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NEWS CONFERENCE

#145

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:30 A.M. EST

FEBRUARY 14, 1975

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: Happy Valentine's Day.

The President is meeting with representatives of the Higher Education Association, mostly college and university presidents, to discuss issues involved in higher education. The President has not met before with leaders in this area. The meeting was requested by the American Council on Education and other senior education associations. Those attending include, in addition to the President, Secretary Weinberger, the Attorney General-Designate, Mr. Levi, and T. H. Bell --

Q He has been sworn in.

MR. NESSEN: That is right, we did swear him in, didn't we?

-- Attorney General, Mr. Levi, and T. H. Bell, the Commissioner of the Office of Education. There are some other of the President's senior staff members there. We have Larry in there from our office, and he will be able to give you some details of what happened there, when the meeting is over.

At 12:30, the President is meeting with Count Otto Lambsdorff. He is a parliamentarian from the Federal Republic of Germany and the economic spokesman for the Free Democratic Party. He is in this country to visit with economic officials, and he is stopping here for a courtesy call.

Q And you will have a briefing afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I will.

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At 4:30 this afternoon, the President is meeting with the Defense Secretary, and this is one of their periodic meetings to review the defense budget and other defense issues.

Looking ahead to the weekend just a bit, the President will work in the office tomorrow morning. We don't have any other definite plans for tomorrow, but we will keep you posted on that. He has no scheduled activities for Sunday.

Q Does he have a 1 o'clock meeting scheduled with the Mayor of Providence?

MR. NESSEN: That is today.

Why didn't we announce it.

Q You did announce it.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, but I don't why I didn't mention it here.

Q Why are they meeting?

MR. NESSEN: It is a courtesy call; he is a Republican Mayor.

Q Where is he from?

MR. NESSEN: From Providence, Rhode Island.

As for church on Sunday, the President will, as always, make up his mind tomorrow afternoon about that, and we will let you know.

Q What helps him to make up his mind?

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Q Is he going to play golf tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: There is that possibility, depending on the weather and his schedule. He will be at Burning Tree, if he plays.

On Monday, the President is going to go over to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial in Alexandria at noon. The purpose of this is to participate in the unveiling of the Gerald R. Ford Medallion.

On George Washington's Birthday each year there is a meeting of Grand Masters of the Masonic Order in Alexandria at the National Memorial. The National Memorial there has plaques for each of the 14 Presidents who have been Masons, and this is the unveiling of the Gerald R. Ford plaque, which will be in the auditorium of the building.

The President will speak briefly there. There will be open press coverage, of course, and also a travel pool from the White House. We haven't picked the names of the pool members yet or the time of departure, but we will post that.

Q He is a Mason?

MR. NESSEN: The President is a Mason, yes.

Q How long?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q What is the time on that, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: He is a 33rd degree Mason.

When he gets back from the Masonic Temple, the President will have a brief courtesy meeting with the Governor of Maine, Governor Longley, at about 12:45 on Monday. The Governor requested this meeting with the President.

I believe we will probably not have a briefing on Monday because of the trip to Alexandria and because it is a holiday.

I do have some personnel announcements today. Before we do that, some of you probably saw an announcement on the bulletin board saying that someone had lost a Konica camera, and the camera was turned in.

What we would like to know is, who turned it in? The camera was reported stolen and the EPS just needs to clear up its records. (Laughter) Actually, we need to get a dossier on that guy. (Laughter)

Q What was the Governor's name?

MR. NESSEN: Governor Longley of Maine.

Q Is there a subject or does it concern heating oil?

MR. NESSEN: Governor Longley requested the meeting, and it is described as a brief courtesy call, so I don't know the subject.

We are announcing today a resignation, but let me say this on all the personnel things. We are running just a little late from the mimeograph room and by the time we are finished here, we ought to have all the paper to put out.

The President accepts with deep regret the resignation of Phillip Areeda as Counsel to the President. Mr. Areeda has decided to return to Harvard University.

In his letter to the President, Mr. Areeda said that he "would be honored to render any occasional future assistance that you might find useful after my return to Cambridge in several weeks."

In his letter accepting Phil's resignation, the President said, "I welcome this opportunity to express my personal gratitude for your unhesitating support and willing assistance during the past months of transition."

Q Are you releasing the text of those letters?

MR. NESSEN: I hadn't planned to, John.

Q Why is he leaving? Because of the oil policy?

MR. NESSEN: No, because he wants to return to Harvard.

Q But he stayed so short a time, didn't he?

MR. NESSEN: When did he come, at the beginning of the Administration, for six months.

Q It was a couple of months afterwards.

MR. NESSEN: I think as far as I know his reason is his desire to return to Harvard.

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Q The second term has already started up there. There won't be a teaching term until September.

MR. NESSEN: You will need to check with Phil, if you have any further questions.

Q Is it a "Dear Phil" letter?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Why can't that be made available, Ron, these letters?

MR. NESSEN: We can. It will take a little time to get this done, if you want. It is a "Dear Phil" letter.

Just to continue the quotes from the letter, "Your past experience and knowledge of the White House and of the Federal Government have enabled you to make significant contributions to the development of our legislative programs and to the establishment of my Administration."

The President is today announcing the appointment of Margita E. White as Assistant Press Secretary to the President. We have Margita right here before your very eyes.

If anybody wants to take any still pictures or silent pictures, you may be able to do that.

Q What will her role be?

MR. NESSEN: I think most of you know Margita. For the past two years, Margita has been Assistant Director of the United States Information Agency for Public Information, and while she was there, she received the USIA's Superior Honor Award for outstanding service.

We are putting out a biography with her complete background. I am very glad to have Margita here at the White House.

Q She does add a little class. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: God knows we need that.

Margita will be working with me and, in fact, has been for a while on things like the seminars and briefings we have had on the economic and energy program, and she helped to arrange the breakfasts for the editors and publishers and the out-of-town news conferences.

Those are the kinds of things she will be doing for me, and we are very glad to have her here, and I think she will be a great help to you.

Q Is she on the staff of Jerry Warren?

MR. NESSEN: She is basically working in Jerry Warren's office for me.

Q Does the fact that she is a woman have anything to do with her appointment?

MR. NESSEN: Actually, when you mentioned that, that was the first time I noticed she was a woman. (Laughter)

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: We pick people for their ability and not their sex. (Laughter)

The President is announcing today the names of five individuals he expects to nominate to the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation to replace some of his earlier choices who, for one reason or another, are not able to serve on the Board.

We will have some papers on this, but briefly, to run through the five names, they are Roger C. Cramton of Ithaca, New York, who is Dean of the Cornell University Law School; Robert J. Kutak, of Omaha, Nebraska, a partner in a law firm in Omaha and also the Chairman of the American Bar Association Committee on Individual Rights and Responsibilities; William Janklow of Pierre, South Dakota, the Attorney General of the State of South Dakota; Marshall J. Breger, of Austin, Texas, an Assistant Professor at the Texas University Law School; and Samuel T. Thurman, Dean of the College of Law at the University of Utah.

The President has decided that his choice for Chairman of the Corporation will be Roger Cramton. This is a preliminary selection, and the various clearances need to be completed before the President can formally nominate these five people, as well as the six people he indicated previously he had chosen.

Q Who are these five replacing?

MR. NESSEN: Let me do it this way. Let me mention to you the five who were originally named and who have, for one reason or another, dropped off.

One is William Coleman, who obviously cannot serve because he is the President's choice for Transportation Secretary. Denison Kitchel withdrew because of personal reasons, which I think he has already talked about in public, involving his health.

Dean Abraham S. Goldstein of the Yale Law School withdrew because he had made a commitment to spend the academic year of 1975-1976 in London and Jerusalem. Judge Omer Franklin withdrew because he has been given increased responsibilities with the Atlanta Bar Association, and he felt that he could not serve adequately in both of these jobs.

Benito M. Lopez withdrew because he felt that the amount of time and energy that would be required would have an adverse effect on his law firm and his clients.

Q Has the American Bar Association expressed any view on these, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Those who remain from the original list of eleven are Edith Green, a former Member of Congress; William Lee Knecht, the Assistant Counsel to the California Farm Bureau Association; Rodolfo Montejano of Santa Ana, California, a partner in a law firm there; Revius O. Ortique of New Orleans, a lawyer and President of the National Legal Aid and Defender Association; Glee S. Smith of Kansas, former President of the Kansas State Senate and a member of the Board of Governors of the Counsel of State Governments; and Glenn C. Stophel, a partner in a law firm in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

You will get all this on paper.

We have one other announcement to make today; that is, because of the recent bombing at the State Department and the threat of possible terrorist activity, which is unpredictable, the Secret Service has decided that it is necessary to institute some closer checks on bags and briefcases and other things brought into the White House area.

This is being done for the security of the President and for everyone in the White House, including you and me.

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Basically, what this means is a very brief check through bags and equipment at the gates when you come in, and obviously there is no harassment involved here at all. The procedures have been designed to be very quick and simple and to have a minimum amount of delay.

I am sure that everyone will cooperate in this for our mutual safety.

One of the problems is that this President, because he does have more frequent and closer contact with members of the press, the Secret Service feels we need to institute this procedure.

I have already told some of you in private meetings that we are going to do this, and we have discussed how to do it.

We have here this morning Bob Snow, who many of you know. He is the special agent in charge of the Technical Security Division, who will answer your questions and also has a brief demonstration to show you of the kinds of things that this procedure hopes to catch.

Walt?

Q There is a matter of policy here, and I certainly don't object to this, but I think this question should be asked: Does the Secret Service feel that the press corps, as presently constituted, constitutes a threat to the President? That seems conclusive in your statement.

MR. NESSEN: Let me answer that question, because I know the answer to that question, and then let me put Bob on. I think I would like to make Bob's remarks OFF THE RECORD because it does deal with some procedures and does deal with a demonstration.

In answer to your question, Walt, there is absolutely no thought whatever that any member of the press is a threat to the President. The thought by the Secret Service is that many of you have briefcases and camera bags and other things which distinctly identify you as people who come into the White House frequently.

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The fear is that someone would put something into your bag when you were not aware of it. Senior members of the White House staff -- Rumsfeld, myself and others -- routinely have our bags checked before we get on Air Force One because of this same reason, because when you are in hotels and so forth, when we put our briefcases down, somebody could slip something into it.

Q Ron, before you step down, may I ask a question? Are any other steps being taken, such as a review of the list of correspondents accredited to the White House, any check of those lists or any other measures other than this gate check?

MR. NESSEN: None that I am aware of, but you might want to put that question to Bob.

Q Will guests or visitors be checked, also?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you hold that and let Bob answer that, also.

Q And the White House staff?

MR. NESSEN: I will let Bob answer all questions along that line.

Q On the question of whether guests and visitors will be checked the same as reporters, it seems to be something that should be answered on the record.

If Bob is going to be off the record, can someone answer that on the record?

MR. NESSEN: Let me see what Bob is going to say.

Come on up, Bob.

(ROBERT SNOW'S REMARKS ARE NOT INCLUDED.)

Q Isn't there something we can put on the record?

MR. NESSEN: I think we can back up at this point, Walt, and put on the record my initial statement. What I will, basically, do is put that statement out in writing. From the time I started talking about this issue, until Bob came up, has to be on the record because I didn't say otherwise. Everything from the time Bob came up here through whenever we end this discussion will be off the record. In addition to which, I will put out a statement which will be essentially the same thing as I said verbally.

Q What is Bob's last name?

MR. NESSEN: Snow.

Q Has there been an increase in the number of threats against the First Family?

MR. NESSEN: Has there been an increase in the number of threats against the First Family? No, there has not.

Q Let me ask, on the record -- because this is a question you are going to be asked tomorrow -- who else is being searched? Now, you just give me an on the record answer to that. Do you have no comment on that?

MR. NESSEN: I think we will stay on the record. I think we will just stay right where we are.

Q So, you didn't comment on that, right?

Q Did you say everyone coming in is subject to search?

MR. NESSEN: No, I am just going to stay on the statement that we put out, which is about the new procedure.

Q Can we get back on the record and stay on the record?

MR. NESSEN: On other subjects?

Q On other subjects, or on this one.

MR. NESSEN: Not on this one, but on other subjects.

Q State, clearly, when you go back on the record.

MR. NESSEN: Are we finished with the security check?

Q What is the President's reaction to the whole-sale prices?

MR. NESSEN: Thank you, Bob, aren't you glad you came?

MR. SNOW: No, I am sorry I created such a problem for you. I didn't expect it.

MR. NESSEN: The drop in the Wholesale Price Index is pretty much in line with the expectations that the White House had for this stage.

Q Aren't you pleased that something matches your expectations? (Laughter.)

MR. NESSEN: I think we will just stick with that.

Q Several days ago, Bill Seidman said he expected 2 million more Americans to be back at work by the end of the year. Yesterday, Al Greenspan had some other comments which contradict that. I would like to know who speaks for the President, and I want to follow that up with another question about Seidman's remarks?

MR. NESSEN: It is not a contradiction because you can have 2 million people go back to work. It is not directly related to the unemployment rate. It is expected, by all the President's advisers, that the number of people employed will go up sharply. That is not directly related to the number of people unemployed, although that is expected to be coming down in the second part of the year. The labor force is growing, and, as I pointed out the other day, Dr. Burns and others feel that the labor force increases in a time of recession because wives and children are also out seeking jobs. So, there is no direct relationship to how many people are employed as to how many people are unemployed.

Q There were several questions left unanswered yesterday about the Vietnam trip. One of them was, is the White House going to pay for that trip.

MR. NESSEN: Is Les there?

I think we found out that it was going to be.

Q Also, do you know approximately how much whoever it is who is going to foot the bill is going to pay for the trip and whatever else you can tell us along those lines?

MR. NESSEN: The group is still not completely put together yet. We will have full details when it is. They will go out on one of the planes out there at Andrews.

Q Ron, in that connection, I think, playing an increasing role in what appears to be a public relations campaign for President Thieu is Graham Martin. He set up exclusive interviews for ten reporters in Saigon, and now, we understand he has inspired this trip for the Congressmen. Has he become sort of a spokesman for President Thieu.

MR. NESSEN: I don't accept any of that, Helen. The genesis of the trip was that the President at that breakfast suggested that they might want to do it. He didn't urge it, or organize it, or anything else, and then, enough members indicated that they did want to do it. But I don't know anything about Graham Martin's role.

Q Some of the copy in the newspaper stories today said that he did.

MR. NESSEN: That is not my understanding.

Q And he has been promoting the interviews with Thieu, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: I have no idea what Graham Martin does in Saigon. I have no way of knowing.

Q We are waiting for Les.

MR. NESSEN: Where is Les?

Q I have another foreign policy question, while you are waiting on Les:.

This morning, over at that conservative -- whatever it is --

MR. NESSEN: We haven't worked out who will pay for the trip. They will go out on one of the planes out at Andrews.

Q When that comes, will you also have a figure on how much it costs?

MR. NESSEN: All right.

Q A plane of the U. S. Government at Andrews?

MR. NESSEN: One of the planes out there.

Q This morning -- I think it was at that Conservative Convention -- Admiral Zumwalt, you know, the recently retired Chief of Naval Operations, suggested that what maybe the United States ought to do is give Israel some sort of dominion status, like Puerto Rico, and, then, station U. S. troops there. Does the Administration have any comment on that? (Laughter.)

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MR. NESSEN: No.

Q No, that is a serious question.

Q He wants to station troops there to keep Arabs out and the Israelis in.

MR. NESSEN: We don't say he necessarily endorses the idea; he just threw it out. (Laughter.)

Q I wanted to ask a financial question, too. Who paid for the President's trip to New York yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: The Republican National Committee.

Q The Republican National Committee paid for it, not the State Republican Committee?

MR. NESSEN: The Republican National Committee -- I better check on which one it was. But it was paid for by one of the Republican committees.

Q Did they pay for the whole thing? The reason I ask that, of course, is because he had one political affair and he had the security analysts. Did he prorate it between the two?

MR. NESSEN: No. As you know -- I think, going back to the very beginning -- the decision was made and has been followed on every trip that if there is any political event, they pick up the whole bill and don't quibble about splitting the difference.

Q Can you find out what that bill is because there is a variety of things from paying first class fare for the President, himself, and his party, versus the entire plane and so on?

MR. NESSEN: I will try.

Q And which committee it was, whether state or national.

MR. NESSEN: I think we are checking that now.

Q Are there any trips to announce and any contact with the Governors' Conference here in Washington?

MR. NESSEN: Any what?

Q Any trips -- say to the West Coast?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any trips, and I don't have anything to announce on the Governors' Conference.

Q The Governors have announced they will have dinner, black tie, with the President Thursday night.

MR. NESSEN: That is tentatively scheduled for him to have dinner with them one night next week. In fact, one of the reasons that Longley is coming in today is that he doesn't expect -- because of a conflict in his schedule -- to be able to attend the dinner.

Q What was that?

MR. NESSEN: That is a tentative schedule for the President to have dinner with the Governors.

Q Ronald Reagan is coming here over the weekend to appear at this Conservative meeting, yet, from what I understand, he has not attended one of the meetings that the Rockefeller CIA Commission has held. I wonder if President Ford feels that members to that Commission can serve adequately by not attending any of the meetings?

MR. NESSEN: I wasn't aware that he hadn't attended any. I think you need to check with the Commission to see what their reaction is to that.

Q Ron, I would like to ask you something about Carla Hills. Yesterday, Howard Norton raised the question, when you gave us the biography, that Mrs. Hills has no background in housing, and you responded to that. And then, Senator Proxmire expressed the thought that it is on-the-job training. My question to you: can you tell us the input, or how the White House functions in selecting a person like Mrs. Hills for such a specialized job?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure how it worked in this case. As we pointed out yesterday, she does indeed have experience in the area of housing, through her work at the Justice Department, and at this stage, it is up to Congress, through the Constitutional process of confirmation, to explore her qualifications. The President believes she is eminently qualified, in fact, the best qualified person he could find, and from here on, it is up to the Committee to decide whether they agree with that.

The RNC will handle the expenses for the trip to New York, and it will be between the RNC and the New York State Committee about how to divide up the expenses for the trip.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:35 P.M. EST)

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