

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:40 A.M. EST

NOVEMBER 21, 1975

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: The advance team is gradually sending back information about the China visit, and so each day here we will probably be giving you a little note.

Today's note concerns third country nationals. The advance team has informed us that those third country press wishing to go to China for the President's visit should apply on their own for visas, either to the PRC mission or embassy in the city where they happen to live, Washington or elsewhere, or you can cable directly to the Information Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Peking.

For those third country people who already live in Peking, they should get in touch with the PRC Information Office. The third country press who have already applied here through the White House Press Office and have turned in their visa forms and passports and so forth should pick them up from Judy and instead file them over at the Liaison Office of the PRC here in Washington.

Q Ron, on the subject of capital punishment, how much does that weigh in the President's decision on picking a new Associate Justice?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President has indicated that he felt that he will keep to himself the qualifications other than the one that would be the best qualified person for the job and not run down a list of things he is looking for or not looking for.

Q Ron, can I ask you two questions on the China logistics? Did the Chinese indicate that if third country newsmen are granted visas independently, whether we will be able to travel on the White House press plane into China and out of China.

The second question is, if we withdraw our passports, send them to the Liaison Office, what are you going to do about our visas for Indonesia and the Philippines. Some of us at least are going on the trip anyway.

MR. NESSEN: Judy and Annie, who have been working on this, will be here in a moment. Meanwhile, let me go on with the schedule for today.

I think you have the schedule for today. There are no additions to it. I just call your attention to the meeting that the President has at three o'clock, lasting two hours, to continue his preparation of the fiscal 1977 budget. Today's discussion deals with the Defense Department budget and, as I mentioned to you before, the President will be having these meetings pretty much daily on the budget, the State of the Union address, the legislative proposals.

Today's meeting will have, of course, Jim Lynn, Brent Scowcroft, Paul O'Neill and Don Ogilvie.

Q That meeting is not also for intelligence?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is defense and related activities.

Q Does one rule out the word "intelligence"?

MR. NESSEN: You mean, will they consider the budget for intelligence activities? I think that may come out, yes.

Q How about Rumsfeld?

MR. NESSEN: No, it has not reached that stage yet. The budget preparation goes through various stages, and at this point it remains in the White House and then at a later stage, the Cabinet Secretaries come in to appeal.

Q Final White House decisions made in meetings or are these tentative?

MR. NESSEN: Tentative.

Q But the decisions are made that subsequently might be appealed by Cabinet officers?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

The cable from the advance team in the PRC does not indicate whether or not the third country nationals who are accredited for the trip will be able to travel in and out of the country on the press plane. We will ask Eric to get an answer to that.

Judy, the other question was, third country press who have applied to the PRC individually as they have to, what is their status in terms of Indonesia and the Philippines?

MS. O'NEIL: There will be no problem with Indonesia and the Philippines.

MR. NESSEN: You will continue to process their applications for those two countries while they process their own on China?

MS. O'NEIL: I will just hold on to those visa applications.

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MR. NESSEN: I believe you have seen the announcement of the appointment of Vice President Rockefeller to represent the United States at the swearing-in of Prince Juan Carlos to be the Chief of State of Spain. The swearing-in is on Saturday.

The funeral for Franco is on the following day, namely, Sunday, and Vice President Rockefeller will represent the United States there. The Ambassador to Spain, Wells Stabler, will be a member of the U.S. delegation. Mrs. Rockefeller will go with the Vice President.

As we settle on the other members of the American delegation, we will let you know.

There is a ceremony honoring Juan Carlos, the new King, and Queen Sophia, scheduled for Thursday, November 27 and the Vice President will also be the head of the American delegation there.

Q What is he going to do in between, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that he will remain in Spain during that period. What his activities are during those days, I think his office will be able to give them to you.

Q Is he going to stay a week?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the swearing-in is on Saturday and the ceremony honoring the ascension of King Juan Carlos will be on the following Thursday.

Q That is Thanksgiving.

MR. NESSEN: That is right. So he will be there for those days.

I guess that pretty much does it in the way of announcements.

Q Ron, do you know whether the Vice President will be going to Rota?

MR. NESSEN: To Rota? The Navy base?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any details of his itinerary, but his office does -- or will.

Q Ron, yesterday WLMH in Laconia, New Hampshire, phoned again about their invitation to the White House for candidate Ford to meet with candidate Reagan and discuss the campaign issues together and they asked if the President really meant it when he said I am not afraid of anybody. In other words, will he be willing to meet with the other candidates and discuss the issues together?

MR. NESSEN: The President's plan for whatever campaigning he may do in New Hampshire is not set yet, Les.

Q Ron, on the broader question, though, is the President willing to debate Reagan in the primary?

MR. NESSEN: I think it has to be the same answer, Jim. His main concentration is going to be on staying in Washington and being the President and doing all the things and making all the decisions that he has to as President, and whatever campaigning is done in New Hampshire has not been settled on yet.

Q Ron, I wonder if you had any comment on a Christian Science Monitor poll -- I think it was in yesterday's paper -- that showed 26 of the 42 Republican County Chairmen in Florida, a key primary State, saying Reagan leads Ford in that State and that the other areas where the President leads Reagan -- the minority of the counties -- the President has only a slight edge and the quote was all the trends are going Reagan's way. Do you have any comment on that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that over the next year we are going to be able to comment on every poll and signal and straw in the wind, Walt. The President is going to do his job as President. The people will judge him both in the primaries and in the general election on one thing and one thing only and that is his record as President of the United States and the direction for the future pointed to by his record as President of the United States.

He believes that he is going to win the nomination, he is confident he is going to win the nomination, he is confident he is going to be elected President. I am not going to each and every day comment on each and every poll.

Q Let me phrase the question this way. Are you worried about Florida as a primary State?

MR. NESSEN: He believes he is going to win the nomination and the election and he is going to do his job of being President because that is what he is supposed to do, that is what he wants to do and that is the basis on which people will judge him.

Q Ron, you said earlier that the President is going to stay in Washington to be President. Does that mean he is going to cut out virtually all campaigning before the Convention?

MR. NESSEN: Well, as I say, whatever campaigning he does has not been settled on. He has done some travel to help the Republican Party. I think some of you who have kept up with long-range trends of his schedule know that it has always been the plan that this would taper off during this period because of foreign travel and these very heavy demands on his time for the budget, the State of the Union Message, the legislative proposal, so he is following that plan.

Q Ron, despite those plans to terminate the heavy travel at about this time he did say in Chicago that he planned to visit all fifty States by the end of 1976.

MR. NESSEN: I think he said he expected to.

Q Does he no longer expect to? Has he backed off from that?

MR. NESSEN: I think he will not be able to do it quite under that timetable.

Q How much has he touched now? Do you know offhand?

MR. NESSEN: Forty-two. It is posted inside the door there. Of course, he does want to have an opportunity to ski in New Hampshire at some point.

Q Can you give us a statement on snow there, Ron? Do you feel it is better now?

MR. NESSEN: The President has asked me to resign as New England meteorologist.

Q Good, good.

MR. NESSEN: He feels that the National Weather Service probably has better facilities and expertise than I do on forecasting snow and ice conditions.

The fact of the matter is that he skied in New Hampshire as a young man when he was at Yale.

Q Is that where his knee trouble comes from?  
(Laughter)

Q Slipped on the ice.

MR. NESSEN: And he looks forward to skiing there again. As I say, he just feels that one of my weaker points is weather forecasting.

Q One of your weaker points?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

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Q How about that editorial from the Arizona Republic that suggests you may be a Reagan agent? That was in Gene Pulliam's paper. What about that, Ron? Did you see that? Do you have any comment on that?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q No comment?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, can I change the subject to something a little more serious?

There is a report that the Soviet Union has shifted a squadron of Mig-25s to Syria, this just a few weeks before the decision on the U.N. folks there. Is the President concerned about this, what would appear to be a tipping of the scales by the Soviet Union, concerned for what it does to detente and what it does to upsetting the balance in the Middle East?

MR. NESSEN: I think you are leaping ahead quite far there, Walt. As I recall that report, it was highly speculative, and I don't recall that it had anything authoritative about it.

Q The report I saw was from Dana Adam Schmidt out of the Pentagon, and he is a good correspondent. It was very hard, very firm. Twenty Mig-25s with Soviet pilots, some of them reconnaissance and some of them interceptor fighter-bombers.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, the report I saw speculated that that might have happened, and I have not followed it up, frankly, because it was speculative.

Q Would you, because it adds a whole new element to the Middle East discussion?

MR. NESSEN: I will look into it.

Q Ron, back on the subject of skiing, can you give us any guidance on the possible departure for Vail? When might that start?

MR. NESSEN: I can't today.

Q Ron, does the President plan to spend Christmas this year again in Vail?

MR. NESSEN: That has not really been decided.

Q Not decided?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q On the Middle East, what is the status of the Americans to the Sinai peace-keeping force?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. You have to get that from the State Department. I sort of stopped following it.

Q You said the options were here.

MR. NESSEN: It is moving ahead, but I don't know where it stands now. I have not looked into it for a while.

Q Ron, can we pursue that Vail thing just a little bit further?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to forecast the snow conditions at Vail, either, because he has also asked me not to do meteorological reports on the Rocky Mountain area.

Q Are you suggesting by your answer that it has not been decided yet that, in fact, he may not go or you simply are not in a position at this point to announce that he is going?

MR. NESSEN: If he hasn't decided where to go or not, it seems to me he then has two choices, to go or not to go, and he has not decided.

Q Is there, in fact, a real --

MR. NESSEN: Third choice? I don't think so.

Q -- a real possibility that he will not go?

MR. NESSEN: If he has not made up his mind yet, then I would say there is a real possibility.

Q Is it possible he may spend Christmas and New Year's in New Hampshire instead of Vail? This is a serious question, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: It simply has not been decided what his Christmas plans are.

Q Please don't mislead us on this because in answer to Dick's question you said there is a real possibility he may not go to Vail. Do you really mean to say that? Because the Fords have spent Christmas in Vail for what, the past 11 years. I am interested in the news point of view.

MR. NESSEN: There are two choices, Walt -- to go to Vail for Christmas and not to go to Vail for Christmas. Since he has not decided whether to go or not, then both of them are real possibilities until he chooses one or the other.

Q When is he going to unveil his plans?

MR. NESSEN: He has a secret plan for Christmas.  
(Laughter)

Q Ron, could I follow that up with a like question?

MR. NESSEN: He is now checking the --

Q Why are you being so facetious about this? I mean, you seem to be suggesting that you are not ready to say anything about it at this point, but you are leaving the impression --

MR. NESSEN: It seemed to me it would be better to find out what he decides to do about Christmas before announcing the plans. At the moment, there are two choices -- to go or not to go. He has not decided.

Q There are lots of choices, for that matter. If he does not go to Vail, he could go someplace else or he could stay at the White House.

MR. NESSEN: He could go up and ski on the ice at New Hampshire, I guess. Wait a minute, I am not supposed to say that.

Seriously, about New Hampshire, I don't mean to be facetious about that. He has skied in New Hampshire and he likes the skiing in New Hampshire, and hopes that he will be able to go back and ski in New Hampshire.

Q When?

MR. NESSEN: He does not have any plans right at the moment to go, but would like to go.

Q Is this under consideration?

MR. NESSEN: What, to go to New Hampshire to ski?

Q Going to New Hampshire for Christmas and New Year's.

MR. NESSEN: I say his plans for Christmas are not set.

Q That is not much of an answer for Ralph's question.

MR. NESSEN: It just so happens to be the fact, though, Dick, and maybe Ralph wants another answer, which I would love to give him, but until the President decides what he is going to do --

Q Then would you say it is equally a possibility that he will go to New Hampshire?

MR. NESSEN: The President has not set his plans for Christmas.

Q How about Mrs. Ford?

Q Ron, to change the subject to something a little bit lighter, has the President made any comment on the incident in Miami with former Governor Reagan or on Reagan's candidacy or anything on Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, as a follow up to that, has Treasury or the Secret Service sent any word to the White House about being undermanned with the number of candidates running now?

MR. NESSEN: No, they have not. I heard some Secret Service guy on the radio saying that they had plenty of people to cover 14 candidates.

Q Has the President received the energy bill yet in written form and, if so, has he had a chance to --

MR. NESSEN: No. I talked to Frank this morning, and it is not ready yet.

Q Ron, the FCC has issued this ruling that if they show any of the old Reagan movies they will have to give equal time to President Ford. Now, if that happens, will you ask for the equal time and what will you show? (Laughter) I mean, have you got any old football thrills of 1934 or something?

Q The "Ev and Jerry Show"? (Laughter)

Q Ron, is the President considering a change in the U.S. representation at the United Nations?

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

Q Ron, the New York State legislature has tentatively agreed on a \$200 million tax package. Could you tell us whether this would be sufficient to have the White House drop the other shoe on New York aid and come out in favor of it or, secondary, how insistent is the White House on additional taxes in New York State as a precondition for Federal aid?

MR. NESSEN: There is no insistence on any tax increase whatsoever, and I have tried to make that point, and I did yesterday and I did the day before, and it keeps showing up. The fact is that the President is not insistent on anything in particular. As he said the other day, they are now moving toward the idea of accepting primary responsibility for straightening out their economic affairs.

Carey has got a plan. I guess the plan changes from time to time. The President has no recommendation or endorsement of any particular way of doing this. That is up to them. More specifically, he has no recommendation or endorsement for a tax increase. Again, that is up to them. He is not insisting on any particular plan or way.

Q Ron, you said some time ago, I think, words to that same effect, but you also said that the White House knew how it could be done.

MR. NESSEN: No, no. I don't think I quite said that. The White House convinced itself that it could be done.

Q Did the White House, in convincing itself that it could be done, convince itself that it could be done without new taxes?

MR. NESSEN: There were a whole series of ways that it could have been done, and they contained all different elements to them.

Q Did the President convey that to Assemblyman Duryea and Senator Anderson when he spoke to them the other day in Albany?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he did. He conveyed the fact that he had no particular choice or endorsement or recommendation for how to do it.

Q Oh, he did not give them any specific suggestions from the White House?

MR. NESSEN: Absolutely not, quite the opposite. One of the things that he made clear during the phone call, which I was there for, was that as far as he was concerned, that was entirely the responsibility of New York, that he was not going to come down on any particular measure, and most especially taxes.

Q Ron, the New York Daily News says that the President's own economic advisers have been urging him since last week to go forward with a recommendation for a \$2-1/2 billion Federal loan guarantee package for New York. Have the President's advisers --

MR. NESSEN: As I said the other day, there was a consensus on the statement that the President issued the other day.

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Q What does that mean?

MR. NESSEN: It means that there was a consensus on the statement that the President issued the other day.

Q Does that mean some advised him to go forward and some did not?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am never going to get into what a particular adviser told the President. There was a consensus on that statement.

Q No, I am not asking you to do that, but behind the scenes were there some who said he should go forward and others he should not in the consensus that you point out?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I am ever going to get into what an adviser recommends in private to the President.

Q Ron, what is the President's reaction to the release of the CIA Assassination Report in the Senate?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, the President, I think, has made very clear what his views are on that, that he absolutely abhors the idea of Government officials being involved in the consideration of those kinds of things and he has forbidden any official of his Administration to get involved in those kinds of things.

Now he has said himself, and has not changed his mind, that what happened in the past under different circumstances and different pressures, he is not going to sit in judgment of things that happened before he had the responsibility. He knows how he is going to carry out his responsibility and he forbids this kind of thing.

His views as to the public release of the information as opposed to the compilation of the information -- and I think you have to remember that the compilation of the information was aside from witness testimony -- was 100 percent given to the committee by the White House and the Administration. I mean, where do you think that information came from? It came out of White House files and CIA files and so forth, so the information was given to the Church Committee by the Ford Administration.

Now, he has made his views clear as to the reason he didn't believe it should be made public because of its danger to foreign policy, national security and the lives and safety of individuals. Other than that, I don't have any further comment.

Q Ron, does the White House support the recommendation of the committee to make assassination of foreign leaders a Federal crime?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, the President has in the works his own proposed legislative and administrative changes in the intelligence set-up and when those come out you will see what the President's own views on the matter are.

Q Our Ambassador to Argentina is going to be in town next week. My question is is there any special concern about what is happening down there? Anything special? Why would he be here?

MR. NESSEN: In terms of the internal Government affairs of Argentina?

Q Yes. Why has the Ambassador been called back for conference?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. You will have to ask the State Department about that.

Q Ron, has Dr. Kissinger ever told President Ford he will resign if the full House holds him in contempt?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

Q Would he go to jail?

Q Ron, back to the CIA. Does the President feel these people should be disciplined, those who did all these things?

MR. NESSEN: Well, again, you know that the President not only has turned over all this information to the Church Committee so it could do its report, but he has also turned over material to the Justice Department so that it can review the material and see what, if any, legal action is needed.

Q Did the President see anything in there that would make him question the continuation in office of Secretary Kissinger or of Ambassador Helms?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, on Ronald Reagan, you may have answered this yesterday, but what could you tell us about the phone call that Reagan made to the President, specifically the President's views on this so-called 11th Commandment?

MR. NESSEN: Well, Governor Reagan called the President I guess the day before yesterday in the afternoon and the President was in a meeting in the Cabinet Room and returned the call later. It lasted about five minutes and it was in the nature, I suppose you would say, of a courtesy call by Reagan to inform the President that he was going to announce his candidacy yesterday and to tell the President essentially what you suggest, that he was going to conduct his campaign in a way that he felt would not be divisive and that was about the extent of the phone call.

Q How does the President feel about this 11th Commandment idea of not attacking another Republican?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, again the President's job has been and will continue to be to act as President and he is going to do that. He will be judged on his record and his pointing of a direction for the future and that is how he is going to be serving for the next year and then the four years after that.

Q Ron, does this mean that -- ell, I guess it does not mean anything. (Laughter)

Q Good question, John. Good question.

Q Absolutely.

Q Will the President refrain from criticizing Reagan during the campaign?

MR. NESSEN: John, he is going to be President and he is going to run on his record.

Q Well, it seems to me that you are saying maybe that he is not going to criticize him; he is going to run on his own record, he is not going to talk about the other fellow at all. Am I correct in assuming that?

MR. NESSEN: Let's wait and see what, if any, campaigning he does and how he does it, but the vast majority of his time will be devoted to doing his job.

Q Will he stick with Moses and the original ten and forget about the eleventh? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Well, there are a couple of those he is not too sure of. (Laughter)

Q Which ones?

Q Will you be specific?

Q Now, about those icy slopes in New Hampshire.

Q There were reports that it is possible that Brezhnev may go to the Cuban Communist Party Congress in December. Have you seen those?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Is there any chance that the President and Brezhnev may arrange a mini-summit without a SALT agreement on neutral third party ground, let's just say hypothetically a Caribbean country, a Ford-Brezhnev summit as a result of Brezhnev going to a Cuban Party conference?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard anything about it.

Q Ron, does the President have any comment on the use of the presence of Cuban soldiers in Angola?

MR. NESSEN: Is he aware of a report like that?

Q Has he commented on it?

MR. NESSEN: No, I have not heard of it.

Q Excuse me. As a follow-up to that previous question, would you rule that out completely?

MR. NESSEN: It is something I have not heard anything about, Walt.

Q Did the President meet last Wednesday with Levi and Mathews to discuss school busing?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What did they come up with?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what they came up with, I didn't attend the meeting.

If you recall, the President has said publicly on a couple of occasions that he asked the Attorney General and the HEW Secretary to consider alternatives to busing. They have been doing that and they wanted to discuss their views with the President.

Q Ron, now that the President has completed this round of fund raising for the Party in the fall, will he be going out shortly after the first of the year raising money for himself at fund raisers? Are those being arranged now?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any campaign schedule and I think all those questions ought to be directed for the next few months to Peter Kaye at the Election Committee.

Q Was the President discouraged at the fact that his Campaign Manager, Congressman Cleveland, has been away for five weeks and I think got back today? Is he happy about the way the Ford campaign is operating in New Hampshire, totally happy?

MR. NESSEN: Extremely happy.

Q Extremely happy.

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Q Ron, on busing, is the President going to have any legislation of his own that deals with some of these alternatives that he is asking his people to come up with?

MR. NESSEN: One of the reasons for asking and then considering what they do, which I think is possible, is to consider what to do next.

Q Does that mean legislation?

MR. NESSEN: They are still talking about his request, and I don't know whether the legislation is one of the items or not.

Q Did they actually get to listing alternatives?

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

Q Following up Les' question, previously the President's political aides have admitted that he got a slow start in New Hampshire and was trailing Reagan about a month ago. Does your response mean that you think you have now surpassed Reagan in New Hampshire?

MR. NESSEN: I think you ought to ask these of Peter Kaye. He is handling the campaign stuff.

Q Ron, has the President seen a written version of the compromise energy legislation?

MR. NESSEN: It is not finished yet, Dave. I mentioned a while back it was not finished yet.

Q Ron, on the timetable of New York matters, in view of the fact that Congress is going to be out of town all of next week on this recess --

MR. NESSEN: It is precisely what the President said the other day, that early next week he will review the situation and see what, if any, legislation at the Federal level may be necessary.

Q What I am asking is, is there likely to be any statement or action by the White House until Congress itself may have acted, which could not be for another ten days? You said he might have something to say next week.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q I am just curious if that is still the fact in view of the fact that Congress can't do anything next week?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, what he said in the statement is what will happen; that is, that he will review the situation early next week.

Q Does that review include talks with Carey, Beame, or people up in New York rather than just --

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure the talks will be just with the President, but certainly as the President said, the purpose of the review is to see what they have done in New York City and State, and those reports will have to come from the officials up there.

Q Ron, do you anticipate the President will announce a nominee for the Supreme Court before he goes to China?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have a timetable on that at all.

Q Ron, does the President take responsibility for actions or statements of his campaign officials?

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

Q When Bo Callaway makes a statement, does the President stand by that?

MR. NESSEN: What is the statement that you are referring to?

Q I am referring to Callaway's statement yesterday critical of Reagan. Is that a Bo Callaway statement?

MR. NESSEN: John, the campaign is the campaign. The President chose these people as the ones that he feels will run his campaign best. He is extremely pleased at the way they have organized and are running his campaign. I just don't think for the next few months that every day we want to deal with every policy and every statement and so forth.

Q What will we deal with, Ron? This is a political campaign, Ron. Surely you want to be relevant.

MR. NESSEN: There is a political campaign office on 18th Street, or wherever it is, and a political campaign press secretary, and I am sure he will be happy to talk to you.

Q In other words, you are going to defer all questions to them, is that it, on the campaign?

MR. NESSEN: I hope to.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

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