

This Copy for _____

NEWS CONFERENCE

#589

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:51 P.M. EDT

OCTOBER 1, 1976

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me start off with a couple of announcements here. In case some of you don't know it, today is Forrest Boyd's last day of covering the White House. Forrest has been here for 11 years covering the White House.

Some of you know that Forrest is moving to Minneapolis where he is going to be directing the communications effort of the Reverend Billy Graham. I have known Forrest on both sides of this podium and I know I will miss him and I know that all of you will miss him, too, because he is a newsman of great talent and integrity.

We all wish you good luck, Forrest. (Applause)

Q Does that mean this is good experience for the job he is going to have? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: He is going to be dealing with a higher authority from now on. (Laughter)

You know that the French Foreign Minister and the Soviet Foreign Minister will both be coming in today for meetings with the President and I anticipate that we will have printed reports on both the meetings after they conclude.

The Gromyko meeting is late in the afternoon.

Q Do you know what they are going to be talking about?

MR. NESSEN: The Gromyko meeting with the President? I would say the whole range of issues involving the United States and the Soviet Union.

Q You don't think Gromyko will come down here, do you?

MR. NESSEN: We might bring him out.

MORE

#589

Q Would you ask him if he would speak to us on the record?

MR. NESSEN: I will ask him.

Q Is Kissinger in there, too?

MR. NESSEN: Is Kissinger attending the meeting with Gromyko? Yes. He attended the French Foreign Minister's meeting and he will also attend the meeting with the President and so will the Soviet Ambassador, and Mr. Dobrynin and Brent Scowcroft, the National Security adviser to the President, will attend.

Q What is this all about?

MR. NESSEN: It is part of the series of meetings with Foreign Ministers who are in the United States to attend the General Assembly session. He has had meetings with Gromyko in '74 and '75 when he was in the country to attend the General Assembly session.

Q Have they normally when this close, six weeks before a U.N. Assembly meeting, I mean you said like six Foreign Ministers in a week. In previous years before a U.N. meeting, has it been this close?

MR. NESSEN: We can give you the dates of the meetings in '74 and '75. I think I do not have them here with me anymore.

In 1974 the first meeting was on September 9 and the last meeting was October 18. There were 15 meetings in that period with various Foreign Ministers and Prime Ministers. In '75 there were eight meetings in a period of about four weeks. It is roughly the same.

On the California trip, the press check-in -- this is a little bit ahead of time so it is still slightly tentative -- but basically the press check-in will be at 2:15 at Andrews on Monday and 3:00 departure by the press from Andrews. The President will leave Andrews at 4:00 on Monday. A couple of folks who have a problem with attending religious services and still making the airplane, we are going to try to help by putting them on Air Force One.

Q Will you have a briefing on Monday?

MR. NESSEN: Let's not.

As you know, the flight is to San Francisco. The President will be staying at a private residence in San Francisco. I don't have the details of that for you yet, but I will. The press will be staying at the Holiday Inn, the one located at California and Van Ness Streets.

Q Do you have an arrival time in California?

MR. NESSEN: 5:30 to 6:00 California time.

Q Can we have the identity of the owner of the private residence?

MR. NESSEN: I said I will get that; I don't have it now.

On Tuesday, I don't have full details. The President will have staff meetings and also will meet with some outside individuals. I will have to give you the schedule for Tuesday later. It is just not completed yet.

Q Any public events?

MR. NESSEN: Probably at least one public event on Tuesday. One thing he will have to obviously spend time on out there is this pile of bills flowing down from Congress. You know the deadlines are coming up for action and so we will probably be putting those out with some regularity next week.

Q Can you tell us how he is preparing for the foreign policy debate?

MR. NESSEN: If you listen to Mike Duval, who is complaining that he doesn't have enough time to spend preparing for the foreign policy debate, so far he hasn't done anything except --

Q You are the Press Secretary and I just asked how he is preparing; is he not preparing or is he going through briefing books or what?

MR. NESSEN: At this stage he has some briefing books and that is about all.

Q Is Secretary Kissinger going to make the trip?

MR. NESSEN: I think Secretary Kissinger goes back to the U.N. next week, doesn't he?

Q Will they be having any meetings over the weekend to talk over the foreign policy issues in general that might come up in the debate?

MR. NESSEN: I think he will have an opportunity to see the President tomorrow.

Q Hasn't Secretary Kissinger said publicly he expects to spend much of the weekend with the President?

MR. NESSEN: I had not seen that but it is perhaps true.

On Wednesday the 6th will be the debate and the location of it is the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco and I think after the debate there will be an event similar to the one in Philadelphia, which is to drop in at a gathering of supporters of the President who have been watching the debate on television.

Then on Thursday there will be an early departure from San Francisco, 7:00 A.M. for the press, 7:45 A.M. for the President, and the flight will be to Los Angeles, which is approximately a 45 minute flight. The President will tour the B-1 plant at North American Rockwell early in the morning, 9:00 California time.

At 12:30 the President will speak to a meeting at the University of Southern California campus. This is a group of students and the general public and it is called The Voters' Convocation. It is an event staged by the University in election years sometimes, for instance in 1960 Presidents Kennedy and Nixon both spoke at this Voters' Convocation at the University of Southern California.

Then the President will go to a reception at the University for students, faculty and guests.

About mid afternoon, 3:00 P.M., the President will arrive at the Beverly Hilton Hotel and that evening will attend the Republican National Finance Committee's fund-raising dinner. I think you probably know that that evening all over the country there are these fund-raising dinners for the Republican Party and different party officials will be the chief speaker at different dinners around the country. The President will take part by closed circuit television. His remarks will be piped by closed circuit television from the dinner in Los Angeles. Others at that same dinner include Governor and Mrs. Reagan. It is a black tie dinner.

The President will spend that night, Thursday night, that is, at the Sportsmen's Lodge in the San Fernando Valley.

Q Is that a private club or something?

MR. NESSEN: No, it's a motel. It's right up the street from NBC in Burbank, if it is the same one. That is where all the NBC people stay so it's got to be all right.

Q Is that where we are staying?

MR. NESSEN: You are staying very nearby in the Sheraton Universal, made famous by the Johnny Carson Show, where Ed McMahon hangs out, all of the Hollywood show business types.

That takes care of Thursday. Friday there will be meetings -- well, generally the morning will be devoted to meetings with various civic leaders and others from the San Fernando Valley area.

At noon on Friday the President will take part in the opening ceremonies in Glendale, California, of the Days of the Verdugos Festival.

MR. CARLSON: The Verdugos are the mountains there and Glendale is located at the foot of the mountains.

MR. NESSEN: V-e-r-d-u-g-o-s; Days of the Verdugos Festival in Glendale, California.

MORE

#589

Q Is that a Mexican festival?

MR. CARLSON: An annual local festival, a two-week celebration.

MR. NESSEN: It is a local festival.

At 1:30 Friday afternoon the President will leave from the Burbank Airport enroute to Lawton, Oklahoma.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: 1:30 California time, 4:30 Eastern Time, leaving from the Burbank Airport enroute to Lawton, Oklahoma at 5:30, arriving at the Lawton Municipal Airport in Lawton, Oklahoma. That is where we are going to spend Friday night.

You have had one night there at the Sheraton Universal and the next night in Lawton, Oklahoma.

Q Is he going to see the game?

Q Why is the overnight in Lawton, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Partly because he wants to go to Oklahoma.

Q Isn't it because there are no hotel rooms in Dallas?

MR. NESSEN: That contributes to the decision, yes.

Q Is he going to the game?

MR. NESSEN: I am coming to that. I was saving that as a little surprise for the football fans.

At 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning the President goes to Dallas.

Q Does he not do anything in Lawton besides sleep?

MR. NESSEN: What is there to do?

No, he will have some events Friday night. I am only kidding.

Q Is he going to the game?

MR. NESSEN: I am coming to that.

Q There is no game Friday night.

MR. NESSEN: Saturday at 9:00 a.m. the President arrives in Dallas and he will participate in day-long activities centered around the opening of the Texas State Fair. I don't have all the details of it, but it will be pretty much a day of activities there.

Q The whole day?

Q I think you should point out the Texas State Fair always features Walter Jetton's Bar-be-que from Fort Worth.

MR. NESSEN: I guess the football game is not locked in yet, but it is possible the President will attend the Texas-Oklahoma ball game.

Q When will that be?

MR. NESSEN: Saturday, if he goes. If he goes, it will be Saturday in Dallas.

Q Is he going to sit on both sides of the stadium?

MR. NESSEN: I was waiting for somebody to say that. We don't have the details worked out, even if he is going for sure.

Q What game?

MR. NESSEN: Texas-Oklahoma. It is in Dallas in the Cotton Bowl.

Q Did you say he was leaving Lawton at 9:00 a.m. and arriving in Dallas at 9:00 a.m.?

MR. NESSEN: No, I just said he was arriving in Dallas at 9:00 a.m.

Q He better not root for Oklahoma.

MR. NESSEN: Why?

Q There goes everything Carter said about LBJ.

Q Does he come back here Saturday night?

MR. NESSEN: Saturday night we get back here roughly at midnight.

Q Will there be events after the game? Is there a night event in Dallas?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have all those details on Saturday yet because they haven't actually all been worked out yet.

Q Are you ready for questions now?

MR. NESSEN: I am not ready, but I am ready.

Q Are the grounds of propriety of asking about the investigation changed now that the Attorney General is the instigator and not the Special Prosecutor? Can't the President call in the Attorney General and ask him about it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to add to what he said yesterday, John.

Q When did the President learn about the Attorney General's participation in this, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, I just don't want to go beyond what the President said at his news conference.

Q Has the President talked to the Attorney General about this?

MR. NESSEN: He has not.

Q You are absolutely sure about that?

MR. NESSEN: I am absolutely sure.

Q Back in July when this first came up, was the President notified?

MR. NESSEN: I have said the President was not notified and he said he was not notified.

Q By the Special Prosecutor. What I am asking is, did Tyler or Levi ever communicate to the White House or to the President there was complaints?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President dealt with all of this yesterday, and I am not going beyond what he said yesterday.

Q The circumstances have changed radically, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think they have, Dick.

Q You have the number two man in the Justice Department going around talking to reporters about his role, the Justice Department role. What prompted the decision to refer the information, whatever information they had, to the Special Prosecutor's office? The White House still maintains the President did not talk to anybody from the Justice Department about this. They don't want to even find out about it.

MR. NESSEN: If you have any questions about what may or may not have occurred in terms of the Justice Department in relation to this case, you should ask the Justice Department, obviously. I reiterated what the President said before -- I mean, in specific reference to this, I was asked did the President talk to the Attorney General, and I said no. Other than that, I don't have anything to add to what the President said yesterday.

Q Dick asked you when did he learn about Levi's role. You said you wouldn't say anything beyond what he said yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q That is not much of an answer. Didn't he learn about it when he read it in the paper this morning?

MR. NESSEN: I don't even know what Levi's role was. That is why I said you have to ask the Justice Department.

Q Ron, have you or members of your staff talked with any of Mr. Levi's spokesmen at the Justice Department about this investigation?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Not at all or not today?

MR. NESSEN: Not today.

Q Not at all?

MR. NESSEN: I had one call from Bob Havel about three weeks ago. It was to call me and volunteer, when this first came out, the first day, he said my answer to all questions about this is going to be no comment. I said "okay, Bob," and that was the extent of any contact I have had with the Justice Department.

Q To what was he referring?

MR. NESSEN: That was the original Wall Street Journal story, the day the original Wall Street Journal came out.

Q That was only about ten or 11 days, not three weeks.

MR. NESSEN: I have lost a little track, Annie.

Q You made no inquiry about it at all? I mean, going into the case at all? He just said, "I am going to say no comment," and you said that is fine and that was the end of the conversation?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Ron, did the President object to the fact that the number two man in the Justice Department is discussing something that he said he himself did not want to discuss or even inquire about?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, I just don't see any purpose to be gained by going beyond the President's answers yesterday.

Q Obviously there is a purpose to be gained. Are you saying that you have been instructed not to say anything in response to questions?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, for information on what the Justice Department or its officials have or haven't done, you need to ask them. From our point of view, I don't have anything to add.

Q Is the reason the President doesn't want to ask the Special Prosecutor or the Attorney General if he is the target of the investigation because he is afraid the answer will be yes?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I think that question in various forms was put to the President yesterday and I think he --

Q No, it was not.

MR. NESSEN: I think it was.

Q I asked the question yesterday on this subject and I did not ask that. It occurred to me after the news conference that that is perhaps why he doesn't want to ask whether he is the target. That is why I am asking you.

MR. NESSEN: How could he, on the one hand, say what he did say in terms of how he believes what will be the result at the end, which was the lead on everybody's story -- I think that answered the question. The question was not worded quite that way, but his view on how it will end up he clearly gave you yesterday.

Q Does he or do you have any comment on the quote attributed to Mr. Tyler that "to the extent I know about it, this involves President Ford"?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going to comment on reported remarks by the Deputy Attorney General.

Q Ron, has he looked into the matter of how the Prosecutor is doing on the Dole case? Somebody must have contacted that Prosecutor because Dole said the Prosecutor is having no difficulty with the two missing pages.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know anything about the Dole case. I know less about that than I do on the other one, and I don't know anything about the other one.

Q Does the President agree with Senator Dole that Jimmy Carter had displayed weird performance and judgment?

MR. NESSEN: I think Senator Dole can speak for himself.

Q I asked if the President agrees with him.

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to get a Presidential agreement or disagreement on every statement that Bob Dole says.

Q Is the President satisfied with the way the Dole campaign is going, and is he going to make any changes in it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any. He is certainly satisfied with him.

Q Ron, in view of all the haggling and the discussions that have been raised about the President's golf partners, don't you think it might be a good idea here if you tell us who he plays golf with all the time?

Q Would you like to take the pool at Burning Tree?

Q Yes, I would,

MR. NESSEN: Sarah, I think your colleagues will nominate you in a minute.

Each time the President plays golf, whether it is here or in Vail--I guess since he has been President, I guess he played at Palm Springs one year and maybe Monterey, every day when he plays golf--we put out the names of his partners. We give it to the pool and the pool transmits it to all of the others. Every single golf partner he has ever played with has been announced at the time.

Q That brings up another question here. In view of the fact he has played golf with John Byrnes, who is outwardly today, not while Ford was in Congress, but today John Byrnes is a well-known representative of various and sundry big business people, people who are tax clients and things like that. Would it not be a good idea for Mr. Ford to start playing golf with some of the consumers and some of the little businessmen and people on the other side who might present another view?

MR. NESSEN: I mean, John Byrnes is a guy --

Q Why don't you ask Mr. Ford about that and see what he thinks? He might agree with that.

MR. NESSEN: I think I can reflect his views, certainly on John Byrnes, an old friend of his, a very old friend.

Q I know what he thinks about John Byrnes. He told us yesterday. I am asking you what about his playing with some people on the other side of the philosophical fence?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what side of the philosophical fence Lee Elder is on, or Jackie Gleason is on, or Flip Wilson, a lot of the people -- he played golf with three women's golf champions out in Vail, Glenn Campbell.

Q That doesn't quite fit what I am talking about. I am talking about people who are small businessmen, people who are consumers, people who may have a different view or people that don't have any axe to grind, with clients.

MR. NESSEN: He even played golf one time as the partner of Kay Graham's son in the Washington Post charity tournament here a while back. So, I think his range of golf partners is pretty wide.

Q That falls more into the category I am talking about.

Q How is the check on the records coming?

MR. NESSEN: It is still going on.

Q Have they made any progress?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to report on the progress.

MORE

Q Ron, is it your understanding that the format for the second debate is to be the same or are there any negotiations going on to revise it slightly?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that Mike Duval spent about 45 minutes in a conference call the other night with the League of Women Voters people and the Carter people discussing the second debate, and our view is that the format worked well and we believe that that is the proper format to serve the prime purpose of the debates, which is to bring out the views in depth and detail of the candidates on major issues.

I am told that the Carter people, among their suggestions, they wanted to cut out the follow-up question. We are opposed to cutting out the follow-up question and Mike indicated that on the phone the other night because the follow-up question is an opportunity for the reporters to go back and push further or ask for more detail or to catch the candidates up if their statements are not as full and responsive as the reporters think they should be.

So our view is that the debate format ought to remain the same.

Q Ron, why will you not speak of the agreement or disagreement of the President on Senator Dole's characterization of Jimmy Carter's performance as "weird?" I think it is a serious statement that Dole made and it brings another element into the campaign, and I think whether the President agrees or not with that characterization is very important. Why don't you want to even seek the agreement or disagreement of the President?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, first of all, I didn't hear precisely what Senator Dole said or how he used that term.

Q Do you want us to tell you what he said?

MR. NESSEN: It wouldn't particularly help any because I am just not going to make it a practice to go each day to the President and say, what do you think of Bob Dole saying this and saying that. Obviously the President has confidence in Bob Dole and his abilities as a --

Q Well, he said it here after he had talked to the President.

MR. NESSEN: I brought Bob Dole down because I was asked to bring him down because reporters wanted to talk to him.

Q He volunteered that characterization seemingly as a way of getting off another subject. He seemed eager to press it.

MR. NESSEN: I was not here and it won't be a daily practice for the remaining 30 or 31 days to ask the President to approve or disapprove. Bob Dole is his running mate. He believes Bob Dole is a good running mate and a good campaigner and supports Bob Dole.

Q Ron, then can we take it the President will not disavow that statement?

MR. NESSEN: We have never avowed, disavowed, approved, disapproved, reviewed, previewed or anything else that Bob Dole says.

Q Does the President think Jimmy Carter is weird?

MR. NESSEN: The President will make his own comments in the course of the campaign.

Q How was the debate issue resolved, then?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know the format will remain the same, that the proposal of the Carter people to do away with the follow-up question I believe was not acceptable. So as far as I know the format will remain the same.

Q Will it be the same time length?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to find out whether Mike has any further conferences planned but as far as I know it will go on as it was before, the same format.

Q Ron, are you certain of your information about the Carter proposal, because I talked to the fellow who was on that conference call with Mike and that is not at all what the Carter people are proposing.

MR. NESSEN: That is what Mike indicated to me, that that was one of the ideas they had for changing the format. They had other ideas, too, but that was their main proposal.

Q When will the President sign the public works bill and the extending public service jobs, and will there be a ceremony?

MR. NESSEN: As I understand it, what he promised the Members of Congress was to let them know his decision before they left town. He has done that now. The actual signing -- I think he has already said he will sign it but I don't have the date for you.

Q Do you know what the deadline is on the tax bill signing?

MR. NESSEN: That is Tuesday. I expect the tax bill to be signed before we leave Washington.

Q You haven't given us Saturday's schedule.

MR. NESSEN: Saturday's schedule -- well, the President is going to be here I know and I don't have the details of it yet.

Q Will he do any campaigning, anything this weekend?

MR. NESSEN: He will not campaign this weekend.

Q Will he be making public appearances, though?

MR. NESSEN: Probably not.

Q Ron, in the advance script provided by the Religious Broadcasters, the Evangelical ministers who talked to the President two weeks ago --

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Amongst other things the President was quoted by them to say that, a slight variation from his usual remarks, about how religion shouldn't be propagated by a candidate for his own advantage in a political campaign. Was that an implied criticism of Governor Carter?

MR. NESSEN: No, but which answer is it you are talking about?

Q The first question, I think it is the first question.

MR. NESSEN: I don't see anything in there about anybody else.

Q Will it be possible to find out what President Gromyko and the President discussed today at 4:00?

MR. NESSEN: I said we would have a written report certainly and I will relay to them the request of the press that he be trotted out so that --

Q While we are waiting, can you say for the record why you cannot say anything further about the investigation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything further to say is why I can't say anything is because I don't have anything further to say.

Q In other words, the President has told you not to say anything further about it?

MR. NESSEN: There is nothing further to say about it.

Q Obviously there are lots of things that could be said. You are not saying them, just for the record.

MR. NESSEN: Let me say this: I don't have anything new to say.

Q In other words, you intend to allow the number two man at the Justice Department to go about telling reporters different things, seemingly contradictory things about the President of the United States, and he has nothing further to say?

MR. NESSEN: If you have questions about the Justice Department's actions or statements in this matter, you need to address them to the Justice Department.

Q The President still has full confidence in the Attorney General?

MR. NESSEN: Why do I need to do that today?

Q Well, because the Attorney General is investigating the President.

MR. NESSEN: My own personal view, Dick, is that we went through a period not long ago where this didn't happen. You know, is there a complaint now that it did happen? I mean, the President has -- presumably his whole Cabinet is full of people with complete integrity and I think the President told you yesterday he would be very surprised if a man of integrity working on these matters didn't perform their duties properly.

Q Ron, on Monday the House --

MR. NESSEN: Let me answer Dick's question.

Well, I certainly don't interpret this as being any kind of criticism of any other candidate for his religious beliefs.

Q Ron, can you tell us whether or not in their discussions this morning, whether Senator Dole expressed his belief to the President that Jimmy Carter is weird?

MR. NESSEN: It was a private meeting between the two of them, Don, and I didn't go.

Q Ron, on Monday the House Government Operations Committee in a bipartisan report on the Teton Dam disaster said -- in which 11 persons were killed and a billion dollars worth of damage was sustained -- that the Interior Department went ahead and built this dam despite all the warnings over a period of time and months, it was a bad place to build it, they shouldn't do it, there were leaks in the dam, it was just a no-good proposition from the beginning. Eleven persons were killed as a result of ignoring this memoranda, memoranda that had been at the top level for six months. It wasn't acted upon for another three months and then only in a perfunctory manner. Does the President plan to do anything about that? He says he has an investigation going but the report won't be returned until late November, a significant date, and the report --

MR. NESSEN: What is the significance of it?

Q And the report is going to be on technical things, like why the dam went, why the cement didn't hold, and all that sort of thing, but not about the substantive issue about why the warnings were ignored.

MR. NESSEN: I am not an expert on it but I will look into it, however. I know investigations are being made and I will find out what they are and what the President's role has been.

Q On the jobs bill, can you tell us why the President decided to go ahead and sign those two bills, and was there any kind of a deal made between the White House and Congressional leaders that he would accept the two leaders if they would defer the revenue sharing bill?

MR. NESSEN: No, there was certainly no deal made. You know that the President said that he would announce his decision before they left town if they would go ahead and pass the general revenue sharing extension.

On the two bills, the extension of the CETA bill, I don't think there was any great controversy about that. The public works countercyclical bill, Congress had passed it twice before. The President has always said that his use of the veto is to give Congress a second chance to look at legislation, and that has been the case, in many cases, to improve the legislation. It was very clear that Congress had taken a second look and indeed a third look, and that this was the will of Congress. So the President signed it for that reason.

Q Ron, doesn't it make sense in the timing of the President's awareness of the Attorney General being the instigator of the investigation, that yesterday at the press conference he praised Ruff following criticism earlier in the week by the Vice President and Senator Dole about Ruff's role or what the Special Prosecutor was about? That clearly was counter to what -- the President's praise of the Prosecutor was counter to what happened earlier in the week.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am not familiar completely with what Phil Buchen and Bob Dole said earlier in the week and I am just going to let the President speak for himself on that as he did yesterday.

Q Do you have any idea, Ron, what other matters may have been casually and formally discussed on golf courses other than the Clean Air Act?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly have no way of knowing what transpired over 28 years of golf games.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 1:24 P.M. EDT)

#589