

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:08 P.M. EST

NOVEMBER 24, 1975

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President asked me to read you a statement this morning.

Q A statement by the President?

MR. NESSEN: It is a statement I am reading for the President.

Q So do we quote him or you?

MR. NESSEN: You will see how it all goes together. We can do this later for the cameras if anybody has any interest.

The President met this morning with Ambassador Moynihan to discuss a range of matters involving the United Nations. They were later joined by Secretary Kissinger. Both President Ford and Secretary Kissinger expressed their strong support for the effective job Ambassador Moynihan has been doing representing the United States at the United Nations.

The President wants it clearly understood that Ambassador Moynihan has his complete confidence.

The President and Secretary Kissinger encouraged Ambassador Moynihan to continue to speak out candidly and forcefully on major issues coming before the United Nations.

Q How long was Ambassador Moynihan alone with the President and, secondly, did Ambassador Moynihan raise a question as to whether there were people at the State Department, possibly Kissinger himself, who would prefer him out despite the President's full confidence?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't sit in on the meeting but this is what the President wants to have said about the meeting.

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#380

Q What was the purpose of this meeting, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I think this is all we are going to say about the meeting, Peter.

Q What about Moynihan's future plans? Is he going to resign?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how you could get that out of this statement, Bob.

Q There were reports that Moynihan came here to resign. Did he?

MR. NESSEN: This is the statement the President wants given about the meeting.

Q Is Mr. Moynihan staying in his job?

Q You can't tell us whether he agreed to stay?

MR. NESSEN: There is nothing in here about his leaving.

Q Ambassador Moynihan apparently told some reporters he would be very happy to meet with the press if he were permitted to by Mr. Nessen. (Laughter)

He has not appeared and he might have something to say that we can't get out of you what his attitude is. Is there any way you can help us on this matter?

MR. NESSEN: Pat indicated that he didn't prefer to come down here and so he left.

Q Can you tell us, Ron, did Ambassador Moynihan tell the President he was willing to stay?

MR. NESSEN: This is the way the President wants the meeting described.

Q Yes, but can you tell us?

MR. NESSEN: The President's statement, I think, speaks fully as to what the meeting was about.

Q But we don't have Ambassador Moynihan's reaction to what the President told him?

MR. NESSEN: Ambassador Moynihan went in to see the President at 10:35 and Secretary Kissinger joined the meeting at 11:05 and the meeting concluded at 11:10.

Q What time did it start?

MR. NESSEN: At 10:35.

Q Can you tell us why the half-hour difference between when the meeting started and the Secretary joined?

MR. NESSEN: The President wanted to have some time to talk to Mr. Moynihan.

Q Can you tell us a little bit more? It is a bit unusual for the Secretary of State not to be in a meeting where someone serving under him is meeting with the President, and this is for 30 minutes.

MR. NESSEN: I can't help you beyond the statement, Cliff.

Q Is Moynihan appeased?

Q Ron, was there any written communication between --

Q I didn't hear the answer to my question, Ron, and it is a serious question.

MR. NESSEN: Peter, the statement is the statement the President wants to make.

Q Was there any discussion of Ambassador Moynihan resigning?

MR. NESSEN: The statement is what the President wanted to state, Dick.

Q You can't say, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: I told you what the meeting consisted of and so forth.

Q But the statement makes no reference whatsoever to his departure or staying on in the job?

Q Was there any letter or other communication between the Ambassador and the President prior to this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Did they talk on Friday, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: There was a plan for the President to call Pat, I think, Saturday, maybe Friday night. They did plan to talk Friday night and as far as I know, they did.

Q Do you know of any plans for Mr. Moynihan to have a press conference or make any statements on his own?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't mention it to me.

Q Ron, you have given us the report of the President's assurances, total confidence in Ambassador Moynihan. Can you tell us Mr. Moynihan's reaction?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, there is nothing in this statement about leaving.

Q Did you talk to him after the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What was his reaction to the statement?

MR. NESSEN: He concurred in the statement.

Q Ron, I am not sure why it is necessary for the President to express confidence in Ambassador Moynihan right now. What is the purpose of the statement?

MR. NESSEN: I thought there was some interest out here in hearing what the meeting was all about. I thought there was.

Q Why the expression of confidence, why was that thought to be necessary?

MR. NESSEN: I think I am going to stop with the statement because that is what the President wants to have heard.

Q Have they made tentative arrangements for another meeting or suggest another meeting?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, apropos of this --

MR. NESSEN: I have not finished my announcements yet, Les.

The President has this afternoon at 2:30 the next in the series of budget preparation meetings. This one lasts two and a half hours, from 2:30 until 5:00. The subject of this afternoon's discussion will be budget items in HEW and from the Agriculture Department and several smaller agencies.

The participants will be the President, Jim Lynn, Jim Cannon, Paul O'Neill and Dale McOmber.

As you know, the President has had these almost daily, including one long one yesterday. And he will spend an increasing amount of time on the budget and the State of the Union and the legislative proposals.

Q Do we know who was at yesterday's meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I will get that for you.

You know about the Judiciary Dinner tonight.

Q I was wondering whether the White House is ready to make an announcement on the nomination to the Supreme Court?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Do you plan to put out a guest list in advance of the dinner?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I think Sheila Weidenfeld is handling that.

Q Will there be anything other than someone like the Attorney General who might attend such a function? Will there be any private citizens, people who are not judges?

MR. NESSEN: There will be the Chairmen and ranking Republicans from the Senate and House Judiciary Committees, the Justices of the Supreme Court, the Chief Judges of the Circuit Court and other members of the Federal bench, the Chairman of the Conference of State Chief Justices, the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General and Solicitor General, and from the White House, Phil Buchen, Jack Marsh, Ed Schmults, Ken Lazarus and Dick Parsons and wives --

Q Any potential nominees among the list you just mentioned?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to look over the list.

Q Are any of wives potential Justices?

MR. NESSEN: There is the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

Q Were any husbands invited?

MR. NESSEN: I'm sorry. I should have said spouses, members of the Judiciary and spouses.

I think that is --

Q Any Cabinet members other than the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q About how many people all together?

MR. NESSEN: Two and a half pages worth.

Q Will Justice Douglas be there?

MR. NESSEN: Justice Douglas, I am told, will not be attending.

Q Do you have any details on the China trip you can add today?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't but we are getting close to announcing more details.

Q Ron, did President Ford brief Governor Wallace before his European trip, as per the Atlanta Constitution story, on foreign affairs?

MR. NESSEN: Without making reference to the Atlanta Constitution story, the President talked to Governor Wallace on the phone on October 11 from 11:06 until 11:14 in the morning.

Also at the request of Governor Wallace, two people -- and I have not found out whether or not they were State Department people or NSC people -- went down to see Governor Wallace and brief him on European issues. The phone call was primarily to wish him well and --

Q Was it initiated by the President?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it was initiated by the President.

Q Did the President mention Portugal?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the full contents of the phone call but I got the idea from the President that it was much more general than that.

Q Ron, Senator Proxmire's detailed charge that Frank Zarb spent \$25,000 and 19,000 gallons of fuel getting around the country and chartered the aircraft urging businessmen to economize on energy and fuel, I just wondered what the President's reaction was to this?

MR. NESSEN: You have seen, I know, the FEA explanation, haven't you, Les?

Q No, I haven't.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, then, why don't you check that?

At the Sunday budget meeting the people in attendance were Lynn, Ogilvie, O'Neill, McOmber and Scowcroft.

Q Is General Scowcroft now Mr. Scowcroft, and has he been sworn in? What is his status or do we already know that?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't think I have had a chance to spell out his status yet.

His status is this, that on the third of November Dr. Kissinger ceased to serve as the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. At that point, of course, Brent Scowcroft was the Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and the NSC continued to function and the President continued to get all the information he needed from the NSC.

On November 10, Brent filed his retirement papers from the Service. Since then he has been on terminal leave, which will end on December 1.

There are some little technicalities involving his retirement but in effect he filed his retirement papers on November 10.

Brent's commission to be the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs was signed on November 20 and he signed the oath on November 20.

Q Did Ford sign the commission?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q You sign an oath for that job?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, you do. You can sign an oath. He did sign the oath.

Q So that was when he officially --

MR. NESSEN: That was dated November 10, which was the date he filed his retirement --

Q What was dated November 10?

MR. NESSEN: The commission and the --

Q You just said November 20.

MR. NESSEN: He signed it November 20 and it was dated November 10. So in effect he has been the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs since November 10.

Q Ron, what is the status of the President's review of the New York City situation in terms of Federal aid legislation?

MR. NESSEN: He said he is going to review it and he is going to review it.

Q He said that earlier this week.

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q He hasn't started yet?

MR. NESSEN: The New York State Legislature, I guess, is still working on the matter.

Q Has he started it yet?

MR. NESSEN: He has kept up daily on the status of things in New York.

Q You wouldn't expect him to do anything until after the thing sorts itself out up there?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q You expect him to do something after that?

MR. NESSEN: No, I wouldn't expect him to do anything before.

Q Do you expect him to do anything on a Justice this week?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have a sense of the timetable on that, Ted.

Q What about energy?

MR. NESSEN: There is nothing we can do about energy. The written Conference Committee report hasn't reached here yet.

Q Ron, may I go back to the Moynihan matter just once more for one question?

Who was at the meeting besides the President, the Secretary and Mr. Moynihan?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear the question, Joe.

Q Who was there besides the President, the Secretary and Ambassador Moynihan?

MR. NESSEN: That is all.

Q Len Garment was not there?

MR. NESSEN: Not in the meeting, no.

Q And Scowcroft was not there?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, aside from this particular meeting and statement by the President, as far as you know is Mr. Moynihan going to stay on as Ambassador?

MR. NESSEN: There is nothing in here that says he isn't.

Q I didn't ask that. Aside from this meeting and this statement, is there anything else you know as to whether he will stay or leave?

MR. NESSEN: I see nothing that says he is leaving.

Q Ron, there is nothing in the statement that says he is going to stay, either. The question is, do we now have an Ambassador at the United Nations?

MR. NESSEN: You certainly do.

Q And it is Ambassador Moynihan?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it is.

Q Do you expect a resignation by Moynihan any time in the foreseeable future?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't.

Q Like after the General Assembly?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't.

Q Ron, there was a lot in the papers Saturday to the general effect that on Friday Ambassador Moynihan was on the point of announcing his resignation and was talked out of it by the White House. Can you tell us whether that is correct?

MR. NESSEN: I think -- you know so many things have happened since then and I think I will just stand on what the President has said today.

Q Can you tell us why the meeting was held this morning?

MR. NESSEN: I think both the President and Pat wanted a chance to get together and talk.

Q Who initiated the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I think it was mutual, Marilyn.

Q Did Ambassador Moynihan request it, or did the President suggest it?

MR. NESSEN: I think it was mutual. They both wanted to talk to each other.

Q Did the Ambassador ask to see the President alone for a few minutes when the meeting was set up?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think this is the way the President wanted the meeting to go.

Q Ron, did the President agree with David Belin that Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy probably knew of the plots to assassinate Dr. Castro?

MR. NESSEN: I think he said before he is not going to sit in judgment of things that happened a long time ago.

Q I didn't ask what he thinks about it. I asked does he think they probably knew by his reading of the memorandum written by Mr. Belin?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't ask the President about that.

Q Ron, who is Chairman of the Verification Panel in the 40 Committee now?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't gotten all those committees straightened out yet, but I will.

Q How about WSAG?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't gotten that one either.

Q Ron, since the President nominated the Ambassador and after the President designated him as his Ambassador to the UN, there were constant reports of harassments of Moynihan from the State Department. Is the President, to your knowledge, planning anything, any directive to the State Department to ask them to stop harassing Moynihan? There are constant reports that they have been after him, like when he called Amin a "racist murderer" a report in the Washington Post said they tried to get him to apologize.

I just wondered what does the President plan to do about the State Department's reported harassments of Mr. Moynihan?

MR. NESSEN: I think the statement is pretty clear.

Q It answers that, then?

MR. NESSEN: In my view, it does.

Q Ron, is the President aware of a huge arms sales to Phalangists in Lebanon?

MR. NESSEN: Not by this Government.

Q Not by this Government -- by Americans?

MR. NESSEN: I know that there has been no arms sales to any of the factions in Lebanon by the Government.

Q Is there a U.S. embargo on any American arms sales to Lebanon?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check that statement and find out what it should be on that.

Q Ron, is Moynihan still in the building?

MR. NESSEN: No, he isn't.

Q Ron, there is a report that the United States has secretly assured Israel that we will not press for anything beyond cosmetic concessions to Syria on the Golan Heights agreement. Do you have a comment on that? Is that true?

MR. NESSEN: It is a speculative story which we don't normally comment on, but I do want to emphasize that the American position has always been that there needs to be forward progress and we are working with all the parties there on the most effective means to make forward progress.

Q Ron, do you have any guidance on Vail?

MR. NESSEN: No.

THE PRESS: Thank you.