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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:30 A.M. EST

MARCH 2, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Some of you saw the President at his meeting with the Senators who are involved in the defense budget process.

This afternoon, at 2:00, the President will be having a similar meeting with the House Members who are involved in the defense budget process.

Q On that, is he going to speak again to the pool at 2:00, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't think you would need to do it again at 2:00. He has the same message for both groups.

The purpose of both of these meetings today is to talk to these Members who are involved in the defense budget process prior to March 15 because under the Congressional budget process now in place, various Congressional committees must submit their estimates and recommendations for 1977 fiscal year budget ceilings to the Congressional Budget Committees by March 15, which is about 13 days away.

Then, the Budget Committees, as you know, will report their first concurrent resolutions, setting budget ceilings on April 15.

So, the purpose of the two meetings today is to talk to these Members involved with the defense budget and give them the benefit of the President's views and Secretary Rumsfeld's views as they approach this March 15 date, when they must send their recommendations to the budget committees.

Q Is he spelling out areas or programs or anything he considers sacrosanct that he puts at top priority?

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MR. NESSEN: I believe, Rudy, he has said this budget has been cut to the bone, and there is no fat in it and that he wants it approved as is.

Q Ron, hasn't the President made his views known to Congress on the budget, and hasn't Mr. Rumsfeld done that in testimony? Why go through this again?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think the President has had the opportunity to sit down face to face with those Members who are most closely involved in preparing the defense budget recommendation and talk to them.

Q So, the timing in March is the factor, March 9?

MR. NESSEN: March 15, yes, that is the factor.

Q Is he really seeking sufficiency and equivalency and not superiority with this new dramatic emphasis?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean "new dramatic emphasis"?

Q It seems to me there is a heavy emphasis on the defense budget.

MR. NESSEN: Certainly there is. As you heard the President say today for the reasons he stated, the defense budget in real dollars has been declining for a long time.

Q Does he think the Russians are ahead?

MR. NESSEN: No, he does not think the Russians are ahead. You heard his remarks today, that the trends need to turn around.

Q Is there some concern in the White House by the President or his advisers that the Congress may be moving to make significant cuts in this budget?

MR. NESSEN: They have year after year, Dick. Every year they seem to feel you can cut the defense budget without having any effects, and this has gone on for a long time. Last year, as you know, the Congress cut \$7 billion out of the defense budget, over the President's objection.

So, in an effort to head off another cut at a time when the President feels it is important to turn this trend around, he is making this personal appeal.

Q We did get out of a war, which would seem to cut a defense budget.

MR. NESSEN: These are long-term trends that really go back to before the Korean War, really -- the steady decline in defense budgets in real terms and as a percentage of the budget and as a percentage of the Gross National Product. These trends go back 20 years or so.

Q Ron, are you trying to relate his remarks on the defense budget to his remarks of yesterday about detente? Are the two things linked?

MR. NESSEN: I would not say so. His remarks yesterday on detente really had to do with the word detente and not the policy that that word has come to stand for.

Q Then there is no significance in you wearing a pink shirt today? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: No, I wore it because it matches my eyes.

Q There is no change in detente policy with the Soviet Union?

MR. NESSEN: There is no change in the American foreign policy. After all, Helen, the President has been trying to retire that word for quite some time.

Q Do you mean he has said this before?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, sure. Don't you remember the other occasions when he has done this thing?

Q Isn't it a fact that because nobody did pay much attention before, he persisted until someone did pay attention?

MR. NESSEN: No, because I have heard him talk precisely that way in private in terms of how the word has lost its meaning, the meaning is misunderstood, it has become confused and misused, but if you go back, for instance, to the American Legion speech in Minneapolis, which was August 19, 1975, which was more than six months ago, the President said at that time, "In recent weeks there has been a great deal said about the subject of detente. Today," -- meaning last August -- "let me tell you what I personally think about detente.

"First of all, the word itself is confusing. Its meaning is not clear to everybody. French is a beautiful language, the classical language of diplomacy, but I wish there were one simple English word to substitute for detente. Unfortunately, there isn't. Relationships between the world's two strongest nuclear powers cannot be summed up in a catch phrase."

So, in other words, this is something he has believed for quite some time and has said publicly for some time. The policy that the word detente has been used as a kind of shorthand for, the President himself, I think, kind of summed it up yesterday.

It is a policy that is designed to lessen the risk of nuclear war. It is a policy designed to reduce tensions between the superpowers, where possible, and when in the best interests of the United States. It is a policy that depends upon American strength and not upon American weakness.

I would say that is the process, really, or the policy that the United States has followed and will follow. It has, as I said, sort of all come together in a word whose meaning has become fuzzy and confused, so the President now prefers not to use it.

Q Is this a Nixon policy? This is exactly the policy that Nixon enunciated.

MR. NESSEN: Certainly not, Helen.

Q How is it different?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to get into a long discussion --

Q You have to because detente --

MR. NESSEN: Helen, the foreign policy is carried out day by day in connection with the events of the day. Now, this President has faced and dealt with a number of foreign policy developments that obviously no previous President could deal with because it did not happen.

Q That does not make the policy, does it?

MR. NESSEN: This is the Ford foreign policy.

Q Are you saying the President has no sweeping conception of what American foreign policy should be and is developing it day by day?

MR. NESSEN: No, I am not, Mort.

Q Then what is the position that he has about foreign policy, and how is it different from the Nixon position?

MR. NESSEN: The President has answered that question himself publicly. It is the Ford foreign policy designed to meet today's needs and future needs.

Q How is it different from the Nixon policy? Now it is not a question of the word detente. It is a question of policy. How is it different?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think the White House Press Secretary is the proper one to deal with sweeping questions like that. The question has been asked of the President before, and he has given you his answer.

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Q Ron, what evidence do you have that this word is confusing the American public?

MR. NESSEN: The President feels from what he has read and what he has heard that it has. I know there was a poll recently in which the people were asked whether they supported -- and then the process that I have just mentioned was described. The question was, "Do you favor the Government's efforts to find areas of agreement with Russia and China and ways to cooperate with them," and the poll indicated -- this was a Harris poll -- indicated 62 percent of the people favored the concept that I just described and other polls, I am told, when the word detente is used there is a certain amount of confusion and the support for it drops.

Q Ron, is it fair to say the White House has the perception that the public concept of the word detente is something akin to a give-away or appeasement?

MR. NESSEN: No. As the President said as long ago as last August in public, the policy dealing with other super powers is much too complex to sum up with one French word.

Q Ron, are there other words that the President has retired; Nixon, for example?

MR. NESSEN: Let me move on. I never did get through my announcements.

Q Ron, does this in any way indicate or signify or in any way lessen the President's support, endorsement, encouragement and confidence in Secretary Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Does it in any way have anything to do with primary politics?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, did detente become a dirty French word? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I knew we were going to leap ahead to that but I did not finish my announcements.

You know about the two budget meetings today. Now tomorrow at 2 o'clock or shortly after 2 o'clock the President is going to go over to the new Washington headquarters of the Disabled American Veterans. I am told it is on Maine Avenue in Southwest, across from Hogates.

They are having the dedication ceremonies over there tomorrow. There will be open press coverage, of course. The President will speak and his remarks will be piped back here to the White House if you prefer to stay here. There will be a travel pool to go with the President.

For those of you who are going ahead to set up your cameras or tape equipment, you should have it set up at 1:15.

Q What is the speech about?

Q Defense?

MR. NESSEN: Probably.

And the President is expected to leave the White House, as I said, shortly after 2:00 and be back at the White House about 2:45.

Q What time is he speaking?

MR. NESSEN: I guess about 2:15. Something in that area.

The Illinois trip -- I can give you a couple more things about the Illinois trip. It looks like a mid-morning departure on Friday and the first stop would be Springfield and the first event is about noon in Springfield. It involves unveiling the cornerstone for the Visitor Center at the Lincoln Home in Springfield. As I say, that is about noon or at noon.

Q Is that a new home for Lincoln? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I think the Visitor Center is new. The home is probably pretty old.

At 6 o'clock the President will go to Peoria where he will participate in the Everett McKinley Dirksen Forum at Bradley University Field House.

Q What university is that?

MR. NESSEN: Bradley University in Peoria at the Field House. Everett McKinley Dirksen Forum. The format there will be that the President will have a brief opening statement and then will take questions and answers.

Q Who is invited to this?

MR. NESSEN: Both of those events, both the cornerstone at the Lincoln Home Visitors Center and the Field House at Bradley University are open to the public so anybody can come who feels like coming.

Then both the President and press will stay overnight in Peoria at the Peoria Hilton.

Q Can we ask questions at that question and answer thing?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is a public thing for students and members of the public.

Q We are members of the public, are we not? Can't we stand up and ask a question?

MR. NESSEN: Probably.

Q Are these the only two events?

MR. NESSEN: The only two I have so far the first day. Then on Saturday, again the schedule for the day is not complete, but you can expect stops in Champaign - Urbana, and in Marion, Illinois.

Q Will he go on the campus there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any other details at this point of those two stops or any other stops on Saturday.

The President is expected to get back to the White House around 8 o'clock on Saturday evening so that is not such a long day.

Q Does he expect to win in Illinois?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: Because he will get more votes than the next guy. (Laughter)

Q Ron, can you give us a description of his participation in the dedication ceremony?

MR. NESSEN: It all has not been filled in yet.

Q Can you give us a general description?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, frankly, what they are going to come up with as an event.

Q Do you have a time for the beginning of that session at Bradley?

MR. NESSEN: 6 o'clock.

Q Ron, is he going to stop in at Pekin to pay his respects to Mrs. Dirksen?

MR. NESSEN: I don't even know if she is in Pekin. She was in Florida when he was down there. She lives near Orlando. He called Mrs. Dirksen from Orlando when he was down there the other time and talked to her. I don't know if she is home.

One other announcement for royalty fans. The King and Queen of Spain have accepted an invitation from the President to visit the United States on June 2 and 3. The King looks forward to meeting with the President and various U.S. officials during the visit. This underscores the importance that the United States attaches to its close and harmonious relations with Spain. It also highlights during the Bicentennial celebration the contributions that Americans of Spanish descent made to the founding of America and to the building of America.

Q Will that be an official visit or State visit or what?

MR. NESSEN: It is a State visit.

Q Is this the first time that a reigning Spanish monarch has visited the United States, Ron, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: Juan Carlos was here before he was the King, when he was the Prince. In 1971 the Prince and Princess were here. Let me find out if any reigning Spanish King has ever been here.

Q How did you describe our relations -- close and what?

MR. NESSEN: Harmonious.

Q What is the Queen's name?

MR. NESSEN: The Queen's name is Sophia.

Q Ron, are the basic figures in this morning's Times story, the defense budget for next year, accurate?

MR. NESSEN: You mean the foreign aid budget?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: 7.8. I don't know why that story got so much attention because I think that figure was published at the time of the budget. What has happened is this week the details of the foreign aid budget have gone to Congress, and they are either available now or will be either today or within the next few days, the details, breakdown from the State Department.

But, the 7.8 figure I am sure was in the overall budget at the time it was announced. That is a correct figure.

Q Has the President made up his mind whether he is going back to Florida or not?

MR. NESSEN: No, he has not.

Q Ron, when Kissinger was asked for a phrase that he would find acceptable as a substitute for the word detente, he accepted peaceful coexistence. Would the President accept that?

MR. NESSEN: As the President said last August, privately since last August and yesterday, what we are talking about, which is relations between superpowers who are trying to avoid a war -- why do we need a single word or catch phrase to sum it up? I described the process. It takes a while to describe a policy that involves something that important.

Q Ron, the word detente, though, has been a favorite word of the Russians. Are the Russians going to be angry at Ford -- how does he feel about that -- for retiring the word?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how the linguistic -- the President is saying he does not like the word or won't use the word. The policy remains unchanged.

Q Whatever it is called.

Q Ron, speaking of words, does the President have any reply to yesterday's statement by Prime Minister Kosygin that the current economic difficulties underscore that Capitalism is in crisis?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, there is a report out that the White House, or some people in the White House, are expecting John Connally to make a move for the Republican nomination and, therefore, they have discouraged Republicans from going to the big Connally barbeque, or whatever it is. I guess it is a two-part question.

Number one, has this discouragement gone out from anybody here at the White House? Two, does the President and his political aides, do they expect Connally to get involved in getting the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard either of those matters discussed by the President or his political people. I have not heard that.

Q Ron, in the past several days the Senate Finance Committee has made a number of tentative decisions, one of them rejecting the President's proposal on the Social Security taxes. The other rejected his plan for an additional \$10 billion tax cut.

Do you have any reaction to those developments.

MR. NESSEN: It is still workings its way through the legislative. The President stands by his proposals because he thinks they are best, and obviously his economic policies of the past are working. But, I don't think I will say anything while they are working on it.

Q Does the President realistically expect in an election year that Social Security taxes will be increased?

MR. NESSEN: Again, Jim, you have come to that kind of short-term, long-term division. The President, despite lots of things that are written saying everything he does is for political purposes--obviously if he were doing things for political purposes, you would not recommend an increase in Social Security taxes in an election year.

But, the long-term necessity of maintaining the Social Security fund intact for future retirement is so important that he felt the long-term need outweighed whatever short-term political liability it may have.

Q Let me rephrase the question this way. Does the President expect, given the fact that this is an election year, that there will be difficulties, that it will be a difficult proposition to persuade Congress to increase Social Security taxes?

MR. NESSEN: Congress can look at numbers just as easily as the President can and see that something needs to be done to overcome the annual shortfall in the Social Security and there are various ways to do it, as you know, and this is the way the President believes is best.

Q Ron, can I return to the detente question for just a minute? I don't think you have really told us, what does the President think most or many Americans think that term means?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that he has spelled out what he thinks most Americans think it means, but as I say, as long ago as last August he felt the word was not a proper way of describing the policy that he has pursued.

Q I am not sure I understand why. You say he does not feel there should be one word to describe relations?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q But, that word has a lot of connotation for a lot of people, and I am just wondering, you said this was not related to the domestic political situation.

MR. NESSEN: Right. I mean, obviously it is not because last August -- more than six months ago -- he said virtually the same thing he said yesterday except he did not absolutely rule out the use of the word.

Q He has used it since then.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, but I can't remember that he has used it very often, Helen.

Q Regardless of when the President developed contempt for the word detente -- (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: That is a little strong.

Q -- does Mr. Ford feel the word conjures up the Nixon Administration?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, no, I have not heard him say that.

Q Even though you have not heard him say that?

MR. NESSEN: It is just that foreign policy--and especially between superpowers trying to avoid confrontation or war--is a complex business and one, as the President said, somewhat confusing French word the President believes is not the proper way to describe this whole process.

Q Ron, does the President believe Ronald Reagan wrongly used the word in his speech in New Hampshire, at Andover?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall how he used the word.

Q The only result of detente has been the right to sell Pepsi Cola in Siberia.

MR. NESSEN: Dick, as I said before, every stump political speech is not going to be answered from here all this campaign year.

Q What did he mean that the criticism of Kissinger was misdirected and unfair? Does he think it ought to be directed to him? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: No, I am not going to elaborate any more on his words.

Q But what did he mean by that?

MR. NESSEN: I did not ask him for further elaboration. He spelled out himself in there what he believes to be the really historic foreign policy accomplishments that Dr. Kissinger has made.

Q But does he think he has become a character in the political campaign?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to extend his words beyond what he said, Helen.

Q Saying the word is confusing or is inadequate, does he think --

MR. NESSEN: Inadequate is really a very proper description of detente. It is a word he himself said, "I think the word is inadequate."

Q Does he think then it has become politicized, come to have political connotations?

MR. NESSEN: It just is, as he said six months ago before we were in a political context, Rudy, that it was confusing and simplistic and something more was needed to describe this process.

Q Ron, he did not repeat that disclaimer about detente. I know you historically can refer to the American Legion appearance, but if he wanted to get away from the word that best symbolizes American foreign policy, why did he choose the middle of the primary season to do it?

MR. NESSEN: He was asked about it.

Q But he had a lot of other opportunities to describe the inadequacies of the word detente.

MR. NESSEN: I know he talked about it publicly more than six months ago. Privately, he said very much the same things he said yesterday, and yesterday he said it publicly.

Q Has he come to think the word detente was a political liability for him?

MR. NESSEN: The policy, as I say from the Harris poll, is clearly supported by 62 percent of the people. The policy is to avoid a nuclear war among superpowers and reduce tensions where you can when it is in our benefit.

Now, that is the policy, has been the policy, and will be the policy, and the change of the word has nothing to do with the policy, as I told a lot of people yesterday.

Q Ron, does that poll show how many of that 62 percent are Republicans?

MR. NESSEN: I will check.

Q What is the date on that poll?

MR. NESSEN: Late December.

Q Does the President think the word detente also extends to another catch word to characterize the process going on in the relations between the United States and China; namely, normalization?

Q That is not French. (Laughter)

Q What about that question about Republicans?

MR. NESSEN: That does not indicate in the poll. It seems to be a general public poll of 1,394 adult Americans.

Q Is it geographically or any other way?

MR. NESSEN: It is just a national poll. Dr. Kissinger also received a 60 percent vote of confidence, according to this poll.

Q Ron, does the President think it was a mistake to begin using the word in the first place back in the Nixon Administration?

MR. NESSEN: You guys are really making more out of this than is really there.

Q Ron, the Government of Angola says it is going to support a revolution in Namibia, and there are some people who express fears that that may be the next Cuban target. Does the President have anything to say about moves into Namibia?

MR. NESSEN: Sort of similar questions have come up before, and I have always said that I did not want to comment on a hypothetical possibility for invasion. But, I do want to point out to you that the kind of things that are being talked about -- at least, without actually having happened -- they would be the consequences, if they happen, that the President warned about last December when he had his hands tied in Angola by the Congress.

He warned at that time that the cut-off of aid to our friends who were supporting those people in Angola who simply wanted to decide their own form of Government, that the cut-off would certainly encourage those forces in Angola and would discourage our friends in Africa and would be a signal to both sides that the Congress did not have the will and that Congress seemed to be willing to tolerate external intervention of Africa.

Q Ron, in the interview yesterday, the President said -- and I think it is not for the first time -- that the United States will resist aggression, expansion of aggression, and that sort of thing. I don't have the text with me.

MR. NESSEN: Castro expansion in the Western Hemisphere?

Q No, this was on the first page of the interview, and I think it had to do with extension of the Angolan situation. He said if there is any further aggression -- and the context was such that it sounded like he was talking about any more moves in Africa -- that we would resist, that we would do what we tried to do in Angola, is what he said.

Now, you keep talking about hypotheticals all the time. The hypotheticals are getting less and less hypothetical all the time. Why not say what the United States plans to do, what the dangers are, what is happening specifically in places like Namibia and Rhodesia and try to have the American people understand what the problem is instead of declaring it a hypothetical situation all the time?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President in that interview and on other occasions -- and the Secretary of State has also indicated -- I have to get the exact words in terms of what our response would be to further Cuban and Russian intervention in Africa. I don't have the text of the speech with me, but what I have said today should be seen in the context of what the President and the Secretary have said earlier about additional Russian and Cuban intervention in Africa.

Q Do you think there is a risk of pressure from the Popular Movement for intervention in Southwest Africa?

MR. NESSEN: Again, I don't want to speculate on whether they will or they won't, but I mean the President's word and the Secretary's words and some additional things I have said here today are on the record for people to look at, if they contemplate that kind of thing.

Q Ron, are you aware of any plans to debrief the former President now on his trip to China? Has he called?

MR. NESSEN: He has not called the President or any other senior person at the White House or State Department.

Q Has he been called?

MR. NESSEN: I am told that he has indicated that he will send a report in writing to the State Department.

Q How did he convey that?

MR. NESSEN: He conveyed it to the White House.

Q By telephone?

MR. NESSEN: To none of the senior officials at the White House, or the President.

Q Who did he get in touch with, and how?

MR. NESSEN: He just passed the word to the White House that he was going to send a written report to the State Department.

Q You mean Brennan called somebody here?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I will get into the details of how the message was passed, but the fact is that the former President has indicated to the White House that he will send a written report to the State Department.

Q Ron, you realize fully this has been a question we have had for several days now. Why can't you disclose how this was transmitted? It is not a classified thing.

MR. NESSEN: It is a matter of who on the staff got the word. I said it was not the President. It was not anybody on the senior staff. It is a routine staffing matter. Somebody got notified that he is going to send a written report to the State Department.

Q Ron, who did Jerry Warren see here yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Jerry Warren was totally unrelated in any way to what you are asking.

Q Will the President read this report?

MR. NESSEN: If the people at the State Department feel there is anything in the report that needs to be called to the President's attention, I am sure they will do it.

Q I still can't understand why you can't tell us and the American people how this was conveyed, to what person. I just can't understand that. Can you explain?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I don't really think it is all that important a matter.

Q Is there some national security reason for this?

MR. NESSEN: It is a minor staffing detail. The former President indicated to the White House that he was going to send a written report to the State Department.

Q Did he himself talk to somebody here? Did Nixon talk to somebody here or was it an aide of his that talked to somebody?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really know, Fred.

Q Ron, did he tell that to Secretary Kissinger in California?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, they have not spoken.

Q Was the President told that Nixon would send a report?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he was.

Q When is this report expected?

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

Q I am sure there will be other normal American citizens going to the People's Republic of China. When they return, how do they get whatever information they might have passed along to the Ford Administration? What person do they contact to get that, to send a written report?

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

Q Would you check on that?

MR. NESSEN: The State Department, I think, could help you with that.

Q There seems to be a determination here to show that Nixon will not be in contact with Ford or Kissinger. Is that some set policy?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that there is any effort to show it. It just happens to be the fact. That is all.

Q Does he plan to block any kind of contact?

MR. NESSEN: We have said from the beginning, Helen, there were no plans for a call or visit.

Q The President said he expected he probably would talk to him.

MR. NESSEN: He said that in an offhand way, that at some point "I expect I will be" talking to Nixon.

Q Ron, who are the people at the State Department who are going to make the determination whether or not the report comes to Mr. Ford?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. You have to ask them, Larry.

Q When was the word passed? Yesterday or today?

MR. NESSEN: Either this morning or late yesterday.

Q How do you ask them if you don't know who they are?

MR. NESSEN: Ask Bob Funseth over ther.

Q Ron, you said former President Nixon did not call President Ford or any senior staff people here?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Was he called by anybody at the White House just to tie it up?

MR. NESSEN: No, he was not.

Q When did you say he made this communication?

MR. NESSEN: Either late yesterday or this morning.

Q You call it a minor staffing detail and yet you don't even know whether the former President himself delivered this word?

MR. NESSEN: The important point I thought that we have been dealing with all along is how, and was he going to file some kind of report, and I am saying that he has indicated to the White House that he will file a report in writing with the State Department.

Q And this was on his own initiative?

MR. NESSEN: The indication sent to the White House?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: It was.

Q Do you know when the report might be in?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the vaguest notion.

Q Ron, why can't you simply tell us how this came about? What is so secret about that?

MR. NESSEN: There is nothing secret about it. I am telling you what it is I have been asked about all along which is he indicated he will file a written report with the State Department. The functionary in the White House who got the message is just --

Q A functionary got it?

Q Was it the switchboard operator?

MR. NESSEN: No, it was not the switchboard operator. (Laughter)

Q You say there is no secret about it and then you keep it a secret. You run an open Administration and you run a closed Administration. It is not a national security matter. It is not terribly important. Why don't you just tell us what happened?

MR. NESSEN: I told you what happened.

Q Who was involved?

Q Will it be a classified document or will it be a visitors document?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Helen. You will have to ask the State Department.

Q Can we say a functionary in the White House got the message?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do you have any idea how long it is going to take, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't, Don. How could I know?

Q Is his report coming to the White House first and then being sent to the State Department?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is being prepared for and sent to the State Department.

Q Can we also say the White House or you specifically did not want to talk about the subject today?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think I have talked about it a good deal today. We talked here about 20 minutes, I think, Phil. We talked 20 minutes or so yesterday. I think we talked probably 20 to 30 minutes every day for the last two or three weeks.

Q Can we say for an unexplained reason you cannot give the name or details?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you say for a reason unacceptable to you I would not give the name. The reason is that it is a routine staffing matter as to which functionary got this. That is the reason. Now if it is an unacceptable reason, you can say that, but I have given the reason.

Q Do you customarily keep routine staff matters of no great importance secret when asked a specific question?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I do.

Q You know who the functionary was?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do you know how the word was received, then, also? Was it a telephone call?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it was. I said that.

Q But you don't know who it was that called?

MR. NESSEN: You mean from the other end?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Whether it was the former President or one of his staff people?

Q Correct.

MR. NESSEN: I don't.

Q You leave the final decision on the President getting this material to somebody in the State Department?

MR. NESSEN: That's correct.

Q Isn't the President, though, going to be interested in what Nixon has to say after nine hours of conversation?

MR. NESSEN: I said if the people in the State Department feel there is anything in that report that needs to be brought to the President's attention that we don't already know from our normal day to day diplomatic contacts, they will make sure the President sees it.

Q That is just it, there has been no contact with this man. Won't the President take the initiative to want to see anything that Nixon may write about him?

MR. NESSEN: John, I have told you what the process is going to be.

Q What if there are questions that somebody wants to raise over the report or further details they want to ask.

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you ask the State Department? They are going to get the report and deal with the report.

Q Ron, do people in the State Department who send reports to the President channel those reports through the Secretary's office?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Larry. I don't know exactly what you mean.

Q Does the Secretary of State have to see State Department reports that come to the President?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. You will have to ask the State Department what their procedure is.

Q If there was any word from Mao, any message, wouldn't the President be interested in this?

MR. NESSEN: If there is anything in their State Department files that needs to be brought to the President's attention, it will be.

Q Ron, you may have been asked about this yesterday -- I was not here -- and if you were, I will withdraw it immediately. Were you asked yesterday about Rogers Morton's comment or description of the President's reaction --

MR. NESSEN: No, I was not asked about it, but I asked Rog about it. Rog said he feels he was misquoted. He said he was asked and he answered that question in the negative really, just the opposite of what that story said, and he said he called the people who wrote the story. But, in any case, the President, I think, has had a couple of opportunities lately to give you his own reaction and feeling about that.

Q How come he didn't give it in the first place? The timing has always been wrong, hasn't it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean.

Q On the Nixon trip.

MR. NESSEN: His timing?

Q The Nixon trip timing was wrong. He finally got around to saying that.

Q What are the plans tonight?

MR. NESSEN: A couple of us are going to stay here at least until the returns have some clear pattern to them. Very few, probably Dick Cheney and myself and maybe one or two other people in my office. The President is going over to the Residence as he did last week. I will be around. I don't expect the President to say anything. It is possible that the Press Office may have something to say when there is some determination.

Q Ron, if the President loses, will it be because Nixon came home?

Q Did Nixon indicate when he passed the word to the White House anything about the content of this report or what he feels will be the most significant item?

MR. NESSEN: No, my understanding was it was purely a phone call to set up the arrangement for whom to send the report to.

Q Did he say when the report will be ready?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Was the call to inquire who should receive it in the State Department? Is that what San Clemente was calling about?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the details of the phone call.

Q Why didn't they call the State Department?

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

Q Did Nixon want to send it to the White House?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Ron, what are the President's expectations in Massachusetts?

MR. NESSEN: He thinks he will win but I am told there has been quite a quiet effort waged up there on behalf of former Governor Reagan, without very much publicity but quite intensive and I think the results could be a good deal closer than what some of the expectations are.

Q Has there been any effort on the President's part up there?

MR. NESSEN: No. I think there have been some TV commercials run.

Q They spent almost \$200,000 in the State in the last couple of weeks. That is as much as they spent in New Hampshire.

MR. NESSEN: I think that is mostly on TV commercials and speakers going up there on the President's behalf.

Q You don't call that an effort on the President's behalf?

MR. NESSEN: I thought Helen meant a personal effort by the President.

Q What do you mean on Reagan's part?

MR. NESSEN: He has some organizations which I understand have worked quietly in his behalf.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:15 P.M. EST)