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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 3:12 A.M. EDT

JULY 27, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The evacuation has been completed successfully. Let me backtrack from there and go to the beginning and work my way up to the present.

The President came over to Brent Scowcroft's National Security Council office at about 1:25 a.m. He was dressed in a blue suit and white sport shirt. He had taken a nap -- beginning about 10:30 -- for about two hours or so.

Shortly after he arrived there, Don Rumsfeld phoned and brought him up to date. At that point the ship had just about reached the beach. The President spent the entire period of time monitoring the evacuation from Brent's office. With him, in addition to Brent, was Dick Cheney, Jack Marsh, William Hyland, and myself.

The monitoring took the form of talking directly to Don Rumsfeld at the Pentagon, the President talking directly to Don and in some cases Brent Scowcroft talking to Don and relaying the messages to the President.

At approximately 2:25 Brent received a phone call and relayed out loud to the people in his office the message, which was, "Everyone is on board." Then, about five to seven minutes later there was another call which Brent took and out loud repeated, "They have cleared the beach." They have cleared the beach meant that the landing craft with the evacuees on it had pulled away from the beach. About 15 or 20 minutes later the landing craft reached the mother ship off-shore, the CORONADO, safely.

O What time was that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an exact time on that but it was about a half hour or so later.

The President then placed two phone calls, one to Phil Habib, who was the head of the task force at the State Department that was following the evacuation, and a second call to Don Rumsfeld at the Pentagon.

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The President congratulated both men and both groups and said to Don, "It went smoothly. There were no incidents." The President left the NSC office at about 2:45, stopped in the Oval Office for about five minutes and then went home.

The number of people taken off was approximately 300, including American citizens. I can't be any more precise as to the exact number of people or the exact number of American citizens. We won't be able to nail that down tonight.

The President is pleased that the evacuation was carried out successfully. The President wants to congratulate the officers and men of the Sixth Fleet and the members of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut for having arranged a safe and orderly evacuation of American and other foreign nationals.

The President also wants to express his gratitude and sincere thanks to all others who gave their cooperation to facilitate this departure.

Q Does that include the PLO?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Was the number of Embassy personnel unchanged?

MR. NESSEN: I think I said 28 this morning. It actually was 27.

Q That would leave about how many?

MR. NESSEN: About 15 there.

Q 27 evacuees?

MR. NESSEN: That includes the Ambassador.

Q Ron, was there any kind of military activity, any kind of shooting or anything?

MR. NESSEN: No. As the President said, it went smoothly. There were no incidents. There was just literally no incidents at all.

Q They are on their way to Athens now?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct, yes.

Q When are they expected to arrive?

MR. NESSEN: If I remember, the last time it was about 40 hours.

Q Is this the last evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it is.

Q Do you know whether there were women and children involved?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have a breakdown. I know that the total number is approximately 300, of which 30 are press, but that is the only breakdown I have.

Q American press?

MR. NESSEN: Mostly American, yes.

Q Did the Ambassador come out?

MR. NESSEN: Ambassador Seelye came out, that is correct.

Q He did?

Q He came out?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. He came out for consultations.

Q Is he flying back to Washington?

MR. NESSEN: He will, yes.

Q What is his first name?

MR. NESSEN: Talcott.

Q Is his correct title Ambassador?

MR. NESSEN: He is the President's Special Representative but he has the title of Ambassador.

Q And he is coming back?

MR. NESSEN: He will be coming here to Washington for consultations.

Q Do you know when he will arrive here?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the exact time.

Q Will the Ambassador go back?

MR. NESSEN: It is a little premature to say whether he will go back. We will have to wait and see.

Q Who is the man in charge then?

MR. NESSEN: The Deputy Chief of Mission, whose name I don't have.

O What is the name of the Deputy?

MR. NESSEN: We will check to see if Brent is still there and we will get the name.

O There is nobody at the Embassy --

MR. NESSEN: No, there are 15 or so people still there to maintain an American presence and perform the minimal functions of an Embassy.

Q What is the estimate of Americans left?

MR. NESSEN: It is impossible to say because of the confused situation.

Just to give you a little background on that, those Americans who live in the Christian areas, if they had wanted to get out, there is a ferry that runs three times a week, for instance, to Cyprus, and there is no way of telling how many left that way.

Individual cars have been getting through to Damascus, so there is no way to tell how many have gone out that way. The number of Americans has been reduced down from, I think, 40,000 at the height to those Americans who are left, many of them are Lebanese-Americans who have more ties to Lebanon than they do to America.

O It sounds like this place is going to blow up.

MR. NESSEN: Well --

O It is going to get worse. This is a massive withdrawal.

MR. NESSEN: We don't have any information to indicate anything other than what has already been going on. The evacuation, as you know, resulted from the fact that the living conditions there have deteriorated in terms of no electricity, water, shortage of food, shortage of fuel and the living conditions really made it too difficult to maintain an Embassy of the size that we did before.

So, the decision was made to reduce the Embassy to a minimum because of the difficult living conditions. Once that decision was made, then Americans living there were notified that they would no longer have full Embassy services and protection, and that is why the evacuation was urged.

Q Why are all the newsmen going then?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask them.

Q Do you know whether there are any American newsmen left there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that, Bob.

Q You are indicating that Ambassador Seelye will not return?

MR. NESSEN: It is just premature to make a decision on that. We will have to wait and see.

Q Did the American Embassy advise newsmen to get out?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think they singled out newsmen, Charlie. I think newsmen were covered by the same advice that was published and broadcast to all Americans who were left there.

Q Where was Kissinger waiting to be advised of this?

MR. NESSEN: I think he was probably at home being kept advised at home, as far as I know.

Q Ron, what kind of protection is now being offered to any Americans left in Beirut?

MR. NESSEN: There is just a minimal Embassy staff and minimal Embassy services and protection available. As the announcement of the evacuation said, the staff has been reduced to a level and the conditions are such that the Embassy cannot guarantee protection for Americans, legal or otherwise.

Q Didn't the announcement also say this was the last evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: It is the last organized evacuation, that is correct.

Q What cooperation did the PLO give to the evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: All the parties that are involved gave their assurances of a safe departure.

Q Is there any additional leverage being used?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge, it isn't.

Q Did you have any guards?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a precise description of the area around there.

Q Is this the first news that this thing was successful or is the Pentagon announcing it?

MR. NESSEN: Bill Greener said he was leaving his office to walk to his briefing room at the same time I walked down here to my briefing room. I think Bill will have more of the military details whereas I have more of the Presidential view.

The American charge' at the Embassy in Beirut is Leamon Hunt, and he would be the senior American official remaining in Beirut.

Q If the group of Americans fled from the Embassy, wouldn't there be some attempt to help them get out?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q There would be some attempt?

MR. NESSEN: There are no further plans for any organized evacuation. That was made clear in the announcement, in the broadcast.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 3:25 A.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:35 A.M. EDT

JULY 27, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President is meeting with Prime Minister Fraser of Australia, now. The meeting will probably go on for another 20 minutes or so, and we will have a printed report on the meeting in the afternoon.

I think the arrangements for the coverage of the State Dinner for Prime Minister and Mrs. Fraser has been posted. I will give you further details of that if you need it.

The President will travel to Mississippi on Friday to visit with the 30 delegates and 30 alternates there. I think he will probably be meeting in a group and probably he will have a chance to meet in smaller groups also and individually, maybe.

The departure time and the exact events that the President will participate in we have not yet gotten together, but I will announce them later in the week, as we do.

Q Are there events going on that day? Is that something special?

MR. NESSEN: No, I mean the events on the President's schedule while he is there we will announce later on.

Q Did you say whether he would be coming back the same night?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I expect him to.

Q Is there something going on there involving these delegates, previously scheduled? They had a meeting last week. Are they going to have one this week?

MR. NESSEN: They are going to have a meeting with the President this week.

Q Is it an all-day affair?

Q There isn't another fund-raising dinner or some deal like that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have all the details. There will be some activities on the President's schedule.

Q Is he going at the invitation of Clark Reed?

MR. NESSEN: I don't don't know what the background on this trip is, Dick.

Q Is there any relationship between this trip and Mr. Reagan's announcement yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Does he plan to have the Pennsylvania delegation in now, in light of the Reagan announcement? Does the President plan to have the Pennsylvania delegation in to talk to them?

MR. NESSEN: There is no change of the long-announced plan, Jim.

Q When was that to be?

MR. NESSEN: I believe it is Thursday. And as far as I know, there has been no change in it.

Q Is the President giving any thought to announcing his running mate in advance?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President has already spelled out to you what his process will be.

Q Ron, can you tell us when this Jackson trip was firmed up?

MR. NESSEN: I guess yesterday.

Q Sometime after the Schweiker announcement?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, but whenever it was, I don't know of any relation between the two. I don't know exactly what the timing was but I don't know of any connection.

Q What did make him decide to go?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what all the factors were, Helen.

Q Was one of the factors Dick Cheney's return from Mississippi yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether that was directly a part of the decision.

Q Ron, is the President aware of Billy Mounger's statement last night? He is the Reagan chairman for Mississippi who said, "If Ford picks Connally, he will bowl over Mississippi."

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he is specifically aware of that, Les. He has been reading the wire copy and the newspapers, like most people have.

Q Ron, when you answered the last question, you said the President already spelled out what he will do about timing of his announcement.

MR. NESSEN: His process, he has spelled that out.

Q His process was consulting with Republicans but did he say anything about timing, when he would actually announce anything?

MR. NESSEN: No. I think somebody asked him at his last news conference when he would announce his choice and I think he said, at the appropriate time he would make his recommendation to the delegates.

Q Would the appropriate time now be different from what it was before Reagan jumped the gun?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of anything that has changed since the President talked about this before.

Q He has spoken of the appropriate time as being before the Convention and also at the Convention, at different times over the year. What is the appropriate time?

MR. NESSEN: I just can't spell it out for you in any more detail today or change or go beyond what he said before.

Q But could you at least clarify that discrepancy? I am not clear on what he said. Maybe others are not.

MR. NESSEN: I think we have to look up what he said then. I don't have anything today that would change what he said before.

Q Do you remember what he said?

MR. NESSEN: I think he just said at the appropriate time he would make his recommendation to the Convention.

Q Does he have any comments about the Schweiker appointment?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing new today, no.

Q Did he say anything yesterday? You said "nothing new." You did not say anything yesterday, either.

MR. NESSEN: I think Rog Morton had a news conference yesterday, if I am not mistaken.

Q Did he quote the President?

MR. NESSEN: No, but he is the President's campaign manager.

Q Has the President discussed the possibility of presenting the Convention with, say, two names or possibly three, and letting the delegates pick from that group?

MR. NESSEN: I think what the President said at his last news conference, and previous to that, Russ, remains the case today, that he would make a recommendation to the Convention. He said that last week and I think he said it every time he was asked about it, he said the same thing.

Q You mean present the Convention with one name?

MR. NESSEN: That is what he said before, yes.

Q After he is the nominee?

MR. NESSEN: At the appropriate time, Ted. That is what he said before.

Q Ron, it is my understanding that Senator Schweiker was a Ford supporter, wasn't he?

MR. NESSEN: I have no idea. I read on the UPI he was a delegate from Pennsylvania.

Q A Ford delegate.

MR. NESSEN: That is what UPI said.

Q Right. Now, does the President regard this as an -- in other words, is he disappointed in any way in Senator Schweiker or does he include this under the category of what he terms political license?

He used the term "political license" a while back about the fact he was not excluding Governor Reagan from the ticket. He used the words "political license." He did not define it, but I am wondering if he thinks Senator Schweiker's sudden shift could be included in the category of "political license."

MR. NESSEN: I did not ask him that specific question, Les.

Q Did you ask him how he reacts to Senator Schweiker's sudden departure?

MR. NESSEN: I think, as I said to Carol, Rog had a news conference yesterday and spelled out some of the campaign views of yesterday's announcement.

Q For party unity, the President has said he would support a Reagan ticket. Does that still hold if Reagan won the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall. I would have to look up the exact words he said. There was a fair amount of back and forth during that news conference. It is all there on the record, Helen.

Q Would he support a ticket like this if Reagan won the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, as you know, the President expects to win the nomination and go on to win the election.

Q Ron, has anybody called up the President today and said, "I just want you to know we are on your side as a result of this."

MR. NESSEN: I don't know precisely what the phone calls are he has had today. He has been fairly busy preparing for the Fraser meeting and having some staff meetings. I don't know what calls he has taken today.

Q Can you say whether he has talked with Senator Scott?

MR. NESSEN: Senator Scott has called here and asked for an opportunity to talk to the President about his trip to China and about other matters. There has been no meeting arranged yet, but I would certainly expect there to be one.

Q What other matters, Ron? Pennsylvania matters?

Q Would that be today, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think he is going to be able to fit it in today, but it would be, I think, fairly soon.

Q What about the other Senator Scott?

MR. NESSEN: The Bill Scott from Virginia? I have not heard of a call from him.

Q Ron, is the President specifically disappointed at the loss of that one little delegate, namely, Schweiker?

MR. NESSEN: I read on the wire where he had resigned from the delegation.

Q That is right, he did, and he was a Ford delegate.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q And is the President sorry at the loss of a Ford delegate?

MR. NESSEN: You know, the President expects to have enough delegates to win the nomination on the first ballot.

Q Is Senator Schweiker expected to be one of the Pennsylvania delegates that arrives here on Thursday afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: The entire delegation was invited, Ann. My understanding, from reading the wire services, is that he has resigned from the delegation.

Q Does the President believe he is already over the top on delegates?

MR. NESSEN: Jim Baker is the chief delegate counter and I just refer you to him.

Q Baker said they are over the top, but is the President, at this moment, confident that he is over the top?

MR. NESSEN: Jim Baker is the chief delegate counter and he is the one who is keeping track of where the President stands.

Q We know all that, Ron. We are asking questions about what the President thinks of the Schweiker designation and what the President feels as to whether he is over the top, not who is the delegate counter or who had news conferences yesterday, which we all know. So, can we try again? What is the President's feeling on this matter? Does he see it the way Baker says he sees it, which is that he has 1,135?

MR. NESSEN: The only reason I referred to Jim Baker was that Jim is the man who keeps track of the delegate totals. The President does not have the time to keep the little chart or list. Jim Baker is the man designated by the President and his campaign to keep that list so that is the list of the President Ford campaign, and is the one that Jim Baker published last week.

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Q Does he believe that?

MR. NESSEN: Are you saying, does the President believe his own campaign?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, Ted, that is silly.

Q That is the essence of the question.

MR. NESSEN: What, that the President's doesn't believe his own campaign.

Q Does he believe he is over the top?

MR. NESSEN: Jim Baker is the campaign official in charge of keeping track of the President's delegates.

Q Does the President think he is infallible?

MR. NESSEN: I think the doctrine of infallibility has --

Q -- only been used three times since 1854 or 1870.

Q Ron, does the President have any reaction to the arrest of former Prime Minister Tanaka of Japan?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q In view of what he said about how it would be disturbing to have Communists in the Italian Government, does he have a reaction to Communists being named to chair four committees in the Italian Parliament?

MR. NESSEN: I think we went around on this so many times. I don't have anything new to say about that today.

Q Ron, is the President going to do anything to forestall this apparent controversy brewing over whose supporters will appear on the program at the convention?

MR. NESSEN: I was not aware of a controversy brewing over that. The RNC, which is neutral, as I understand it, in the race between candidates, is in charge of the convention arrangements.

Q The RNC is saying it is still up in the air, but what I am concerned with is whether or not John Wayne appears on the program appears to be a question. Whether or not Pearl Bailey appears on the program appears to be a question. Is the President going to say or do anything to perhaps resolve the question?

MR. NESSEN: I don't see how he can. The RNC is in charge of all the arrangements for the convention.

Q Ron, is the President doing anything to forestall the Schweiker effort to peel away delegates in the northeast, in Pennsylvania, in New York, New Jersey?

MR. NESSEN: I just have to refer you over to the PFC, Bill. They are in charge of lining up delegates.

Q What does the President think the effect of this will be -- the Schweiker thing -- on delegates? Has he thought about that?

MR. NESSEN: The President still feels and is confident that he will win on the first ballot.

Q He is doing some private delegate polling, is he not, and continuing to make telephone calls and so forth? Do you mean this did not spur him on the phone with some Pennsylvania people to see how it looked to them?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

Q As a matter of fact, at the PFC yesterday we were told he did get on the telephone with Ambassador Scranton and other Pennsylvanians.

MR. NESSEN: I don't keep up with all his phone calls.

Q Ron, that brings up another question. William Scranton is a delegate to the Convention, a Ford delegate. If I am not mistaken, that is a departure from past practice where U.N. Ambassadors have usually been apolitical. Did the President discuss with Scranton beforehand the merits of his becoming a Republican candidate and seeming to lend a political overtone to that office?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Ron, Senator Schweiker was considered a political ally. He had been entertained here at the White House. He was a Ford delegate from Pennsylvania. He was to be an advocate for President Ford in the pre-convention caucuses. He is now the running mate of the opposition.

Does the President have no reaction to this? Does he feel betrayed? Does he feel enlightened? Does he feel relieved or have you discussed it with him at all to get his reaction?

MR. NESSEN: I think the proper place for comment on another candidate's running mate is from the other candidate and as far as the reaction of the Ford campaign goes, I think that came from and continues to come from Rog Morton and others at the PFC. I don't really have anything to add from the President.

Q He has had no reactions then? He is incapable of reacting to a major announcement of this sort?

MR. NESSEN: I think that questions of effect and so forth really have to come from the other candidate and questions regarding the campaign should come from the PFC. I don't really have anything to add.

Q Referring to the comment of Rogers Morton, does that mean he was expressing the President's view when he said Reagan apparently has traded the second highest office in the land for a handful of delegates?

MR. NESSEN: Ted, again, Rog Morton is the man chosen by the President to be chairman of his campaign so it is like saying, does the President agree with his campaign on the delegate count. You are asking me to approve or disapprove of everything the President's campaign chairman says, and I just don't think we will do that here.

Q Not really. We are really asking you for the President's views and you referred several times to other people at the PFC so the logical next question is, are they then speaking for the President and expressing the President's views?

MR. NESSEN: He is the man chosen by the President to be chairman of his campaign.

Q Does he reflect the President's views?

MR. NESSEN: He is the chairman of the President's campaign.

Q How many times a day does Rog Morton call the President?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if I could put any number on it. It is whenever he needs to or feels he needs to.

Q You don't feel you have to ever give us the President's personal reaction? You know we went through this in 1972 and there was CREEP and then there was the White House and there were two voices in the lands on every given subject. So, what we are trying to say, really, is does the President not have a personal reaction to what is happening? He is a candidate, and he should have a reaction.

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I think another candidate's choice of a Vice President is something that does not necessarily need a comment from the White House. As far as political or campaign reaction, then the people who the President has appointed to manage and run his campaign have already and are continuing to respond to questions about this.

I think the proper thing from the White House is simply what we indicated yesterday, which was the process that the President intends to follow in the choice of his running mate.

Q Ron, if Schweiker can be peeled off so very easily when he was such a strong supporter of the President, where does the President think he has solid support? I mean, doesn't this cast a kind of pall and suggest that maybe there are an awful lot of soft Ford supporters that could be peeled off as easily as that?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, when will the President go to Kansas City?

MR. NESSEN: It has not been decided yet.

Q I am a little puzzled by the division suddenly between the campaign and this office. After all, you have been entertaining delegates here. The President will be going on the road to meet with delegates on Friday. He has not exactly been reluctant to make other political judgments and his responses in his news conferences and so on.

Why now suddenly have you elected not to make an observation on his behalf?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think, Tom, it is a sudden matter or that there is any sharp division. I don't think you would let us make a sharp division. The fact is that all along, ever since the campaign began, I have referred questions about delegate counting and reaction to this or that activity by another candidate over to the PFC. That is why they have a full operation over there.

Q But they have come from here as well, those reactions and observations.

MR. NESSEN: They have sometime, sure.

Q And you had no reservation -- correct me if I am wrong -- in commenting from here in a variety of ways about the choice of Senator Mondale as a Vice Presidential candidate.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we did have any reaction from here on that, if I recall. I don't recall that we had any. It is just a matter that is being, it seems to me -- all the questions that have been raised have been responded to by the President Ford campaign.

Q Ron, when does the President anticipate getting a full report on the shooting of the intruder the other night?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how long that is going to take, but I will check on it for you.

Q As a follow up on that, one of the jumpers has come over three times and one of the earlier times Cheney said he wanted a full report because he came within a few feet of Susan and subsequently at that time he was arrested again. You said the President does not feel satisfied with the security.

Is any consideration being given, however, to make the fence more than just a barrier between the White House and the public meanders?

MR. NESSEN: I think if there are going to be any changes in security -- and I don't know that there are -- you will have to learn that from the Secret Service because they are the ones in charge and charged with the President's safety.

Q Ron, is there going to be any message of thanks to the PLO on this evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: Last night, for those who stuck around, you know that at the end of the evening I just passed on a few of the President's observations, including his congratulations to the officers and men of the Sixth Fleet and to the members of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut for having arranged a safe and orderly evacuation of American and other foreign nationals.

The President also wanted to express his gratitude and sincere thanks to all others who gave their cooperation to facilitate the departure.

Q But nothing specifically to the PLO?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any planned direct communication, no.

Q On the last occasion there was a message, I believe, from the State Department channeled through the Egyptians to the Palestinian leadership, not the PLO specifically.

MR. NESSEN: I think there was a report of that, Mort, but I don't know that the State Department ever said that it had sent such a communication.

Q It may not have acknowledged that that happened, at least on the record, but I think on background it certainly was acknowledged. Is there any plan for a message of any kind to the PLO?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Ron, has the President received a report yet from Usery or Mr. Butz on the cannery strike, and what is the status of that, and what is he going to do about it?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that Bill Usery met most of the night and the negotiations are continuing today, and I understand that he and the others who have been involved in this are encouraged at their progress. Secretary Butz has sent a report to the President on what damage would be caused to the crops if the strike is extended and the California Congressional delegation -- or some members of it, anyhow -- have asked for an opportunity to come in and talk to the President about their views of the strike.

I expect that the President will have that meeting as soon as time can be found on his schedule.

Q Would that be today, Ron, do you think?

MR. NESSEN: It is possible, but a time has not really been found yet.

Q Will you make Mr. Butz' report public?

MR. NESSEN: I think that request has already been put into the Agriculture Department and they are making that determination now.

Q Ron, why is the President going to Mississippi instead of bringing the delegates here?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really know the criteria that went into the decision to go to Mississippi.

Q Because he is worried now?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, no. The President has been confident right along that he will win on the first ballot, and he still is.

Q Did he invite the Mississippi delegation to come to the White House? Were they invited by the White House?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that he did, Ted, or that they were.

Q I know you said you did not have any specific times or details of the Friday trip, but you did say return that same evening. Are you contemplating a relatively early departure and fairly early meeting with them during the day?

MR. NESSEN: I can't even give you that broad range, Jim, because I don't know.

Q Ron, the President's men made no secret last week when they talked to Mississippi delegates that the President would come down if he was assured of a substantial number of votes down there and some of the senior officials here at the White House made no secret of that, either. Does this mean he has been assured or he thinks the Schweiker nomination or announcement perhaps gives him a better shot at it?

MR. NESSEN: Aldo, I just don't keep up that much with the standing of each delegation, so I think Jim Baker is the guy who can give you the latest status of the Mississippi delegation.

Q Ron, does the President favor increased American investment in Australia?

MR. NESSEN: I will look into it. I don't know what brings up the question.

Q Fraser.

MR. NESSEN: Let me check. Perhaps that was a matter they discussed today, and it will be in the readout.

Q In the same area, Prime Minister Fraser, I believe -- correct me if I am wrong -- has made several statements to the effect that he believes there should be closer cooperation between the United States, Australia, Japan and Communist China, closer ties between those four nations in response to Russian expansion in the Far East.

Does the President agree with this position of Prime Minister Fraser?

MR. NESSEN: I will check and learn more about the discussions and the American policy toward Australia.

Q Ron, back to the cannery strike. Has there been any discussion over here of invoking the Taft-Hartley Act?

MR. NESSEN: I think I indicated last week that one of the purposes of sending the Agriculture Department team out there was to assess what the effect on the crop might be and therefore what effect a prolonged strike could have on the public interest, public health, safety and so forth.

It will be one of the factors weighed by the President. He will have that and he will have Bill Usery's estimation of where the negotiations stand and so forth. At the moment, the hope is that this strike can be resolved through the collective bargaining process and, in fact, the process is going on, went on all night and is going on today.

Q What are the President's views on the unit rule?

MR. NESSEN: In Mississippi?

Q It is not just in Mississippi because the Republican Convention in 1972 passed a resolution against the unit rule, which Mississippi has chosen to -- I don't want to use the word circumvent, but in effect, that is what it is. What is the President's view on that?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check, Ted. I have not asked him that particular question.

Q To get back to the Australia matter, I am curious as to why you don't have kind of reaction to give us on that. The Prime Minister is here, and I would assume matters like that would have been reviewed in advance in anticipation that Prime Minister Fraser would be bringing them up in the meetings.

MR. NESSEN: My own ignorance, Jim, should not in any way suggest that the President is not fully prepared to discuss this.

Q What does it suggest?

MR. NESSEN: It suggests I did not prepare myself in the kind of depth that you are asking.

Q Can you bring us some reaction to that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I will.

Q Ron, to get back to the running thing, there has been a lot of talk about how different Reagan and Schweiker apparently are ideologically. Has the President, in his various comments on the process of choosing a running mate, said he would like somebody that is ideologically suited to him?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall what he said on that particular issue. I would like to check that one. That is a good question, but I don't know what the answer is. I will have to check.

Q Ron, is the President in favor of another meeting between Kissinger and Vorster?

MR. NESSEN: I think at the end of the first meeting between Kissinger and Vorster they said they would keep in very close contact and would have another meeting, hopefully if it would advance the efforts to settle issues in Southern Africa peacefully.

Q Ron, you were asked yesterday at the time this man was shot on the lawn whether there were any White House medical personnel on duty and the answer was there were none available.

MR. NESSEN: There were none on duty is my understanding. We will check that.

Q No doctors, medics on duty in the White House?

MR. NESSEN: I think Bill Roberts or somebody checked that yesterday and that is the answer they found out. There were none.

Q Did the President pull out the main core of the American Embassy in Beirut because he expects the war to get worse and to break relations of some sort?

MR. NESSEN: No. As I indicated last night, Helen, and all along, in fact, the living conditions are really deteriorating in Beirut.

MORE

Q But that never stopped an Ambassador from being in a key spot?

MR. NESSEN: It is also important to remember the Embassy is remaining open and there will be an American presence there and a very minimal number of Embassy services will continue to be performed and that the President's representative, Mr. Seelye, is coming home for consultations.

Q But you also kind of made it clear he is not going back.

MR. NESSEN: I said it was premature to say when and whether he would go back.

Q Ron, David Broder has written, "It would be utterly unconscionable for those candidates who take our money to buy TV spots, then to deny their obligation also to appear on the public air in unrehearsed debate." I was wondering, does the President think this is wrong?

MR. NESSEN: For Dave Broder to write that?

Q No, No, Ron. No, I mean he did send a letter to the Common Cause, I believe, that agreed to appear in unrehearsed debate with other candidates. I am wondering if the President believes Mr. Broder's thought here is wrong?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think there has been any decision made yet on debates.

Q I realize that, but would you ask the President if he disagrees with this principle?

MR. NESSEN: I think the answer you are looking for, really, is the President has not decided on his policy towards debates in the election campaign.

Q He hasn't. There is a possibility he might debate the Democratic candidate?

MR. NESSEN: He just has not made any decision, yet.

Q Do you have anything you want to lay on us today?

MR. NESSEN: Let me see, what can I lay on you here.

Q Before you start laying it on, can you tell us whether the President has any appearances outside the White House tomorrow evening? He is going over to that Hispanic banquet tomorrow night?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check.

Q The reason I ask is the guest of honor at the Australian reciprocal dinner tomorrow night will be Vice President Rockefeller. Is there any reason why the President will not attend?

MR. NESSEN: Let me look into it.

I don't have anything to lay on you there, Bob. It is a quiet day.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:10 P.M. EDT)