

This Copy For \_\_\_\_\_

N E W S   C O N F E R E N C E

#604

---

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:34 A.M. EST

NOVEMBER 29, 1976

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: WRC asked whether they could film the briefing today for a story they are doing on the press office, so that accounts for the lights.

As you know, the President's schedule today is primarily staff meetings, and there is no change in that, or any additions to that.

I thought you might be interested in my pulling together some kind of overall figures on earthquake relief. If you have any interest in that, I can run through it for you.

Q Before you go to that, if you wouldn't mind, can you tell us who he is meeting with and what the subjects are that they are discussing?

MR. NESSEN: So far he either has or will meet with Dick Cheney, General Scowcroft, Nessen, Friedersdorf, Marsh and Hartmann.

These are the normal staff meetings, Dick, that have been going on all the time to conduct the regular White House business.

Q Can you give us any feeling for the subjects that they are talking about? I mean, to have a full day of staff meetings --

MR. NESSEN: And paper work.

Q What kind of things are they talking about?

MR. NESSEN: The presidency goes on, Dick, and the President has the responsibilities and there is work to do each day. That is what he is doing. In my case, I went in, talked to him about some of the questions I thought I would get here and a couple of things that needed decisions for the future. Dick has his usual stack of paper work that he takes in.

Q We are curious about Friedersdorf, being the Congressional Liaison. What business is in the hopper in that category?

MR. NESSEN: The President is going to send messages to Congress as it comes back on January 4th. There are dealings with Congress even now.

MORE

#604

Q Ron, could you tell us why, as I understand it, we are not going to be allowed to cover this meeting with the Republican Governors, and so forth, this afternoon? Could you tell us why?

MR. NESSEN: It is just a closed meeting.

Q That I understand, Ron. My question was, and I will repeat it: Why is it closed when he is meeting with Republican Governors? Is there some desire to keep us from looking at kind of dour expressions or a feeling of gloom, or what?

MR. NESSEN: Somebody told me that the number of political reporters over at the Hyatt Regency Hotel where they are meeting outnumbered the Governors 10 to 1 last night.

Q How large a room are they using for this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think there is any hiding of Republican Governors, Les.

Q Why is it, other than policy? Could you give us a reason for this, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: It was just decided to have a private session with the Governors.

Q In other words, you were instructed to give us no reason?

MR. NESSEN: It was just decided to have it in private.

Q Will there be any remarks by the President this evening?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, you say the President is going to be sending messages to Congress. Other than the -- I assume he is going to make a State of the Union, budget and economic report. Are you talking about special messages, legislative messages? Is he going to be sending any of those?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. He has already told you he is committed to having a tax cut proposal on the desk of Congress on January 4th, which he will have. It will be a \$10 billion additional tax cut. He will spell out how he proposes that that be done, and there are a number of other areas that I would rather not get into today, but they are areas where the President expects or at least is contemplating messages to Congress.

Q Isn't that the same tax cut that he proposed, essentially, a year ago, the \$10 billion cut in taxes tied to a comparable \$10 billion cut in Federal spending?

MR. NESSEN: It may be achieved --

Q It is the increase in the personal exemption.

MR. NESSEN: It is the increase in the personal exemption and some reduction --

Q Wasn't that always tied to a comparable cut in Federal spending?

MR. NESSEN: It seems to me the first time it was coupled to the \$10 billion.

Q Will it be this time?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. It hasn't been put into final form yet.

Q On those infrequent occasions when he gave the second half of the equation, didn't he say it would indeed be tied to an equivalent reduction in spending?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to look back and see.

Q Could I ask something on the tax cut? Does this \$10 billion cover only the proposal to raise the personal exemption from \$750?

MR. NESSEN: If I recall it, it was kind of a 75-25 breakdown between personal income taxes and corporate taxes.

Q Which is which?

MR. NESSEN: You know, this is one of the legislative matters that is being put together now, so I am really only talking about what has happened in the past. I am not giving a preview of the details of this today because the details haven't been decided yet other than the overall amount and the fact that at least a large amount of it will be accomplished by the increase in the personal exemption.

Q Who can answer the tax questions? I have two, the one I asked and yet another question about the nature of that proposed tax cut. Who can handle those questions?

MR. NESSEN: On the staff? Treasury and OMB.

Q Who? That is a big building. Who over there is handling it?

MR. NESSEN: I will get the names for you and give them to you after the briefing.

Q You have talked about a tax cut. You said there are some other matters the President will send special messages on. Would you characterize this as a full-scale legislative program that the outgoing President is going to leave with Congress?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't call it a full-scale legislative program, although the budget itself, the budget document is obviously a full-scale plan for running the Government for a year. But as far as special messages go, taxes is one area, there are at least two other areas I know that the President is committed to send messages on. I would rather not mention those areas today. They are important areas where he feels that it would be important to, first of all, state where we are in those areas and, secondly, some proposals he has for moving ahead and coming to grips with the issues.

Q Other than these public recommendations, does the President intend to leave behind any kind of written report or memorandum for President Carter outlining the things he thinks should be done either in foreign policy or domestic policy, programs, suggestions, recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know -- you mean sort of a "Dear Jimmy" letter?

Q A written memorandum.

MR. NESSEN: There are a couple of things that could possibly -- I don't know of a "Dear Jimmy" memorandum that is being prepared, although I will check on it for you. There are a couple of things that sort of go to that area. One is obviously the State of the Union speech, which is the President's view of where the Nation is now. A possible State of the World message, then the budget, of course, which is as I say the blueprint for running the government for a year. Then those of you who have followed the transition know that each of the Departments and agencies has prepared a written document for the Carter transition people saying this is where my department stands now, here is the mechanism that we have here at this department, just really a kind of instruction sheet for how to run that department and agency and each one of those departments and agencies has prepared in writing one of those for the Carter people.

Q Would you check? What I am talking about is a personal letter, report, memorandum, whatever you want to call it, a personal statement by the President, not the Cabinet departments.

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q Can I follow up on the tax question? The President is talking in terms of a \$10 billion tax cut.

MR. NESSEN: Additional tax cut.

Q Is there not also on track and written into law a built in increase in Social Security which would eat up, an increase in Social Security withholding taxes, which would eat up \$6 billion of that proposed tax decrease?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check. That would be on January 1st presumably. Let me check and see what happens to the withholding.

Q It seems to me when the President talked about the campaign the Carter people said that was so. As long as some of us may be writing a tax story, would you please check and see if there is a built in tax increase?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what your tax story is, Walt. Let me give you kind of a cautionary note. It was not my intention to announce anything here today. You asked me why was Max Friedersdorf meeting with the President. I indicated that there are some legislative things that will go forward such as, well, the tax cut. But that has been announced before. I don't think a story saying the White House announced or disclosed or revealed anything today is justified.

Q I understand that. I find it is interesting how the President is going to propose a tax cut, which he couldn't get, if it is the same tax cut he couldn't get a year ago. It is interesting he is recycling it even now.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I am not announcing today he is recycling it. He announced every day during the campaign he was going to send it up.

Q That was on the presumption he was going to be elected.

MR. NESSEN: No. It wasn't on the presumption he was going to be elected.

Q If Mr. Carter is supposed to be coming back next week to Washington, would there be any further meeting with President Ford?

MR. NESSEN: There is none planned.

#604-11/29

Q Ron, Seymour Weiss, the Ambassador to the Bahamas, is being replaced, it is reported, by Jack Olsen of Wisconsin. Evans and Novak seemed to suggest that he is being paid off for primary support of President Ford in Wisconsin. They report giving him a few weeks of golf at the right time of the year and the right to be called Ambassador for the rest of his life. Is there any truth in this speculation? If not, why would the President appoint a new Ambassador at this 11th hour?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the details of that, Les.

Q Is it possible somebody could check on that because there is the suggestion that this is a political payoff and Mr. Wyman got into a lot of trouble, as you will remember, for the question of Ambassadorships. Could somebody check on this so I can get a follow-up as soon as possible? I would be very grateful.

MR. NESSEN: Just to tidy up the record, if I recall Mr. Wyman was eventually given a clean bill of health.

Q But not soon enough.

MR. NESSEN: That may be, but just to tidy up the record --

Q Absolutely, but not soon enough. This is the situation, one of the reasons I asked the question.

Q Ron, the President has spent a good deal of time, since the election, out of town. He has been spending a lot of time in private and although we are told that he has meetings periodically, apart from those on the budget we really haven't been told much of anything about what he is actually working on. That is why I raised the question this morning as to a full day of staff meetings, but we really don't, even after this rundown, have a very clear picture of what it is he is doing.

MR. NESSEN: Dick, he is doing what he has done every day for the last two and a half years, which is running the country. He has got a stack of red folders this high on his desk. It is the same size stack or maybe a little higher that has been there every day for the last two and a half years.

As you know, there is a constant flow of paper. There is a constant flow of decisions that have to be made. He is making them and will until noon on January 20th. He comes in at the same time he has always come in, follows the same routine. Dick goes in twice a day with the in box for him to consider and sign and approve or disapprove. There is no change whatever.

Q I mean he has had virtually no public appearances.

MR. NESSEN: I don't agree with that. He has had public appearances.

Q Like what?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, you can review the schedule for the past couple of weeks as much as I have.

Q I don't mean to argue with you. I don't mean to be critical of him. Obviously he can allocate his time the way he wants to. But I personally have had a feeling that I am sitting out here day after day with very little sense of what it is that the President is devoting his time to. Even after you responded to my question, you just said he is doing the same thing he has done every day for the last two and half years.

MR. NESSEN: You never understood what he was doing over the last two and a half years.

Q That obviously isn't true. He has had very few visitors from outside.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that is so.

Q Aside from people bringing in their diplomatic credentials and on the few occasions that he has had a meeting like tonight with the Governors, you are keeping it private. That is why I say it.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know where all of this goes, Dick. I know that the President is doing the same business he has done for all of this time and has to and will. So I don't quite get the question.

Q To follow up Dick's question, what public appearances? I have been away a little bit, as many of us have. Can you tell us, give us some example that would lead us to conclude that the President is not isolating himself? I mean tonight, for instance, you say there is no reason, it is just policy. Somebody decided that they shut off the press from covering the President's meeting with Republican Governors. It is certainly a newsworthy event. Why, Ron, if this is not isolation?

MR. NESSEN: Les and Dick, I don't really think we are moving toward any area where I can provide you much help beyond what I have said; that is, that the President has the same documents, the same meetings, the same decisions to make that he has had right along. He has got to put the budget together. He is going to write a State of the Union speech. He is writing it. There are other ongoing matters and I probably can't convince you of that, but it is the truth.

Q Ron, along these same lines there is the Newsweek story that says that the President is bitter about his loss (a), and (b), Jimmy Carter is one of the people that Mr. Ford genuinely dislikes. What is the White House reaction?

MR. NESSEN: I can tell you that any suggestion that the President has turned into a recluse or that the President is -- I don't know how you would characterize in a word the Newsweek story -- maybe depressed or whatever, just simply isn't true. The President, I think and others here think, has a very good attitude. Obviously, he would rather have won the election than lost the election. Everybody --

Q He is fond of Jimmy Carter, would you say?

MR. NESSEN: Les, give me a second, would you?

Q Absolutely, certainly.

MR. NESSEN: Phil asked a question. I think I may have some material to answer the question. I would like to go on with it.

Q I certainly apologize. Go ahead.

MR. NESSEN: I think, as I said, it would be better, the President would be a lot happier if he had won the election instead of lost it. I guess we all would. But his attitude is great in the sense that he is looking forward to the future. He believes that he is going to embark on a new and challenging phase of his life and I have talked to some people here this morning about the Newsweek story. I think the consensus is that the folks who are talking that way or depicting the President that way are the people who spend little or no time with the President.

I think it has always been a case there that you get different views from different people and some time the most startling and unusual and newsworthy views come from the people who have the smallest basis of fact on which to base their opinions.

As I say, the people who see the President and deal with him every day certainly do not agree with the characterization that seemed to come through in the Newsweek story and therefore, it seems that our conclusion is that the people most widely quoted are the ones who have the least basis of knowledge.

Q John Osborne quoted you as saying essentially the same thing in his piece two weeks ago in the New Republic, Ron. I think John Osborne's piece, if you will remember, had you saying that the President was still extremely depressed and that he was very down.

MR. NESSEN: I have to read what my quote was and I have to see what the time was, too.



Q What about the reference to Jimmy Carter, the President's views about Jimmy Carter?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President has spoken publicly a couple of times. I think most of you saw him standing side by side with Jimmy Carter and heard his views.

Q Ron, he is fond of Jimmy Carter? Does he like him? Are you denying he dislikes Jimmy Carter?

MR. NESSEN: I think, as I say, the President himself has spoken a couple of times --

Q I am aware of that.

MR. NESSEN: I think I will not elaborate.

Q Are you suggesting by withholding any answer that there is some truth in this, that he does like Jimmy Carter? Isn't that true?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so, Les. I think what I have done on the subject of that kind I would rather let the President speak for himself and he has.

Q Could I follow up on my question? You said you had talked to some people this morning obviously about the Newsweek story. Did the President express any feeling about the Newsweek story to you?

MR. NESSEN: The President had not had a chance to read it yet, but he was aware of the general thrust of the story.

Q Did he make any comment about it to you?

MR. NESSEN: As always, Phil, when I speak here, I reflect the President's views and I certainly do on this matter.

Q Sometimes you do it with a little more emphasis, saying the President is aware of it and he thinks it is a bunch of bunk or whatever.

MR. NESSEN: I said it is not true. That, I think, is fairly emphatic.

Q Did you talk to him about the story?

MR. NESSEN: I just said I did, Phil.

Q Ron, speaking about the President, Governor Thompson is quoted today as saying that he would like the President --

Q What is the new and challenging phase of the President's life --

MR. NESSEN: Let's do one at a time.

Tom, the new and challenging phase of the President's life begins on January 20th at noon and exactly what challenges and excitement he undertakes after that we will announce as time goes on.

Q He is looking forward to retirement?

MR. NESSEN: He is looking forward to the days and years after January 20th. I wouldn't characterize it as retirement.

Q Your answer implies he is looking forward specifically to a new and challenging phase of his life he has decided upon. He still has not decided what he is going to do?

MR. NESSEN: It is going to be a new phase of his life. He looks upon it as challenging and exciting. What he is going to do during those years he has not announced yet.

Phil is inquiring --

MORE

#604

Q Excuse me. One more thing. You said he is not ready to announce yet. Does that mean he has decided what he is going to do?

MR. NESSEN: He has not really made his final decisions. Phil, what was Governor Thompson's remark?

Q He suggested a Republican Party advisory committee or group headed by President Ford. I wonder if this idea had been broached to President Ford and whether he is thinking about it.

MR. NESSEN: I would say this: that the President has talked to a number of people on the phone and in person about the future of the Republican Party and he has indicated to a number of those people that he favors some kind of -- well, for want of a better word, maybe something you could call a coordinating committee. It might be or could be similar to -- those of you who recall the committee that was set up in 1965 following the election that year and the circumstances were similar then, too, a Democratic President had just been elected, Congress was heavily Democratic and the President who -- at that time the House Republican leader was a leading member of that group. It had representatives of the Governors, Republican Governors, State legislators, elder statesmen of the Republican Party or outstanding people in the Republican Party who were not at that time holding public office, and also members of the RNC. This would be kind of separate but somehow related to the RNC.

But that is about as far as his thinking has gone on that matter and it is about as much of a definition as he can give at the moment; that he favors some mechanism like that. Obviously, he feels that he intends to play a very active role in the Republican Party in the future.

What his role with such a coordinating committee, if it were set up, would be is -- you know, there are just too many if's, contingencies and hypothetical conditions. But generally speaking he would plan to play a very important role in the Republican Party.

Q He has not ruled out having such a --

Q Will he take this up with the Governors in the meeting this evening?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't be surprised if, perhaps not in this kind of detail, but certainly the Republican Party's future and perhaps even his role in the future.

Q Ron, you said he talked with people. When you say "people", do you mean Rhodes, Dole, or Baker?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly talked to Bob Dole about it. I would have to, again, get out all of the phone calls and so forth. But he has talked to people who have come to visit and people who have talked to him on the phone about this idea.

Q Has he talked about Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Senator Baker, in a press conference last week, stated that if he ran for the minority leader of the Senate he felt that he would be the leader of the Republican Party because Ford had been defeated.

MR. NESSEN: I have to look at that quote. I hadn't heard that or read that exactly.

Q It was a Tennessee press conference.

Q Ron, we know that the President is going to submit a budget that proposes a tax cut.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q He may propose, if the FEA wants, the deregulation of gasoline.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q I wonder if specifically you could tell us other specific proposals he may make before he leaves office?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I know of two other areas at least where I think the President is committed to make a proposal to Congress, but today, not having had time to sit down and reconfirm that, I would rather not say.

Q Is one of those the deregulation or decontrol, I should say, of gasoline prices?

MR. NESSEN: No. That is another matter. That is not what I had in mind. But there is a possibility of the State of the World speech, for instance.

Q How about a farewell address?

MR. NESSEN: That is a possibility, too. That would be separate from the State of the Union speech.

Q But would he just give a broad outline of the course he thinks should be followed? He couldn't very well make specific proposals.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes, he could. He certainly could. In the State of the Union or the separate legislative messages?

Q The messages.

MR. NESSEN: It is still being sorted out. Obviously, the tax cut proposal he is publicly committed to. On the other matters, I want to reconfirm that he is going to go ahead with those.

Q Has it been decided whether the President will deliver the State of the Union message in person or send the document to the Hill?

MR. NESSEN: It hasn't been decided.

Q Can you tell us what the status of the message is? Has he completed the first draft?

MR. NESSEN: The first draft is due -- I hate to say today, but it certainly is this week.

Q Have you discussed with the President at any point or elicited his views on the various election challenges by the Labor Party and by the Republican Party in Wisconsin, New York and several other States?

MR. NESSEN: The fact is that the White House is just simply discouraging such challenges. The President himself hasn't been involved, but the White House Counsel's office -- I think some of you know and I think perhaps have even talked to them -- when queried about it, either by reporters or by any of the participants, have simply discouraged such pursuits.

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: The President believes the election has been decided and plans to leave office on January 20th.

Q You mean if these things turn it around, he would refuse to stay? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Then we go to Option B. (Laughter) There is no anticipation that the outcome of the election will be reversed.

Q You said it is too early to speculate about the President's future role with the Republican Party except he will be active. Can you tell us whether the President is giving any thought to heading himself the kind of coordinating committee he thinks might be a useful vehicle for the party?

MR. NESSEN: If you recall, in '65 it was Ray Bliss.

Q Was he also the RNC Chairman at the time?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall. Was he?

Q He became RNC Chairman in '66.

MR. NESSEN: He really hasn't advanced that far. As I say, at this point, as far as you could go would be to say that he has indicated to people he has talked to that he would favor some kind of coordinating committee.

Q To do what, separate from the RNC?

MR. NESSEN: Let me get a little better description of what he thinks. Obviously, to make suggestions and to think about the future of the Republican Party.

Q I guess the basic question is: Does he think some vehicle separate from the RNC is necessary to do that? Isn't that one of the roles of the RNC?

MR. NESSEN: It would be sort of an adjunct to the RNC, as it was in '65.

Q Is he afraid that the Reagan people, the right, is going to take over the Republican Party? Is that his fear?

MR. NESSEN: You know, if I answer that particular -- I want to say that without particular reference to that question, however, the President thinks that whatever group leads or plans the future of the Republican Party ought to be one that could do so in a constructive way, in a way that would unite the party.

Q You don't mean to suggest that the RNC is incapable of leading the Republican Party?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't. That is why I am reluctant to give that answer to that question, because it reflects the President's thinking, but I don't want it to appear to be saying that the President today rejected the Ronald Reagan wing of the party, or something like that.

Q It sort of sounds like the answer to my question is yes.

MR. NESSEN: No. But that is why -- I have fallen into the trap.

Q He doesn't think Ronald Reagan, if he becomes the chairman and replaces Mary Louise Smith, would have any kind of a destructive influence?

MR. NESSEN: I knew I had been led down that path.

Q I didn't lead you, Ron. I think it is a good question. Does he think that Governor Reagan -- he has spoken kindly of Governor Reagan on occasion -- would be a stimulating chairman of the Republican National Committee?

MR. NESSEN: I think at this point all I want to say is that the idea of some kind of coordinating committee, perhaps similar to the one in '65, is a good concept in the President's mind and I have tried to give, I think, an accurate picture of where the President's thinking has taken him up to this point. I think we are getting too far along now. I cannot go any further.

Q Let me ask a question from the standpoint of the old Democratic Advisory Council back in the fifties that was set up -- at least one of the main reasons was because neither of the two national party committees, the Democratic National Committee or the Republican National Committee has ever gotten very involved in policy. I mean by that legislative policy; recommending policy to Congress, things that should be done. They have tended to concentrate more on politics.

Is the President thinking of this new coordinating group in that sense analogous to the Democratic Advisory Council; that is, a group that would prepare a Republican policy agenda which the Republican National Committee seldom does, seldom if ever does?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that the '65 group did that very thing. In fact, there is quite a thick book that I have seen which, I forget what they called it, but it was kind of an agenda, alternate agenda.

Q So he is thinking in terms of a committee or group --

MR. NESSEN: The thing is I am right up at the very limit of where the President's thinking is at this point. To push on any further into specifics of what such a committee would do, who would be on it, what role the President would play would be simply surmise because he really hasn't gone any further.

Q Is it fair for us to leave here with the notion that the President thinks the concept of a separate committee is a good idea?

MR. NESSEN: Simply, but related to or working with or connected with the RNC.

Q He really has no clear idea or hasn't thought through what precisely such a committee would do.

MR. NESSEN: I think that would be fair to say.

Q I get the impression that the name of Ronald Reagan is right back where it was in the primaries. It is kind of the unmentionable name.

MR. NESSEN: I thought I mentioned it. Ronald Reagan. I thought I said that. I said it.

Q You did. How would the President feel if Governor Reagan -- does he think he would be a constructive contribution? You seem to be avoiding that question, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I don't mean to avoid that question, Les. I think the President has indicated his feelings about Governor Reagan.

Q How? As a Republican National Chairman? Has he done that?

MR. NESSEN: He has not taken any position on a single individual to be a Republican National Chairman.

Q He would not oppose Governor Reagan becoming the Republican National Chairman, would he?

MR. NESSEN: Les, I think you are just pushing this beyond the point where I can really offer any answers because the President has not taken a position on any individual. But if you leave here with the idea that anything I have said or indicated suggests any feeling by the President, any negative feeling of the President concerning Ronald Reagan, I think it is a terrible mistake.

Q No negative feelings about Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: Come on, Les. Let's don't play word games. I have told you a lot today, I think, about the President's views of his own future and of the party. But to push it in a word game to get me to say something that bears no relationship to the actual facts, I think, is a waste of all of our time.

Q Could we approach it from this standpoint? It is a matter of public knowledge there is a good deal of jockeying in the aftermath of Mrs. Smith's announcement between the wings of the party. That is not something that you have to stand up there and deny. It is public knowledge.

Is the President thinking about this new group, this coordinating group, as a group that could be a compromise or could prevent an all-out kind of a struggle over the leadership of the party and specifically, would he be willing to or would he be available, I guess is the way to say it, as a compromise kind of a chairman for this group, not for the Republican National Committee obviously, but as a compromise figure to prevent this kind of, or to try to alleviate this kind of rivalry?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is a little bit beyond the point where his thinking has gone, other than to say that the President does intend to continue to meet with individuals and groups from the Republican Party and who simply have ideas about the Republican Party, to listen to them, to consult with them and to come to a constructive conclusion about the future of the Republican Party.

Q Would he reject the chairmanship of this coordinating group that he has in mind?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, at this point I just can't say yes or no, because it hasn't gone that far.



Q Ron, there has been a report that the Carter people asked for and were denied permission to sit in on the daily budget planning sessions. First of all, is this true? Second, if it is true, why, in view of everything the President has been saying about cooperating in every way, was this permission denied?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether it was something where -- I would have to check for you and find out how it came about that it was decided not to include the Carter people in the actual preparation of the budget, whether it was their decision or ours or a mutual decision.

Q The fact is that Paul O'Neill has been quoted as saying publicly that it was your decision, this Administration's decision.

MR. NESSEN: I said, I guess a week or ten days ago when asked what role they were going to play, that they would not have a role in producing this budget, that this is the responsibility of the Ford White House to produce this budget and so they were not included in the preparation of it.

The two other parts of it are, one, that they -- my knowledge is only from reading about it and some discussion here on the staff -- that they are working on a budget or parts of a budget at least in parallel or in association with the Congressional Budget Committee and secondly, the very definite decision was made and is being carried out to provide every bit of information the Carter people request on the budget.

I said that about a week ago. So that really hasn't changed.

Q Could I ask a question?

Q Could I finish?

I didn't understand. Was their request in the nature of being allowed to sit in as observers just so they would understand the process better?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check with Paul and see. I don't know what the genesis exactly or the scenario was.

Q A week and a half ago when I asked, you said he would still consider himself to be the head of the Republican Party even when he goes out of office January 20th. Today you said the President plans to have a very active role in the Republican Party politics. This question logically should be asked of the President, but we don't see him anymore. I would like to ask, does the President believe he has a political future of his own? If we asked him ultimately we would ask, "Have you ever given thought to running again for elective office?", but inasmuch as you made two or three statements which lead in that direction, does he believe he has a political future?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly believes he has a future in the Republican Party. But to say yes, he is going to run again or, no, he is never going to run again is --

Q I would like to ask him --

Q Let him finish that sentence. Go ahead.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of any plans for him to run for any office again. But then again, I don't know of any plans. But I don't want to leave the impression that I hinted that he was going to run for office in the future.

Q I understand. That is why I said it would be nice if we could have a press conference. My question is, do you know if he has given any thought to this subject of ever running for elective office again?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Walt. I really ought not to wing this one.

Q How about the press conference? You indicated he was going to have one?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any plans for one right now.

Q Do you think there will be one before we go to Vail?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't know.

Q Do you think he plans to hold any more press conferences during his term of office?

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

Q Ron, will the President be available to us at the annual Christmas party for the press or is there any Christmas party for the press this year?

MR. NESSEN: There is for those boys and girls who have been good this year. (Laughter)

Q No. I mean really, is there going to be a party or not?

MR. NESSEN: There is indeed going to be a party. You haven't gotten your invitation yet?

Q No. When will that be, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I believe the date is the 15th of December for all those little kids standing there with their faces pressed against the window.

Q Against the iron gate.

MR. NESSEN: That is the real list. (Laughter)

Q Another aide has told me, one who does see the President frequently, I think, that one reason the President doesn't want to hold a news conference now and may not hold another one during his term is that he knows we are going to ask him these very questions we are asking you and he just flat doesn't want to address them. Is this true?

MR. NESSEN: No. Not as far as I know.

Q Why would there be any hesitation, any hangup to holding a news conference? He appears to have time on his schedule. This could occur.

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have any plans for one now, Phil. Nobody wants to hear about the earthquake relief?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't think so.

Q Will we have a briefing tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't we try Monday, Wednesday and Friday and see what happens.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:15 P.M. EST)