

This Copy For _____

#54

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

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:05 P.M. EDT

OCTOBER 23, 1974

MR. NESSEN: I hope everybody is as tired as I am so you cannot ask tough questions. I am in total confusion today, but then again, what is new about that?

Just before we start, there is going to be a 12:15 photo of Cardinal Cooke, which will be during the briefing. If you will come to the side door of the press room, somebody from the press room will take you around during the briefing.

Q Will he be available later, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: For questions? I have not asked him.

Q Can we?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, you could.

Before we start, I have a word about my own continued tenure in this job. As of Monday, I set the longevity record for Press Secretaries under the Ford Administration. (Laughter) The President was in the office early this morning and met with --

Q That is it?

MR. NESSEN: What did you want to know?

Q How much longer is this going to go on?

MR. NESSEN: What, my tenure?

Q Your longevity record.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Every day I set a new record. I am sort of like Hank Aaron. But he is retiring next year, I understand. Isn't he, or is he just going to another team?

MORE

#54

Q He does not know yet.

Q It should also be pointed out that his record consisted of home runs. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: But didn't he strike out a lot, too? (Laughter)

Q You should have used Lou Brock and his stolen bases.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we are going to get anywhere with this conversation, but I thought you would like to know.

Q That is like the foreign policy announcement. We are ready for the other shoe to drop here, Ron. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: The President was in the office early and met with Rumsfeld, Marsh, Hartmann, Timmons, Scowcroft, and myself. In a couple of minutes, the President will meet with Cardinal Terence Cooke, the Archbishop of New York. Cardinal Cooke will be reporting on his recent visit to the drought-affected areas of Africa.

He made his visit to Africa from September 28 to October 4, and he asked for this meeting to report to the President on his visit.

By way of background information, the United States has contributed about 40 percent of all the assistance to that area through the end of the fiscal year which ended on June 30. The United States committed over 600,000 tons of foodstuffs, along with \$120 million, and has given another \$29 million in non-food assistance.

In addition, at the request of the Administration, Congress appropriated \$85 million this past summer for recovery programs in the area to help the affected nations reestablish the ecological equilibrium and to adopt new and better agricultural methods to increase food production.

The Catholic Relief Service has been active in Mauritania, Senegal, and Upper Volta, and has received funds from the Agency for International Development to carry on its work.

As I told you, there will be a photo, and there will be a pool taken in to see the beginning of the meeting.

Q Did the Government pay for the Cardinal's trip? Who paid for the Cardinal's trip, the church?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q Ron, these figures you gave, is that Government assistance or all assistance from the United States including the public and/or private?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think that is Government assistance. It is, but we will double-check it to be sure.

At about 12:25 the President will meet with Fred Malek and his family. Fred left his position as Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget on September 13, and this is an opportunity to thank Fred for his service to the Government.

This evening the President will host a black tie dinner in honor of General and Mrs. Alexander M. Haig, Jr. at 8 o'clock. It will be a private dinner. The President wanted to hold the dinner as a token of his deep appreciation to General Haig for his dedicated service. We will post a guest list for you later.

Q Is Mrs. Ford available? Will she be able to attend?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is yes.

Q Ron, can you take another question on that?

MR. NESSEN: Sure.

Q We note that virtually all the top senior staff of the White House is going to be at that dinner tonight, Mr. Marsh and virtually every senior staff member except Mr. Hartmann. We wonder why Mr. Hartmann will not be at that dinner tonight.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't make out the guest list, so I don't know.

Q Will you take the question?

MR. NESSEN: I could, if you like.

Q Is it a fact that he is not at the dinner?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the guest list either, as a matter of fact. That is the first I knew Mr. Hartmann was not going to be there.

Q Is he ill?

MR. NESSEN: He has had a cold and he skipped the trip yesterday.

Q Is he ill now?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is in the office this morning. He still has a bad cold.

Q Are there any hard feelings between Mr. Hartmann and General Haig?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Tomorrow, the President is going to Des Moines, Iowa; Melvin, Illinois and Chicago. We will have the detailed schedule for you later, but I can go through the highlights. There are no highlights, actually, they are all low lights. (Laughter)

Check-in at Andrews is at 8:45. That is not too bad compared with the Mexican trip. And the press plane leaves for Des Moines Municipal Airport, the International Guard Terminal, at 9:15.

The President leaves the White House at 9:45 and leaves Andrews at 10:05. He arrives at Des Moines Municipal Airport at 11:15 Central Time, and will go by car to the capital building where he will speak about noon at a public rally on the capital steps.

Q Central Time?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

There will be a public rally at noon on the capital steps.

Q Ron, was that arrive in Des Moines at 11:15 Central?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Ron, can you give us any idea of the nature of the remarks? Will this be a standard campaign speech or does he have a policy matter that he chooses to discuss?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the speech yet, but I will try to give you some guidance when I have seen it.

Do you want another major foreign policy announcement?

Q In Des Moines?

MR. NESSEN: He will go to a Republican lunch at the Val Air Ball Room in beautiful downtown Des Moines.

Q What kind of lunch is it, a Republican fund-raiser?

MR. NESSEN: No, just a Republican lunch.

Q What time is that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he speaks about 1 o'clock.

He departs Des Moines at 1:40 and goes to O'Hare, arriving at 3 o'clock and then he goes by helicopter to Melvin, Illinois to participate in an event in honor of Les Arends at 4 o'clock at the fairgrounds.

Q How do reporters go to Melvin?

MR. NESSEN: In helicopters.

Q Will there be ample helicopters or will this be like the Mexican pool?

MR. NESSEN: A small pool.

The President will speak at 4:20 at the fairgrounds.

Q Do you have any idea of how far Melvin is from Chicago?

MR. NESSEN: I am told it is a 90-minute helicopter flight.

The President will speak at the fairgrounds at 4:20. Following his remarks, he will go by helicopter back to Meigs Field, arriving at 5:50. I better give you some idea of the flight time.

Q Is that the lakefront field?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

He will arrive at 5:50 at Meigs Field and will be greeted by Mayor Daly.

Q What about coverage on that? Is that pool or open?

MR. NESSEN: I guess that is open.

Let me go through this and then I want to go back to the aid to Africa.

We have had him greeted by Mayor Daly. Then he is going to go to the Conrad Hilton to attend two receptions and speak at the President's Dinner of the United Republican Fund. The President will speak at about 9:15 Central Time and leave the Hilton at 9:45 and depart O'Hare at 10:25.

Q Can you give us the name of that rather long dinner name that you just rattled off?

MR. NESSEN: The President's Dinner of the United Republican Fund.

MORE

Q What are the times?

MR. NESSEN: Chicago or Illinois? We will find out.

Q The time that the speech starts and the time that he leaves there.

MR. NESSEN: Speaking at 9:15 and leaving the hotel at 9:45, and leaving O'Hare at 10:25. So he gets back to Andrews at 12:50 Eastern Time, and back to the White House at 1:10.

Q Did you say there is a small pool going to Melvin?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. It is a 15-minute helicopter ride, I am told.

Q Did you say only a pool is going on that?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q The rest of the press is going to have to stay in Chicago? We want to be clear on this.

MR. NESSEN: One helicopter.

Q We can go to the Conrad Hilton or something?

MR. NESSEN: Or you can go to Meigs and watch the return, if you like.

Q Will you arrange transportation for us to get to Meigs, or is that something we have to do on our own?

MR. NESSEN: We will have to see what the detailed schedule looks like first.

Q I get the impression that we may be totally helpless.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't like to make characterizations like that.

Let's see now. Friday, if we are all alive and well by then, we don't have much of a schedule to give you. The President is expected to work here in the White House on Friday, and for guidance, he probably will go to Camp David with Mrs. Ford for the weekend.

Q Leaving Friday?

MR. NESSEN: That is not clear yet, Frank, when he is going to leave.

Q Is Monday a three-day weekend, and will you have a briefing Monday?

MR. NESSEN: Not if I can help it.

Q Monday is Veterans' Day.

Q Your policy so far has been on three-day weekends not to have a briefing. I would like some guidance.

MR. NESSEN: That is all right with me. Does anybody want a briefing?

Let's not have a briefing.

Q When?

MR. NESSEN: Monday.

Q Does that mean we have two briefings on Tuesday, then?

Q One small thing. How are you going to get the details out on the Grand Rapids trip?

MR. NESSEN: What Grand Rapids trip?

Q Tuesday. The Grand Rapids trip.

MR. NESSEN: We can post all that.

Q Does the President meet with the civil rights leaders --

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute. I am getting all backed up here with little slips of paper.

Jim, you wanted to know -- it is the Illinois United Republican Fund Dinner.

Let's go back to the African aid for just a moment.

The United States Government has committed 600,000 tons of food worth approximately \$120 million -- I didn't read it that way the first time -- and in addition has given another \$29 million in non-food assistance.

Q All Federal funds?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Tomorrow is he meeting with the civil rights leaders -- on Friday, rather?

MR. NESSEN: I have not gotten the exact schedule for Friday yet.

Q Did you answer the question as to whether the Archbishop paid his own air fare on that?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, he did.

Q Did the President ask him to take the trip, or was that at his own initiative?

MR. NESSEN: I think it was at his own initiative.

Q Are you going to run down the schedule for next week?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to try to go down a little bit of it, yes.

Let me just see something here.

On Monday at 11:00, the President is going to go to Arlington Cemetary to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and that is Veterans' Day, as you pointed out.

On Tuesday, the President is going to Grand Rapids, Michigan, late in the day for a rally and fundraiser.

Q Overnight in Grand Rapids?

MR. NESSEN: We will give you the details when we get them, Jim. We don't have the exact details yet.

On Thursday, October 31, the President will go to Los Angeles for a fundraiser, and spend the night in Los Angeles.

Then the next day, Friday, November 1, the President will make appearances in Fresno, California, and Portland, Oregon, and he will stay that night in Portland -- hometown of David Kennerly.

Then he will be coming back to Washington on Saturday, November 2, having stopped on the way in Salt Lake City; Grand Junction, Colorado; and Wichita.

Q What happened to Las Vegas?

Q Is he against gambling?

Q That was on what you might call the speculative list.

MR. NESSEN: No overnight in Grand Rapids, for whoever asked that question.

Q Go out late and come back late?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Ron, when are we going to leave for Los Angeles?

MR. NESSEN: You mean what time of day?

Q Yes.

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

Q Can you give us the details on the Los Angeles event at all?

MR. NESSEN: No. There are not any details on any of those stops that I can give you yet.

Q Where will the President vote, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: He usually votes absentee, but we were not able to find that out this morning. But we will get it for you.

Q Staying with that last trip, and asking seriously, both San Francisco and Las Vegas were supposed to be on that itinerary. Do you know why they were scratched?

MR. NESSEN: What itinerary was that, Jim?

Q The one that starts in Los Angeles, that last three-day trip.

MR. NESSEN: Well, we never announce any stops until they are firm, Jim. As you know, a lot of stops are proposed to the President, and when they are firm, we announce them -- which is what we are doing today.

Q Might they be added yet?

MR. NESSEN: I think probably this wraps up the President's campaign schedule.

Q Ron, I would like to ask, in view of the President's dedication in the beginning of his term to an open Administration and our justice and so forth, why is it, Ron, that we cannot get any satisfactory or reasonable explanation from either the Department of the Interior or its Park Police as to why ordinary citizens keep getting citations for speeding with lights out, but Mr. Mills has no citation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe that is a question that the White House can answer, Les.

Q But I have tried both other places and this is his Department of Interior. That is where the buck stops. I just wondered if the President cares about this standard of injustice. Doesn't he? I mean, if you were -- no, not you -- but if any one of us was speeding at 2:00 in the morning, we would get a ticket, wouldn't we?

Now why doesn't Mr. Mills get a ticket? A whole carload of drunken, fighting people with the lights out? The Post was concerned Sunday. I just wondered if there is any --

MR. NESSEN: I think you have to direct your question elsewhere, Les.

Q Ron, you said this probably wraps up the President's campaign speeches. Do you have handy or has anyone tabulated how many places he will have been or the extent of his campaign activities?

Q And the mileage?

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

Well, you remember the first week there were three stops. There was Burlington, Philadelphia and Detroit. Then there was Kansas City. Was there a political event in Kansas City or only the nationally televised speech?

Then there was Sioux Falls, Lincoln and Indianapolis later that day, if you recall. Then I think we had last Saturday, which was South Carolina, North Carolina and Kentucky.

Then yesterday was Oklahoma City and Cleveland and tomorrow will be Des Moines, Melvin and Chicago. Then we have got Los Angeles, Fresno and Portland.

What were those other places I mentioned?

Q Salt Lake City, Grand Junction and Wichita.

Q Ron, Democratic Chairman Strauss says the President should apologize to Democratic candidates who the President said, if elected, would endanger peace. Does the President have any second thoughts about that? Does he plan to apologize?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know of any plans to apologize, Gaylord. I think you all heard what the President said. He was very careful to praise the bipartisan American foreign policy of the past 25 years. He singled out Carl Albert by name for praise.

I believe it was Chairman Strauss who made the comparison to the Agnew and Nixon speeches of 1970. The President says no comparison at all between what he said and what was said in that campaign. The President's own words are that there is the same difference as between night and day.

Q Would you mind saying that again?

MR. NESSEN: The difference between his remarks yesterday and those speeches given by Agnew and Nixon in 1970 is the difference between night and day.

He did praise the Democratic leadership of Congress for helping him with the bipartisanship and his message really was directed to Republicans as much as it was to Democrats. He wants and needs the help of the Republicans with his foreign policy, too.

Q The fact nevertheless remains, Ron, that he came very close to calling the Democratic Party the war party, which is something that the Democrats have for many years been more sensitive to than almost any other issue.

Q What is the question?

MR. NESSEN: He has not finished yet.

Q There is noise in the back.

Q I was saying nevertheless the President came close to calling the Democrats a war party, which is an issue or a charge that the Democrats have always been extremely sensitive to. And leaving aside those Democrats he praised, what was his motive in calling other Democrats a war party?

MR. NESSEN: Well, Jim, you know he didn't call them a war party. That is a silly question. You cannot answer a question about something that he did not say.

Q I say he came close to saying it.

MR. NESSEN: Well, that is your assessment.

Q Regardless of how you assess what he said, I am asking what the motive was in attacking those other Democrats, the ones you have not mentioned?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think I told some of you who asked yesterday and asked what was his motive, and I told you that he had particularly in mind the Congressional action relating to the continuing resolution and aid to Turkey, the cutback in foreign aid, generally, and other restrictions that have been placed or have attempted to be placed on the President's activities in foreign policy.

Q Does the President believe it is healthy for the country and a factor of unity to charge that one group of people in the country are not for peace or will jeopardize peace?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I think you really ought to read his words more carefully and not go beyond what the President said because his words were chosen carefully.

Q Ron, he said if the wrong kind of Congress was elected, peace could be jeopardized, and that is a direct quote. I am asking whether he thinks it is healthy for the country to charge that a certain group of people could jeopardize peace.

MR. NESSEN: I don't really want to go beyond his words on that, Jim, because he did choose them carefully and I have given you the reasons and what some of his thinking was.

Q Ron, can you get us a list of the names of these candidates whose election would jeopardize peace?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that he has specific candidates in mind, Norm. I think, as I said, his remarks were directed as much at Republicans as they were at Democrats, and it was a general call for cooperation on foreign policy and not tie the President's hands in a way that would interfere with his conduct of foreign policy.

Q Well, he certainly must have had somebody in mind because he talked about the possible election of additional extremists of the Democratic Party. Who were these people?

MR. NESSEN: I think if you read carefully you will see that he was talking about two separate things there. He was talking on the one hand about big spenders who would contribute to inflation and then he had some separate comments relating to foreign policy, and I think the extremists was in reference to spenders, if I am not mistaken.

Q So, presumably the spenders, if elected, might not contribute to the danger of war?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are playing with words, aren't we?

Q Ron, maybe we could get at this this way. If the President really wants people to vote for men that he favors or against men that he disfavors, and that seems to be the objective of this backbreaking exercise, then could you give us an idea of who it is that he wants people to vote against or for in some of the major races?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think you see who he is campaigning for, don't you, Bob. Does that not give you a clue as to who he would like elected?

Q By that, are we to infer that the men that are running in those races are the warmongers or the people against peace?

MR. NESSEN: I would not infer that and I would not imply that, either.

Q Ron, you leave it up in the air that everybody is smeared with this unless you are specific.

MR. NESSEN: I have not given that impression -- or I hope I have not given that impression -- because I didn't intend to.

Q But who is the warmonger, or who are the warmongers then? Can you be specific?

MR. NESSEN: Where does the word "warmonger" come from?

Q Well, if you are against peace, you are obviously for war.

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to add any more words to what the President said, Bob. I tried to explain a little of the background of his remarks, but I certainly didn't--

Q You don't have any specific individuals in mind?

MR. NESSEN: I think he was appealing to both Democrats and Republicans -- appealing to voters to send people to Congress who would cooperate with him in conducting foreign policy.

Q Ron, you are not taking back the specific reference to Democrats? You have said now that it is generally aimed at both Republicans and Democrats.

MR. NESSEN: I am not taking back anything he said, Steve.

Q I thought you said very specifically Democrats -- opposition party.

MR. NESSEN: No, I am not taking back anything he said. I am just trying to explain what his feelings were when he said this.

Q May I ask, we got the advance warning that it was coming. Could we get some background on the decision-making process -- when it was decided to make this change in the President's strategy and policy, and why it was decided? Was Secretary Kissinger involved in this?

MR. NESSEN: I can check that for you.

Q Let me try it another way and ask you, is the President surprised that these words of his have been interpreted by him as demagoguery?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q He is surprised?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q He didn't realize that this was kind of a shorthand in the minds of many people, that it would provoke the memories of many people -- the charges, you know, that the Democratic party is the party of war? He didn't realize he was in that area?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't intend them that way, Bud, and as I say, he does not consider them to be in anyway comparable to what was said in the 1970 campaign.

Q Ron, can you comment on the published reports that John Sawhill is resigning and on the frequent rumors that he has been fired?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he certainly has not been fired and I don't know of any plans for him to resign.

Q Ron, on that subject, does the President back John Sawhill, and does he want him to remain on the job?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of anything that would indicate that Mr. Sawhill's status has changed in any way.

Q He retains the full confidence of the President?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q Ron, has the President said anything to you or have you heard him say anything to indicate that he has been at all disappointed with some rather disappointing turnouts along the campaign trail, and I refer specifically to yesterday in Oklahoma City where the State Chairman, Clarence Warner, said he was very disappointed in the small ticket sales -- 59? You remember we had a relatively small crowd in Greensboro, South Carolina, where the President at that point decided to give them a pep talk because things were going so badly, and there are other places along the line. Has the President said anything to indicate that he is disappointed or disheartened at the Republican party's low turnouts, their lack of spirit?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't think the President would agree with your characterization. He has had some very good turnouts.

Q I cited several which in fact were not very good turnouts, and I can be more specific with details, if you would like. In several of those places, for example yesterday, the State chairman in Oklahoma, Clarence Warner, said he was -- I can give you the exact quote, but "yes, I am disappointed" without qualification.

He said ordinarily he could sell 100 to 150 tickets, and then he cited issues involving the President which hurt him. I wonder if the President is aware of these low turnouts and has he said anything about them?

MR. NESSEN: He has not said anything about them.

Q Ron, did he talk with Jim Rhodes or receive a telegram or anything yesterday? Did he have any communication with Rhodes?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that he did.

Q Was he surprised or disappointed that Mr. Rhodes was not present last night?

MR. NESSEN: I understand that Rhodes was attending another fund-raiser in another town.

Q That was my first question. Did Mr. Rhodes send him a telegram saying, "I regret I cannot be there," or "I am very sorry, I would like to be there."

MR. NESSEN: The President was aware that he was not going to be there.

Q Ron, was not Governor Rhodes a person who requested that the President come to Ohio?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the background on that stop, Jim.

Q Did he have any reaction to the fact that Governor Rhodes never saw him when he went to Ohio?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear any reaction from him.

Q Ron, in accordance with the President's reference to legislative dictatorship, is it true that he has endorsed Mr. C. R. Lewis of Alaska for the Senate, who is a member of the John Birch Society and, if so, does he feel the Birch Society is not dictatorial?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check, Les. I don't know about that endorsement.

Q Also, one follow-up on that, and that is, has he endorsed Judy Petty in Arkansas, the GOP candidate?

MR. NESSEN: The President believes that Judy Petty is waging a vigorous and determined campaign for Congress, and he wishes her well.

Q Ron, on the basis of his campaigning to date, what kind of realistic goals in terms of numbers has the President set in his own mind for the Senate seats, and the House seats? I presume he has a general goal, he would like to see Republicans everywhere win, but realistically, what is he expecting in terms of numbers and what would he consider satisfactory and what would he consider to be a serious loss in terms of numbers?

MR. NESSEN: I think he talked to the pool on Air Force One for quite a long time the other night, and there was a long section on his expectations for this election in that pool report.

Q Did they have numbers?

MR. NESSEN: If he spoke in numbers, it had numbers, Pat. I am not sure he spoke in numbers.

Q My understanding is that there were not numbers. Does he have numbers?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard him speak of any numbers.

Q Could you inquire some time in advance of the election as to what his number goals are so there will be some standards?

Q Another subject. What was the President's reaction of the Consumer Price Index increases?

MR. NESSEN: The one yesterday?

Q Yes.

Q Well, let's start there, anyway.

MR. NESSEN: This is not the President's reaction to it, but I can give you some thoughts about it.

Q Whose reaction is it?

MR. NESSEN: It is the White House reaction.

Q The President has no reaction on it?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't talk to him about it.

Obviously, the inflation problem continues to be severe, but there are some indications that the increases in price levels in the industrial area are slowing.

Q What are those indications?

MR. NESSEN: Just a moment.

However, it is clear that controlling inflation will be a long, hard fight. I think that this report that came out yesterday is another reason, and it emphasizes the need for Congress to act on the President's economic program, which in part is aimed at controlling this kind of inflation.

Q Ron, does the President now believe that we are in a recession?

MR. NESSEN: I think he spoke about that on the plane the other night, Pat, too, and the answer is no.

Q No what?

MR. NESSEN: He does not believe that the term recession ought to be placed on the kind of economic difficulties we are having.

Q Did yesterday's report in any way trigger new programs on the part of the President or cause him to add new elements to the program?

MR. NESSEN: Tom, he has 31 programs up there that the Congress has not done a thing about yet, and he is not going to lay anymore on top of them until they get to work on these.

Q What was his reaction to Muskie's speech last night to take on the surcharge, mandatory gas rationing, guidelines?

MR. NESSEN: Well, as you know, we have said before that the President considers his 31 point proposal to be a package that taken together and enacted as a package will begin to get inflation under control and also do something about the lagging elements of the economy.

The President has more faith in people joining this campaign in a voluntary way than some of his critics seem to have. The President believes that if you present the problem to the people as he has, and they are well aware of it, that they will join voluntarily to reduce their consumption of energy and the other things.

Many of his critics seem to feel that you have to order people to do things before they will do them, and that is not the President's philosophy. I do want to call your attention, however, to something that may have been overlooked because of not very good briefings given on the economic message.

As you know, the President set a goal of reducing oil imports by a million barrels a day, and that was taken as sort of a hope or a wish that we could do that when in fact it is a firm goal that the President will achieve, and he has faith that it can be achieved voluntarily, but if not, I want to call your attention to the President's words. "I will not hesitate to ask for tougher measures." And he has repeated that other times, too. He means it.

The other part of this is that his critics seem to have a strange split in their criticism of his economic proposals because on the one hand they say they are not tough enough and because he didn't ask for gas rationing or for mandatory controls; but the same critics turn around and say that the proposals are too tough because they ask for a 5 percent surtax on people's income taxes.

Q Ron, are you suggesting the President is holding open the possibility of imposing gas rationing?

MR. NESSEN: I am not suggesting that, Gaylord. I am just calling to your attention that he will reduce oil imports by a million barrels a day. He believes it can be done voluntarily.

Q But if it is not done voluntarily --

MR. NESSEN: Then he will ask for tougher measures, and I am not prepared to say what the tougher measures are. There are more ways to do this, Gaylord, than by rationing gasoline.

Q Does that indicate he would go back to the tax increase idea?

MR. NESSEN: There are other ways beyond that to do this.

Q What are those?

MR. NESSEN: These are just ideas now that are possibilities of ways to do it, which is not to say that this is what he would do. You could limit oil imports.

Q Is that it?

MR. NESSEN: That is one other way to do it.

Q Is the President ready to go back to the long lines of last winter?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, Gaylord, he believes that the people will respond voluntarily to his appeal and his critics don't seem to believe that, but he does.

Q When do you think the judgment will be made as to whether the voluntary campaign is succeeding or not?

MR. NESSEN: He asked this morning to see the figures on fuel consumption. These figures lag several weeks behind, and they are not likely yet to reflect any change in fuel consumption, but he has asked to see the figures.

MORE

Q Ron, in light of the third-quarter record profits that are being announced now by the oil companies, does the President expect any voluntary action by these firms that would contribute to easing inflation?

MR. NESSN: Well, I think he said in his speech that he does expect companies to do their part for inflation, but more importantly, I would point out to you that he asked some time ago for windfall profits taxes on oil companies -- a long time ago that was proposed -- and he endorsed that in his economic proposals. And that is another one of the steps that Congress has not taken yet.

Q Does he consider the current profits to be windfall profits?

MR. NESSEN: He believes that the current profit levels that you are seeing from some oil companies fall under his proposal for windfall profits taxes.

Q Is the President as adamantly opposed to gas rationing as he was to the proposed increase in the Federal excise tax on gasoline, or is gas rationing something that he is just reluctant to undertake?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of any change in his position on either one of those and he has talked about them publicly before.

Q Is his position the same on both? I mean, is he as adamantly opposed to gas rationing as he is to the increase in Federal excise tax?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q Ron, if I can follow up on that, in Sioux Falls he said that there would be "no gasoline excise tax increase so long as I am in the White House."

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Now it follows, then, from your comments, that he feels the same way about gasoline rationing. It is out for the remainder of his Administration as far as he is concerned.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that I would want to put words in his mouth, but I have not heard any indication that he has changed his opposition to gas rationing.

Tom.

Q Sawhill said this week that gas prices will go higher. Does the President think that that is one way of achieving conservation -- to reduce the oil imports?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard him speak of that as a method of reducing gas consumption.

Q Ron, the oil companies have tried to pressure some of their stations to sell more gas. Is the President aware of this? Has he commented on this?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check on that. I have not heard him talk about it.

Q Ron, there are all kinds of oil imports. We get Canadian oil and Venezuelan oil. Are you saying an oil import quota program, reinstatement of it, or --

MR. NESSEN: No, I am not, Pat. I was asked what did he mean by "I will not hesitate to ask tougher measures." Did he mean a tax or rationing? And I said those are not the only ways, and I suggested that as one possible way if it ever came to that.

Q Would this be a selective quota system?

MR. NESSEN: We are not even talking about something that has been approved or thought about seriously at all.

Q I mean, restoring these quotas --

MR. NESSEN: There are various ways to do it, Pat, on those quotas.

Q That is what I am trying to find out.

MR. NESSEN: One way you could do it, for instance, would be to put a dollar limit on imports rather than a gallon limit on imports, or barrel limits on imports.

Q You mean as an additional duty on the price of it coming in?

MR. NESSEN: We are not talking about things that are under consideration or that are about to be done because he still believes in the voluntary program. But just in answer to the general question of how this might work if it ever came to that, one possibility would be to announce that you will import no more than a certain dollar amount of oil each year.

Q But the fact you suggest that indicates that it has been discussed.

MR. NESSEN: No. Gaylord asked the general question.

Q Was this a thought that came up in your mind, or has someone else mentioned this, or where does this particular example come from?

MR. NESSEN: Well, in response to Gaylord's question.

Q Yes, but where does your response generate from?

Q Where did you get your information, in other words.

MR. NESSEN: Well, do you think I am dumb?

There are various ideas floating around --

Q Will the record show there was no answer to that?

Q Can I change the subject?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, has the President seen Mr. Sawhill, or has Mr. Sawhill asked to see the President? He is being shot at from every direction in this town except from this direction, apparently.

Has there been any meeting scheduled or asked? Does the President have any vote of confidence in view of the fact that Secretary Morton has people over?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you are asking a lot of questions. They have not had a meeting, and there is no meeting scheduled that I know of.

Q Ron, what is the status of the Commodity Exchange Act bill?

MR. NESSEN: That is here and is being studied and, as you know, the President has to make a decision one way or the other by midnight. I don't have any decision.

Q Ron, has the President any comment on Governor Rockefeller's refusal to answer any more questions about his confirmation until he reappears?

MR. NESSEN: No specific comment.

Q Ron, there are reports in the Arab press that two days before the pardon of Mr. Nixon, our Ambassador, Mr. Akins, asked for an urgent meeting with King Faisal, which the Arab press interprets as a notification 48 hours in advance of what the King had requested of the President.

I remember the King's statement that "Anyone that is opposed to Nixon is opposed to me."

I was wondering if there is any truth in this, or would you deny it or confirm it?

MR. NESSEN: I would not have any comments on Arab newspaper accounts.

Q Ron, let me ask you the specific, then, if I may. Did King Faisal at any time ask President Ford to pardon former President Nixon?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware of any, Jim.

Q You are not aware of it. Are you saying there that you are not denying it, you just don't know anything about it? Or is that supposed to be taken as a sort of a denial?

MR. NESSEN: The President, as I understand it, told the full story of the pardon to the Hungate committee and in other settings, and I have no reason to believe that King Faisal was involved in any way.

Q Was he aware of the pardon before it was announced?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask King Faisal that.

Q Back on the matter of oil, the President asked for the reductions by the end of 1975?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q You say he has now started to review the oil consumption levels?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. He wants to see how it is working, Tom.

Q Can you give us any general answer about when he will determine whether we are going to be able to achieve the reduction that he wants?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I guess as we get into 1975 and we see whether it is going to meet that goal.

Q But will he know in the first quarter or the second quarter?

MR. NESSEN: We have not even seen any figures since he made the speech yet. It is a little premature, I think.

Q Sawhill has been under a lot of fire within the Administration, evidently, and there seems to be some effort to undermine him. There are rumors that he is going to be forced to resign.

Now you have not answered the question directly whether the President is supporting him or whether the President would consider having him resign.

Let me ask directly: Is anybody in the Administration urging the President to get Sawhill out, and if so, what is the President's response?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know. I can't speak for everybody in the Administration. I know that --

Q I am asking whether they are urging the President and I presume you know what --

MR. NESSEN: I don't know everybody that is urging the President to do anything, but I do know that I have not heard anything from the President about plans for Mr. Sawhill to leave.

Q Do you know whether he is even considering seriously the question of whether he is going to stay or go?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard any discussion of Mr. Sawhill going.

Q Has he had any discussion with him?

MR. NESSEN: With whom?

MR. NESSEN: With whom?

Q With the President.

MR. NESSEN: Mr. Sawhill?

Q No, have you raised the question?

MR. NESSEN: It was discussed and I didn't hear any discussion of his leaving.

Q What did he say about it?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I asked about the newspaper stories this morning, as I think you would probably expect me to.

Q What did the President say?

MR. NESSEN: The President didn't give any indication that he had any intention of --

MORE

Q On the other hand, did he ask you to come out and reaffirm clearly that Dr. Sawhill retains his full support? I don't think you have done that, either.

MR. NESSEN: All I am saying is that there are no plans that I know of for Mr. Sawhill to resign or be fired.

Q What did the President say about it? You are telling us what he didn't say.

MR. NESSEN: That is what he said.

Q He said what?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans for him to be fired, and he knows of no plans for Mr. Sawhill to resign.

Q Would he like for him to stay?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know. I have no reason to believe that he does not.

Q The reports from Sawhill's own office yesterday, I made a phone call myself asking about these rumors and they said so far as we know, the White House is scheduled to make a statement on it today.

Was there ever any consideration of a special statement today?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, when the President vetoed the Freedom of Information Act --

MR. NESSEN: Let Phil ask a question.

Q Is the President preparing to put his staff into ethics classes?

MR. NESSEN: Ethics classes? I don't know what that means.

Q Well, there is a report in the Jack Anderson column today that he is going to have some sort of policy to remind the staff of the Administration's ethics in Government procedures and so forth. Is this underway?

MR. NESSEN: The President indicated that he would set the example for his Administration. In addition, Don Rumsfeld has had some people looking into general questions of ethical conduct and so forth, but those reports that Don asked for have not come back yet from the people he had looking into them.

Q Ron, is Mr. Saxbe coming over here today at all, or is there going to be any discussion between him and the President on Mr. Ruth or any other possible replacement?

MR. NESSEN: They have talked on the telephone today.

Q Who?

MR. NESSEN: Attorney General Saxbe and the President.

Q What was said?

MR. NESSEN: They discussed the new Special Prosecutor.

Q Was Ruth the particular focus of the discussion?

MR. NESSEN: I think we said before that he comes highly recommended and is being given strong consideration.

Q Has a decision been made?

MR. NESSEN: No, not that I know of.

Q Any idea when it will come?

MR. NESSEN: Mr. Jaworski leaves in two days, and I would think we would have something before he leaves.

Q Ron, when the President vetoed the Freedom of Information Act he indicated he had some suggestions of his own. Do you know what those suggestions are?

MR. NESSEN: In the veto message, he suggested legislation that he would be happy to sign.

Q And that is the extent of his suggestions and recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: He is happy for the bill, except for the portions that he found unacceptable.

Q Ron, there are reports that the President's trip to Japan is now being reconsidered because of the danger of potential violence over there. Is that in fact the case?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q It is not?

MR. NESSEN: He is going ahead with his plans for the trip.

Q Ron, could you clarify something you said about Mrs. Petty, and that is that the President wishes here well. Does he also hope she wins? (Laughter)

Q Would she get arrested if she came to the Tidal Basin? (Laughter)

Q Wait a minute. What about the answer to Don Fulsome's question?

MR. NESSEN: That is what I have to say about the Mrs. Petty race.

Q Does he wish Wilbur Mills well? Does he?

Q You have told us of four conversations between Mr. Ford and Mr. Nixon. Number one, have there been any other conversations since then?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

Q Can you tell us, the Nixon office in the EOB building, has Mr. Ford ever used that? Has that office been cleaned out? What is the status of that?

MR. NESSEN: It seems to me that President Ford has never used that office. He went over to the EOB a couple of times when he first came in here to use his old Vice Presidential office while they were still in the process of moving stuff back and forth, but he has never used the office in the EOB formerly used by President Nixon. I am told that that office is being used by some members of the transition staff of the former President to do some transition work.

Q Ron, I would like to ask two political questions, if I may.

Q Could I get back to the campaign swing? Do you have an assessment -- has the President given you his own assessment of how he is doing on this campaign tour and specifically if he thinks that he is helping Republican candidates in their campaigns?

MR. NESSEN: I think he spoke to that the other night to the pool, and I cannot add anything to what he said then. I have not talked to him about it since then.

Q Could I ask you two political questions, Ron.

In Cleveland last night, the President had something to say about the polls and the pollsters and specifically, he said words to the effect that the polls were propaganda. He said, "Don't let the pollsters fool you with this propaganda."

Does the President believe that the polls showing in many cases Republican candidates running behind are propaganda? Does he believe that these are manufactured and inaccurate polls in some way for the purposes of propaganda?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear all the speech last night because I had some other things to do during the speech, so I didn't hear him say the polls were propaganda. I would rather check up and see what he said before I answer your question.

Q He said, "Don't let the polls fool you with this propaganda." Well, if you won't answer that question --

MR. NESSEN: I can't, Jim, because I didn't hear him say that.

Q If you read the text, I would like you to take that question.

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q I would also like you to go back to this statement about the Democrats or about some Democratic candidates, that if the wrong kind of Congress were elected peace could be jeopardized.

The timing of that statement, is there a connection between the timing of that statement and the polls showing Republican candidates running behind. Are they related? Is that statement related to the apparent difficulties that many Republican candidates are in?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any relation, Jim.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

END (AT 1:04 P.M. EDT)