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

#190

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 1:09 P.M. EDT

APRIL 17, 1975

THURSDAY:

MR. NESSEN: Frank Zarb has told you about the energy meeting.

I think some of you went out to the Rose Garden to see the President greeting a group that Congressman Tennyson Guyer brought here, about 50 ministers of the Church of God from Pennsylvania. They were here on a tour of the White House, and the President went out in the Garden to greet them briefly.

Q There are seven different Churches of God -- Cleveland, Tennessee; Anderson, Indiana, the Church of God and Jesus. Do you have any greater specification as to which Church of God?

MR. NESSEN: This is the Ohio Church of God. What happened was he was in the office with some people, including me, and these people were on the tour. They were in the Rose Garden, and he said he was going to slip out for about five minutes and talk to them, which he did.

Q Was the press supposed to be invited out to see that?

MR. NESSEN: No. As I said, he was in the middle of a meeting and just got up and went out there to greet them and came back in.

Q What did he say to them?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I didn't go.

We had the energy meeting, and then the President met with Senators John McClellan and Dewey Bartlett, who requested the meeting to discuss with the President the Rock Island Railroad situation. Secretary Coleman also sat in on that meeting.

MORE

#190

This afternoon the President has meetings with a number of staff members for most of the afternoon.

At 5:30 the President will meet with Professor Eugene B. Rostow of the Yale University School of Law for a personal discussion of a number of issues, among them the situation in the Middle East.

I do recall, for those of you who have perhaps leaped to the wrong conclusion, that this is Gene Rostow, not Walt.

As some of you may recall, Gene Rostow was one of the President's professors at Yale Law School, and they are old friends.

Q He is the one who has been talking, too, on Southeast Asia:

MR. NESSEN: Is that right?

Q Aren't they going to talk about Southeast Asia, as well as the Middle East, this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: I said a number of subjects. The meeting has not taken place yet.

The President is going to be going to Ford's Theater this evening for a performance of "Give 'Em Hell, Harry." The President is scheduled to arrive at 7:30 and will depart the White House sometime before that. We don't have the exact time. There will be a protective travel pool with him, and we will give the exact time a little bit later.

Q Is he going to the reception afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he is supposed to go to that or not, Fran.

We will have a detailed press schedule for the Friday-Saturday trip to New Hampshire and Massachusetts sometime for you this afternoon. I think you all know the broad outline of the trip, and also the fact he is coming back Saturday to meet with the President of Zambia and also to have a dinner for the President of Zambia.

Another schedule item we are mentioning today is that next Wednesday, the 23rd of April, the President will visit New Orleans to accept three speaking engagements that have been extended. The President is going to leave in the morning of Wednesday and come back late the same night.

At 10:30 the President will participate in the ground-breaking ceremonies for the Edward Hebert Library, which is on the lakefront, and it is 10:30 New Orleans time.

Q On what time schedule are they?

MR. NESSEN: They are one hour behind us.

At 12:30 the President will be the keynote speaker at the 73rd Annual Navy League Convention at the Fairmount Hotel in New Orleans.

At 8:00 that evening, he will address the student body of Tulane University, and that will be in the Tulane University Fieldhouse.

Q Honorary degree?

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe this is a commencement.

If I can go back to the forthcoming New Hampshire-Massachusetts trip, my plan is to get out at least the Joint Legislature speech late this afternoon and make it for flat p.m.'s, if we can get it in time.

Q Do you know what the subject is? Is it foreign policy?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Politics?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q 1976 campaign?

MR. NESSEN: There are a couple of personnel announcements today.

Q Is that it on New Orleans, return after that?

MR. NESSEN: Return after the Tulane University speech.

Q About New Orleans, I think they are saying down there he is going to hold a news conference, is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: These are the three events scheduled so far, and there may be other events added to the schedule.

Q Are you saying a press conference is possible?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard a press conference discussed for this trip.

Q Ron, he goes to New Haven next Friday. Is that still on the schedule?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, that is right.

Q Is that up and back?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q That is the 24th, isn't it?

MR. NESSEN: The 25th.

Q Ron, when you all have these press conferences on a regional basis, do you all invite people to come?

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean outsiders? Do you mean press people?

Q Yes, press.

MR. NESSEN: The local press association handles all the arrangements. All we do is bring our people and bring our list of questioners.

Q If you have briefings for people outside the press, do you invite them?

MR. NESSEN: Those are by invitation, right.

Q Ron, what is the Edward Hebert Library? Is that State, or a State school?

MR. NESSEN: We will get more details on that before we get there.

Have we passed out the W. J. Usery notice?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: The President is announcing his appointment of Bill Usery as Special Assistant to the President for Labor-Management Negotiations. You have his biography.

The President took this occasion to praise Mr. Usery's outstanding abilities and distinguished record as a mediator, who is highly respected by labor and management alike.

The President stated that the work of Mr. Usery in the Mediation Service has contributed significantly to the labor-management peace in a period of economic stress.

The President also noted there are a growing number of instances in which the Mediation Service has been of assistance in resolving disputes involving State and local Government employees and in controversies involving other groups.

MORE

Q I thought when he was appointed to this mediation job he was given the Assistant to the President title.

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, the President is announcing it today.

Q Does it mean he is leaving the Mediation Service?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, several of us have a very strong recollection that this isn't exactly new to us, that he already had this title.

MR. NESSEN: You have the words of the statement. The fact is, he will continue to serve as Director of the Mediation and Conciliation Service with this title.

Q Will he go on the White House payroll?

Q Does this involve any extra pay?

MR. NESSEN: No extra pay.

He is not on the White House payroll.

Q Why is he doing it?

MR. NESSEN: The President wanted to make him the Special Assistant to the President for Labor-Management Negotiations.

Q Will this require new Presidential action? Is that the point here? At the time Mr. Usery was thinking of leaving Government, most of us have a fairly clear memory that President Nixon appointed him to this same Special Assistant to the President job.

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I don't know the background other than the fact the President decided to announce this today.

The President also has signed an Executive Order, which I think you have, relating to Hopi-Navajo Settlement Interagency Commission. You have that Executive Order.

Q What does it mean?

MR. NESSEN: We can get some people to explain it to you if you will check at the Press Office later.

To answer the earlier question as to the topic of the speech in New Hampshire at the Legislature, it will deal mainly with economic matters.

Q Is he going to have a conference while he is up there with William Loeb?

MR. NESSEN: I think we had announced that there would be a reception at which the President would meet with news executives from that region.

Q He will be there.

MR. NESSEN: He has been invited, I believe. He was invited but he will not be able to attend.

Q Do you have the ball park time for the speech?

MR. NESSEN: 1:10. I think we announced that the other day.

Q How long will it go?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. In the 30-minute area, probably, or slightly shorter.

Q Can you tell us about Cambodia? What the White House knows now in terms of its fate?

Q Does the President have any statement on that?

MR. NESSEN: The President asked me to issue the following statement --

Q Ron, this is on Cambodia?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is there any reason why we couldn't film this?

MR. NESSEN: I suppose not.

Q Ron, a paper in the hinterlands that has not been able to reach you has asked me to ask you if any disciplinary action is planned against the person responsible for those leaks associated with Kissinger last week?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I am really going to talk about the totally erroneous accounts I have seen in the paper. I might clear up one matter just for the historic record -- I don't think we want this minor house-keeping matter on film or tape, but I did check my records just out of curiosity because I was so abused by the stories I read.

I phoned Joe Laitin at 5:40 on the afternoon of March 4 -- that was five weeks ago -- and told him that Lou Thompson had just about completed the organization and administrative arrangements for the Press Office and did he have a good job out at the Pentagon that would be suitable for Lou's very extensive talents.

At approximately 6 o'clock, Joe called me back and mentioned to me a job that was out there that he felt would be suitable for Lou.

The records also show that I talked to Bill Greener for the first time on March 5 about coming to work in the Press Office. He asked me where he would fit into the organization and whether he would be downstairs or upstairs. I said that the corner office where Lou Thompson is now will be available shortly and that is where I thought he would be located.

Just to set the record straight a bit, I would be curious to see whether anybody bothers to make any revisions.

Q When did you first mention this to Lou Thompson?

MR. NESSEN: Lou and I talked a few minutes after my second phone call from Joe Laitin on March 4.

Q For those of us who turned on tape recorders downstairs, what is Lou's new job? Did we miss the announcement?

MR. NESSEN: No. I was just trying to tidy up something I had noticed was very badly out of shape.

Q Is Lou going to take the Pentagon job?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask Lou. I have no idea.

Q So, you are denying all the stories in terms of the Kissinger aspect and Thompson?

MR. NESSEN: The stories are in the realm of fiction as I read them, and I don't intend to sort through them other than to mention this factual matter which I thought would be of some interest to people who had other thoughts.

Are we ready to go on to Cambodia?

Q Are we going to get a copy of this?

MR. NESSEN: We could put it down on paper for you. I don't have it at the moment.

Q Is this the President's statement?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q While they are wrapping up on that, do you also categorically deny the reports there was a memorandum sent from your office to Dr. Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: Tom, I am not going to deny the whole number again. As I say, it is amusing to me to read -- the stories I have read bear no relationship to what has happened and I am not going to continue on it.

Q The answers you have given here don't necessarily bear any relationship directly to the charge.

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going on with it, Tom. I don't believe I should.

Q Ron, there have been conflicting printed responses from you on this memo business.

MR. NESSEN: Gene, I am not going to do it.

Q Le me ask my question, okay?

MR. NESSEN: There is no use asking your question.

Q I insist that I ask the question.

MR. NESSEN: Go ahead.

Q There have been printed reports that you denied sending a memorandum to Dr. Kissinger saying that a member of your staff who was the source of those leaks is no longer with your staff. Did you indeed deny sending the memorandum?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, Gene, I am not going to talk any more about the episode.

Q You have also been quoted as saying you wouldn't talk about a memorandum.

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to talk about the whole episode.

Q You are not going to say whether you sent the memorandum or not?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to talk further about the whole episode.

Q The question we asked the Press Secretary in the former Administration on occasions like this is: Would you consider it a fair description of your position that you are stonewalling it?

MR. NESSEN: I would not, Jim. As I mentioned, I do find the stories amusing. They are in the realm of fiction. They bear no relationship to the truth.

As perhaps one example of that, this small factual matter I pointed out here this morning -- and I am just not going on with it.

Q Can we get to Cambodia?

MR. NESSEN: I would like to go on with the briefing and with the Cambodian statement.

The President has asked me to read the following statement:

"The United States views the fall of the government of the Khmer Republic with sadness and compassion. The President wishes to express his admiration for the Cambodian government leaders and people who showed great courage until the end and to their armed forces who fought valiantly with their remaining supplies."

We will pass out copies of this.

Q Will you find out when he found out that Cambodia had fallen and exactly how he found out?

He, Helen, as we have said many times out here before, has a constant source of information for any major developments either foreign or domestic.

Q That doesn't do it. I called at 2:00 in the morning and the Pentagon --

MR. NESSEN: Larry told me.

Q Is there anything wrong with calling at 2:00 in the morning?

MR. NESSEN: I have not complained. I said Larry told me.

Q I think we ought to be able to call this White House at any time when there is a major event.

MR. NESSEN: I agree.

Q The question is, the Pentagon didn't seem to know any factual information other than what they were getting from the news wires. I would like to know when the President found out, and how.

MORE

#190

MR. NESSEN: I will make an effort to find out, Helen.

Q Ron, could you tell us about a meeting that was held here two or three days ago with the President, Secretary Kissinger and a large group of Government officials apparently?

MR. NESSEN: It was the meeting that we announced the day of the meeting, Bob. It was a periodic meeting the President has with sub-Cabinet appointees. This was in the East Room. It was late in the afternoon. He has had these meetings periodically -- I think one on the economy, one on energy, several others -- and this one was on foreign policy.

The purpose of it was to simply keep other Government officials fully informed as to what his thinking is and what the status is in various areas.

Q Ron, Secretary Kissinger, at the ASNE meeting today said the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China made a mockery of the Paris accords and that we shall not forget who supplied the Communist forces.

Doesn't that statement conflict with what the President said yesterday, that he does not blame Moscow and Peking for supplying their ally?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I will do a textual analysis of Kissinger.

Q That is not a fair answer to that question.

Q That was the lead on the AP story. I am not asking for a textual analysis, but that does seem to be in direct conflict.

You know, the Secretary of State is attacking Moscow and Peking for supplying their ally there, and the President, if not praising them yesterday, said he doesn't blame them for doing it.

Is that not inconsistent?

MR. NESSEN: I don't see an inconsistency, Ted.

Q Which is the official position of the United States Government?

MR. NESSEN: I frankly don't see a need to elaborate on either the President's or Dr. Kissinger's remarks.

Q Ron, I will second Walt and Ted because I was there. It is a direct contradiction, and I think Walt's question is very well taken. With all due respect, Ron, which is the position? Do we blame the Soviets or do we not? That is a logical, reasonable and courteous question.

MR. NESSEN: I agree. It is, Les.

Q Could you either say I don't know, or I will try to find out, or something, Ron, rather than just disregarding it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I did disregard it.

Q You did.

MR. NESSEN: No, I think what I said was -- maybe we could have the lady read it back.

Q You said you didn't see an inconsistency.

MR. NESSEN: And I said I didn't intend to engage in an analysis of either the Secretary's or the President's remarks.

Q Most of the times in the past when we have serious contradictions come up like this, we certainly had an explanation of whether the President and the Secretary of State are conferring on policy or what.

MR. NESSEN: I have read that they are.

Q Can we get a reaction from the President on Dr. Kissinger's remarks?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so, Ralph.

Q Does the President still believe that Russia and China are not to blame?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I don't think I am going to analyze either of their remarks.

Q No, I am not asking that, but does he still stand by that statement of yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Would you think he had changed his mind overnight?

Q I don't know.

MR. NESSEN: The answer is no.

Q Ron, several weeks ago in Newsweek magazine, you indicated there would be a shake-up in the Press Office. I am wondering what the status of that is.

MR. NESSEN: Don't you read the papers?

Q I have been, and I am wondering what relationship, if any, there is to what I have been reading in the paper and the shake-up.

MR. NESSEN: You see we have a new principal deputy. Lou has completed his administrative organization. We have a new editor for the news summary. Paul Miltich has gone over to the Postal Rate Commission.

Q Do you expect to be staying on as Press Secretary?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know. Have you heard that I wasn't?

Q I read in the paper there was a possibility you aren't.

MR. NESSEN: What did the paper say?

Q I think it was Fred Barne's piece of yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: What did he say?

Q I will refer you to the paper. (Laughter)

Q Ron, the President is quoted on UPI, I believe, as saying yesterday that Mr. Brezhnev's trip here has been postponed until, I think, September. Is that correct, and if so, what is the reason?

MR. NESSEN: There has been no postponement because there was never a date set for the visit.

Q Is he coming in the autumn rather than the spring or summer?

MR. NESSEN: There is still no date set for the visit.

Q Did the President say that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he said that or not.

Q They quote him as saying the visit was postponed.

MR. NESSEN: There was never a date set, and there is not a date set.

Q Did he say, regardless of whether it represents a postponement or not -- do you know whether the President said at that reception that the visit might occur in the fall rather than the summer?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that he did, but I read it in the paper, also.

Q You and I are on even ground, here.

MR. NESSEN: We are all reading the paper these days.

Q Ron, on the Rock Island Railroad conference, can you tell us anything? That is quite important to a number of States.

MR. NESSEN: I think you probably know from following the case that there is various legislation and other proposals to aid the Rock Island Railroad and they are coming in to discuss it. I didn't attend the meeting, so I don't know --

Q Did they ask the President to take a view, and did he say he would or would not?

MR. NESSEN: They requested the meeting, and I didn't attend the meeting so I can't tell you precisely what it was.

Q Did you have anyone in there? Can you find out for us precisely what it was? They evidently asked him to do something.

MR. NESSEN: You can check with the Senators, too.

Q I know, but they may say get it at the White House.

MR. NESSEN: I will check.

Q Ron, can you tell us what the President and the Attorney General discussed in their meeting day before yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: I can't, Phil, because I don't know. The Attorney General asked for the meeting and did not say before he came in what it was about, and I don't know what it was about.

Q Ron, can you tell us the amounts of U.S. aid to Saigon in the periods since the Paris accords that the President said was so little?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have those figures, Fran.

Q Can you get them for us?

MR. NESSEN: The people who handled the aid can certainly get them for you, the AID at the State Department and the Pentagon.

Q What figures were furnished to the President on which he based that statement?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, but if you want the figures, you can get them through a phone call.

Q They will be the ones he got?

MR. NESSEN: Figures are figures. There was a certain amount of aid sent and what it was, they can tell you.

Q Ron, can you tell us what leads the White House to reject the \$200 million and the legislation that was written to go with that that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee came out with?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding of the President's position is that he feels what he asked from Congress in the foreign policy speech, which was \$250 million in humanitarian aid, and \$722 million in military aid, is what is needed for the reasons he stated.

He does think that Congress is moving with the kind of urgency that this matter requires.

Q He is not willing to accept a lesser amount?

MR. NESSEN: He feels that the \$250 million and \$722 million are what is needed. He feels strongly that way.

Q Did he misspeak yesterday when he said he was absolutely convinced that the situation was stabilized?

MR. NESSEN: No, he didn't misspeak himself.

Q It seemed to me like he was offering a guarantee. I have never heard any Government official take it quite that far.

MR. NESSEN: No, I think if we read his words, he is talking about both the effect of the actual military aid and of the perception that Saigon would get of the vote for the military aid.

Q Ron, on this point, Secretary Schlesinger told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he would not make any promises and that at best this aid could give to the South Vietnamese a reasonable chance for stabilizing the situation in achieving a negotiated settlement. That is a paraphrase, not a direct quote.

My question is, if the President is so convinced, is he getting an assessment of the situation from someone other than the Secretary, or from whom?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President's statement spoke for itself yesterday, and I checked with him this morning, and he meant what he said.

Q Ron, there seems to be some conflict there because my recollection of Schlesinger's testimony was the same. I am not sure of this, but I believe the background briefer told us there was less than a 50 percent chance.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I checked with the President this morning because I felt you might be curious about that, and he does stand by his statement for the reasons I mentioned to Bob, which are both the aid itself, the physical aid, and the perception in Saigon of the vote to provide additional aid.

Q Have there been any developments in the South Vietnamese situation since Secretary Schlesinger's testimony and the background briefing that have led the President to the conclusion he stated yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: I won't speak directly on what led the President to his conclusion of yesterday. He gets a lot of information from a lot of different people, but it is fairly obvious that the South Vietnamese have been fighting well in the Xuanloc area and in the Mekong Delta.

Q Next week the Supreme Court is going to hear arguments on the death penalty, and the Solicitor General is going to argue for it. What is the President's position on that issue?

MR. NESSEN: I have never asked him that, but I will.

Q You will ask him?

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q Yesterday when the President was asked about Secretary Simon's tenure, he said, "I have asked the Secretary to stay, and he has agreed to stay." It is kind of a nebulous answer. Stay for how long? Until the end of the current term or what? Can you be more specific on this?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Does it have the same element as the Kissinger request and agreements, at least until the end of the term?

MR. NESSEN: I can't add anything to it, Jim. I think the statement speaks for itself.

Q Would you think the same request would be made of one senior Cabinet member as was made of another in terms of time?

Q Do you have an update on the evacuation from Saigon?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean, an update?

Q Have they increased the figures of how many are still there and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: I do want to say something about that. As the President told you yesterday, he had instructed that Americans, some of whom had jobs in other areas of Vietnam that are no longer under Government control and, therefore, whose presence is no longer necessary there, as well as on nonessential personnel from Saigon, would begin to leave.

It is expected that within the next few days most of the American dependents will have departed from Vietnam.

What we have talked about here in the past few days, referring to it as a thinning out, is the process he referred to yesterday. It will not affect the essential personnel of the U.S. mission, and it doesn't affect the determination of the United States to continue all possible support for the people in Vietnam.

I think that we will not give a day-to-day countdown.

Q Ron, can I ask what the Administration feels is the minimal number of Americans? I have asked this question at the Pentagon and State Department and gotten no answer. Specifically--one other thing with that--has the number of personnel been increased in Saigon?

MR. NESSEN: I just think we will not announce a countdown and not give any sort of goal or minimum.

Q Can you comment on these reports emanating from the Hill, and I think elsewhere, that the goal within a relatively short period of time, a few weeks, is to reduce the number of Americans in Saigon to about 1,000?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I think what we have said before is that this is an extremely sensitive matter involving the safety of people, and I just don't think it is good for us to go into very much detail like this.

Q On a related matter, some of the Members of the Foreign Relations Committee are making it clear that they want, in return for the \$200 million or whatever sum is finally voted, absolute assurances from the President, guarantees from the President that the departure or evacuation or removal or withdrawal of Americans will proceed and they are saying publicly they want the President to assure them that he has instructed Ambassador Martin not to drag his feet on this matter. They want those absolute guarantees.

What is your comment on that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any. The President said yesterday --

Q Will such assurances be furnished?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President said yesterday he has instructed the thinning out or the departure of these categories of Americans that we listed here.

Q Ambassador Martin, or a plan which is being attributed to Ambassador Martin was given to the Senate committee and they have reportedly indicated that was insufficient.

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard that.

Q I would like to ask if in ordering that they be thinned out, the President has ordered Ambassador Martin to increase the evacuation or is he accepting the plan as presented by Mr. Martin?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the timing is, and have not seen the document you referred to. I do know the President's directive to thin out the Americans was given last well, so it wouldn't be related in any way to any recent events on the Hill.

Q The President, in his address to Congress, said he would like this completed by the 19th of April. He told the editors yesterday the 19th of April, or shortly thereafter. General Weyand told the Senate committee yesterday that without any aid, South Vietnam has enough ammunition to last through late May or early June, and any aid voted by Congress could be there in ten days.

With all that, how long does the President think he could wait beyond the 19th?

MR. NESSEN: He is pleased the Congress is approaching this with urgency. They have put aside all their other business and are concentrating only on this. It appears they will have completed actions, as he said, by the 19th or shortly thereafter.

I think one thing to keep in mind is that Secretary Schlesinger testified that left over from the \$700 million appropriation of this year is about \$180 million. That aid is going forward.

As Schlesinger testified the other day, the additional \$722 million is partly meant to re-equip four divisions and to upgrade the regional forces and to equip some ranger battalions and so forth. So, there is aid going under the old appropriation. This appropriation is meant to accomplish other things.

Q That aid that was going forward, why did they slow it down and hesitate on it if they needed it so badly?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't know they had.

Q You know, the other day they said they had stopped giving spare parts and turned it into food?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't know they did.

Q They did. The Pentagon said for a while they started giving more food and not spare parts. We have enough spare parts it looks like.

Q Ron, on evacuation, before we finish this, you explained the other day, Ron, why the VOA's policy on news about this sensitive matter of evacuation, that they were really allowing only the broadcast of official statements.

One of the things they were stopping was the statement of Members of Congress, Senators and Members of the House. Aren't these people considered American officials as well as members of the Administration?

MR. NESSEN: Peter, I am just not really that much up on what the VOA is doing. The State Department sets the policy for VOA and I really think that is the proper place to ask that question.

Q You went into it the other day.

MR. NESSEN: In response to some queries, I gave the general philosophy of why there had been some restraints on their reporting.

Q What would be the general philosophy of the VOA in censoring statements by Members of Congress?

MR. NESSEN: Peter, I don't know that they have. I think precisely what they are doing and why they are doing what they are doing, you need to talk to them, to State.

Q Can you tell me if the President is aware of reported efforts by the French government to get President Thieu to resign and for a coalition government of some kind to take over in Saigon, and is the President being kept up-to-date on those efforts?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check that one, Bob.

Q Do you know, Ron, if the Administration has any intention to talk about the Vietnam situation with the former leader of that country, who is arriving at Dulles this afternoon, General Con?

MR. NESSEN: When Con is coming?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't know that. I didn't even know he was coming.

I have one further announcement. Recently, we have received a number of queries about the President's position on the Consumer Protection Act. I think we mentioned in the little printed report on the Cabinet meeting yesterday that the subject had been discussed.

As soon as the briefing is over, we will give you copies of a letter that the President is sending to the committee chairmen and the ranking Republican Members on this bill.

Those letters were sent up to the Hill this morning, recently, and I think they are self-explanatory as to the President's position on the consumer bill.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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(AT 1:40 P.M. EDT)