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NEWS CONFERENCE

#371

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:55 A.M. EST

NOVEMBER 13, 1975

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: We have a busy day, with lots of stuff.

First of all, let me give you an announcement embargoed for noon, which I am sure will come as a great surprise to everyone.

Q It is already out from Peking, so can we eliminate your embargo?

MR. NESSEN: No, I am going to stick to my embargo because I haven't seen any stories from Peking.

It has been agreed that President Gerald R. Ford of the United States of America will visit the People's Republic of China from December 1 through December 5, 1975.

I will tell you what we will do. We will pass these out and while they are being passed out, I will give you one or two other items, and then we will break to file.

The President expects to leave Washington on November 29, which is a Saturday, stop in Alaska, and probably overnight in Alaska. There will probably be one or two events in Alaska, other events in Alaska, which I don't have the details of at the moment. There will be a brief refueling stop in Tokyo.

Q Is this an overnight in Alaska?

MR. NESSEN: Probably.

Q What city?

MR. NESSEN: Anchorage.

There will be a brief refueling stop in Tokyo before going on to Peking. As for any possible airport meeting in Japan, I don't have anything on that at the moment.

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On the way home from the three stops on the trip, the President will stop in Hawaii on December 7, which is a Sunday also. He will also have some activities there. I do not have the details of those. He will arrive back in Washington on the 8th of December, Monday, early on the 8th.

Q Can we assume the December 7 activities have something to do with the Pearl Harbor celebration?

MR. NESSEN: One of them may.

Q No other stops on the return?

MR. NESSEN: Other than Hawaii?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Can we also assume there will be no fund-raising event in Tokyo? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Not so fast, Peter.

Q Can we file?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, file. We will meet back in five minutes.

(AT 12:03 P.M. EST)

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12:08 P.M. EST

MR. NESSEN: I have a lot of information on all the various trips we will be making, and we will have to work our way through this very slowly.

In connection with the trip to the People's Republic, each news organization must supply in writing by three o'clock Saturday -- that is this coming Saturday, the day after tomorrow -- the name of each individual who will accompany the President on that trip. Each name should be followed by the individual's passport number.

I think you have this in the form of a release, incidentally, so maybe I will skip over it, except to call your attention to it.

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Since many of you will be out of town anyhow tomorrow and then on Saturday and through the weekend for the Paris trip, it is important that you get these names in absolutely by the deadline of three o'clock on Saturday for the people from your news organizations who want to go on the trip to the People's Republic.

I don't need to remind you it is 16 days away before we go to the People's Republic, so we have to move on with this.

Judy O'Neil is the one assigned to collect the names of the people from your organizations who do want to go. The people who are not here in this room who may want to go, we will get in touch with ourselves.

Q Ron, there are obviously no limits then?

MR. NESSEN: We haven't gotten a limit yet. We are hoping to take as many as we can.

Q Is Peking the only place we will visit in China?

MR. NESSEN: Peking is the only place in the People's Republic we will make.

Do you have a summary schedule of the trip tomorrow? Everybody should have that. It is in the bins.

Just to run over it with you, since it is somewhat complicated --

Q Has this been going on long?

MR. NESSEN: No, I have just called attention, Frank, to the two releases put out, one having to do with the names of people from your organization who want to go to China by 3 p.m. Saturday, and the other is the summary schedule of the trip to Atlanta and Raleigh.

Those of you who are going to go on the Raleigh-Atlanta leg of the trip should be at the airport at Andrews to check in at eight o'clock tomorrow morning, and the press plane will leave at 8:30. Those of you who are also going on to Paris should bring your luggage at that time.

You also may put your luggage today in Room 87 of the EOB, and it will be accepted up until eight o'clock tomorrow morning. That is for the Paris trip.

Q The Paris luggage, that doesn't go on the Atlanta plane, does it? They just hold it out there?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

For those of you who are going to Paris, not going to Atlanta or Raleigh, you can leave your bags in Room 87 of the EOB up until three o'clock tomorrow afternoon. If you are going to Paris only and not to Atlanta and Raleigh, you should check in with your baggage at Andrews at 6:30 tomorrow night. If you have already turned in your luggage, check-in is at 6:45.

The press plane will take off at 7:20 tomorrow evening for Dobbins Air Force Base in Atlanta. Let me see if I can explain this. The press plane will leave Andrews at 7:20 tomorrow night, will go to Dobbins Air Force Base in Atlanta, arriving at 8:50 p.m. tomorrow night.

Those of you who have made the Atlanta-Raleigh trip and are going on to Paris will get on a bus at the Marriott in Atlanta at 9:10 tomorrow night. It will take you to Dobbins. You will get on the press plane, which has come from Washington, and you will leave for Paris at 9:50 tomorrow night.

Do you want me to run over that quickly again?

Those not going to Atlanta and Raleigh should check in with baggage at Andrews at 6:30, and without baggage at 6:45. The press plane leaves Andrews at 7:20 and stops at Dobbins Air Force Base at 8:50.

People who have gone on the trip earlier tomorrow, but are also going to Paris tomorrow, will leave the Marriott by bus at 9:10, go out to Dobbins, get on the press plane and leave for Paris at 9:50.

Those of you who are going to Atlanta and Raleigh and not going to Paris, there will be another press plane to bring you back to Andrews, the same one you went on.

Q What time does Air Force One leave Andrews for Paris?

MR. NESSEN: You would have to ask that, Phil.

On your summary schedule you will see that the President departs Dobbins Air Force Base at 10:05 tomorrow night, arrives at Andrews at 11:25, takes off in the other plane at 11:40 for Paris.

Q So the pool should be there when?

MR. NESSEN: The pool going on Air Force One to Paris should be at Andrews I would guess at 11 o'clock.

Here are some arrival times.

The press plane arrives at Orly at noon Saturday, Paris time, which is 6 a.m. Eastern time. At the airport we have ten long-distance phones exclusively for the White House press, plus 11 more long-distance phones inside the press room, but you will be competing with some other reporters for those 11 phones.

I don't have a Presidential arrival time in Paris, do I?

Q Will there be an arrival statement, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: At 1 p.m. Paris time, 7 a.m. Eastern time, the President arrives at Orly, and I don't have any word on whether there will be an arrival statement.

The President will then go by helicopter to Rambouillet and the press corps will go to the George Cinq Hotel in Paris. It is the White House hotel and press center. There is another press center located in Rambouillet in a restaurant called, believe it or not, the Drink Store. (Laughter) How appropriate.

This will be the press center and gathering place for pools. (Laughter) It will be the gathering place for pools who will be covering the activities of Rambouillet, the place of the summit talks. The travel pool will accompany the President when he flies by helicopter from Orly to Rambouillet.

This afternoon, at three o'clock, we will hand out the traditional press notes for this trip, which will contain information about filing facilities at both press centers, telephone numbers you will need to know during the trip, addresses of various places you want to know during the trip, information about what kinds of clothes to take and so forth.

We will also hand out press notes on the flight for people who don't want to be here at three or are not here today.

The pool on Air Force One will also get press notes.

During the flight, you will receive your credentials for the trip and also a French credential for covering the events.

As for a detailed Presidential schedule of the first day, I hope to have that later this afternoon. Three o'clock would be a good time to check here for a detailed schedule of the trip.

Q Ron, before you leave the trip, could you give us some idea of what kind of briefing arrangements are going to be made for the three days in Paris?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, we discussed that this morning, and it seems unlikely that there is going to be anything on Saturday that really is worth calling everybody together for. The meetings don't start until very late in the afternoon, and by the time they are over and there is really anything -- that is really only a dinner on Saturday, I believe.

MR. GREENER: It is dinner and a meeting, but not over until about 10:30.

MR. NESSEN: I think we will pass on a briefing on Saturday.

Q There is still six hours difference, so there is plenty of time to make the American papers even if we get a briefing at nine or ten.

MR. NESSEN: The problem is it will not be over until 10:30 or 11, and then it is a helicopter flight from Rambouillet and a car ride to the hotel, and given the fact they are Sunday morning papers, and it will only be their first meeting and dinner, I just thought that it probably wasn't worthwhile. Sunday we will schedule briefings, although I don't have the precise time yet.

Q Assume you can get back there by one o'clock in the morning. That is seven o'clock on the East Coast. In fact, the Sunday papers, it seems to me --

Q Four o'clock on the West Coast.

MR. NESSEN: I take it there is a burning desire for a briefing on Saturday. If we can, we will. I think it is a good suggestion.

Q Ron, you said sometime ago the President plans to make no other stops and confer with no other leaders beyond the Rambouillet conference. Does that still stand?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Will you be able to supply texts of transcripts back here in Washington pretty quickly after they are delivered?

MR. NESSEN: We always do, yes.

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Q May I ask two questions on the China trip? Why has it been decided that the President will go to Peking only? I know he has visited the Great Wall and other places on previous trips.

Secondly, has he had advance guarantee that he will see Chairman Mao?

MR. NESSEN: Let me answer the last part first. On the subject of Chairman Mao, we take this visit seriously and we believe that the Chinese do also. We have every reason to believe that the President will be received with courtesy and with all appropriate protocol. Naturally, we assume that this would include the President meeting at the highest levels.

On the subject of the meeting being limited to Peking, I think one thing to say about that is that the President has been to China before in his role as Republican Leader of the House in 1972. He has been to a number of places outside of the Chinese capital.

The United States and China agreed that this would be largely a working visit and so there was the feeling that there was no need for either a longer stay or travels outside of Peking; that the four days concentrated in Peking are ample time for substantive exchanges.

Q Ron, could I ask a question about the President's travel tomorrow? Why is he coming back to Andrews Air Force Base?

MR. NESSEN: It is technical problems involving the refueling and the preparation of the plane and so forth.

Q Isn't it for the statement, a departure statement? Isn't that it, basically?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware there is a departure statement, Aldo. I haven't heard of one.

Q Wouldn't he have to come back here and pick up some people who would normally be traveling with the President to Paris that wouldn't go on the other trip?

MR. NESSEN: The plan is that people like Bill Seidman and Alan Greenspan, Dr. Kissinger and so forth would get on the plane here and then the President would join them.

Q When former President Nixon went to China, there was a considerable amount of -- pardon the expression -- "hoopla", a lot of public ceremonies and that sort of thing. Would you expect this to be a lower key trip with more emphasis on discussions and less emphasis on trappings?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if I want to accept all your descriptions of previous visits and so on, but, as I said to Ralph, both the Chinese and the United States have agreed this is largely a working visit and the time there will be spent primarily in serious exchanges.

Q Ron, should I take it from your answer that you assume he will be meeting with people at the highest levels but you have not been assured he will see Chairman Mao?

MR. NESSEN: We assume he will be meeting with people at the highest level, Bob. I just don't think it is a normal diplomatic endeavor to demand that your hosts sign some kind of promise in advance.

Q You wouldn't put out a schedule saying 8:00 to 8:30 here, and 9:30 to 10:00 meet with Chairman Mao?

MR. NESSEN: I think the people who have made the China trip before know that if you get the schedule by 5 a.m. of the day, you are lucky.

Q I am not talking about the press schedule. I am talking about the President's agenda.

MR. NESSEN: I am talking about the President's schedule, too. If he gets the schedule by the early morning hours of the next day --

Q There is no specific agenda or specific schedule of what he will be doing each day?

MR. NESSEN: Not yet. As you know, the advance team hasn't gone yet.

Q Then there has been no direct communique from Mao to the effect he is looking forward to meeting with the President during his trip?

MR. NESSEN: We have obviously had communications back and forth with the Chinese and, as I said, we obviously assume he will be meeting at the highest levels.

Q A direct communique from Mao was the question.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it is normal to spell out who signs the communiqués, Russ.

Q But there is no specific agenda thus far on who he will be meeting with?

MR. NESSEN: There is no specific schedule for any of the days in China because the advance team hasn't gone yet.

Q How about Mrs. Ford? Is she going to be touring?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a full list of who is going yet, Frank.

Q Have you said whether or not she is going?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't said because I don't know.

Q Ron, will Ambassador Bush come back here to fly over with the President?

MR. NESSEN: That is one detail I don't know.

Q Somebody involved in the planning said there will be people disappointed because there will be a reduced press entourage on this trip. Can you give us any idea if there will be reduced press?

MR. NESSEN: We haven't really gotten into the question of numbers yet. I think there is some indication that the Chinese generally prefer to have the trip handled as it was in 1972 by the former President. I think some of the considerations have changed.

As I understand it, the TV networks, for instance, no longer use film and would not need to have film processors and film editors. I think probably the interest by people who asked to go on that trip who have never before or never since gone on a Presidential trip will be somewhat lessened. I don't anticipate a major problem when it comes to the number of reporters that want to go.

Q Ron, I was a bit late coming back to your resumed briefing. If you have answered this question, I apologize.

What about the question of third country newsmen?

MR. NESSEN: We have not really dealt with that yet.

Q No decision at all?

MR. NESSEN: No.

The President's day today -- I think you have seen his schedule -- he does have time set aside to prepare for the Paris meetings. He also has an hour-long meeting this afternoon on the 1977 fiscal budget.

As you know, some time ago I announced a very long list of meetings the President would be holding on the budget, state of the Union and legislative proposals. This is one in that series which he will be holding virtually every day between now and the end of January.

Other than that, I have no further announcements.

Q Ron, can you tell us about the New York situation, the President's reaction to Governor Carey's plan and if there are any further plans to reconcile aid?

MR. NESSEN: Secretary Simon has -- let me back up a minute before I tell you some of the specifics, and say that obviously there has been finally, at long last, some serious action by New York City and New York State to solve their own financial problems. This is something the President has been talking about, urging, I guess, for six months now. Finally, New York City and New York State have done it, or have begun to do it anyhow, or said they would do it.

The President feels that this action or apparent action by the City and State largely is the result of his own firm position against a Federal bail-out for New York City.

Now in the specifics, the Treasury Secretary has asked Governor Carey to send him the full details of this plan to help New York City solve its own financial problems.

Secretary Simon also has asked that the participants in the plan indicate in writing their commitment to carry out their part of the plan. As much action as has been taken so far and the indications of further action in response to the President's own firm stand is encouraging to the President and the Administration will monitor what is done.

Q Governor Carey said yesterday that Secretary Simon had assured him that if such a plan were implemented, that the President would reconsider short-term aid to New York.

MR. NESSEN: Marty, you know that I said that the Administration will monitor what is done and just as an aside, that is obviously in contrast to what is said and what is promised. The Administration will monitor what is done.

Now for one thing, the detailed plan really has not arrived here in writing. It is clear from what has been printed in the papers and some tentative information which has been sent here that there is a provision for kind of short-term money that is needed for seasonal reasons; that there are times of the year when revenue collections are below the expenditure needs, and that there would be the need for some kind of money to tide over that seasonal period.

It is not clear to the White House that this money necessarily has to come from the Federal Government. It could easily come from private sources.

Q Easily, did you say easily come from private sources?

MR. NESSEN: You know if the plan goes through it should be possible for the City and State to get that money from private sources.

Q Was Governor Carey correct in saying that the Secretary had assured him that the White House would consider short-term aid?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the exact conversation was because obviously I didn't listen in. I know what the Secretary intended to say to Governor Carey but I don't know precisely what he said to him.

Q Will the Secretary accompany the President to Paris?

MR. NESSEN: He will go to Paris. My understanding is he will fly on another airplane.

Q Can we assume the monitoring will not begin in earnest, or the consideration, until the Presidential party returns from Paris?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't say begin, Sol. The monitoring has been going on for quite some time.

Q But you don't have the plan?

MR. NESSEN: Simon has asked to see the plan in writing and to have these commitments made by the people who are supposed to participate.

Q Does this mean that the President may be changing his position?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly is not changing the stand which he has taken repeatedly, which is that he is against and will not approve a Federal bail-out of New York City.

Q What will he approve? My question is, yesterday you said the President's position was unchanged and today you said the President is encouraged. You say he won't approve a Federal bail-out. What will he approve? Could you help us in that regard and word it as carefully as you would like to?

MR. NESSEN: I think I have. You know, we haven't seen the plan yet in detail or in writing.

Q Would you be a bit more precise?

MR. NESSEN: We have not seen the plan in writing or in detail. There is, according to the tentative things we have seen and the newspaper reports, a need for this money to tide over the seasonal period but it is not clear whether that needs to be, or whether the Governor is thinking of Federal money.

Q Is the White House considering Federal money?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think there is anything to consider at the moment since the plan isn't here.

Q But you are not ruling it out at the moment either, are you?

MR. NESSEN: I am saying, just to go back to the beginning, that New York City and State have taken some encouraging action, thanks to the firm stand taken by the President. The President is still firmly opposed and will not approve anything that is a Federal bail-out of New York City.

Q The word "bail-out" is used by a great many people. I wonder if you could be a bit more precise as to precisely what the White House means by a "bail-out"?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean by a bail-out?

Q A bail-out is used by a great many people. Loan guarantees have been called bail-outs, direct grants, direct loans from the Federal Government, certificates of indebtedness, which may or may not be guaranteed by the Federal Government. I am curious as to what the White House position is on exactly what constitutes a bail-out?

MR. NESSEN: I never really asked anybody here for the definition of a bail-out.

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Q Ron, when the President asks for a written commitment by officials of the city, it seems to me that he is implying that he is going to do something if they give him a commitment. What is he going to do in exchange for this commitment?

MR. NESSEN: How can I answer that question when it is --

Q Does he propose to do something in exchange for the commitment?

MR. NESSEN: The President is not proposing or volunteering to do anything. The city and the State have taken some encouraging action, and the President feels his firmness has led to this.

Q Why should they make a commitment when nothing has been promised in return?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing has been asked.

Q Ron, are you making a distinction between "bail-out" and "short-term" assistance?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are just getting ahead of the game at this stage.

Q It is explicit in your words, Ron, that is why I raise it.

MR. NESSEN: I think this is where we stand today, and I don't know that I can elaborate on it anymore.

Q Ron, you said that the President thinks that there might be a need for seasonal --

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute, Adam. I didn't say the President thinks anything. I said our understanding from tentative plans we have seen and from newspaper reports is that there is a need for seasonal financing.

Q And it is not clear to the White House this money has to come from the Federal Government but it could easily come from private sources. Does that suggest if the money were to come from private sources and everything that he requested happens, that the President might be prepared to consider the Federal Government guaranteeing the money from private sources in the form of a loan guarantee?

MR. NESSEN: Adam, I tell you, I just think at this point, given the fact we have not seen it in writing, we have not seen the commitments, it is not clear where the money needs to come from, that I can't go beyond what I said in terms of expectation.

Q Ron, would it be fair to say at this point that the President is keeping an open mind about the New York City plan until he has a chance to see what it is in writing?

MR. NESSEN: An open mind about what?

Q Whatever is proposed in the New York City plan, until he has a chance to study it? An open mind as to the proposal for such things as a Federal role in the plan?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I think I have gone about as far as I will go today.

Q Yesterday you said the President's position was unchanged and that position was the President would do nothing to prevent a default. Are you now saying he is reconsidering that and if it becomes clear to him, after studying this plan, that the only place to get this money is from the Federal Government, he might be willing to go along?

MR. NESSEN: His position is unchanged, one, in that he will not approve anything that is a Federal bail-out of New York City, as he said in the Press Club speech -- and I wish I had brought the exact words out with me -- but he would not hesitate to veto any legislation which provided a Federal bail-out to prevent default. That position is unchanged.

Q Do you have any idea when they will get this information from New York, a written commitment and the Carey plan? What is the timetable on that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, but I would think in a relatively short period, the next couple of days.

Q Excuse me. Could you go back to that? What was the question you were responding to?

MR. NESSEN: Bill's question was when do we expect to see the plan in writing, and the commitments from the participants. The answer is in a relatively short period of a few days.

Q Ron, in the past your statement has been that the President would take no action to prevent a default by New York City. Without getting into terms like bail-out, do you still stand by that statement today?

MR. NESSEN: I think you have to figure out what default really means. Default, I guess by most people's definition, is when you fail to make the interest or principal payments on your debt on time. Whether this plan, as we have seen it, amounts to that or not, it is hard to tell. It is a legal question at the moment.

Q So, you can't categorically say you will stand by that, then, right?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, you would have to have a legal definition of default, and it is beyond my legal expertise.

Q When Government officials start defining terms, that means they are changing their position. We have found that for years. Today you are wanting a definition of bail-out. Today you are wanting a definition of default. Today you are wanting definitions, so in other words we can say the President no longer is categorically against preventing a default, right?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I would like to say things my own way, if I may.

Q You have always been very dogmatic about that in the past. You obviously have changed your position.

MR. NESSEN: I would like to say firm.

Q Whatever you say -- do you want me to define dogmatic? (Laughter) -- the position is changing. It is not the same today as it was yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: I would say that due to the President's forcefulness and firmness on this issue, Bob, the situation that we are talking about has changed. For instance, the legislation which is pending on the Hill, none of which to the President would be acceptable, as we have said in the past, now becomes, I think, probably somewhat irrelevant because none of it applies to the changed situation in New York City and State, brought about by the plan they are working on, which in turn was brought about by the President's firmness.

Q Why does it no longer apply?

Q Rockefeller was right, then, wasn't he?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I like to say things my own way.

Q Why does it no longer apply?

MR. NESSEN: It no longer applies, Marty, because if I understand, and what I said before, we are talking about some kind of seasonal period, some mechanism or financing to tide New York City -- and of course all of this is predicated on this plan being carried out as the mayor and Governor say it will be and the other participants.

But, in any case, the things up on the Hill apply to one situation. The situation they are talking about now has to do with short-term seasonal financing of some kind.

Q Ron, your categorical statement in the past is no longer operative, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: I don't consider that a serious question, John.

Q It is, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: As I told Bob, I like to say things in my own way. If you prefer to use that, it is your story.

Q Is there some reason why we are playing games out here? This is a fairly serious thing.

MR. NESSEN: I think it is serious, and I think it should be obvious to you I have spent a great deal of time working on it this morning, and I am saying it precisely as I want to say it and as the President wants to say it.

Q Why are you leaving open the possibility that the President will agree to some short-term assistance if he likes the plan put on his desk hopefully in the next few days?

MR. NESSEN: Ralph, I don't think we are up to that stage yet.

Q Are we now stalling until Friday afternoon when all the markets are closed for the weekend?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Can you give another answer to Bob Schieffer's question? He asked you very simply has the President's position changed or is it changing and you responded --

MR. NESSEN: I don't think a one-word answer is adequate.

Q You responded by saying the situation has changed.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q That certainly leaves the impression that, therefore, his position is changing. If that is not the impression you mean to convey, would you say that?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, I have told you his position is opposed to a Federal bail-out. I have answered John's question about does this amount to a default or not -- it is hard to say, not being a lawyer. I have told you what Simon is doing, what the President intends to do with what the Governor sends here and so forth.

As you say yourself, it is a serious question that requires more than a sentence or word that will fit into a headline.

Q May I ask, you said we haven't reached that stage yet. Are we correct in assuming we are at least moving in that direction; that is, the President --

MR. NESSEN: I would not look beyond where we are now, Walt, because it is not possible to.

Q Ron, what will the President do with the information and the commitments that are put in front of him? You said he would receive them, but what --

MR. NESSEN: He is going to read them and find out what they are all about and what it is that the Governor feels he wants to have brought to the President's attention, and he will determine what is the Presidential role.

Q What is the timetable?

MR. NESSEN: I said the timetable is that I would expect the written plan and commitment to arrive shortly, within the next few days.

Q What is the timetable for selecting a new Supreme Court Justice?

MR. NESSEN: Let's finish the New York question.

Q Does the President share Chairman Burns' opinion over what he describes as being deeply concerned on the impact of a default on the money markets of the country?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President has stated his own view that a default would not have -- I forget what the precise adjective he used was -- but it would not have a --

Q I think he called such things fear tactics.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

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Q Ron, the President also said he based that view on advice he received from his economic advisers.

MR. NESSEN: Arthur Burns is one person he talks to and there are others he talks to.

Q What I fail to understand is that why at the Press Club couldn't the President have been just as tough as he was and said something along these lines instead of being so unequivocal? It seems he has put himself in a box and might be endangering his credibility by his past actions.

MR. NESSEN: Why would you get that idea?

Q Ron, would it be wrong to say the President is unalterably opposed to short-term loan guarantees to New York City to prevent a default?

MR. NESSEN: I think it would be wrong to say anything you haven't heard me say here today.

Q Ron, we can't expect any decision on this until after his return from Paris, can we?

MR. NESSEN: You say decision, you know, as if you anticipate one.

Q Then what good is monitoring the developments in New York if not for some decision?

MR. NESSEN: Will he not begin monitoring --

Q No, for what purpose is he monitoring developments in New York?

MR. NESSEN: As I said to Sol, to find out what is in the plan, whether the participants have committed themselves to carry out the plan, to find out what it is Carey thinks is needed in the way of this seasonal financing, and from whom.

Q For what, if he is still opposed to any aid pre-default of systems?

MR. NESSEN: I think if you want to get my transcript and read back all I have said this morning --

Q Ron, the New York State Legislature is being convened in special session largely because the Governor believes that there may be some movement on the President's part based on what Simon told him. Now what you said today might perhaps cause the New York State Legislature to decide why should we be here in special session because there is no movement. Would you please define for the Legislature what it is that they are there for?

MR. NESSEN: I would think you better ask Governor Carey that and, in addition, I would disagree with your assumption that the New York State Legislature has been convened because of some indication on their part that the President is backing away. I would argue and tell you that the President's feeling is that New York City and State, the Legislature, the Governor, the Mayor, the other participants have reached this point not because of some signal that the President is reversing himself but quite the opposite, because after trying by every way they could to scare or persuade the Government into a bail-out, the President's firm position has finally gotten through to them to the point where they realize that they must put into effect and carry out their own plan for saving the City of New York.

Q Are you saying they should come up with a plan that does not call on the Federal Government at all; is that what you are telling us?

MR. NESSEN: They have put a plan together and we have asked to see it and that is where it stands.

Q Is there a substantial difference of opinion among the economic advisers on how to handle the New York situation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it has reached a point yet where anybody has been able to review the plan and convince themselves that these commitments have been given or to find out what, if anything, it is that the Governor wants the Federal Government to do, so there can't be a disagreement since it hasn't come to a full discussion yet.

Q Will President Ford submit his choice for the Supreme Court to the American Bar Association's Committee on the Judiciary which in the past has screened Presidential appointments?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a specific answer on that, Peter, because I failed to ask the President this morning. I can tell you that the President will be discussing with the Justice Department and others his nominee for this job. It is obviously one of the most important decisions that any President is called upon to make. He will do it with great deliberation. At the same time, there is a certain urgency to have a full court so the President will act as quickly as possible on this, but it will be a deliberate choice because he has in mind the extreme importance of that nomination.

Q Did he indicate any time line, a couple of weeks, in that area?

MR. NESSEN: There is no time schedule that I can give you.

Q Ron, could you find out whether he will use that process of the ABA's Judiciary Committee?

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q Do you have some standards the President has set down to you that he is looking for in a Justice?

MR. NESSEN: I talked to him about that. He indicated that this had happened only yesterday afternoon. Justice Douglas' letter arrived at 1:15, as some of you know, and he spent some time writing an answer. It came with suddenness and I don't think he has had the time to develop any lengthy list of qualifications that he will be looking for.

He did say that he would be looking for the person he felt was the best qualified person for the Court that he is able to find. That will be his first qualification, that he is the best qualified person.

Q Ron, do you have any little details on how that letter got down here yesterday? Did the Justice call Mr. Buchen and tell him what he planned to do or just say there was a letter on the way?

MR. NESSEN: Either Douglas himself or an aide at the court called Buchen and said that the letter was on the way and it arrived and Phil asked for the first opportunity to see the President, which was at 1:15.

Q Did Mr. Douglas say what was in the letter, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: The phone call did not go into any detail other than the fact the letter was on its way.

Q Did he say, "I am resigning, and I am sending a letter to that effect?"

MR. NESSEN: I think either he or the aide from the Court indicated the Justice was sending a letter which was an announcement of his retirement.

Q Did the President have any conversation with maybe the Chief Justice or anyone else up there about this?

MR. NESSEN: He did not. I think it would be fair to say the President was aware of the kinds of stories and so forth that everybody else was aware of, but the President had no advance notice.

Q Has he talked to the Chief Justice since?

MR. NESSEN: The President?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No, not that I am aware of.

Q Has he talked to Mr. Justice Douglas?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of, but I will check it.

Q Has he talked to Mrs. Ford about the job?
(Laughter)

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

Q He said yesterday that he would probably hear about it tonight, referring to Mrs. Ford's championing for a woman.

Q Ron, Prime Minister Thorn said in his news conference today the President told him the United States would not take any retaliatory financial actions in the UN as a result of the Zionism resolution. Can you tell us exactly how he does feel about that?

MR. NESSEN: Taking retaliatory action against the UN?

Q Well, cut down our commitments.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that has changed since yesterday, Frank. I said that the President had asked for the amount of money for the American contribution to the UN that he thought was appropriate and still has that feeling.

Q Congressman Pike has said that the Ford Administration has forbidden the intelligence agencies -- CIA, NSA and so on -- from saying the Soviets have failed to comply with the SALT agreement. Apparently, former Defense Secretary Schlesinger wrote a letter citing specific Soviet violations and the White House says that letter has been lost or destroyed.

My question is, did the Ford Administration forbid the intelligence agencies to say that the Soviets failed to comply with the SALT agreement?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with that, Walt. This is the first time I have ever heard it.

Q There is a story on the AP wire out there.

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of it before.

Q Is the new energy bill, except for pricing, acceptable to the President?

MR. NESSEN: The energy bill conference report was just finished up, I guess late last night. There is nothing in writing, I understand. Frank Zarb has got his own notes of what the bill, as drafted by the conferees, contains and it is complex, as you know, and the President wants to read it and study it before reaching a conclusion.

Q Ron, Zarb is quoted as saying he will recommend to the President that he accept this conference bill. Has he done that yet?

MR. NESSEN: He was in to talk to the President this morning and kind of outlined for the President what is in the bill since there is nothing in writing. The President wants to think about that before reaching a decision.

Q Did he include in the outline a recommendation?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is probably not proper to relay the recommendations of Presidential advisers.

Q When will the President return from Paris?

MR. NESSEN: The President will return Monday -- I forget what the return time is. It is late afternoon or early evening.

Q Ron, there was a presentation yesterday by the United States in the United Nations calling for the release of all political prisoners which is being interpreted by some people as a counter by the United States to the anti-Zionist resolution. Does the President share that view?

MR. NESSEN: It hasn't been introduced yet, has it? The State Department can probably give you full details on that. I just don't have them.

Q Does the President share the Secretary of State's feeling that the anti-Zionist resolution is only an emotion of today, as he said yesterday in Pittsburgh?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I think it is fair to say the Secretary shares the President's view or the President shares the Secretary's view.

Q The President is going to one of the first five primary States tomorrow -- North Carolina. Is he confident he will win that primary?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think the President has spent all that much time running down a check list of States, John. He expects to win the nomination and the election, but I don't know that he has gone State-by-State.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:50 P.M. EST)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 5:09 P.M. EST

NOVEMBER 13, 1975

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: Tonight, at 7:30, the President is going to meet with the Republican Members of the Conference which dealt with the energy bill, along with some additional leaders of Congress.

Q All Republicans?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

I will quickly run through the list for you, if you would like. On the Senate side, it is Senators Griffin, Fannin, Hansen, Bartlett, McClure, Stevens, Weicker, Bell, Baker, Tower and Stafford. On the House side, Clarence Brown, James Broyhill, VanderJagt, Bob Michel, Sam Devine, Jack Edwards, Barber Conable, Lou Frey and Herman Schneebeli. Staff people will include Cheney, Marsh, Greenspan, Cannon, Lynn, Seidman, Zarb, Scowcroft, Nessen and a couple of other people from the FEA.

The purpose is to have the President get a clear idea of what is in the Conference report, since I told you this morning that nothing is written down. He has Frank Zarb's notes, which he has had with him all day, but he wants to hear from the Republican Members their view of what was agreed upon and, as I say, the meeting begins at 7:30, it will be in the Cabinet Room, and I would say that it is possible that afterward we might have some word for you on the President's view of the Conference Report.

Q Is he apt to come out and announce it himself?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Why is he only consulting Republicans on what is in the bill? Is it because it has a political aspect?

MR. NESSEN: No.

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Q What did the Republicans do on this bill?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the vote. I am not sure Conference Committee reports are recorded, even.

Q What are they doing on either side, House or Senate, and are they opposed to it or do they support it?

MR. NESSEN: I frankly don't know the answer to that.

Q Is he leaning toward signing it, but he wants a fuller explanation and he will announce tonight whether he is going to sign it?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't say leaning either way, Helen.

Q You mean he will make a decision on the basis of this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: And his talk earlier today with Zarb and his study of the notes that he has received from Zarb.

MORE

Q To complete Helen's question, just factually, why is he not inviting the Democrats, who are the majority party and have been calling the shots more or less for a year?

MR. NESSEN: I think he has had an opportunity to confer all along with Democratic leaders and people working on the energy program. I don't know that there is any special reason tonight.

Q Has he talked with any of them today?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q You are really saying there is a possibility he will announce tonight whether he is going to sign it or veto it?

MR. NESSEN: I think that is right.

Q There is a possibility?

MR. NESSEN: It is a possibility.

Q Do you have any timetable for this, any idea when it will finish up on the Hill?

MR. NESSEN: They have to write it down on paper, Russ, which is one problem that may take a while, and then it will have to get through the Senate and House. I don't have a timetable.

Q Did you mention Rhodes in that list?

MR. NESSEN: Rhodes is in Hawaii, I think, on some business.

Q Is John Anderson coming?

MR. NESSEN: No, this is the list as I have it.

Q Ron, might this group also discuss the New York City situation?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Has Zarb changed his position that he will recommend the signing?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think Frank has -- well, I think what Frank has recommended to the President, or suggested to the President on the basis of the final version because, I think as Phil points out, at various times during the conference phase he felt at certain times that what they were working on was not acceptable and at another time it was acceptable -- as for what he has recommended based on the final version, I think I should not say.

Q Do you happen to know whether the conference report has been accepted? I haven't followed it.

MR. NESSEN: It was accepted by the conferees.

Q What about the final vote in the House and Senate?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, it is not written down on paper yet.

Q You said the President is not leaning either way at this point?

MR. NESSEN: I would say that is right.

Q Yet you think there is a possibility he will announce a decision at the end of this meeting. He is relying pretty heavily on what these gentlemen tell him; is that right?

MR. NESSEN: And Greenspan, Cannon, Lynn, Seidman, Zarb, Scowcroft, Marsh, Cheney and the other people.

Q How long do you expect the meeting to run?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any idea.

Q Ron, is it still the President's position that the lowering of oil prices would encourage consumption and would act as a deterrent to further exploration?

MR. NESSEN: I think probably we may be close enough to a Presidential decision that we will wait and see what he decides and then explain whatever it is he decides.

Q Do you think Zarb will come out tonight or someone from the conference?

MR. NESSEN: We could probably do that, yes.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 5:15 P.M. EST)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 9:29 P.M. EST

NOVEMBER 13, 1975

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: The meeting lasted about two hours. It mainly consisted of a review of the provisions of the Conference Committee report and an expression of opinion by the various Members of their view of the various provisions.

At the end of the meeting the President told the Members that he has made no firm decision on whether to sign or veto the bill. He said that from this meeting he found that there were variations of opinion as to precisely what the provisions were. He said there was a lack of precision as to people's memory of what the conferees had agreed to, and until the exact provisions are clarified he is going to reserve judgment.

I think you know just as a parenthetical aside that the Conference Committee report is not in writing. The President told the Members at the end that he does want an energy program that meets his goals but until he sees what the bill provides in detail there will be no firm decision.

He noted that Frank Zarb has recommended that he sign the bill, but the President himself has not made up his mind and he repeated there is no firm decision one way or the other.

One of the Members then gave him an idea -- are we taping or not taping?

Q We are standing by.

MR. NESSEN: One of the Members recalled to him that the Conference report will not be ready in the form of a bill that he can read the exact provisions of until the latter part of next week and then, due to the vacation -- Thanksgiving vacation schedule of Congress -- it is not at all certain when the Senate and House will actually approve the Conference report.

It was then pointed out to him that some time will lapse before this bill can reach him for either a veto or a signature and that the existing controls lapse at midnight on Saturday.

He was asked what his view was of a proposal by Senator Mansfield, I believe, for a 30-day extension -- it is a proposal to extend existing controls for 30 days, and he said he had no objection.

So that is the story.

Q Is he leaning toward signing it, as some Republican sources on the Hill say? The Republican sources on the Hill are saying that he is leaning in that direction. They say flatly he will sign. My question is, are they correct?

MR. NESSEN: The President has made no decision one way or the other. He has not made up his mind.

Q Did he use the words "no firm decision," do you recall?

MR. NESSEN: Repeatedly.

Q Those were his words?

MR. NESSEN: They were.

Q Can you clarify whether or not the President asked for this meeting or whether the Republican Members asked for it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall.

Q Was the President urged strongly in this meeting to veto the bill?

MR. NESSEN: There were opinions on both sides, variations of opinions on both sides.

Q Was it evenly split?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't make a head count and not everyone spoke.

Q Ron, did he state that he has no objection to a 30-day extension without hesitation? Because, as I recall, this last extension was absolutely the final one.

MR. NESSEN: The case here was that there is a bill. He needs time, first of all, to wait for the exact provisions to reach him so he can study them and reach his decision. In the meanwhile, he is not an advocate of this 30-day extension. He simply said, "I have no objections."

Q Was it pointed out the provisions in this bill are retroactive to November 15 and the oil companies wouldn't make any sudden moves anyhow?

MR. NESSEN: That specific point wasn't pointed out and, as I say, he is not an advocate or an enthusiastic booster of the 30-day extension. He simply said it really didn't make any difference one way or the other since he said himself that a lapse of a short period wouldn't make any difference. But when asked what was his position, he said, "I have no objections."

Q Ron, you repeatedly used the phrase "no firm decision."

MR. NESSEN: Because he did.

Q But that certainly leaves open the possibility that he, as Walt said, is leaning one way or the other on the bill.

MR. NESSEN: It does? Which way? Let me know because I can't detect it.

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Q It leaves the impression that although he hasn't firmly made up his mind, he does have a feeling one way or the other. Or is he absolutely --

MR. NESSEN: I also gave you a quote, "The President has not made up his mind."

Q Right.

MR. NESSEN: If you haven't made up your mind, you haven't made up your mind.

Q Would you say that not only has he not made up his mind, but he in fact is not even leaning in one direction?

MR. NESSEN: If he is, I cannot detect it in several meetings today.

Q When will he have a firm decision? How soon?

MR. NESSEN: In view of the fact that the written Conference report with the details spelled out over which there was tonight some variation of opinion as to what they actually said, in light of the fact that the written report will not be ready until the latter part of next week, I will say it is going to take some time.

Q Ron, during the time that Mr. Zarb was negotiating with the House and Senate Conferees, which went over quite a bit of time, was he in touch with people at the White House and, if so, with whom?

MR. NESSEN: Frank was doing the negotiating.

Q Am I to take it when Zarb negotiated an agreement, that the Conferees were quite confident he had administrative support, that he was operating just as Frank Zarb, Federal Energy Administrator, or did that not come from any higher up at all?

MR. NESSEN: I think it would be fair to say Frank Zarb was negotiating as Federal Energy Administrator. I know he had the President's goals in mind, but I don't think he got detailed instructions day by day.

Q Did he have conversations on this matter with the President's political advisers?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Mr. Hartmann?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Buchen?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any, and I would say no, based on the way I think they were conducted.

Q Ron, all the times that we have sat here and listened to you talk about a do-nothing Congress, or dragging their feet on energy, for all the months the President has said this is an urgent matter that has to be taken care of, does the President still feel that same sense of urgency and does he regret now that he has to wait even more days and perhaps have yet another extension before he has a definitive energy policy?

MR. NESSEN: Ann, he obviously has to read the provisions of the bill. You can't decide on whether to sign or veto until you have read the bill. He thinks we should have had an energy program months ago. Of course he does.

Q Ron, along the same lines, is there any particular problem that the President has with this bill?

MR. NESSEN: There are a number of provisions on which the Conferees -- is anybody filing?

Q He says it is for tomorrow's paper.

MR. NESSEN: Let's keep this nice and clean. He has all night to file for tomorrow's paper. Send the man back.

Q In effect, are there any particular provisions --

MR. NESSEN: As I said, there was a variation of opinion among the Conferees as to what the Conferees had agreed to, so there are some points he is not even clear on what the bill says.

Q You said Zarb recommended he sign the bill. Were there any recommendations tonight that he veto it?

MR. NESSEN: You mean among the Conferees?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I told Walt there were people on both sides among the Conferees.

Q Were you present at the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Did Senator Tower urge the President to veto the bill?

MR. NESSEN: I think you ought to talk to Senator Tower about his own recommendation.

Q Was there a predominance of feeling on the part of the people at the meeting one way or the other?

MR. NESSEN: No. As I told Walt, some were on one side, some the other, and some didn't speak at all. I didn't detect any overwhelming feeling on one side or the other.

Q Almost evenly divided?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't keep a score sheet.

Q Was General Scowcroft at the meeting as originally advertised?

MR. CARLSON: He was in there for the first half hour.

Q Is he one of the President's energy advisers now?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously it involves international questions, imports of oil from foreign countries, as well as some of the matters that will be discussed in Paris this weekend, which is what all the industrialized countries are doing to conserve their oil in order to lessen their dependence on the uncertain supplies and prices from the OPEC nations.

In answer to an earlier question, Senator Fannin and Congressman Brown, who are the ranking Republican Members on the Conference, requested tonight's meeting so that they could report to the President on what the Conferees had done.

Q Ron, can you think of any other instance since Mr. Ford has been President when his chief adviser on a particular issue said publicly that he has advised the President to take a certain stand and the President has gone the other way?

MR. NESSEN: I would have to review all the bills and all the recommendations before I could answer that. You know, I certainly wouldn't take Frank's recommendations one way or the other as a signal of what -- the President simply --

Q Do you accept that premise?

MR. NESSEN: I don't accept the premise it has happened because there are too many bills and too many recommendations to know.

Q Would you agree that it is rare the President's chief adviser on an issue would recommend that he do something publicly and the President would go the other way?

MR. NESSEN: I couldn't agree one way or the other because I don't know what the facts are.

Q Ron, several of the Democratic Conferees said after the vote that they had been assured the President would sign. Where did those assurances come from? Was that just Zarb and was he exceeding his instructions on that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Was the President surprised that he got such an apparent variance of opinion from lawmakers as to what was in that bill and what wasn't?

MR. NESSEN: No, not in light of the complexity of it. Frank told him this morning during an earlier meeting that even Frank wasn't sure what had been agreed to precisely in many of the details, so he had an anticipation that there would be some lack of clarity on some of the points.

Q Why did they come down here if they didn't know what is in it?

MR. NESSEN: It isn't that they don't know what is in it, Fran. On some of the details there is a lack of clarity and diversity of opinion.

Q Did they want to head off the President saying he would sign the bill?

MR. NESSEN: No, they came to give him a report on it.

Q Did the President comment specifically about the 3-1/2 cent cut in gasoline prices, and can you tell us what he said about that?

MR. NESSEN: No, he didn't comment directly on that.

Q Did the subject of New York come up in this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: No, nothing came up except the energy bill, and at the very end a request for his views on the 30-day extension. Those were the only subjects.

Q Ron, when the Conferees finished action on the bill, there was no Republican who would sign it and indeed most of those who were filing out said they would not sign it. Was the President told that tonight?

MR. NESSEN: Frank talked to him about that this morning, and it is not my understanding of what happened.

Q Do you know whether tonight somebody told him there is no Republican name on that Conference report so far?

MR. NESSEN: No, I didn't hear that mentioned and, as I say, it is not my understanding that that is the case.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 9:43 P.M. EST)