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

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 6:27 P.M. EST

DECEMBER 21, 1974

SATURDAY

MR. NESSEN: Governor Rockefeller met with the President from 4:45 to 5:15 alone, and at 5:15 members of the two staffs joined in.

On the Vice-President's side there was Robert R. Douglass, D-o-u-g-l-a-s-s, Ann Whitman, W-h-i-t-m-a-n, and James Cannon, C-a-n-n-o-n.

The President's staff members who attended were Rumsfeld, Marsh, and Scowcroft. And then a little later Hugh Morrow, the Vice-President's Press Secretary, and I joined the meeting, and it just broke up about five minutes ago, so you can judge the time.

Both meetings, or the entire meeting, was to discuss Vice-President Rockefeller's duties. And the President asked him to take on the following duties:

One, to be a member of the National Security Council, acting as Vice-Chairman.

Two, to be Vice-Chairman of the Domestic Council, with a strong emphasis on working with the White House to find a new Executive Director to replace Ken Cole.

The Vice-President also expressed his special interest in handling the Domestic Council's role in coordinating activities with the Governors and Mayors.

The President said that he wanted Vice-President Rockefeller, because of his wide association in and out of Government, to help with the recruiting of top people for the Ford Administration.

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The President also asked the Vice-President to become a member of the so-called Murphy Commission, named for Robert Murphy, the diplomat. The purpose of this Commission is to analyze American foreign policy, and to make recommendations on implementing and improving American foreign policy. Anne Armstrong formerly served on that Commission, and since she has resigned the President has asked Vice-President Rockefeller to join.

The President asked the Vice-President to study the question of whether the system of a White House Science Adviser, or Board of Advisers, should be revived, and if so, in what form. And the President asked that this be done rather quickly, and to have his recommendations in on the question of a new Science Adviser, or Advisory Board, in a month or so from now.

The President also asked Vice-President Rockefeller to help in presenting and explaining the President's programs, both domestic programs and international programs -- the SALT Agreement was mentioned as one -- throughout the country. And Vice-President Rockefeller took on that assignment.

Also, it was decided that members of the Vice-President's staff will be attending regular White House staff meetings.

The President also asked Vice-President Rockefeller to play a role in the Bicentennial Celebration. The exact role was not decided.

It was discussed, and the President felt strongly that he has an open door, as he put it, to the Vice-President; that any time the Vice-President wants to see him, he could either pick up the phone or simply walk into the office. The President says, "There is no doorkeeper for the Vice-President. He does not have to get on my schedule."

Q That is a direct quote?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

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Q Would you repeat that?

MR. NESSEN: "There is no doorkeeper for the Vice-President. He does not have to get on my schedule." This is a paraphrase. "He can pick up the phone or walk in any time. I expect to have an open door with the Vice-President."

At the end of the meeting the President, in commenting on having Vice-President Rockefeller here said, "I am excited about it." And the Vice-President replied, "We are excited to be here. And we are excited to work with you." And the President said, "In looking toward the future with the Vice-President now in place, we have a great opportunity."

Q Rockefeller was there all afternoon, wasn't he?

MR. NESSEN: Vice-President Rockefeller attended also the economic meeting, which lasted from 2:12 to 4:31.

Q Why is he not heading the Domestic Council?

MR. NESSEN: You mean as Chairman?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: The President is Chairman, and the Executive Director is a day-to-day job which would be too time-consuming, and would prevent Vice-President Rockefeller from doing anything else.

Q Going beyond the National Security Council, isn't he a statutory member of the National Security Council?

MR. NESSEN: Vice-Chairman. Statutory, I think so.

Q On the Science Advisery thing, was Teller's name mentioned?

MR. NESSEN: There were no names mentioned, no.

Q Was Teller's name mentioned at all in connection with this?

MR. NESSEN: It certainly was not mentioned in this meeting.

Q Ron, in getting the word to the people, does this mean he is going to go on a nationwide barnstorming tour some time soon, stopping in every city?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the meeting did not get into those kind of details, and I don't know of any plans for him to go on a nationwide tour. He is going to take a little vacation.

Q Is he going to use the office in the EOB that Mr. Agnew used?

MR. NESSEN: He is.

Q The old Nixon office?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. It was talked about. He said, "I have not been to the office at all." In fact he asked, "Where will my office be?" And somebody told him. And the President said, "Have you seen it yet?" And he said, "No, I have not been to the office at all." But that is where his office will be.

Q It will be the Agnew office, not the Nixon office.

MR. NESSEN: The Ford office is what it will be. The office the President had when he was Vice-President.

Q Was there any elaboration of what the President expects Rockefeller to do with respect to domestic policy beyond what you said?

MR. NESSEN: There wasn't, Dean. There wasn't that much detail at this meeting.

Q Did Rockefeller have any input at the economic meeting, or did he just sit and listen?

MR. NESSEN: No, he made a couple of comments.

Q Such as?

MR. NESSEN: The President prefers that the discussion at the economic meeting not be talked about.

Q When Mr. Ford was Vice-President did his staff ever sit in on White House staff meetings, or is that a new institution, to have the Vice-President's people in on White House meetings?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to ask Bill who was here in those days.

It is now a regular policy. They will attend regularly.

THE PRESS: Ron, can we break this now?

Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 6:35 P.M. EST)