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N E W S C O N F E R E N C E

#562

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:26 P.M. CDT

AUGUST 17, 1976

TUESDAY
(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. NESSEN: I think this is going to come as a total surprise to many of you, and even a shock. We actually have some news today. I know it is unprecedented.

At about 10:45 this morning, the President telephoned Governor Milliken of Michigan, who was in a room here at the Crown Center preparing for one of his caucus sessions, and the President asked Governor Milliken to deliver his nominating speech and the Governor said that he was delighted to be invited to do this, was pleased and would certainly accept. They talked just briefly about a few of the mechanics. So, that has happened.

Q What do you mean, the "mechanics"?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President said it should be about four or five minutes long, that sort of thing.

Q Who will second?

MR. NESSEN: The seconding speeches, there will be a number, or a series, of short seconding speeches from the floor of the Convention and the specific people I don't have to give you right now.

Q Not from the podium?

MR. NESSEN: No, from the floor.

Q About 20 of them?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the exact number, but I think that is too many.

Q Do you know the names of any of them?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any of the names. Each candidate is only allowed 15 minutes to have his nomination and seconding, so if you take four or five minutes for Governor Milliken's nomination speech and then all the seconding speeches have to fit in the remaining ten minutes.

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Q Do you know any names at all?

MR. NESSEN: I don't, Helen.

Q Do you have a count of the uncommitted delegates or how they are being chosen?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how they are being chosen, Aldo, or who they are at the moment.

Q Why did he pick Milliken?

MR. NESSEN: First, because he knows Governor Milliken well. He is a friend. Governor Milliken knows the President's record and accomplishments. He is an articulate, dynamic, popular Republican Governor. It seemed like a good choice to the President.

To bring you along on the schedule, the President spent the evening with various aides and advisers, watched the Convention and went to bed shortly after midnight. He was up at 6:45 and had breakfast at 7:15. I think the pool has probably given you a report on the meeting that was covered with the regional whips of the Ford campaign. Then, there was a larger meeting of the regional and State whips. There was a small addition to the schedule this morning. At about 10 o'clock, the President met with a small group of delegates from Mississippi, then at 10:45 was the phone call to Governor Milliken and then the trip to the Illinois caucus, which you saw.

In between, the President sent a message to President Marcos of the Philippines. As you may know, there was an earthquake in the Philippines. It struck the island of Mindanao and the President sent a message to President Marcos offering assistance to the Philippines and offering condolences to those who lost their lives in the Philippines.

My plan is to have a posting at 5:00 today.

Q The meeting with the small group of delegates from Mississippi, will you elaborate on that? How small a group? How long did it last?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a breakdown on what their preference was on candidates. The meeting lasted about 30 to 35 minutes.

Q Who was there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the list of participants.

Q Was Clarke Reed there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the list of participants.

Q Do you know how many were there?

MR. NESSEN: A little over a half dozen.

Q Why did he meet with them?

MR. NESSEN: It is part of a series of meetings with delegates.

Q Did he ask for the meeting today?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure, Sarah.

Q Ron, Mr. Cheney said the President will go to Reagan's hotel Wednesday night to discuss with him the selection of a Vice President, on a consultative rather than an announcement basis. What can you add to that?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing.

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Saul said that Dick Cheney told the Sperling breakfast this morning that the President would go and visit Governor Reagan Wednesday night after the nomination and consult with him on the Vice Presidency and did I have anything to add. I said no.

Q We have been told that the President is going to fight the foreign policy plank.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who is telling you that, Helen.

Q Is it acceptable to you then, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I think, at this stage, what I want to say is that the Committee version of the platform is a good one. We expect to support the platform as written, but I am not going to speculate on what planks or amendments or substitutions may be offered on the floor.

Q I believe a substitute has been offered.

MR. NESSEN: Is that the foreign policy morality plank?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: My position is I am not going to speculate on what planks may be offered or what the position will be.

I don't know who told you that, Helen, but this is the position of the campaign.

Q It was by one of the supporters before you came in.

MR. NESSEN: Who?

Q A Ford supporter?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who the supporter is but, as I have said many times, if you want the authoritative--

Q If you have a position on 16-C, how come you aren't taking a position on this?

MR. NESSEN: I just won't speculate on what might happen in the way of amendments to the platform.

Q Ron, you said that Secretary Kissinger was coming to the Convention. Where is he and is it possible that he might be one of the seconders?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the plans are for Secretary Kissinger.

Q You said that he was -- (Laughter)

Q Question.

MR. NESSEN: Les' question was, I said in Washington I thought Secretary Kissinger would be coming to the Convention. Where is he and might it be that he would be one of those seconders from the floor tomorrow night.

My answer is that I don't know exactly when Secretary Kissinger would arrive but I don't expect him to be one of the seconders.

Q You don't think he is going to arrive at all?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know when he will arrive.

Q Do you expect him to arrive?

MR. NESSEN: The last word I heard in Washington was the whole Cabinet would be here. The State Department said he would arrive on Thursday.

Q Jerry Parske announced it yesterday at that youth thing. (Laughter)

Q Can you tell us what happened in the Illinois delegation caucus, including the questions asked of the President?

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Saul is wondering what happened in the Illinois delegation caucus.

As is the normal procedure for these caucus meetings, the President began with two or three minutes of remarks. He said that he is absolutely convinced that the Convention is moving in the right direction from his point of view:

"The Rules and the Platform Committees have made an honest effort to bring the Republican Party together and that must be done. When we leave here Friday, the Republican Party needs to be unified behind a program and a candidate which will be good for America. I hope that we will eliminate divisiveness."

Then he talked about the programs and policies and accomplishments of his two years. He talked about turning the economy around, talked about peace in the world and maintaining a strong defense, and he said we have restored confidence and trust in the White House.

Then he talked about the grounds on which Jimmy Carter can be attacked and then he said that --

Q What were the grounds, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: He said that Jimmy Carter had embraced the Democratic platform that tries to be all things to all people. It is costly and inflationary, and seems to want the United States to withdraw from its responsibilities in the world. He said Carter also has embraced the record of the Democratic Congress, which also has passed big spending bills and so forth.

He said he has been in Illinois many times, that "our candidates must win from the court house to the state house, from Congress to the White House. I appreciate your welcome" and he sent Betty's regards.

Then he was asked a series of questions. Some of them had to do with his position on issues and some were more to do with strategy and so forth. A gentleman named Sheehan stood up and said he was from the 41st ward of Chicago.

He said that there were polls in his ward showing that the President's popularity was surging since the Democratic Convention, and he asked the President whether that was true all over the country. The President said, "Yes, we have gained in the polls," and he mentioned the two polls that came out this weekend, the Gallup and the Harris, showing a considerable drop for Carter and said he also had seen some private polls taken quite recently. He said the gap is narrowing and the momentum is growing.

Q Excuse me. That is the Ford-Carter gap?

MR. NESSEN: That is right. "Our momentum is growing and we can win this election."

Q Ron, will the President support the ticket irrespective of who is nominated?

MR. NESSEN: That was one of the questions he was asked and he said -- as he has before -- he will support the ticket. He expects to be the nominee and will support the ticket.

Q If Governor Reagan offered him the nomination for Vice President, would he accept it?

MR. NESSEN: He doesn't expect to have to face that question. He expects to be the Presidential nominee.

Q Was he asked questions about the Vice Presidency?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. "What are you looking for in a Vice President," someone asked, and he said, "I have gotten a lot of advice," and he has listed all the people he has solicited views from. He said "someone compatible with me ideologically and personally. We have to have a team."

Q Did Governor Ogilvie ask any questions?

MR. NESSEN: No, he didn't. He was asked, "Will you campaign in black communities?" He said, "I always have. I will." Then he was asked about his program for the cities. He was asked, "Are you willing to take on Congress; to push Carter out into the open?" He said, "If you listen to my acceptance speech, you will have an answer to that question." There was laughter and applause. He said, "All the points you made will be very well taken care of in the speech."

Q What did he mean, he has always campaigned in black communities? Do you mean in Grand Rapids?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

"Why don't you tell us who your Vice Presidential choice is?" He said, "I don't believe the contest between me and Governor Reagan should be determined on the basis of a running mate. It should be between the two of us." Then he was asked about his program on senior citizens -- Medicare, catastrophic insurance, campaign management -- and he said again that he does plan to add additional people to the campaign staff. He didn't name any, and he said, "I believe we have a campaign that will win in November."

That was about it.

Q Was the alleged bribery mentioned?

MR. NESSEN: No, it wasn't.

Q Did he narrow it down? He spoke yesterday of five or six sort of people at the top end of the delegate preference. Did anybody ask him about that?

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute. You know this five or six people at the top end of the delegate preference is something very different from narrowing down, and I tried to make that clear yesterday. I don't think I was too successful. What he told the delegation yesterday was that of all the suggestions, the 5,000 letters or so he sent out asking for suggestions, the ones that have come back, the majority of the recommendations have been centered on five or six candidates with a scattering of support for others. He has not indicated that he has narrowed his choice at all, to anybody on his staff at all. So, anybody around town telling you he has is misleading you.

Q What was the President's reaction to Mrs. Ford's statement that if he loses the nomination he will move back to Alexandria and practice law? You may have already been asked this, but if so, I missed it.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear about it, Les.

Q It was in the Washington Post?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear about it.

Q Will you ask him?

MR. NESSEN: He expects to win the nomination and win the election, so it is sort of academic.

Q Should we be looking for comments or reactions to whatever happens on the floor tonight, will you be available?

MR. NESSEN: I will be here in the hotel all evening.

Q Will you be around here?

MR. NESSEN: I will probably be upstairs, but John and I will work out some sort of arrangement. Why don't we do this: I will come down and be here or in my office shortly or immediately after the conclusion of the session.

Q Will the President watch it on television?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Why don't we just take a pool up there?

Q Ron, the position on the foreign policy plank, is it contingent in any way on what happens on 16-C?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going to speculate in any way on what our position might be in a plank that might be voted on.

Q Will the President release the financial and medical data on his running mate?

MR. NESSEN: One of the questions asked during the initial contact with the people was, "Will you commit yourself to having a set of information on health, tax returns and liabilities and assets made public?" Those called had to make that pledge before they would be considered as his running mate.

Q Is the disclosure so far made by Governor Reagan considered satisfactory?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, what was that?

Q Is the disclosure of Governor Reagan's financial, health and tax records, which he has made during his campaign, considered satisfactory by the President?

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

Q Does it meet the test you just described?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I never thought of it.

Q Ron, has the President, or any of his aides, consulted, talked to or even informed Secretary Kissinger about the Ford policy platform action here in Kansas City this week?

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, I think, if I can boil down your question, Secretary Kissinger, has he been kept informed of developments in the platform that relate to foreign policy.

Q And has he been asked his advice?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly has been kept informed and I am not sure what role he has played in terms of advice.

Q Does the President consider Governor Reagan compatible with him, ideologically?

MR. NESSEN: It is so late in the game -- I said last week I wasn't going through the checklist and say whether he was compatible, not compatible, and so forth.

Q Ron, a Reagan delegate in Illinois has told the press about what he thought was an improper offer from some Ford people for their support. My question is, in light of this story now and in light of the alleged bribe on the other side, is the President concerned with the image that is going to be created here with all of these stories and any damage to the party coming out of Kansas City?

MR. NESSEN: Bill, you know I have read about and seen on television these cases that you mention and I understand they are being handled by the proper people. I don't basically know enough about them to really comment on them.

Q My question wasn't directed to what you think; the question is, has the President discussed it?

MR. NESSEN: I am not real sure that the President is aware of the stories.

Q Ron, is there any reason why a pool cannot be permitted into the meetings with the President at these State caucuses?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that most of these caucuses make that decision on their own and I think most of them prefer, the ones that are closed -- some are open, some are closed -- the ones that are closed, I understand, indicate they want to have something like a private business session.

Q I understand the decision to close the Illinois caucus to the pool was made by the White House and not by the Illinois caucus.

MR. NESSEN: I heard earlier that the Illinois people had made that decision even before they knew the President was going to come to have a closed caucus and then I heard somebody mention that too, and I haven't had to me to check it out.

Q Could you get them to open some of those up?

MR. NESSEN: I will check to see what the case was in Illinois because I heard both sides say it was the other side.

Q Governor Ogilvie said it was the White House's decision to have it closed.

Q Ron, I want to relate to the Vice Presidency. Mr. Cheney said this morning that several of the possibilities who have been asked to prepare or submit their data have already been interviewed. Could you tell me whether the President personally has interviewed any of them or were their interviews confined to the President's staff?

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Saul wants to know more details of the Vice Presidential selection process and who is doing the interviewing, and so forth.

As I said, the other day I just prefer not to drop a detail here and a detail there each day, but rather, to reconstruct the whole process for you after the person is selected and announced.

Q Ron, what is the President's reaction to Senator Baker's keynote speech last night?

MR. NESSEN: The President thought it was a good, strong speech. He thought that Senator Baker had made a good presentation of the speech and he felt, from watching the response, that it had been well received by the delegates. He also felt that the other speeches last night -- Senator Dole and Vice President Rockefeller and Senator Goldwater -- made good speeches and commented on them.

Q Will the White House be open enough to allow us to know exactly how Senator Baker's speech was altered by David Gergen, as reported this morning in the papers and on the networks?

MR. NESSEN: I think I know what you are driving at, Les. (Laughter) The writers reviewed all the major speeches primarily to make sure there was no duplication, and so forth, and for factual matters.

Q Duplication, was that what they were worried about?

MR. NESSEN: The White House did not make any changes or any deletions in any of the speeches. The White House did make some suggestions.

Q Were they followed?

MR. NESSEN: The White House took nothing out of any of the speeches.

I think, if I may say parenthetically, there is a White House speechwriter named Pat Butler, whom many of you know. Pat is a long-time friend and, in fact, former employee of Senator Baker and as a courtesy, as really, more of a private relationship that they have, I believe Senator Baker did show his speech to Pat Butler and Pat probably made some suggestions on it.

Q Gergen had nothing to do with it? Gergen didn't alter any of it, it was Pat Butler?

MR. NESSEN: Nobody at the White House altered any of the speeches.

Q We are asking, did the White House ask Baker to delete some of the Watergate stuff which he basically confirmed this morning on television.

MR. NESSEN: I saw Senator Baker on television and I didn't get the same confirmation you did, Helen.

I think that is about all I have to say on the speech review process.

Q Ron, did the White House review Governor Connally's speech?

MR. NESSEN: I think all the major speeches were looked at for duplication and factual errors and mistakes.

Q Governor Connally's?

MR. NESSEN: All major speeches. I don't know specifically, but in general, the major speeches were looked at. I don't know specifically on that one.

Q Speaking specifically, have you had a copy of Governor Connally's speech, yet?

MR. NESSEN: I have not.

Q What about the White House? You represent the White House.

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

Q You don't know whether they have seen Connally's speech or not?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Do you know what they suggested come out of Baker's speech?

MR. NESSEN: I don't. Wait a minute, I don't know that they suggested that anything come out of Baker's speech.

Q What were the suggestions?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that the White House suggested that anything come out of Baker's speech.

Q When did the President see the entire Baker speech?

MR. NESSEN: I think what you are driving at, Phil, is that the President saw part of it last night -- most of it last night -- and asked CBS for a tape so he could look at it again this morning.

Q He didn't see the entire speech last night?

MR. NESSEN: He saw most of the speech last night. He saw it in its entirety this morning on the CBS tape.

Q There are two candidates in this race, at least we thought there were. Why is the President given the power to review these speeches when Ronald Reagan is apparently not having that opportunity?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that Baker's speech also was -- I think he said that on TV this morning.

Q I am talking about all the speeches.

MR. NESSEN: These speeches are sent here as a courtesy. Certainly there is no demand or command that they be sent here. They are sent as a courtesy.

Q You mean the White House didn't ask for those speeches to be sent to them?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q If he could go back to the morality in the foreign policy thing, the Reagan people are pushing, you have asked repeatedly this morning about it, and I have answered repeatedly I am not going to speculate on that. One gets the impression if you were confident this effort was going to be defeated, you would say we are confident this effort is going to be defeated. It sounds like you don't know how it is going to turn out.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think anybody knows how it is going to turn out, whether it is going to be introduced, whether it is going to be voted on, what the form of it is. It is too far ahead of the game to say.

I think I have said, you know, to preface that part of my answer, that the committee version, the Platform Committee-adopted platform is a good one and the President expects to support the platform as written.

Q Ron, Governor Reagan has said that he is eager to debate with Governor Carter. Why isn't the President eager to debate with Governor Carter?

MR. NESSEN: There is no change in the position on that.

Q I mean, in other words, am I incorrect in my assumption that the President is not eager to debate with Governor Carter or am I wrong?

MR. NESSEN: I forget what the President said the last time he was asked that. I will dig it out and show it to you, Les.

Q Ron, did Governor Connally clear the preliminaries and is he still up for consideration as the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to say who is up, who is down, who is in, who is out, and anybody who tells you they know is kidding you.

Q Ron, the President said today he has several Vice Presidential candidates. Those are different words from the various numbers --

MR. NESSEN: That is right, and Marilyn said how do you define "several," and he said more than two.

Q How do you define "several"?

MR. NESSEN: More than two.

Q Ron, there was a considerable amount said yesterday about getting a Ford delegate in Illinois to switch, bribery and so forth by the Reagan people and all that. There is a story this morning that went just the other way.

MR. NESSEN: Phil asked about that, Bob, and I said --

Q You said that the President is not aware of these things.

MR. NESSEN: He may not be, as far as I know. It is something that has not come to the White House.

Q Ron, will you ask him what he has to say about this because I understand he is ready to say that he would deny any desire to prosecute these.

MR. NESSEN: It is something that has not come to the White House, wouldn't come to the White House.

Q That is ridiculous. It has come to the White House already because it has been talked about by various and sundry White House staffers.

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with it.

Q You better get familiar with it. Why don't you ask the President if he has any comment to make on this Illinois situation?

MR. NESSEN: I will ask.

Q Ron, is the President thinking about going over to some women worker delegates or women workers Elly Petersen is meeting this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: Is that on the schedule? As far as I know, there hasn't been any change, John. I will double-check. What time is that supposed to be?

Q Between 4:00 and 6:00. He has that 5:00 thing with the black delegates at another hotel.

MR. NESSEN: It is not planned, John, that he would go.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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NEWS CONFERENCE

#563

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:24 P.M. CDT

AUGUST 17, 1976

TUESDAY

(Kansas City, Missouri)

MR. NESSEN: The President asked me to come down and tell you how grateful he is to the delegates who supported his position on this vote and how appreciative he is of the orderly process followed by the Convention in determining this issue.

Obviously, the President is delighted by the victory and he believes it is a good indication of how the final vote will turn out when the delegates vote on the nomination tomorrow night.

The President watched the vote on television in his office. He watched with Mrs. Ford, with his son, Mike, and Mike's wife, Gayle, with the White House Chief of Staff Dick Cheney, and with the President's Counsellor, John Marsh.

After the vote, the President telephoned his team of strategists at the Convention Hall and congratulated them. He told them it had been a tense but good vote. He asked that his appreciation be conveyed to all those who had helped with this and thanked everybody who had helped to achieve this victory.

Q Does this mean the President is now going to turn his attention to the other major concern he has-- picking a running mate? Did he do anything in that regard this evening?

MR. NESSEN: Not especially this evening, Jim. The President has been working for some time on his consideration of a Vice Presidential running mate, and he will continue that tomorrow.

Q Ron, I know you don't like these rumors, but another one surfaced tonight.

MR. NESSEN: That is the main problem with this Convention. (Laughter)

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Q It is that Baker and Ruckelshaus are now the only two people on the President's list, that Ruckelshaus is on the list by himself now. Do you know anything about that at all?

MR. NESSEN: As I told you ever since we got to Kansas City, anybody who tells you they know who is on the President's list, who is up, who is down, who is in or who is out, doesn't know what they are talking about because only one person does, and that is the President, and he isn't telling anybody.

Q Has he made up his mind yet?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, he has not selected his running mate yet.

Q Have any of the delegates been told they will know who is chosen before he announces his running mate?

MR. NESSEN: Nobody will know until the President announces it on Thursday.

Q You said the President has not selected his running mate. Do you mean in his own mind he has not made his selection?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Ron, this so-called morality in foreign policy issue will be coming up out at the hall in a few minutes now. Has the President been sending the word out on that? We understand the Ford people are not too happy with that thing as it is written and perhaps with a word changed here or there they might be willing to go along with it.

MR. NESSEN: Bob, after the vote on the 16-C, I came down here to talk to you and I sort of left things and I need to check on what is the next development at the Convention Hall.

Q You don't expect any great concern about that, do you?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to check and find out what is happening or about to happen at the Convention Hall.

Q What is going to make the President make up his mind? At what point and on what basis will he finally decide?

MR. NESSEN: On a Vice Presidential running mate?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: The President's first consideration in picking a Vice Presidential running mate will be to pick the person who he considers to be the best qualified to take over as President should that need arise.

As I said before, the second consideration would be someone who is compatible with the President both in terms of his policies -- domestic policies and foreign policies -- and also personally compatible.

Q Has he talked to anyone personally?

MR. NESSEN: The third factor, or the least important of the three factors, would be someone who could contribute to the President's election campaign.

Q That would be the least factor?

MR. NESSEN: That is the way he has set his priorities for selecting a running mate.

Q Ron, when you say the President feels that the vote tonight was a good indication of how the voting will go tomorrow night on the nomination, you mean the President believes that the numbers will be within the same range, will be pretty much the same?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, we have said for some time now that the President has more than enough delegates to win on the first ballot, and I think many of the news organizations in their independent surveys of the delegates have come to the same conclusion. So, our own count, the news organization counts and tonight, as an indication of things to come, the combination of those three, gives the President confidence that he will win the nomination tomorrow night.

Q Ron, in view of some of the acrimonious debate we saw tonight, what confidence does the President have that he can unite the party now?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing has happened during the primary campaign and nothing has happened here in Kansas City that divides the Republican Party. The party will emerge from this Convention, the President believes, united to begin the campaign for the fall election.

This has been a healthy competition. It has been a competition between two strong, articulate leaders who hold principles very strongly and there has been nothing divisive about this. It has only been healthy for the party to have this kind of competition.

Q Is this the President's views or yours?

MR. NESSEN: Those are the President's views.

Q Is the President going tomorrow after he gets the nomination, if he gets the nomination, and talk to Ronald Reagan about it?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, we have said the President has indicated that he does want to go and visit Governor Reagan after the nomination is decided tomorrow night, and I talked to him about some of the things that Walt mentions, about the unity of the party, to consult with Governor Reagan about the Vice Presidency, but whether he goes tomorrow night or Thursday morning has not been decided yet.

Q Ron, how can you talk about unity at this point when there is a 50-50 split on a near frivolous issue, that the President of the United States, after campaigning nine months, can only get about 55 percent vote on a rather frivolous issue, an issue that his people call frivolous?

How do you call that unity?

MR. NESSEN: The President believes the party will come out of the Convention united and ready to march off to the fall campaign.

Q Is the President going to sit down with his Vice Presidential possibilities or his selection before he announces publicly?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything further to tell you tonight on the selection process, but we will as the President makes his decision.

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Q The President doesn't plan to make up his mind before he sees Reagan, is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q The President called it a tense vote. Did he, at any time, doubt that he might win it?

MR. NESSEN: No, he kept track of the vote on a tally sheet, as a lot of people did, and watched the TV and some of the commentators mentioned that the President was running five votes ahead, or 10; at one point, I think 15 votes ahead of the forecast and he followed that and he followed on his own tally sheet. He said it was tense.

Q Did this tally sheet have some projections on it?

MR. NESSEN: He was measuring what the projections were against what the actual vote was.

Q You mean when he consults with Reagan tomorrow night he will not have made up his mind?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct. He will not have made up his mind at the time he consults with Governor Reagan.

Q Was the total above or below his projections he had on his tally sheet?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't check what his projection was, Dick.

Q On the question of unity, Ron, is the President aware that Senator Laxalt and Senator Griffin, among others, were meeting since the Convention began, on the question of unity; the latest meeting took place today at the Muehlebach Hotel, before tonight.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't catch the point of the question.

Q The point of the question is, does the President know that members of his campaign team, namely, Senator Griffin and Senator Laxalt, had met on the question of unity already, throughout this Convention there was more than one meeting at kind of unusual sites and these discussions were ongoing? These discussions originated before the Convention ever opened in Kansas City and indeed began in the office of John Rhodes in Washington?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously, the President knew about the meeting in Washington, as I think most people in Washington knew about it. It was widely publicized.

Q Ron, did you know those meetings were going on here?

MR. NESSEN: That also was widely publicized, as far as I know.

Q There was a newspaper article, in Alabama, I believe, that appeared today quoting Rog Morton as saying the President could win without the South and wouldn't have to worry about the cotton South. Was that the apparent cause of the consternation tonight on the part of the Southern delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know exactly what Rog Morton said but as we said before, the President is not writing off any part of the country or any State in the Union as he begins his campaign. He doesn't think there is any State that he cannot win.

Q Ron, from what you have said, he is not going to have made up his mind by Wednesday night when he goes to talk to Governor Reagan. He is going there to make up his mind just a few hours before he makes this announcement?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q How do we know he hasn't made up his mind if nobody knows what is in his mind?

MR. NESSEN: That is what he says.

Q Does that mean, at least, Ron, that he has a certain number of people he is working with now? I mean, he is not working with the plethora of candidates he has now?

MR. NESSEN: I know you would love to know who his choice is tonight but we just don't have anything to say about it.

Q You don't have to name them but could you at least narrow it down in terms of a number?

MR. NESSEN: No, I can't.

Q Is he going to meet personally with any of them tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to say tonight. You know, the Republican Governors who are in Kansas City are coming to meet with the President to discuss party unity, the fall campaign, their ideas on the Vice Presidential nomination, and so forth, tomorrow morning.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: Nine o'clock.

Q Are we going to see them?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Some of those Governors have been mentioned as possible Vice Presidential candidates, so I suppose in that sense, you will have to say they will see him.

Q Did the President see Senator Baker today?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, have you announced who the President is having breakfast with?

MR. NESSEN: No. Who is he having breakfast with tomorrow?

Q You do not know?

MR. NESSEN: I don't, no.

Q Then, you wouldn't know whether Howard Baker is coming for breakfast?

MR. NESSEN: No. Somebody asked me that earlier. I haven't checked it yet. I will.

Q You have not checked it?

MR. NESSEN: No.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 11:37 P.M. CDT)