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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:15 P.M. EDT

MAY 18, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me say this first. A written report on the Giscard meeting will be given later this afternoon, certainly after the lunch break, no earlier than 3:00 and perhaps later than that.

At 2:30 this afternoon, the President is going to be presenting awards to the winners of the National Center for Voluntary Action. This is 11 winners of the National Volunteer Award, people who have made contributions of volunteer services to help the poor, the handicapped, the aged and so forth. That will be open coverage. It is supposed to be in the Rose Garden. Obviously it may not be.

Ambassador Scranton is coming in at 4:00 to meet with the President to discuss matters. He asked for the meeting to discuss matters coming before the United Nations.

Q     Would you expect there will be any political discussion there? Going into the Nebraska primary, the President called in Scranton to discuss politics and there was a dinner, you remember.

MR. NESSEN: This is strictly on U.N. business.

Q     Why is he always here on primary night?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it is only a coincidence, but he did ask for the meeting and I have a list of topics, and they are all U.N. business.

Q     You don't think it is a coincidence?

MR. NESSEN: I said it is a coincidence.

Q     Has the President spoken privately on Ambassador Scranton being a delegate to the Republican National Convention?

MR. NESSEN: Spoken privately to Scranton, you mean?

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Q Or to you?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that Scranton is a delegate.

Q He will be at noon Saturday.

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard anything about it.

Q Apropos of U.N. business --

MR. NESSEN: Let me finish my schedule, all right?

As you know, the President is going this evening to the French Embassy as the guest of President Valary Giscard d'Estaing for the return dinner and the President leaves here about 10 minutes of 8:00 and gets back here at about 11:00.

Rog Morton is going to be over at the PFC, and I am told he will be available there for reaction to the election returns from Maryland and Michigan. If there is anything to say from the White House, obviously it would be said after the President returns here from the dinner.

Q Ron, what is going to be the drill over there? What will be the opportunity for news over there?

MR. NESSEN: In terms of covering the dinner and the entertainment and so forth?

Q Will we get in or will it be a stake-out outside?

MR. NESSEN: The French are handling the press arrangements for their Embassy, and I don't know what the arrangements are.

There will be a travel pool, and the travel pool will go with the President, as always, and they will be admitted for the toasts and the entertainment and arrivals and that kind of thing.

Q May I inquire when the network pool engineer, which is CBS, gets back and assuming, let us say, for example hypothetically, Giscard makes some reference to the Presidential victory in Michigan, would that sound be piped through the mult when he gets back or if the network engineer or the network correspondent gets some reaction from the President en route from the dinner to the pool, will that then be put on the White House mult?

MR. NESSEN: I don't expect there is going to be any Presidential reaction to the results while he is having a diplomatic dinner at the French Embassy.

Q Well, I am saying en route. You remember there was a dinner that the President addressed one time after one of the early primaries, perhaps Illinois, and Hal Walker grabbed him in the hall.

MR. NESSEN: That was an American Legion dinner or some domestic group and it wasn't a foreign power.

Q If there is any sound, will it come through the mult?

MR. SPEAKES: It is up to the pool. It is not our show.

MR. NESSEN: The pooler will have a tape, and he is committed to play it for the others, isn't he? It is up to the pooler to make arrangements to provide that.

MR. SPEAKES: We don't guarantee what the engineer will do sitting back there by the mult.

Q Are they going to pipe the toasts in here?

MR. NESSEN: The toasts will be piped.

Q How will the President be kept abreast of the returns from Michigan? Will he be getting a little delayed news?

MR. NESSEN: If there is anything of interest to the President, he will be kept informed during the course of the evening. Basically, Terry O'Donnell will be around and will be in touch by phone with the White House, and if there is anything that the President should be informed of, he will be.

Q You say Terry will be around. You mean he will be at the Embassy and will relay messages from the White House to the President?

MR. NESSEN: No, not on any regular basis, but you know if there is any news that Terry thinks the President ought to hear, then he would probably pass a note to the President.

Q Terry will be at the Embassy?

MR. NESSEN: You are right.

Q You are not suggesting that the President will be so occupied with that white tie dinner that he will not be interested in that primary?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to stand here and tell you he is not going to want to know what is happening during the evening. I will be over there and I will be back here with the President, and we will see what happens when we get back here.

O What is the California schedule?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have anything further yet. We don't have the cities, no.

Q Ron, since the State Department has stated that the U.N. charter forbids sanctions unless a nation is a threat to world peace, and since Secretary Kissinger testified that Rhodesia is not a threat to world peace, why is the President supporting sanctions against Rhodesia?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check on that one, Les.

Q Could I just follow it up with one because then I have to go down to the State Department. (Laughter) Senator Byrd of Virginia has asked if it is logical for the United States to spend \$100 billion a year to arm itself against a potential Russian threat and then make us dependent on Russia for the vital strategic material called chrome, and I am wondering what is the White House answer to this Senator's question?

MR. NESSEN: Who is the Senator?

Q Byrd of Virginia.

MR. NESSEN: I will have to look up more details on that. I am not an expert on chrome.

Q Have you finished your announcements?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

O Can I ask a question on the specific subject of a nuclear processing plant to Pakistan which came up in the Giscard talks?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Walt. I will have to check on that.

Q Ron, talking of nuclear, when is the treaty to be signed, the new threshold treaty?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a specific date for it.

O Will it be this week?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q You told us last week that these preparations had to be made. Have they been made in the past several days to get it out as soon as possible?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Due to the fact a couple of members of the Administration -- Vice President Rockefeller and Ambassador Scranton -- are going to control uncommitted delegates at the Republican Convention, can you tell us if the President has talked to these people about what they are going to do with their uncommitted delegates?

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

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Q Can you tell us if the President talked to Attorney General Levi about the Attorney General's consideration of intervening in the Boston school desegregation case?

MR. NESSEN: I think I mentioned yesterday that any decision to intervene or not to intervene in that case will be made by the Attorney General, but just to give you a little background on it I think we have said before that the President has talked to both the Attorney General and the HEW Secretary about finding alternative remedies to the matter of integrated quality school education. I think you know about that and I think you know there have been several meetings held on the subject, which we have announced.

During the course of those meetings, the President asked the Attorney General to look for an appropriate case to ask the Court to reexamine busing as a remedy, a case which would enable the Attorney General to ask the Court to explore alternative solutions that would be less destructive of community life.

Now, that is a general overall policy decided by the President. The selection of any particular case for that purpose is left up to the legal experts and the Attorney General to make the decision on whether that will be pursued in the Boston case or in another case.

Q This question has come up before, Ron, and I am pretty sure the President has been asked it, and I am quite sure you have been asked it.

Once again, you have referred to the President's desire that the Courts examine alternatives to busing before ordering busing -- for example, alternatives to busing. Is not the President aware that in almost all, if not all, of these busing decisions the Courts have done just that before ordering busing? It is certainly true in the Richmond decision and I think true in the Boston decision.

Why does the President keep raising the question of alternatives when the Supreme Court directed the lower courts to do just that and the lower courts have done just that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am not that much of a legal expert, Jim, in that I know the background on all of the busing cases.

Q Does the President continue to oppose a constitutional amendment to ban busing for school desegregation?

MR. NESSEN: I think his position on that is that he doesn't have a role in that process, that it is a matter for Congress to decide and then the States to ratify, but he doesn't have a role in that.

I think he has said that he feels that legislative remedies and remedies arising out of court decisions really are a more practical way to resolve the problem and would deal with the problem more quickly than waiting for a constitutional amendment to be ratified.

Q He did speak with Senator Brooke about this Boston case the other day, did he not?

MR. NESSEN: The President?

I don't know. I will have to check. I am not aware that he did.

Q Ron, the other day out in Michigan, when the President responded to that heckler, as I understand it the heckler said, "You blew it," and he said, "We blew it in the right direction," and then he went on to say, "If you would go out and look for a job you could find one."

Did he have some indication that the heckler was out of work?

MR. NESSEN: I think we went through all of that on Saturday in response to Phil's question and the question of Dick Lerner, I think, and I went to the President and asked him how he recalled the sequence and I think I explained it to everybody on the train who asked me about it.

Q I wasn't there. As a matter of fact, what did he say?

MR. NESSEN: The President recalls there was a kind of a dialogue back and forth and at some point in that he heard something about the economy and that is what brought forth his remark about the job.

Q Does he think that will help him out in Michigan?

MR. NESSEN: What is that?

Q Urging people out of work to go out and look for jobs -- is that his strategy? I know there is a lot of high unemployment out there -- about 14 percent -- and I just wondered.

MR. NESSEN: And also the fastest drop in unemployment in any State in the country.

Q Did the President say anything to you since he has come back from the trip about what his expectations are in Michigan?

MR. NESSEN: He expects to win. I mentioned that yesterday. And he expects to do well in Maryland.

Q Why would you say you are expecting to win in Maryland when the President Ford Committee is predicting a victory over there?

MR. NESSEN: You asked me what the President's expectations are and I am telling you the President's expectations are that he expects to do well in Maryland.

Q Have you had any kind of a poll at the White House with Mr. Teether in the last weeks in Michigan?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen one, Tom.

Q Do you know of one?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of one myself.

Q Have you heard any discussions about it?

MR. NESSEN: No, I have not.

Q Ron, the President has voted by absentee ballot, and how many of the Fords voted in Michigan?

MR. NESSEN: The two of them voted in Michigan, and the helicopter pilot mentioned that he had voted by absentee ballot, and Admiral Lukash stated that he had voted, and on the basis of those four votes, we projected the President to win it. (Laughter)

Q Did they tell you how they voted?

MR. NESSEN: I projected them to be voting for the President. I don't know whether the kids are registered out there or not. I will have to check on that.

Q I have another question. Is the President getting any kind of reports during the day on the turnout or anything like that?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, he has not, no.

Q We asked President Ford over the weekend -- and I don't think we got an answer -- but can he survive a loss in Michigan?

MR. NESSEN: I think a lot of people asked him that question and the answer was always the same, which was he doesn't expect to lose in Michigan.

Q That wasn't the question.

MR. NESSEN: Well, when people said that wasn't the question, he said, "I know, but if I don't expect to lose, then obviously I haven't considered any alternatives."



Q So he has not considered any alternatives after Michigan, if he should lose?

MR. NESSEN: He doesn't expect to lose.

Q Senator Proxmire charged that the Pentagon and two shipbuilders have conspired to coverup cost overruns, the shipbuilders being Litton Industries and Tenneco. This is only the latest in a spate of problems at the Pentagon, and minor scandals -- the meat scandal, indirectly the West Point scandal, the Lockheed bribes and payoffs -- and I was wondering if perhaps the President, in view of the fact that he is telling everyone he has restored trust in the Government, is concerned about this spate of scandals at the Pentagon?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know. You know, I wouldn't want to accept all of these stories as being scandals and I wouldn't want to have them all lumped together as spate.

I talked to Bill Greener specifically about the story that was in the Post this morning involving shipbuilding contracts, and he said this is a matter that has been in the process of settlement for quite a long time. I don't have the details of it, but he said he would be happy to supply the details of how it is operating.

Q One of the details in the Tenneco-Litton thing is that these firms are refusing or have threatened to refuse to continue work on two aircraft carriers until the Government pays them these alleged fees which are owed. That sounds like blackmail.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know enough about it, Walt, but I did check with Greener to find out whether he knew anything about it and he said yes, to call him.

Q That doesn't tell us how the President feels.

Q Ron, what is the President doing on the FEC? Is he going to swear-in the members approved by the Senate, or is he going to wait for all six?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check on that, Tom. I didn't know the five had been approved already.

Q They were just confirmed.

MR. NESSEN: We can find out.

Q You said that the White House was studying this new compromise natural gas deregulation bill. Have they decided what they think of it?

MR. NESSEN: No. I talked to Frank Zarb about it this morning. It is still in the process of being studied and Frank had not reached a conclusion about it this morning, as late as this morning when I talked to him.

Q Do you know if the President urged President Giscard or encouraged him to indulge in greater participation in NATO?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I would rather wait for the report on the meeting.

Q I would like to go back to the school busing question for a moment. You said you couldn't answer the question as to why the President kept talking about alternatives. Has the President read the decisions, let us say, in the Boston and Richmond desegregation cases? Has he read the Court decision?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if he has read the actual Court documents, Jim.

Q Has he had them described to him or a summary of them, or something that would give him factual information?

MR. NESSEN: I believe he is probably familiar with them.

Q Why doesn't he know that the courts in these and other cases examined the alternatives as instructed by the Supreme Court before ordering busing?

MR. NESSEN: I said I would check on it.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

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