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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:35 A.M. EDT

AUGUST 11, 1976

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The swine flu bill, which some of you have inquired about this morning, hasn't arrived at the White House yet. I understand it may get here this afternoon from the Hill. It will have to be reviewed by the OMB, as all bills are, and then the President will sign it promptly. By "promptly" I think realistically you will probably have to look for it tomorrow because I don't think it will get here in time, and I don't think the review can be completed in time to sign it this afternoon.

Q Will it be a public signing?

MR. NESSEN: I would think so, right.

Q Will there be a Presidential reaction on passage?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, the original indication yesterday afternoon was the House would go on its recess without passing it, and I think some of you know that the President phoned John Rhodes, Speaker Albert and Tip O'Neill and emphasized to them the importance he placed on having it passed before their recess so the drug companies could go ahead and begin to break down the bulk doses into inoculation-size shots, as well as resume production of the other 100 million doses.

So, he is obviously pleased and he feels that his calls to the leaders seems to have had the desired effect of persuading the House to complete action before going on recess.

Q How about the FEA extension bill?

MR. NESSEN: The FEA extension bill, I understand, has some features in it that came out of the President's energy proposals in the State of the Union address -- the help for insulating homes, the so-called thermal standards on new buildings and so forth -- but it is also a very long bill. It is about 100 pages, so the President will review it.

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I know Frank Zarb talked to him this morning about wanting to come in and go over the bill with him. The FEO, of course, is in place now, pending his decision on this FEA extension, so it will be a while before that bill can be analyzed.

Q Now, the \$64 billion question, the tax bill?

MR. NESSEN: The tax bill. Where is the tax bill these days?

Q I withdraw the \$64 billion question.

Q Back to the cheaper question. (Laughter) There is no thought being given to vetoing it, is there? It is just a matter of wanting to review it before signing it, but he is not seriously thinking of vetoing it, is he?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard anybody raise a strong objection to it.

Q There is no possibility the President would not sign the swine flu bill, is there?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly not. He has labored long and hard to get Congress to pass it.

Q Do you expect that the swine flu bill, if it got here early enough, would even be signed today?

MR. NESSEN: I think realistically there won't be time to analyze it carefully enough to sign it today.

You know, my understanding from Dave Mathews is that the drug companies take the passage of the bill and the President's intention to sign it as strong enough evidence for them to resume their production, the ones that have stopped. So, it is not that another day delay in signing it will cause a day's delay in production because they are going ahead with it now. They have been assured, in other words, that the liability problem --

Q Has the President had his shot yet?

MR. NESSEN: No, he hasn't. There are no shots available yet.

Q Last night when the President came out and prodded the Congress to act, he said he didn't think the inoculation program could begin for six weeks, and I think I figured about the second or third week of September. Does this legislative action change that timetable?

MR. NESSEN: No, Jim Cannon gave the President a very brief report this morning on what the passage means in terms of when the shots can begin. They will begin in September --

Q Early, late, middle?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't pinpoint it, but they will begin in September. The President told Jim that he wanted the message passed to HEW and all the others involved and that he wanted the program to be thrown into high gear now that the legislation had been passed. He wanted everything to be in place to start giving the shots and he wanted it to be done "efficiently and effectively"-- those were the words he used.

Q Is the phrase "high gear" his phrase?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure he used that expression, but that was his thought.

Q Have you any announcement today, any particular announcements?

MR. NESSEN I can announce to you today that the President will leave on Sunday to attend the Republican National Convention in Kansas City. I would look for a departure from the South Lawn at around 4:00 in the afternoon, take off from Andrews about 4:30 and the President would then get into Kansas City about 6:00 Kansas City time.

Just by way of giving you some idea of what the President will be doing out there, he will be --

Q Ron, I am sorry to interrupt, but do you know which airport he is going into? Is he going into the International Airport?

MR. NESSEN: Larry will check. He has been tracking on this.

Q Prime time television arrival?

MR. NESSEN: You got me. You will have to ask the prime time television people. Don't forget, I was only involved in the not ready for prime television.

Q There is also a great lag between the 4:00 departure and something at Andrews at 4:30; that is to say, it is usually less than ten minutes --

MR. NESSEN: These are very loose times.

Q So, you are not planning any fanfare at Andrews?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think anybody will be left for any fanfare.

Q Do you have press times?

MR. NESSEN: No, but you can more or less calculate the press times, Ralph. About an hour before.

Q Do you have any departure statement or arrival statement?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is there will not be much of a reception at the airport in Kansas City. I have to check out these details for you, but the indication is that some of his supporters may want to gather at the hotel, at the Crown Center, and welcome him to Kansas City.

Q What is he going to do when he gets there?

MR. NESSEN: You mean that night or for the rest of the week?

Q That night and the rest of the week both.

MR. NESSEN: I think that night he will pretty much have a private dinner with his family.

Q Who is going with him?

MR. NESSEN: Sheila, I think, announced the family plans yesterday, didn't she?

It is the Municipal Airport.

Q She didn't say when Mrs. Ford was going?

MR. NESSEN: Since the President is going on Sunday, Mrs. Ford, so far as I know, will go with him.

Q What will he be doing before the balloting?

MR. NESSEN: I am obviously going to give you his plans as they are finalized, but just in a general way I would expect that the mornings would largely be taken up with normal Presidential business. There is obviously no way to put aside the Presidential business for a week. There are a large number -- or at least some -- of bills being passed by Congress this week which will need to be studied and acted upon by the President. So, that is one thing. A small NSC staff is going to Kansas City to keep the President advised and to work with him in that area.

Q Advised by Scowcroft or somebody else?

MR. NESSEN: Scowcroft will go.

Q Approximately how many others?

MR. NESSEN: You mean the entire White House staff?

Q No. I am referring to when you said small NSC staff.

MR. NESSEN: Three people, including Scowcroft.

So, the mornings are largely on Presidential business --

Q You are going tomorrow, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: No, I am going on Sunday with the President.

Q Keep going with the description of what will be happening.

Q Who else will go as senior aides on that day?

MR. NESSEN: That is a separate thing and something you will probably want to discuss at some length. Let me finish the schedule part of it.

Generally speaking, the President will confer with party leaders, Governors --

Q You are talking now essentially of the afternoons and evenings?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, afternoons mostly -- party leaders, delegates, mayors and Governors.

Q Where?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have exactly where these will take place, but I think most will probably be at the President's hotel. The President obviously will spend time every day continuing to work on his choice for Vice President, and that will include conferring on the choice of Vice President with these people I have mentioned -- party leaders, Governors, mayors and delegates.

Q Does he plan to meet with some of the prospective running mates out there?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have that to give you today, Ed.

Q Will he be talking to Governor Bond and Governor Ray about the Vice Presidential selection?

MR. NESSEN: He will be talking to those Governors as well as other Governors there about the Vice Presidential choice. He will also work on his acceptance speech for a good deal of time each day. As far as I know, most of the evenings will be spent having dinner with his family and watching TV.

Q Anything public? Any public appearances?

MR. NESSEN: Aside from the arrival at the hotel on Sunday, I don't have any schedule at the moment to give you of public appearances.

Q We will never know who he confers with in the evenings? The story will be that he is watching TV?

MR. NESSEN: It is not anticipated there will be much conferring in the evenings. The evenings have been set aside for the family and for TV watching.

Q He goes to the Convention Hall for the first time on Thursday?

MR. NESSEN: For the acceptance speech, that is correct.

Q Will he be giving a news conference in Kansas City?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans for one right now.

Q When he announces his VP choice, he will, won't he?

MR. NESSEN: We haven't worked out the details of the method for announcing his choice.

Q Why is he going so early when he obviously isn't supposed to show up there until he is nominated?

MR. NESSEN: I would say there are two reasons, Howard. He wants to do all he can to promote greater party unity so that when he emerges from the Convention as the nominee and begins to campaign for the Presidency he will begin it with a unified Republican Party. So, some of his efforts, or many of his efforts in Kansas City, will be devoted to building greater party unity.

The other reason, I would say, is that I think you know the President's interest in politics -- he has been to the Conventions of 1952, 1960, 1964, 1968, and 1972, and I think it would be very hard to keep him away from the Convention this time.

Q When does he plan to meet with Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: There is no schedule for that.

Q Is he going to?

MR. NESSEN: I mean, he is going to meet with a lot of people out there in the interest of party unity.

Q My question is, is he planning to meet with Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: I said he doesn't have any schedule at the moment to meet with Governor Reagan, but he is going to have meetings out there to promote party unity.

Q Will he consult with Reagan on the choice of a running mate?

MR. NESSEN: He is going to consult with party leaders out there, but I can't give you right now the list of who they will be.

Q Any comments from the White House on the possibility that Senator Buckley will enter the race for the Republican Presidential nomination?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, you have covered a lot of conventions and you know that the rumor content is very high and begins very early.

Q You put this in the rumor category?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, it is.

Q You have mentioned several times that the President has been working on his acceptance speech. That is understandable. I guess he wants to make the best possible speech. But, you have never mentioned what will happen if he doesn't have something to accept. What will he do if Reagan is nominated -- in that unlikely possibility -- let me put it that way? What will he do? Will he prepare a concession statement or plead party unity, or what?  
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: He expects to use the speech he is working on.

Q Ron, will the President be talking to delegations, speaking to delegations and will it be covered --

MR. NESSEN: His exact schedule is not worked out yet, but I would anticipate he will be seeing delegates as part of his effort to build party unity.

Q How will we be able to cover that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have all the details for you yet of the comings and goings in the hotel or if he is going to go out of the hotel, but I can assure you that we are going to have a full press operation there and that we are going to keep everybody posted of everything he is doing, and we will have as wide a coverage as we can.

Q We will know everyone who sees the President? Are we going to have contact with them or are we going to be barred from the two floors?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think there are any plans for the press to be on the two floors where the President is staying and where the other people are living and having offices. You know, there is a very extensive press operation in Kansas City and no effort that I know of --

Q Yes, there is a tough Secret Service that will keep us from getting near --

MR. NESSEN: I don't know why there will be a desire to keep anybody from talking to anybody. As I say, his meetings out there, the ones he has, will be for the purpose of, one, discussing the Vice Presidential nomination, and, two, to build party unity.

Q Ron, there is a specific one that is supposedly in the works that I want to ask you about. That is the meeting he is supposed to have on Tuesday with the Virginia delegation. Can you confirm that?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot, Jim. I know for a fact that a detailed schedule of his meetings with delegates is not firmed up yet but we certainly will tell you about it when it is.

Q Ron, will there be one entrance or one exit that the White House press will be able to watch and --

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I am told that even as we speak there are very elaborate camera platforms and lights in the lobby of the Crown Center so I know your own producers and the pool producers are working with the White House and PFC people out there to make sure there is full coverage of comings and goings at the hotel.

Q What I am talking about is related to Helen's question of, are we going to be able to be in a position to see people who are going up to see the President or are we going to be kept in the lobby and not anywhere close --

MR. NESSEN: As opposed to what?

Q As opposed to the two floors that he is on?

MR. NESSEN: As I said to Helen, there is no plan for there to be any routine press coverage on the two floors where he lives and works and the staff does, but there are very elaborate arrangements already made in the lobby right now, Phil, to cover the people who are coming and going.

Q Some people may come through the kitchen?



MR. NESSEN: I know of no plans, as I say, to keep anybody away from the press.

Q Will one elevator only be used to go up to the President's floor or will the public be allowed to use all the elevators?

MR. NESSEN: Unlike previous Conventions that some of you may have been to where a candidate's hotel has been off limits from the front door on, the Crown Center is not off limits. The vast majority of the hotel is totally open to the public, including the press room, incidentally.

Q We don't want the public in there. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: What?

Q The only time there is a press conference --

MR. NESSEN: What have you got to hide? Don't you think the public has a right to know what goes on in the briefing room?

The fact is, the briefing room is one of the open parts of the hotel at the moment.

Q During a briefing the public will get in? That is unbelievable.

MR. NESSEN: To answer Phil's question, unlike previous Conventions, the candidate's hotel is open, and there will be certain areas that will be secured -- the two floors where the President and his staff live and work and certain offices that are on other floors -- but the public can come and go in the lobby and other large areas of the hotel, unlike previous years.

Q Ron, how many rooms will be occupied by the staff on those two floors?

MR. NESSEN: Essentially the entire two floors.

Q What two floors and will the President have a place set aside on these two floors where he can talk to the press or introduce people to the press, something like that?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, it is not planned that there would be any press coverage on those two floors. There will be other places for the press --

Q Which two floors?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure we have indicated what the two floors of the hotel are.

Q Will the public get access to the press room to take our lovely typewriters, pencils and erasers --

MR. NESSEN: There will be security and so forth out there.

Q Ron, will the President meet with a Rockefeller reception or assembly when he gets there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any plans Sunday night, except to go up and have dinner with his family, Aldo.

Q The New York Times says that the President, according to White House sources, says the President will consult with Reagan before he announces his Vice Presidential candidate.

MR. NESSEN: He is going to consult with party leaders and I am not prepared at the moment to list them and tell you what time they are coming to see him.

Q You won't confirm that?

MR. NESSEN: I am saying he is going to meet with party leaders on the question of his Vice Presidential choice.

Q Does he consider Reagan a party leader?

MR. NESSEN: I think you can answer that question, Helen.

Q No, I can't.

Q Ron, I am intensely curious about that question.

MR. NESSEN: I can see that, Les. I am not prepared right now to spell out the schedule of meetings, Helen.

Q I don't know why you won't answer the question.

MR. NESSEN: I am just not, at this time, ready to list the names and appointment times of the party leaders who are coming in.

Q Ron, do you have anything to announce on the quest for the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't. I don't have anything new to announce on the quest for the Vice President.

Q Ron, will you confirm that the list in today's Washington Post of people being considered as Vice Presidential candidates is accurate?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to confirm or deny any names.

Q This isn't names, it is a clump.

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to confirm or deny clumps. (Laughter)

Q Ron, did you run a tally of the number of responses?

MR. NESSEN: I have a tally of the number of letters that went out asking for recommendations. Does anybody care to receive that?

Q Yes.

Q Ron, today was the last day.

MR. NESSEN: But they are still coming in.

Q What is the tally?

Q They will be considered?

MR. NESSEN: They will be considered so long as they come in. I don't know that I would say the deadline has been extended, but the letters will, even though they come in past 6 o'clock.

Q Will Scott and Rhodes wind up their Capitol Hill search today and come in with the --

MR. NESSEN: No, it is past time for the Capitol people to come in. The President is just going to take into consideration suggestions that come in, even though it is past today.

Q He has a pretty good idea now what field he is going to play around with?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you know, some people will have been contacted and told they have been recommended but some other people --

Q Have they all been contacted, those he plans to contact, as of now?

MR. NESSEN: No, I wouldn't say that. I would say since the letters and suggestions are still coming in that it is still possible that he will discover a name or two or more that he will want to contact.

Q How many have been contacted?

MR. NESSEN: I can't tell you.

Q How many letters were sent out?

MR. NESSEN: The letters that went out were the delegates and alternates, 4,428; mayors, 387; county executives, 150; Governors, 13; Senators, 38; House Members, 186; Republican National Committee officials at the national and State level, 175; PFC State chairmen, 50.

Q How many replied?

MR. NESSEN: I am not at the moment ready to give the tally of replies. As I said yesterday, I think you would have to consider the response really quite good.

Q How many names were proposed --

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to get into how many names or what the ranking was.

Q You won't tell us how many people have been proposed?

MR. NESSEN: It is still being tabulated. Letters that have come in over the past couple of days have not been counted yet.

Q Why would we have to consider that response quite good?

MR. NESSEN: I guess you would have to more or less accept my judgment.

Q Ron, has the President been asking these black leaders for their support?

MR. NESSEN: No, this is for an entirely different purpose. This is, as I understand it, an organization that black college presidents have formed to work for the solution to a number of problems that are peculiar to black colleges, including their problems with endowments, their difficulties in holding down tuition, the lack of cooperation in foundation grants, and some specific problems they have with Federal aid to higher education. This is unrelated to what we had been talking about.

Q Ron, the series of letters that has gone out, is this the total contact that will go to the potential Vice Presidential nominees before one is selected?

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean has everybody who is going to be asked for a suggestion been asked for a suggestion?

Q No, the people who are being telephoned saying "send in your financial statements" --

MR. NESSEN: Or prepare them.

Q Is that the total contact to be made by the White House and the President before one is picked or will there be a series of meetings in Kansas City in the narrowing down process -- telephone conversations or any other contacts?

MR. NESSEN: Tom, I can't spell out the next developments in the process. I just can't do it today.

Q Ron, when you cited the reasons for the President's departure on Sunday, it occurred to me that you made no mention of the speculation that the President might be going early because he wants to firm up his position there. Is the President concerned that by going on Sunday he might lead some people to think his position is not as strong as he claims it is?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what impression people are being led to. I am telling you the reasons. I know for a fact the President believes he now has -- and has for a couple of weeks now -- had the votes to win the nomination on the first ballot. He still believes that, even more so, in fact, as he sees other delegates lining up on his side.

So, as far as he is concerned, he has the delegates now to win the nomination on the first ballot and he has seen no slippage in the overall number since a couple of weeks ago when Jim Baker announced he had it.

Q Ron, is the President aware of reports that say his Special Assistant, John Calhoun, has master-minded some magic scheme under which black delegates have pushed him over the number needed for nomination? Is he aware of these reports and what has been his reaction to them?

MR. NESSEN: A magic scheme for black delegates to put him over the top? I have not heard -- as I say, to my knowledge Jim Baker announced about two weeks ago or maybe more that the President had 1135 delegates, and there has been certainly no slippage since then.

Q Ron, how many members of the White House staff are going to have to pay their own way to the Convention, and what are the financial problems regarding hitting the ceiling on spending?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how close the PFC is to hitting its ceiling. You will have to talk to the PFC, but there will be 59 White House staff people who will go to the Convention. That is everybody -- senior staff, other staff, secretaries, Press Office personnel, et cetera -- 59.

That does not count Secret Service and communications. It does not count the Military Aide. It does not count, for instance, Terry O'Donnell, who is designated as one of the few people who is going in an official capacity, nor does it include the small NSC staff.

Q Why is Terry O'Donnell designated as something special?

MR. NESSEN: He is performing official functions out there, as he does everywhere, nonpolitical functions. You know what the functions are. He prepares papers for the President and does -- you know, what he does he does regardless of what the President is doing, whether it is a political function or nonpolitical function.

Q Ron, were you about to tell us those 59 are all paying their own way?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct. Let me break that down for you. Thirty-five of the people are paying their own expenses.

Q Are you?

MR. NESSEN: That includes me.

Q For what? Hotel bills and food?

MR. NESSEN: That includes hotel bills and food. The other 24 are having their expenses paid by the PFC.

The general rule is that the PFC is paying for everyone's transportation. The exception to that is that some of the people who can't make it on to the Air Force One or the PFC charter because of conflicts in their schedule or other duties are going to have to pay their own air fares.

Q So, those who get on Air Force One out of the 35 will have their transportation paid?

MR. NESSEN: By the PFC.

Q So, when you say they are paying their own expenses, you are not referring to transportation?

MR. NESSEN: Generally, they are paying their hotel and food expenses and the PFC is paying their transportation expenses. The exceptions to that are the people who are paying their own transportation expenses.

Q How many will that be?

MR. NESSEN: How many is what?

Q Who are paying their own transportation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we have calculated it yet because it really depends on whether they can make the plane on Thursday or make the plane on Sunday.

Q Ron, is the significance of this that the 59 will be engaged in purely political activities on the President's behalf?

MR. NESSEN: I would say that there has been adopted a "bend over backwards" policy at the Convention; that all through the primary season we have followed the rules of the FEC and, in most cases, have gone beyond the rules of the FEC in terms of being careful to have political trips and expenses paid for by the PFC.

In this case, since the dividing line I would say probably is even harder to define on this particular trip, it was decided to resolve the question very simply by having the PFC or the people themselves pay their expenses in order that there would be no question whatsoever raised.

Q Ron, will your staff continue to be paid by the White House?

MR. NESSEN: Those people who are below the commissioned office level -- commissioned officers get no vacation time. The people who do, whatever level they are at that have vacation time, they will take their vacation next week or will use up vacation time next week so they, in a sense, will be working on their vacation at the Convention.

Q Commissioned officers will be quite a few.

MR. NESSEN: No, there are not very many commissioned officers.

Q They will be out there working on other matters than their regular jobs, right?

MR. NESSEN: There certainly will be Presidential activities out there, Sarah.

Q But they can't possibly be attending to their regular jobs while they are out there, right?

MR. NESSEN: No, they will.

Q They can't, Ron. They just can't because--

MR. NESSEN: They have to because the Presidential business can't stop.

Q Their full-time will be spent on White House duties and not on any political activities?

MR. NESSEN: No, I never said full time. But, as you know, the FEC ruling has been that after officials work 40 hours a week they are entitled to do political activities once it goes beyond the 40 hours a week.

Q Ron, will this be the largest number of aides to accompany the President on any trip since he entered the White House?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't think so. I would think some of the foreign trips have had a far larger staff than this.

Q Are we to assume that the White House secretaries are paying their own hotel bills and meals?

MR. NESSEN: No. For those who it was decided because of their salary levels it was not fair to ask them to pay their own way, they will have that way paid by the PFC.



Q Who pays the President's?

MR. NESSEN: The President's will be paid either by the PFC or out of his own pocket. It has not been decided yet. I think the bottom line here is, as I said to someone over here, that all questions have been resolved by what I think you would have to agree is a kind of bend-over-backwards scheme of resolving all questions, by having either the people pay their own way, having the PFC pay their way, or having them take vacation time where they have vacation time to take.

Q Will you be on your own vacation time?

MR. NESSEN: Commissioned officers don't get any vacation.

Q Are you a commissioned officer?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I am.

Q On commissioned -- where does the line go?

MR. NESSEN: Just in the Press Office, friends, the commissioned officers are Nessen, Gergen, Rhatican, Carlson, and Speakes. Is that a comprehensive list?

Q Has the President sent his advance check for his hotel room yet?

MR. NESSEN: No, as I said, the question of whether the President's accommodations and meals will be paid for by the PFC or out of his own pocket has not been decided yet.

Q The hotel tells us that everybody staying in that hotel, including the President, has to pay in advance. We just wondered if you all had sent the check out.

MR. NESSEN: I was supposed to have my check in by the close of business yesterday, but I didn't have it in yet.

Q How about the President, has he been told to get his check in?

MR. NESSEN: If he hasn't, the PFC will probably send in the check and he can reimburse them if it is decided to do it that way.

Q I just want to know whether or not the President --

MR. NESSEN: Whether or not he is going to have a room when he gets there, or whether the hotel will give away his accommodations.

Q We talked to the hotel. They say his credit is no good in Kansas City.

MR. NESSEN: Why is that?

Q The same reason we have to pay in advance.

MR. NESSEN: Missouri is what, the show-me State. Show me your money if you want your room.

Q Who is doing the deciding whether the PFC or the White House pays?

MR. NESSEN: The White House is not paying anything, Carol.

Q But you said --

MR. NESSEN: You mean on the President's room?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: He will discuss it with the logistics people.

Q You said decisions were made that people will either pay their own way, take vacation time. Who is making the decisions?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it was the White House staff secretariat, the lawyers and the PFC people. They got together and worked out these arrangements.

Q Ron, can I digress on the black university presidents. I didn't see James Cheek's, the president of Howard University, name on that list and that is the most prestigious of all black universities.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that question, but we will find out the answer.

Q Ron, in these days of desegregation, is the President still interested in the continuance of purely black universities?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that is the question here, Howard. This is an organization established by the presidents of black colleges to deal with, as I said, problems peculiar to black colleges. I don't think the President has a --

Q Is he in favor of the continuance of purely black colleges?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I have heard him discuss that issue.

Q Can white people attend those universities?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, a lot do, Sarah.

Q Are you sure that a lot do attend and can attend these universities?

MR. NESSEN: I know that Howard has a good number of white students.

Q But Howard is not on there.

Q Ron, a lot of the cabinet members, as I understand it, are going to be staying through the coming week. Will your office be coordinating interviews with them?

MR. NESSEN: Bill Greener and John Carlson have gone out as an advance party and Peter Kaye and they have set up a very elaborate interview schedule, which I have seen, for this week and it is being put together for next week. Not only is there a schedule of people who will have briefings and news conferences at regular times, but there is something being set up there in which each of the cabinet members and leading White House staff people will be assigned to a half-hour or an hour a day during which they are obligated to come and that is their press obligation for the day, to come.

Q It's like holding office hours?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, that is right.

Q Also, you have a crisis building in the Eastern Mediterranean between Greece and Turkey now. Do you want to say anything about that?

MR. NESSEN: I would only say -- well, overall, the United States hopes and expects that the parties would resolve that in a peaceful way. The issue is a legal issue. It has to do with the dividing line, where the dividing line should be drawn in terms of the Continental Shelf in the Aegean. That is the kind of issue it is.

Greece has asked for both a world court ruling and a United Nations Security Council session. So the United States would hope that those kind of mechanisms would be used to resolve it peacefully.

Q Has the U.S. taken any role in contacting either the Caramanlis Government or the Turkish Government to intercede in any way in this decision?

MR. NESSEN: We have been in touch, I would say, virtually daily in Ankara and Athens and in Washington with those two governments and the contacts consist mostly of emphasizing our view that their particular legal differences over that Continental Shelf dividing line should be solved in a peaceful way.

Q Do you have anything you want to say on which side has the better argument?

MR. NESSEN: No, the American position will emerge at the U.N. session, the Security Council session.

Q Ron, is the President going to swear in Dr. Stever before he departs for the Convention as his science adviser?

MR. NESSEN: Probably tomorrow.

Q How about seeing Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: Kissinger will report on his trip tomorrow. I don't have the time yet.

Q Ron, in all the people who have given the President their view on the Vice Presidency, has he received any communication or have his aides received any communication from Richard Nixon on this matter?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge.

Could I give you a correction on that list of people who were solicited for their suggestions on a Vice President? I listed House Members as 186. That should be 145.

Q Ron, there was a report that the President had been advised by his aides or something that he was not going to take Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld as part of his party to the Convention. Is that true?

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, Don Rumsfeld -- in fact, all the Cabinet -- will be there for the acceptance speech.

Q I heard you say the Cabinet members, but now Rumsfeld will be there?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is he will be there for the acceptance speech.

Q Not beforehand?

MR. NESSEN: At the earliest I think Don would be there Wednesday, but you better let me check that. That is my latest information, but I will look into it.

Q You all have not taken any action to tell him to stay away during this prepolitical activity?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of, no.

Q Ron, earlier there was a question asked if the President had solicited these black fraternal leaders who were in yesterday and you answered --

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, I thought the question was did he ask the black college presidents something about --

Q I would like to ask, did he solicit the fraternal leaders in yesterday or the black individuals with whom he met last week?

MR. NESSEN: Some of those were delegates, so obviously he did solicit those, but he only met them very briefly. I am told he only met them really for a handshake; that they were here for another meeting with other people and the President seeing them was kind of just arranged as something that wasn't scheduled for him to see them so they did meet him for kind of a courtesy call and a handshake. As far as I know, his contact with them was not lengthy enough to involve a serious discussion of delegates or Vice Presidential choices, either.

Q Was there a political discussion with this group that came in --

MR. NESSEN: Which group?

Q The fraternal and the delegate groups.

MR. NESSEN: What fraternal group?

Q The group that visited with President Ford yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: That was the Lionel Hampton group. That was entirely different. That didn't have anything to do with delegates or politics.

We have the college presidents who are in today to talk about black college matters. We had the Lionel Hampton group that came in yesterday, arranged by the PFC bringing in black supporters of the President. We had some meetings last week, which the President told about over the weekend, I think, in response to Helen's question. A number of black groups were in last week for other meetings and on a couple of occasions the President met them briefly and shook hands.

Q Do you have the list of the Lionel Hampton people?

MR. NESSEN: I can get it for you or Speakes can get it for you.

Q Ron, am I correct in remembering that after the President made statements in Texas while he was campaigning down there, he made some very strong statements about the Panama Canal. Am I correct in recalling that you clarified in any way or elaborated on these statements?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. We will look it up and see what was done at the time.

Q Do you recall doing the same thing before you issued the transcript of the Cronkite interview? You paraphrased the President's statements to Cronkite. Is that true or not?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall. I will look it up.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:15 P.M. EDT)

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