

This Copy For _____

N E W S C O N F E R E N C E

#582

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:42 A.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 17, 1976

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me mention a couple of schedule things.

You know that Prince Saud of Saudia Arabia is with the President and afterward -- probably after this briefing -- we will have a written report on their meeting.

There are a couple of extra items on the schedule today. At noon, a group of Members of Congress are coming in to discuss with the President some views they have on a couple of pieces of energy legislation. This was requested by the Members and will be a relatively short meeting. Senators Percy, Ribicoff, Glenn, Pastore, Javits; Congressmen Price and Anderson and some staff people from the Government will be there.

Q Is that John Anderson?

MR. NESSEN: We will find out.

Q Is the President going to tell them of any initiatives to prevent the proliferation of enriched nuclear fuel?

MR. NESSEN: I think the whole question of nuclear fuel production is one of the items they want to discuss, but I don't know what will be said by the participants at the meeting since it hasn't taken place yet.

Q Can you be more specific? What do you mean, energy?

MR. NESSEN: They requested the meeting. One of the pieces of energy legislation is the production of nuclear fuel.

Q Are they going to talk about offshore oil, Ron?

Q Ron, if they could just come out and talk to us about the meeting, it would save you a lot of grief. Can they come out and talk to us?

MR. NESSEN: I will ask them.

MORE

#582

Q Do they foresee they will be able to get the energy legislation before they adjourn on October 2nd?

MR. NESSEN: The meeting has not taken place yet so I don't know what assessment they are going to give to the President.

That is John Anderson.

Let me see what other pieces of legislation, because the nuclear fuel production they are going to talk about --

Q What is the President's attitude on that legislation, the nuclear fuel production?

MR. NESSEN: You know what his proposal was.

Q What is his attitude on the legislation?

MR. NESSEN: On this particular piece that is up there?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I will have to check. I don't know what form it is in.

Q Ron, it is his bill, the nuclear --

MR. NESSEN: I think it is his bill, which is to add some private nuclear fuel production plants to the current two plants, I guess, which are owned by the Government and produce nuclear power.

Q Uranium enrichment?

MR. NESSEN: Basically, that is what we are talking about.

Q Unless I am mistaken, which is a possibility, Members of Congress want to go beyond the President's position in search of a way to prevent the proliferation of these fuels. What is his attitude?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not that familiar with the issue, Jim, but I will check.

Another meeting that has been added to the President's schedule is at 2:30 this afternoon. The 16th Annual Governmental Affairs Leadership Seminar of the Jaycees is currently underway in Washington. Today is the third day of the seminar. As part of their seminar, they have been receiving a group of briefings today in Room 450 of the Old EOB from Cabinet Members, Members of Congress, and others. There are about 80 of Jaycees attending this leadership seminar.

When the President learned that they were here to take part in these briefings, he indicated he would like to see them himself and would like to have a chance to talk to them briefly. So, he will do that at 2:30. I am not sure whether he will drop in at Room 450 or whether they will come over here, but we will work out the details. If there is any interest in coverage, we could probably have coverage.

Q There is interest.

Q Can we go into EOB without that pass rigamarole?

MR. NESSEN: If it is in EOB, we can work out the pass rigamarole.

Q Is he going to make a little talk to them?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Will the talk be open for coverage?

MR. NESSEN: If you want it, yes.

Q Do you know the subject?

MR. NESSEN: I don't. He only decided a short time ago to do it, and I don't think he has written his remarks yet.

Q What about the coverage on the State Department thing?

MR. NESSEN: What State Department thing?

Q Isn't there a State Department drop-in at 3:30? I am sorry. Maybe I am one day off.

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean the Federation of Republican Women? I think we will have some kind of small writing pool for that. I have not worked out the details yet.

Looking at the weekend, I would say Saturday the President has a relatively full day of meetings. He has some staff meetings here. He will have some other meetings. The one I know of for sure is Secretary Coleman will be coming again to continue discussing the airport noise legislation which he is drafting.

Do we have any other definite appointments yet for the President?

Q Will there be a press conference tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans for one.

Q Will there be any political meetings?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q What is his media event for tomorrow?

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

Q I am really not being facetious here. Every day the President comes out and is exposed to the television cameras and you have a schedule which he follows fairly closely as to one television event per day. What is tomorrow's television event?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I have not seen any that I could call a television event.

For Sunday, he will probably go to church and could play golf, but I don't have any definite word one way or the other on that.

Q Isn't that a flip-flop? You said he was not going to play.

MR. NESSEN: But he has already played.

Q Ron, you mentioned all those meetings tomorrow. Do you plan to brief tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I don't plan to brief. I plan to be here, though.

Q Camp David?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q In the White House only?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Some of you have asked, for long-range planning, where I thought the President would spend election day. I expect the President to go to Grand Rapids, Michigan on Monday, the 1st of November. I don't have the exact time of day, but sometime during the day on Monday, but stay overnight in Grand Rapids, vote there on Tuesday morning and then come back to Washington later on Tuesday, election day, and watch the results come in here and, of course, the victory party would be here also.

Q You are advising us to apply for absentee ballots?

Q Will he seriously have a victory party for staff members here at the White House?

MR. NESSEN: You bet'cha, baby.

Q Even if he loses, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: We don't anticipate that.

Q Will he have some of the campaign workers over here watching the results with him?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. We have not quite gotten that far yet.

Q Will the PFC have a ballroom type set-up?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know yet. You better ask Bill Greener that question.

Q Since we are planning so far ahead, can we get rooms in Grand Rapids other than that monastery where we stayed the last time?

MR. NESSEN: Would you rather stay there or at the Holiday Inn in Americus?

Q If the President will vote in Americus.

Q As long as you are on campaign plans, I don't know where it was the President told about the Southern trip, but do you have any more details on that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I have anything to add. I guess, as Jim Baker said more than most others, the plan was to travel occasionally in the earlier or first, say, five to six weeks of the campaign, and this will be the second trip now.

I guess John, who goes to the scheduling meetings for the Press Office, tells me the plans have been in the works about a month for this trip. The basic outline we have so far -- we don't have too much more -- is on Saturday the 25th the President will fly to Kenner, Louisiana, with a motorcade up the Mississippi River to a point where he would board the sternwheel steamboat called the NATCHEZ

He would have with him on the boat about 600 people made up of staff people, guests who are southern political people, and he would have presumably those members of the press who wish to go and some regional press people from the South who might want to go, altogether about 600 people.

The trip down river from wherever he boards to New Orleans would take six hours, from 10:00 Saturday morning to about 4:00 Saturday afternoon. There will be about two or three stops.

Q What is the distance?

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

On the way, he will make two or three stops to have dockside rallies.

Q What is the time on that?

MR. NESSEN: 10:00 in the morning until 4:00 in the afternoon for the full boat trip, roughly.

Q Ron, you said two or three stops. I was told seven yesterday. Is that wrong?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of seven stops. That sounds like too many to me.

Q Will there be phones aboard the boat?

MR. NESSEN: We will have a good press set-up there, and I think most of the filing will have to be done at the two or three stops, which will be half-hour each and they are timed so I think you won't have any trouble for Sunday morning deadlines. The first is 11:30, the second is about 1:30, so that should give you enough time.

Q What kind of filing time after a rally would there be?

MR. NESSEN: After the New Orleans rally?

Q What kind of radio filing time?

MR. NESSEN: I think what will happen is he will do the rally and then during the handshaking and that kind of stuff you should have time to file for radio. Then when we get to New Orleans there will be a rally at 5:00 p.m., approximately, Saturday the 25th in Jackson Square in New Orleans.

The President will stay overnight in New Orleans and the next day, Sunday the 26th, is a motorcade along the Gulf Coast through the States of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. I don't have the exact stops -- obviously there will be stops on that drive -- ending up in Mobile, Alabama, which is the last stop of the motorcade.

That will be late Sunday afternoon or early evening and then will fly from Mobile to Miami Sunday night and stay overnight in Miami Sunday night, the 26th, and on the morning of the 27th deliver a speech to the International Association of Chiefs of Police in Miami. They are having a convention there, and then after that fly back to Washington, getting back here sometime early on Monday afternoon, the 27th.

Q Ron, can you say whether the President plans to personally campaign in Georgia?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any other campaign travel to announce beyond what we have given you.

Q I notice there seems to be an effort to skip Georgia on this Southern motorcade.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think there is any effort to skip it. The motorcade is already over 150 miles long, as I understand it, and that pretty well takes up the day, but as some of the Southern chairmen told you yesterday, there is a feeling that the President can and will win the Southern States and Georgia is not out of the question, that the people in Georgia, according to Harry Dent and others who know --

Q That was really the purpose of my question. Because of the optimistic report he got yesterday, I wonder if he plans to personally go into Georgia?

MR. NESSEN: We still have six and a half weeks to go and the President said he is not writing off any part of the country or any State.

Q Ron, are there any plans to campaign before or after the debate next Thursday? A stop earlier in the day?

MR. NESSEN: On Thursday on the way to Philadelphia?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I anticipate he will go straight to Philadelphia.

Q Thursday or Wednesday?

MR. NESSEN: What day is the debate?

Q Thursday.

MR. NESSEN: I think he will go on Thursday.

Q Will he come back that night?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the exact plans for what happens after the debate.

Q Do you have any idea of whether he will stay around here most of next week?

MR. NESSEN: He will stay around here before the debate.

Q Do you have any idea what time of day he will go up to Philadelphia?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have it at the moment.

Q On Saturday in New Orleans is the 5:00 p.m. rally the last thing of the day?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I think so.

Q Do you anticipate that he will make any Washington appearances next week?

MR. NESSEN: I think he will have some events, but I don't have anything to announce now.

Q You seem to be implying he will stay overnight in Philadelphia.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to announce yet.

Q How about this plane, now? Is the President aware of the plane?

MR. NESSEN: The F-14?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What is he doing about it?

MR. NESSEN: I think I ought to express his gratitude that there were only minor injuries -- that the pilot and the other officer on the plane escaped and some of the deck hands I understand suffered minor injuries, but he is gratified that nobody suffered any serious injury.

Secondly, he has been assured that the Navy is going to make every effort to recover the plane.

Q When did he first find out about it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know precisely at what moment he learned of it, but in a timely way.

Q He has been assured they are going to make every effort to recover the plane?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, that is correct.

Q Is it his role to give a go-ahead on it? Did he discuss it with Rumsfeld this morning?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he did talk about it with Rumsfeld this morning. I did not attend that meeting.

Q Have the Soviets been told to keep hands off the airplane?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Will we keep ships in that area? In other words, will we keep it guarded?

MR. NESSEN: The Navy has assured the President-- or the Pentagon has--that they will make every effort to recover the plane but for the precise details of how they do that or when, I think you should check the Pentagon.

Q If they can't recover it, Ron, has he ordered that it be destroyed?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is premature to take that question because they are going to make every effort to recover it.

Q Ron, what is the nature of the assurance that the Navy gave the President? Did he talk or did somebody at the Pentagon talk to Scowcroft or somebody here this morning on this?

MR. NESSEN: I will check the exact method of notification, if it is important.

Q Ron, did the President say he wanted every effort made to recover it?

MR. NESSEN: He was assured by the Navy that every effort would be made to recover it.

Q So, in other words, they made the decision?

MR. NESSEN: That was the assurance given to the President. I don't know that I see any distinction.

Q To recover it or destroy it?

MR. NESSEN: The Navy assured the President every effort will be made to recover it.

Q They think it is a cheaper method, a better method of doing it?

MR. NESSEN: As opposed to what?

Q . Destroying it.

MR. NESSEN: They are going to make every effort to recover it.

Q Has the President been briefed on the presence of Soviet naval ships in the area?

MR. NESSEN: He has been briefed on the situation.

Q When was he briefed on it?

MR. NESSEN: I will find out if Brent or Don did it, or both.

Q I want to know if he read about it in the papers?

MR. NESSEN: I can assure you he did not.

Q Did he find out the same day that the incident happened?

MR. NESSEN: He found out in a very timely way, as he finds out everything.

Q Is Kissinger making regular reports and what is the nature of them?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he is making regular reports. In fact, some of you heard a rumor and I went to check on the rumor and found Henry Kissinger was on the phone with the NSC at that very time. He is reporting by phone, reporting by cable, but I would rather not discuss in detail what his reports consist of since his mission is still underway.

Q Would you give us a feeling as to how the mission is going?

MR. NESSEN: I think Henry has been talking about it at each step and I would rather have him do that than to do it from here.

Q Ron, the other night the President told the audience that at his direction Secretary Kissinger is on his way to Africa. If Secretary Kissinger fails, does he expect to share the blame or does he expect any kind of political repercussions?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President has explained, and so has Henry, what the importance of this mission and why the United States, the President, felt it should be undertaken and I would rather not speculate on what its possible outcome and consequences will be.

Q Ron, just for the record, does the White House have any comments on Mr. Rockefeller's gestures yesterday and does the President know about that?

MR. NESSEN: He saw the picture in the paper but did not have any reaction.

Q Did he laugh?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't have any reaction.

Q No reaction?

MR. NESSEN: No reaction.

Q Will he see Dole, who has expressed a desire to see the President?

MR. NESSEN: Dole can see the President any time he wants to.

Q We know the Vice President will be out campaigning a lot. Can we expect this to be part of his road show or was it a one-time thing?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have any reaction to it, Bob.

Q Did you say the President does not have any reaction or did not have any reaction? You mean he looked at that picture --

MR. NESSEN: Doesn't, didn't and won't.

Q Do you mean his face did not change, no change of expression?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have any reaction.

Q Ron, on the tax bill, can you give us any rough idea when a decision will be made on it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think the bill is here yet. I don't think it has finished up in conference. Once it gets here then the clock starts running, and there are ten days to deal with it, but it is a 1600-page bill and an enormously complicated bill and I know that the President is going to want to analyze it and understand what the bill purports to do before making a decision.

Q In saying that, Ron, do you mean to leave us with the impression that there is a realistic possibility of veto?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going to be able to say one way or the other because the President has not had a chance to thoroughly review this very long and complicated bill.

Q The reason I say that, the last three tax bills we have had down here, there have been threats from your podium and from Mr. Ford himself about possible vetoes. This time there has been none of that.

MR. NESSEN: I just can't guide you one way or the other until he has had a chance to look at it and see what is in it.

MORE

Q Ron, are there any parts of the bill that you are aware of at this point that disturb the President?

MR. NESSEN: It is so long and complicated and it is still being fiddled with, I guess, that I would rather not guess or speculate on his analysis.

Q While it is in the current form, does the President want to have any input?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean "input"?

Q Does the President not have anything to say about it at all?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President's main complaint with it is it does not give as big a tax cut as the President proposed. That is his major complaint.

Q But you would not realistically expect him to veto a bill that continues a tax cut in an election year, would you?

MR. NESSEN: If the price of it is accepting something that is so thoroughly against his principles, I would say that there is that possibility. But I am only speculating since the President has not had a chance to read the bill and make a judgment on it.

Q But you are saying you are holding out the possibility this bill may indeed be vetoed?

MR. NESSEN: I am just saying, Bob, it is not here yet, it is not in final form yet, as far as I know, and until the President has had time to read it and digest it, I can't say one way or the other.

Q What is the President's attitude on the anti-trust legislation which also cleared Congress?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that that has cleared Congress. It has got three titles to it, as you probably know.

Q And there has been opposition to two of them.

MR. NESSEN: The first title is essentially the President's proposal. That is, anti-trust -- it is amendments to the so-called anti-trust civil process agency. That is basically an Administration bill and obviously, the President supports that.

The second title involves notification prior to mergers and as that worked its way through Congress -- it originally had some procedures in there, features that were objectionable -- but it has been amended now to delete provisions that were objectionable to the Administration.

Q So, it is acceptable, then?

MR. NESSEN: Wait. I have not finished, yet.

I think you know that the *parens patriae* provision -- that is the provision that allows a State to act as the sort of representative of a whole class of people -- the President spoke out previously on his objections to that and I understand that that section has been modified to address some very specific objections raised by the President.

So, I think it is a mixed bag and what the President really needs to do is to sit down and read it and see whether, taken as a whole, it does deal in a responsible way with the responsibilities of the Federal Government to enforce anti-trust laws and that decision just has not been made yet, but I wanted to give you some feel of the factors involved in the decision.

Q It sounds to me like if two are acceptable and the third objection has been softened, he has to go with it.

MR. NESSEN: I only suggest that it is a piece of legislation that the President needs to read and make a judgment on whether, as a whole, it is the responsible way to enforce the anti-trust law.

Q As long as we are on pending legislation, there has been a bill passed by the Senate -- I think at committee level in the House -- to put strict penalties on companies taking part in the Arab boycott. Does the President have any thoughts on that?

MR. NESSEN: I think what the President has said before and what Administration witnesses have testified to on the Hill -- there have been various anti-boycott amendments introduced through various pieces of legislation -- and the Administration witnesses have always testified that the President acted in this area last November, administratively, in a way he feels deals most effectively with the problem and would produce results. That is the way he believes it ought to be handled.

Q Would you in the White House say the problem has been solved?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think he feels that certainly this administrative action has begun to deal with the problem and is taking effect and I think the President said at the B'nai B'rith he would follow the situation and at some point, if it was necessary, would support legislation.

MORE

Q Has he discussed that subject with Prince Saud today, the subject of anti-boycott legislation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether that was on the agenda or not.

Q Do you know about these anti-boycott bills in and of themselves? I am not talking about the tax bill.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Again, the amendments have been worded and reworded and modified and changed and until the actual wording gets here, I am not going to say one way or the other, but in general, the President's view is that he has handled this months ago, more than six months ago, and that that is the proper way to deal with the problem.

Q Ron, were you ever able to determine whether the President saw anybody from the Ford Motor Company while he was in Michigan Wednesday?

MR. NESSEN: He did not, or from the union.

Q Is there anything new on that today?

MR. NESSEN: No. I did check around in response to questions by Jim and others, and the Labor Department has done an economic impact analysis of the strike and what its economic impact would be. That study has been sent over to the Economic Policy Board here for its information and the President is being kept informed of developments in the strike and reiterates his feeling that the proper way to resolve this is through the collective bargaining system. He is optimistic that it will work.

Q He still has taken no action himself, no phone calls? There has been nobody in here in the White House?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Does the statement indicate how long the strike can go on before it has an adverse or serious adverse effect?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen this particular impact statement, Aldo. Normally, the way they are written is a judgment of what the impact would be in one week, two weeks, four weeks, six weeks, et cetera.

Q Why is he optimistic?

MR. NESSEN: He believes in the collective bargaining process.

Q Since obviously, the collective bargaining process failed in this case because it led to a strike --

MR. NESSEN: It is still going on.

Q -- it failed to avert a strike. Is there any role that can usefully be played by the Secretary of Labor in mediating the dispute?

MR. NESSEN: The President believes in letting the collective bargaining process work.

Q Do you happen to recall, Ron, from your inquiry into this matter, what the assessment was on the impact of a six-week strike?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the economic impact statement itself. I have checked and found there is one but Labor might help you with that if it is information that can be put out. I don't know if it is or not.

Q Who is his liaison at Ford and the union?

MR. NESSEN: With the Ford Motor Company?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by his "liaison." The President is not involved in this in any way and has not made contact with the representatives.

Q You said he was being kept informed.

MR. NESSEN: That is right. The Economic Policy Board is keeping him informed.

Q Is there somebody there who is specifically talking to both sides or are they just reading in the newspapers or what are they doing?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what their sources of information are. I don't know of any direct contact.

Q Ron, has the President yet received Jim Cannon's report on the abortion funds?

MR. NESSEN: As of this morning, he had not, but Jim told me yesterday after the President said he wanted it without delay that it was on what Jim called a fast track.

Q You will ask him about it?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly will.

Q He has not decided on how he will view this amendment?

MR. NESSEN: The amendment to the HEW-Labor Appropriations Bill? No, he has not because he has not had a chance to study the exact language of it yet to see precisely what it would do.

MORE

Q A question on the F-14. Did the President get any assurances from the Navy that they would try to not let any more pieces of equipment like that roll off the edge of --

MR. NESSEN: Something about the emergency brake was left off.

Q Seriously, was he upset to learn that there had been such an event with a valuable piece of equipment like that? Has he had any assurances that there were more precautions being taken?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you ask the Navy?

Q Ron, what specifically is the President doing this weekend and the first part of next week to prepare for the debate?

MR. NESSEN: These are the issues that he has to deal with every day on the job so it is not that he needs to start from scratch with any kind of special preparation. He is reviewing some papers to refresh his memory on facts and figures, figures primarily, but that is the only thing I know of that he is doing.

Q He is not going over Carter's records or Carter's statements?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q Has the White House asked any Government agencies to prepare factual material for the debates?

MR. NESSEN: No. This is stuff that is available in the White House. It is the kind of thing he reviews before a news conference.

Q There has been no special request issued to the agencies for help in preparation of the debate?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of any.

Q Ron, is he reviewing facts and figures pertaining to the issue of abortion?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't looked through each page of the briefing book, so I don't know.

Q Does he expect to have the issue of abortion be one of the issues to be debated?

MR. NESSEN: That would probably be up to the three questioners, to decide what they want to ask about.

Q Does the preparation include questioning by members of his staff of the sort that is said to periodically occur before a news conference?

MR. NESSEN: It does not occur periodically before a news conference and it has not occurred in the preparation for this debate.

Q Will it?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Do you mean he gets no possible questions that might be asked?

MR. NESSEN: Since I have been here -- which is two years, shortly -- there has not been any of these make believe news conferences where people pretend to be reporters.

Q Do you mean he does not get possible questions?

MR. NESSEN: He reviews briefing material which sometimes suggests how the questions might come to him in an area.

Q Does he think it is unseemly to prepare for a debate by rehearsing in that fashion?

MR. NESSEN: This is the way he is preparing for the debate, to review figures and so forth that might come up in the debate.

Q Has he reviewed for the debates at all by watching video tapes of the old Nixon-Kennedy debates?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Has he watched video tapes of Jimmy Carter?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Q Has the staff looked at the Kennedy-Nixon debates?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly have not.

Q Ron, do you know whether he watched that PBS replay the other night?

MR. NESSEN: He did not.

Q Ron, has anyone been assigned to gather material for him for the debates, that is their job now, to help prepare the President?

MR. NESSEN: Only the same people who pull together any material he might need before a news conference.

Q Ron, what is Don Penny doing to help the President prepare for the debates, if anything?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing.

Q What is Don Penny doing to earn his salary?

MR. NESSEN: Don Penny is in New York visiting friends and he is with the PFC when he does work.

Q Is he going to work with the President before the debates?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any plans for it.

Q What does he do to earn the PFC salary?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you ask the PFC? He helps the President prepare for speeches.

Q What is the President's answer to Carter's charge that he suddenly has developed these compassionate social programs, in terms of helping on the mortgage business and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: I told you I was not going to answer campaign stump speeches here, and I am not going to.

Q But this is a very legitimate thing. There must be an answer. I am not asking from a political standpoint.

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to answer campaign speeches. I started off that way and I am going to finish up that way.

Q Ron, there are reports that the White House negotiators for these debates are asking that a depression be built into the table he will use so his water pitcher and glass won't tip. What is the reason for that?

MR. NESSEN: I have not been in on the negotiations, Jim. My understanding was that the two sides indicated that they would conduct the negotiations for the debates in a serious and private way and they would not run out and leak details of alleged negotiations.

Q I don't know who leaked these reports. Are you suggesting the Carter people did?

MR. NESSEN: I don't even know it was a leak. This is the first I have heard of it.

Q Ron, on Helen's question, the President repeatedly, and yourself -- certainly the President in news conferences, up to the nomination in Kansas City -- never went beyond the formal Administration proposal on housing. What he announced in Michigan was something brand new. He had not come up with it before. Could you give us the genesis of where this came from?

MR. NESSEN: Let me give you a little bit of an overview. As I understand it from Paul O'Neill -- and if we are going to get very deeply into the technicalities of the new proposals I better get Paul to come down here. He stayed by yesterday, but we did not have any questions yesterday.

I understand that the housing proposals -- that is, to stretch out the mortgage payments or have the lower mortgage payments in the earlier years and rising up in the later years as well as the smaller down payment provision -- have been in the drafting stage for some time.

Let me give you this more overall view of the proposals he made the other night, as well as the one he made in the Yellowstone speech.

As we have said before, the President is being judged in the election on two things: One, the record of two years in office, which he often talks about; and secondly, what he proposed to do or sees as needing doing in the next four years.

Those are the two elements on which he is asking the voters to judge him and to keep him in the White House. So, it seems to me natural and normal that he would begin now during the campaign to lay out what some of his plans are for the next four years and that is exactly what he did in the speech the other night and in the Yellowstone speech and at Vail, and what he will continue to do for the remainder of the campaign is tell people what he will do, plans to do or thinks needs doing in the next four years and why he feels he should be elected to do it.

Q Things that needed being done. Then why did he veto a bill that was much similar in terms of mortgages?

MR. NESSEN: I think his record on housing, I guess -- I forget -- you were there when he told the students about what his record was on housing.

Q He did veto legislation that --

MR. NESSEN: Let me get the housing record or you probably have your notes from the other day at the University when he went through it.

Q Ron, what do you suppose Vice President Rockefeller meant when he said yesterday that the Republican platform adopted in Kansas City does not reflect the President's thinking?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know precisely what the Vice President said up there.

Q Is that a fair statement on his part?

MR. NESSEN: I think what we have said here every time I have been asked about the platform, Jim -- and it certainly has not changed and won't -- is that the President can run on that platform.

Q He does not consider the platform binding?

MR. NESSEN: The President can run on that platform.

Q Is he going to run on it?

MR. NESSEN: He is running on it.

Q He is running on the Republican platform?

MR. NESSEN: That platform was the consensus of the Republican Convention. It is the consensus of the delegates there that that is the platform they wanted their candidate to run on and the President can and is running on the platform.

Q Do you mean to suggest by saying that -- and I don't mean to be unfair in drawing this interpretation -- that there are things in the platform that he is not terribly happy with but that as a whole he can run on the platform?

MR. NESSEN: He can run on the platform.

Q What about the first part of the question?

MR. NESSEN: We said it before, we said it ever since the day it was adopted at Kansas City -- a lot of people came running up and said, "Can he run on the platform," and I said, "Yes, he can run on the platform."

Q Ron, to go beyond that, are there things in the platform he is not terribly satisfied with?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what his opinion is of each word, phrase and paragraph, Jim. He can run on the platform.

Q Also, one thing, Ron. Vice President Rockefeller and his running mate Dole both said in Syracuse yesterday that the platform is not binding.

MR. NESSEN: Dick, this is the most irrelevant issue that I have seen come up in this.

Q And the relevant issue?

MR. NESSEN: The relevant answer is that the President can run on the platform.

Q But he doesn't consider it binding?

MR. NESSEN: He is running on it.

Q Is Solzhenitsyn going to be invited to the White House?

MR. NESSEN: Solzhenitsyn has been invited to the White House.

Q Does the President hope he will come before November 2?

MR. NESSEN: He has an open invitation, Helen.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:25 PM EDT)