too much closer than that because it partly depends on the process of nominating the Vice President and how long that takes and so forth, but around 8:45.

That means that the press should assemble for its buses at around 7:45 with the bus departing at 8:00. The President leaves around 8:45. The press assembles at 7:45 and leaves in the press bus at 8:00.

Baggage call in the morning is 5:30 to 7:00 in the press room. The bus leaving here to go to the Muehlebach for the RNC breakfast at around 7:15 to 7:30. We haven't pinned it down yet. Let me say this: The final and refined schedule is being prepared now, a kind of bible, and will be put out, I would say, within a half hour to an hour.

The bus to the Muehlebach in the morning leaves here at 7:10 to 7:30. The bus leaves the Muehlebach to go to the airport at 9:00. The press bus from the Muehlebach to the airport in the morning -- 9:00 a.m.

MORE

#567

Now, a small surprise for you. I know you like surprises. Senator Dole has invited the President to visit his home town of Russell, Kansas tomorrow to attend a picnic barbeque at midday and the President has accepted.

So, at 10:00 the President will leave the Kansas City Municipal Airport and will fly to Salina, Kansas Municipal Airport, arriving there at 10:35. There will then be a motorcade of 80 miles to the town of Russell, Kansas, the home town of Senator Dole, where there will be a picnic barbeque.

At 3:00 p.m., having motored back from Russell to Salinas, the President will depart Salina en route to Grand Junction, Colorado. Due to the change of time zones, he will arrive in Grand Junction at 3:00, the same time as departure, but different time zone, so in other words it is an hour flight.

Q On the flight from here to Salina, will the President be on Air Force One?

MR. CARLSON: Yes.

Q Will the President and Vice President go on the same plane?

MR. NESSEN: He is not Vice President yet.

Then a helicopter from Grand Junction to Avon -- it is a little landing strip near Vail -- that is about an hour helicopter flight, which means the President would arrive in Vail around 4:00 Mountain Time.

Now, for some filing information on this trip to Russell. All the 'telexes in this area of the world are right here and it will not be possible to get any telexes shifted over to either Salina or Russell in time for filing tomorrow. We are making a great effort to get a press phone set up at the picnic site and/or a press phone set up at the Salina Airport, either or both.

The only other item that I have right now is that some of you are having your wives and children get aboard the press plane in Washington, come out here, pick you up, go to Salinas and then from Salinas to Grand Junction and so forth. Now, these times are not totally firmed up yet, but they will be when we put out this bible in a little bit, but if you happen to talk to your wife tonight, the press plane check-in for dependents boarding in Washington will probably be in the 5:30 area, a.m. If your wife is still talking to you, you can tell her there will be a 6:30 press plane take off. The reason for the lengthy check-in procedure is there are a lot of wives and children and it is figured it is needed that much time to get bags loaded and so forth.

Q Will another bus go directly from the hotel to the airport and not to the Muehlebach?

MR. NESSEN: If you would like it, we can arrange that, I believe. Can we not, Doug, Ray?

If people do not want to go to the RNC breakfast in the morning, but would like to go directly to the airport from here, can we provide transportation?

MR. ZOOK: Yes, we will have two buses.

MR. NESSEN: One will go over as a pre-position and one directly to the airport?

Work it out with Ray.

Q On the breakfast, will there be open coverage? Next question, if it is open coverage, will we have time to file or will we just have to get on the bus and motorcade to the airport? In other words, is it worth our going there at all?

MR. NESSEN: They will have elaborate filing facilities there. It won't be a problem to file. You could certainly cover at least part of it and file.

Q What else do you have for tonight? Is the President going to any parties?

MR. NESSEN: At the moment, other than going to the arena to deliver his acceptance speech and returning here, I don't have any additional plans for the President. I expect him to return here and go to his suite.

Now, if he should decide to do anything else, I will let you know. Right now, he doesn't plan to do anything else.

Q Is the family going with him to the arena?

MR. NESSEN: John, is the family going altogether to the arena?

MR. CARLSON: I think so.

MR. NESSEN: I think that is right.

Q Will Senator Dole come over here and go with them?

MR. NESSEN: I think he has to be there ahead of time because his nomination and acceptance speech will come before the President's.



We have Doug Blaser working on all the travel arrangements, et cetera, for tomorrow and tonight. Ray will help you with your baggage problems and your wife and children problems, or some of them, anyhow. I guess, for the moment, that is all we have. I would say there is a news lid until departure time for the acceptance speech with the exception of the posting of the schedule for tomorrow's activities and tonight's activities.

Q Will there be a text of the speech at the RNC?

MR. NESSEN: I don't expect to have a text of that.

Q He will speak?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Will Kissinger be there tonight?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 5:17 P.M. CDT)