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NEWS CONFERENCE

#72

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:07 P.M. EST

NOVEMBER 15, 1974

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: Air Force One returned from Las Vegas and Phoenix to Andrews Air Force Base at 12:55, and the President got back here shortly after 1:00 and came to the Oval Office at about 8:15 this morning.

So far this morning -- and later in the day he has met or will be meeting with -- Don Rumsfeld, Bob Hartmann, Dick Cheney, Bill Timmons, and myself. At 9:20 this morning, the President dropped in unexpectedly in the Cabinet Room on a group of students in the Pyle Junior High School in Bethesda. The group was on a visit to the White House and one of its members is Kim Timmons, the daughter of Bill Timmons. Bill was showing Kim and her class around the White House and they were in the Cabinet Room to hear some members of the staff explain their jobs and the President came in unexpectedly and talked for about five minutes. I didn't make good notes, but basically, what he told them was that he was glad to see young people interested in Government and politics and he hoped they would maintain their interests in Government and politics.

At 10 o'clock, the President spent about an hour with members of his staff in a review of the legislative message which will be going to Congress next week. That meeting was attended by Bill Seidman, Jack Marsh, Bill Timmons, Roy Ash, and members of Roy's staff at the OMB, and also representatives of the Domestic Council.

The President read through the statement that has been prepared for next week. He made some changes in it, some refinements. He is going to sign the message before he leaves Sunday morning and it will go to the Congress on Monday.

Basically, the message outlines the President's priorities, what he expects Congress to pass during the Lame Duck session. The emphasis is on his proposals for the economy and also for the speedy confirmation of Nelson Rockefeller, and for approving the budget cuts that the President will propose the following week.

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At 11 o'clock, the President met with the Cabinet. This was a regularly scheduled meeting and the last meeting before the President leaves on his trip to the Far East.

The reason I was late is that I was attending the meeting and it is not yet over, so it has been going on now a little over an hour. First, do you want to hear who was there?

Q Who wasn't there?

MR. NESSEN: The Attorney General was not there. He is making a speech in San Diego, California. Secretary Butz is in Rome and Anne Armstrong is in Rome, as you may know.

There were three subjects on the agenda. First of all, going around the table asking each Cabinet Member what he was doing on the economic program both to push the legislation and carry out the Administration's proposals. Two, the discussion of the legislative program for 1975; and, third, Henry Kissinger was there, and this part had not taken place when I left but he will discuss the trip to the Far East.

I can run you through the highlights of what each Cabinet Member had to say about his work on the economic program if you would like to hear it. Under Secretary Campbell said that the Department is in constant contact with the fertilizer supply and there is enough fertilizer to produce the biggest crop in American history.

Q When?

MR. NESSEN: Whatever the next crop year is, 1975.

Q How does he stay in contact with the fertilizer supply?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you ask Under Secretary Campbell?

Q But he does expect enough fertilizer?

MR. NESSEN: To produce the biggest crop in history.

Q Crop of what?

MR. NESSEN: An overall crop, the entire crop.
(Laughter) What a flakey bunch. (Laughter)

Commerce Department, Secretary Dent: About January 1, the major industries will start reporting their voluntary energy conservation measures to the Government so the Government can see how the voluntary energy conservation is going. He reported there is great interest and cooperation in this program.

There has already been a four percent reduction in energy use per unit of production. I am sorry that I am not clear what the period covered by that is, but I suggest you could follow up at the Commerce Department. I was so busy writing down "four percent reduction in energy use" that I missed the period of time he was referring to.

Secretary Morton reports that he met with the Governors, as you know, on Outer-Continental Shelf oil leasing. He said his goal was substantial leases in all off-shore areas by the end of 1978. He said the geothermal energy program is going very well, that his Department is processing 4,200 non-competitive lease applications for use of geothermal forces and they will be issued in 1975.

Lawrence Silberman, of the Justice Department, reported an extraordinary measure of compliance, in his words, in the past month by the legal profession in getting rid of their fixed fee system.

On price-fixing, he reported that the Justice Department is setting up a procedure to monitor price patterns, to see if there were aberrational price patterns which might indicate a conspiracy to fix prices and if such aberrational price patterns are discovered, then an investigation would be begun by FBI agents trained as accountants.

Transportation Secretary Brinegar reported that the mass transportation bill looks very good. He also reported that he plans meetings with automobile executives on an individual, company-by-company basis to discuss the President's intention to have the gas mileage of automobiles improved.

He returned to Secretary Morton for a report on voluntary fuel conservation and Secretary Morton reported that his wife, Ann, went into a gasoline station recently and asked for three gallons of gas, and the gas station attendant said, "You don't want three gallons, lady, you must have been listening to that guy Morton." And Mrs. Morton replied, "I have to listen to him. I am married to him." Secretary Morton seriously said by the time the President gets back from his trip he hopes to have a gasoline conservation program ready for the President to look at and he said it will not include a gas tax.

Q Did he say it with a smile?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, and everybody laughed heartily. That is the report on the Cabinet meeting.

At two o'clock this afternoon, the President will meet with Professor Irving Kristol, an author, editor and presently the Henry Luce Professor of Urban Values at New York University.

Q About what?

MR. NESSEN: Professor Kristol is regarded as an outstanding analyst of political and social problems. The President is interested in hearing some of his ideas.

Q This doesn't have anything to do with General Brown, does it, by any chance?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, the President has been having a series of meetings, most of which we have not announced --

Q Why not?

MR. NESSEN: Mostly because they were private chats or lunches in some cases, with experts such as Professor Kristol, simply to do what we say, which is to hear some new ideas and discuss ideas.

Q How come you are announcing this one and not the others?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Somebody mentioned to the President would he mind if we announced it, and he said, "Go ahead." I can tell you about two weeks ago, for instance, he chatted with Herman Kahn. There are others. In fact, he had lunch one day with some of your colleagues, some of the big thinkers, mostly for the purpose of hearing their ideas rather than them hearing his ideas.

Q Who are some of the big thinkers in our profession?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I would certainly include you, and everybody in this room, obviously. (Laughter)

Q Who else?

MR. NESSEN: Broder, Reston, Osborne, Howard K. Smith, and Charles Bartlett.

Q What was he querying them on?

MR. NESSEN: They had been out and around the country during the election period, so they have a general feel of the mood in Washington and Congress and he wanted to hear what they had to say. That is actually the way the lunch turned out, with them giving him ideas.

Q Ron, could you give us a list of all these unannounced private Meetings he has had?

MR. NESSEN: I can check back and see which ones he has had.

Q Can you tell us who recommended he see Irving Kristol.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who did recommend it, John.

Q What did he discuss with Herman Kahn?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't attend the meeting.

Q Who suggested the announcement that Kristol is meeting with him?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. We were all sitting around this morning looking at his schedule and somebody said, "Why don't we announce this?" And he said, "I don't care, go ahead." And that is simply the way it was.

Q Why did he not want the others announced?

MR. NESSEN: Nobody ever raised the others. I am sure we could have announced the others if somebody had said, "Can we announce it," we would have.

At three o'clock, the President will meet with Roy Ash, Alan Greenspan and Bill Seidman. He expects to spend about an hour at this meeting. It is another in the series of meetings that he is having, thinking ahead to the 1976 budget. We had also talked about a 4 o'clock budget meeting and those two meetings will be merged, the three o'clock and the four o'clock meeting. Roy Ash thought that he could cover all the ground in one meeting.

Q Can I get a clarification on something?

MR. NESSEN: Sure.

Q Professor Kristol publicly was a supporter of Richard Nixon. Would you know whether Professor Kristol is a supporter of President Ford?

MR. NESSEN: You know, these things always get so complicated when they don't have to be complicated.

Q That was a simple question.

MR. NESSEN: Well, let me tell you what the meeting is about and what the other meetings have been about. The President is interested in hearing ideas from people. Professor Kristol is an expert in his field. Somebody thought the President might be interested in hearing his ideas in his speciality and he is coming in to chat. There is no secret meeting.

Q If necessary, I will explain the reason for my question. I was wondering whether the President might have met with professors, with representatives of academia, who are opposed to the Administration, perhaps getting ideas in that matter.

MR. NESSEN: Let me check the list of who he has seen and then we can check off the pros and cons.

Q The reason for that line of questioning, Ron, is that Professor Kristol is somewhat controversial in the academic community and represents one distinct point of view.

MR. NESSEN: Let me check up on who he has seen and then we can judge whether he is getting lopsided views of the world.

Q Could you give us again what Professor Kristol's speciality or expertise is?

MR. NESSEN: He is an author, editor, and Henry Luce Professor of Urban Values at New York University. He is regarded as an outstanding analyst of political and social problems.

Q I don't mean to be argumentative about it, but that doesn't explain to me what kind of professor he is. Is he a history professor or sociologist?

MR. NESSEN: I am told by the representative of the New York Times that he is a sociologist.

Q Would there be any chance of talking to him after he leaves the President?

MR. NESSEN: I tell you, I honestly think we are making much too much of a very simple visit with the President to sort of bounce some ideas around.

Q This is the first time we have heard the President is soliciting outside views and gotten any impression --

MR. NESSEN: Apparently it hasn't gone over very well.

Q Oh, no.

Q That is not true.

Q We are expressing an interest in seeing him.

MR. NESSEN: The meeting is at two o'clock. Let me find out more about what his plans are after the meeting.

You have the routine announcements of appointments and resignations.

Yesterday, we released a couple of things and I want to make sure you got them. Did everybody get the Disaster Declaration for Alaska and the Virgin Islands?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: I understand the wires got them on the trip. Anybody who doesn't have them, they are in the Press Office.

You have a revised schedule for the first leg of the trip to Japan. It may be revised further, I am told.

Q You mean the times may be changed again?

MR. NESSEN: Possibly.

If you are interested in the transcript of last night's news conference in Phoenix, sometime this afternoon the transcript will be available.

Now, the trip to Japan. This afternoon at three o'clock, Secretary Kissinger will talk to you in Room 450 of the EOB on the record and for immediate release, although I take it that it is in response to your request for a briefing in preparation for the trip. But he will be there and you can enter the Seventeenth Street entrance of the EOB and should plan to be there about 2:30.

Q Do we know whether it is going to be telecast live?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it is available for live telecast.

Later today, we will have some printed material on the trip and tomorrow morning, we plan to make available the beginning of the trip bible which will include details on the type of electric power you will encounter in each place, press facilities, which some of you have asked about, accommodations and that kind of thing. It is possible you will get the first few days of the schedule as well -- that is the bible -- with details. It will be the beginning of the bible and possibly some further details of the next few days' schedule.

Q That is tomorrow morning?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: We will let you know this afternoon.

Q Are you going to brief tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I hope not.

Q It would not be possible to get that today?

MR. NESSEN: No, we are working real hard to get it done.

Here are just a few thoughts about packing. Warm clothes. The advance people said it was about 15, I think, when they were in Vladivostok, and that was a warm day.

Q Above or below?

MR. NESSEN: Above, but I am told it is 10 below today, so you will need warm clothes.

You do not need white tie, black tie or morning coat. However, the gentleman should think about a dark business suit and a dark tie for some of the events in Japan. Long dresses will not be necessary for any of the events by the women.

Q Does that mean we don't cover any social events?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't draw that conclusion. I am just saying, long dresses will not be necessary for coverage.

You are going to get into Vladivostok before the President does, and you will wait there. And I am told that it is probably going to be the coldest wait of your lives. There is a wind there, and you will need very warm clothes for that, and boots. The wind chill factor is beyond calculation.

(Laughter.)

Q What is the telephone situation?

MR. NESSEN: Well, they have plenty of phones, but the dials are frozen.

(Laughter.)

That is truly all we can tell you at the moment, but today and tomorrow, we are going to get it all out.

Q Ron, I have to ask you -- you are assuming and your statements assume that everybody is going to Vladivostock who has signed up for that trip; is that true?

MR. NESSEN: That is what I am assuming for the moment.

The departure ceremony on Sunday, which we have never told you about before this very moment, the President plans to leave the White House by helicopter from the South Lawn at 9:25 Sunday morning. As I say, that time could change. He is expected to come out of the White House shortly after 9:15 and he may have a few remarks before boarding the helicopter.

I would think that some Cabinet Members will be there and some staff members and some friends and that will be open for full press coverage. When he gets to Andrews, he will get directly on Air Force One without ceremony. But if you want to cover him getting on the plane, you may, it is full press coverage.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: It is an approximate 9:45 departure from Andrews.

The President has sent condolences to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, a message expressing deep sorrow over the death of Minister Saqqaf. You may know that Omar Saqqaf is the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia and he died of natural causes in New York last night. The President received Minister Saqqaf at the White House on August 29 in connection with the Middle East peace negotiations and the President is saddened by the loss of a good friend who has served His Majesty, King Faisal, and Saudi Arabia, so tirelessly in its contribution to the peace-making process.

The President has made available a United States aircraft and Assistant Secretary of State Alfred Atherton is returning to Saudi Arabia on the plane returning the body of Minister Saqqaf to Saudi Arabia.

I am told, and I should have mentioned this before, that the Japanese Embassy also has information available on their country and these packages will be available here after the briefing.

I think that is everything.

Q In this Kissinger briefing this afternoon, will there be a Q&A afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, absolutely. It is a news conference. He may have some things to say at the beginning, but it is intended as a news conference.

Q Last night the President, when expressing sadness about Mr. Gibson's withdrawal, suggested there had not been firm leadership at the Federal Energy Office. Does that criticism go back to Simon's regime or did he mean that specifically for John Sawhill?

MR. NESSEN: I asked him this morning about that, because I expected someone would have noticed that. The answer is that he was referring to the period of time since the office has been reorganized into the FEA. I believe Bill Simon was there when it was the Energy Office. But his remarks about administration referred to the FEA period.

Q Just the Sawhill period?

MR. NESSEN: Has he been the only Administrator?

Q I am not sure.

MR. NESSEN: Neither am I.

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Q Has the United States turned down a request for a million tons of additional food at the Rome Conference?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I think the words "turn down" are probably not the right way to describe the events. The facts are that some members of that delegation sent a cable here requesting something like that. I am not sure precisely what it was, but what the President did was to have a phone call placed to Secretary Butz who is the head of the delegation there, reaffirming that the American position is as Secretary Kissinger stated it in his speech to the food conference on November 5.

I can run over briefly what he said, because it is the American policy. What the Secretary said was that during this fiscal year the United States will increase its food aid contribution despite the adverse weather conditions which have affected our crops. The American people have a deep and enduring commitment to help feed the starving and the hungry. We will do everything humanly possible to assure that our future contributions will be responsive to the growing needs.

That is the Administration position and there is agreement on that position within the Administration. I think I have explained before, and it continues to be true, that the United States can not be more specific about the quantities of food assistance that it will help with until there is more information about the American crop this year.

The whole matter is being reviewed carefully by the Administration and the commitments will be made on a quarterly basis as the size of the crops are known. The purpose of doing it this way is to avoid compounding the inflationary problems here at home.

Secretary Butz, as I understand it, went on television last night and said that critics of the Administration's food program had failed to note the large amounts of grain recently made available to a number of countries. This is for this fiscal year under the P.L. 480 Food Assistance Program, and the amounts are as follow: The United States has provided 300,000 tons of grain to India, 250,000 tons to Bangladesh and 300,000 tons to Egypt, and there are many other countries which have received American shipments under P.L. 480 in smaller amounts.

The AID organization has complete details and the figures I have given you are for this fiscal year so far, which is, of course, not quite half over. Obviously the Administration is publicly on record as committing itself to do even more.

Q Ron, this is an area I am not expert in, but is this really 300,000 or 300 million?

MR. NESSEN: It is 300,000 tons.

Q Ron, was this response by the President himself?

MR. NESSEN: You mean the phone call?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: He did not make the phone call.

Q But he authorized it?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Earlier this week the Domestic Council staff told me they were, in response to the telegram that Secretary Butz signed, making feasibility studies of the impact the different levels of additional commitment would have on the domestic economy, the domestic food prices.

Were the computer runs completed before this decision was made, and if so, what did they show?

MR. NESSEN: That sounds like something that they would do, but we don't have the outcome here.

Q Ron, can we sum up what he said by saying that the U.S. is continuing to review whether it can increase and it has not turned down the request for a million tons?

MR. NESSEN: I think in the specific response to that cable that Secretary Kissinger's remarks are the American policy and that is a promise to increase its food aid contribution, but the exact amount cannot be determined until we see what the size of the crop is.

Q Asking it another way, has the United States approved such shipments as mentioned --

MR. NESSEN: The million tons of whatever it was?

Q Yes. You say it has not been turned down. Has it been approved?

MR. NESSEN: I am saying the determination can't be made yet, Gaylord, until sometime toward the end of December when the food crop forecasts are complete.

Q Ron, Peter Brennan was overheard saying if the miners fail to ratify the settlement that the Administration may go to the Taft-Hartley Act. Is that Administration policy?

MR. NESSEN: I think you are getting pretty far ahead of the game there. The President is pleased that the coal operators and mine workers have been able to reach a tentative agreement which will be submitted to the mine workers for their ratification, and the President thinks this is a real tribute to the collective bargaining process without Government interference.

On the specific question of ratification, the President, as you know, has talked to Mr. Miller. He said to the President that if a settlement satisfactory to Mr. Miller was reached, as it now has been, apparently, he felt certain that it would meet the desires of the union members.

I think beyond that, since there is a ratification process to go through, it probably would be inappropriate to say any more than the fact that the President is hopeful that it will be ratified.

Q Ron, there was a column a few days ago to the effect that the President has given an interview indicating he will run in 1976, and if he had been asked that last night he would have said so. He was not asked that. Can you tell us if he is going to upgrade that from "probably" to "will"?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q He will definitely run?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he intends to run in 1976.

Q What changed "probably" to "definitely"?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I guess you have heard him, Helen, a couple of times say how much he enjoys being President. Almost as much as I enjoy being Press Secretary. (Laughter)

Q Ron, last night the President said when he was thinking of the Vice Presidential nomination that he had the FBI conduct three checks. In recent weeks has the White House asked the FBI to go into the checks of the two other persons?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of. What would be the purpose of that?

Q Who are they?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to be able to tell you who they are.

Q Ron, may I come back to the President's news conference of last night? I need just one clarification, if you don't mind.

MR. NESSEN: You know we don't have to clarify the President's remarks. We never clarify the President's remarks. He speaks very clearly. (Laughter)

Q In speaking about the Middle East, he spoke first about negotiating with Egypt and other Arab Nations, and then later he spoke about Egypt and other Arab parties. Are the parties and Nations one and the same thing there or is something else meant?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure I understand the question. Are you saying are Nations the same as parties in his reference in one place to "other Arab Nations"?

Q Right.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I would have to check out why he makes the distinction there.

Q While you are checking that, he also went on to say that the parties involved in negotiation should decide on -- I don't have the text in front of me -- decide on who should negotiate. The Arabs decided the PLO should negotiate. Is the United States encouraging the Israelis to negotiate with the PLO?

MR. NESSEN: Well, as he said last night, and I wouldn't want to go beyond his words because I think it was an excellent summation of the American policy in this area which many of you have been asking me about for a long time. It is clear and concise and precisely the American policy, which is that the United States is leaving the decision as to who will negotiate to the parties involved.

I believe further beyond what he said last night, Secretary Kissinger has expressed the hope that the process will go on to a successful conclusion.

Q Ron, in arriving at his decision now to run in 1976, did the President consult with party leaders, with Congressional leaders, Chairman Bush, and the second part of that question, did he have any rumblings after the recent election that perhaps other Republicans are beginning to gear up to challenge him in 1976?

MR. NESSEN: In answer to your first question, I really don't know who he conferred with on this decision, if anybody.

In response to your second question, he has read the newspaper sort of speculation and columns about other candidates, but I am not sure that he has been made aware of this in any other way.

Q Did he consult with members of his family or Governor Rockefeller?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am sure he consulted with members of his family. I don't know whether he consulted with Government Rockefeller.

Q Do you know what Mrs. Ford's reaction was?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is clear from the fact he said it that she must have gone along with him.

Q When did he come to this conclusion? Was it after his meeting with the big thinkers? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Did you say after the meeting with the big thinkers?

Q Yes, was it after?

MR. NESSEN: I heard him say it first on Monday.

Q Might one of the reasons he would make this announcement at this time be that it will take some of the pressure off the Rockefeller confirmation hearings?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't get any sense that his decision was based on anything other than his own personal desire.

Q Is he preparing to name a campaign manager?

MR. NESSEN: I would think this is a little early for the campaign manager.

Q In what context did you hear him say this? How did it come about?

MR. NESSEN: Some people were in talking to him and asked him the same question that was asked back here, "Are you willing to drop the probably? And he said, "Yes."

Q Who were they?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really feel that I ought --

Q Were they outsiders or members of his --

MR. NESSEN: They were people from the outside.

Q In the political arena?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q In the press?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to go much further.

Q When will the text of the Congressional message become available?

MR. NESSEN: Monday.

Q Ron, two more small questions, please. The other day you said you would look into the missing piece of the puzzle on the General Brown affair.

MR. NESSEN: I gave the piece of the puzzle to the pool on the plane. Did you not see the pool report?

Q About someone who knew several days ago?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q I didn't see that.

MR. NESSEN: Should I run through it again?

Q Not for me. I can get it.

The other question is whether or not the President's remarks last night on the Brown incident closes the incident insofar as the President is concerned or is he taking into account the possibility of Congressional inquiries into General Brown's fitness to serve?

MR. NESSEN: As I read and heard his remarks it sounded to me like he was closing the episode as far as he is concerned.

Q Ron, is it the Administration policy now to decriminalize possession of marijuana?

MR. NESSEN: The President indicated that he does not intend to change his views on marijuana and he does not favor any change in the Federal laws relating to marijuana.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:47 P.M. EST.)