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NEWS CONFERENCE

#431

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:23 P.M. EST

FEBRUARY 5, 1976

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: You know the President is signing the rail bill this afternoon at 2 o'clock in the East Room. That is for full coverage, if you care to.

The President will have some remarks at the time of the signing. There will be a number of Members of Congress there -- the Senate and the House -- who helped put the bill together, and Secretary Coleman will also be there.

After this briefing you can pick up a fact sheet on the rail bill so you can know what is in it.

Q What about a text?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so.

Q Now you don't think so?

MR. NESSEN: Did we think so before? A text of the statement of the President?

MR. CARLSON: It will come a little later, before 2 o'clock.

MR. NESSEN: What time do you think?

MR. CARLSON: 1:30.

Q Your office was suggesting it might be coming out together.

MR. NESSEN: The office knows; I don't.

Some people asked about the earthquake in Guatemala. A seven-man American military disaster survey team has gone from Panama to Guatemala to inspect the situation and to discuss with the Guatemalans how we can best help them with their immediate needs.

MORE

#431

In addition, the American Ambassador in Guatemala, named Francis Malloy, like all Ambassadors, has an emergency fund available and the maximum authorized is \$25,000 and he has authorized that maximum of \$25,000 for immediate relief needs.

In addition to that, the disaster relief funds at the State Department, funds and supplies in the amount of \$525,000, have been obligated by the State Department's Aid Office. Money and supplies and some of those are already on their way both from the United States and from Panama.

In addition, I understand --

Q Do you know what is on the way?

MR. NESSEN: No, but I am told if you will call the Aid Office at the State Department they can give you many more details than this. I am sort of hitting the highlights for you.

Also, I am told the Red Cross and the Catholic Relief Organizations are helping and preparing to help, and so are neighboring countries.

As for injuries, all official Americans -- that is, all Americans who work for our Government -- are accounted for and safe and no American citizens, as far as we know, have been reported hurt. The information is incomplete but, of what is known so far, no Americans have been hurt.

Q Do you know whether there was damage to the U.S. Embassy?

MR. NESSEN: Have we heard whether the U.S. Embassy was damaged?

It was not in the area of the earthquake and I have no report it was.

The President has invited the Prime Minister Cosgrave of Ireland to make a visit to the United States. It is in connection with the American Bicentennial. The Prime Minister of Ireland has accepted the invitation and will meet with the President on March 17. (Laughter)

Q What is his first name?

MR. NESSEN: Did you think it wouldn't be?

Q Are they going to march in a parade together?

MR. NESSEN: His first name is Liam.

Q How long will the official visit last?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the full length of his visit but I have to assume it will be more than just a day or so because he will be coming to mark the Bicentennial celebration.

Q Is there going to be a State Dinner for him?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the exact plans yet. They will have a meeting.

Q Is that the day he arrives?

MR. NESSEN: No, that is the date of the meeting between the President and the Prime Minister.

Tomorrow the President is going to go over to a conference at the Marriott Twin Bridges Motel in the Persian Room for about 500 or so, maybe 500, 600 or 700 Northeast State Republican Leaders. This is a comparable group to the one he spoke to in Dearborn last Saturday; that is, leaders of State Republican Parties from the Northeast.

Basically, the plan is that the President will leave here roughly at 1:35 or so, so a travel pool should gather here about 15 minutes ahead of that. He will drive over, will speak to the Northeast State Republican officials beginning at approximately 1:55, for about 15 or 20 minutes, and then will return directly to the White House with the travel pool going.

For coverage there you should use either your White House pass, a Capitol Hill pass or Metropolitan Police pass.

You will need to be set up in the Persian Room, for cameras and sound equipment, by noon and, for additional information you should call Kermit Hill at 628-4200, extension 587 or 551.

The States represented here will be Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and the well-known northern State of the Virgin Islands -- (Laughter) -- Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

I am told that other speakers during this conference include the Vice President, members of the Cabinet and leaders of the RNC.

Q Will this be piped in -- the President's remarks -- here?

MR. NESSEN: We can probably do that, yes.

Q Will there be a text?

MR. NESSEN: I don't expect -- well, there could be. Yes, there is a text in the works. I can't give you a time on it.

Q Is the PFC picking up travel expenses?

Q What is the speech on?

MR. NESSEN: The text I saw will really be a restatement of the President's views on Government spending and the role of the Government.

What do you think this does to the briefing tomorrow now?

Q It plays havoc with it.

MR. NESSEN: Do we need a briefing tomorrow?

Q Yes. How about 11 o'clock in the morning?

MR. NESSEN: All right, whatever we know at 11:00 we will go with.

On Saturday, press check-in for New Hampshire is 8:45 at Andrews with bags. Departure of the press plane is 9:15. The President, himself, will depart from the South Lawn at 9:50 and depart Andrews at 10:10.

The press plane arrives at Manchester Airport at 10:35 and the President arrives at Manchester at 11:15.

I look to have the bible for you tomorrow afternoon and the speech text -- actually I now find out that the main speech for which we will have a text is the one at the Nashua Chamber of Commerce. The Sunday speech at the college probably will consist of brief remarks and questions and answers from the audience, followed by a private session with students, I believe, which is also a kind of give and take session.

Q What is the release time on the Nashua speech, or have you decided that?

MR. NESSEN: Is that the Saturday night speech? I guess we better make it 6:00 if the Sunday papers are ever going to make it.

Q Will we get that on Friday?

Q Why don't you make it straight a.m.?

MR. NESSEN: You have an early edition that comes out on Friday, don't you?

Q No, Sunday.

MR. NESSEN: All right, Sunday a.m.

Q Will we get that on Friday?

MR. NESSEN: He is working with the speechwriters today. It depends on how quickly it gets honed down to the final version.

Q What college, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: The University of New Hampshire.

Q The speech is the Chamber of Commerce speech, isn't it?

MR. NESSEN: The Sunday speech is at the University of New Hampshire.

Q Doesn't he have a speech at Concord earlier on Saturday, and will we have a text of that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think there is a speech on Saturday afternoon. He is going to meet with those elected officials up there but that is not a speech.

Q Ron, they have said up there he is going to speak to these officials and discuss the role of the States.

MR. NESSEN: I would think he might make a few brief opening remarks, but it will be open for coverage.

Q There will be a Q and A at the campus?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q And a news conference?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Taking questions at random from the audience?

MR. NESSEN: On which?

Q At the college, the University.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q The news conference is earlier?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct. That is Sunday afternoon for New Hampshire reporters.

Q This meeting tomorrow, does it have a name?

MR. NESSEN: The name is the Northeast Republican Conference.

Q When did it start?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, it is an annual event.

Q I mean, did it start today?

MR. NESSEN: It begins tomorrow, Friday.

Q Can you tell us anything about the following weekend yet?

MR. NESSEN: I better not say it goes back for years because the paper says it is the first such conference held for the Northeast area. (Laughter) This is the first annual conference.

Q What about the next weekend?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything yet, but don't make plans.

Q The President had an interview this morning, as I understand it. Are we going to get a transcript of that?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Who with?

MR. NESSEN: The Christian Science Monitor.

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: Now let's not go through the whole thing again. The answers are all the same as the other day.

Backing up to the Irish Prime Minister, to answer your questions, he will be in Washington from the 16th to the 22nd, seeing the President on the 17th -- one meeting. The Irish Embassy could possibly help you with the detailed itinerary. We don't have it here at the moment.

Q What was the nature of the President's meeting with Rockefeller?

MR. NESSEN: It is his routine weekly meeting.

Q What did they talk about?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I wasn't there. What they normally talk about, as I think I have said before, and yesterday I gave you a fairly extensive rundown of the assignments that the Vice President is handling for the President and normally what they do in there is to discuss progress of those various assignments and the Vice President reports to the President, asks for guidance if he needs guidance, makes recommendations and so forth. The purpose of the meeting is for the Vice President to report on his assignments.

Q Ron, I wasn't here yesterday so forgive me for asking this question. It may have been asked yesterday, but can you tell us why the President has not asked Rockefeller to campaign for him in New Hampshire?

MR. NESSEN: I think we probably did go over that fairly extensively. The Vice President has said himself, and, in fact, said here the day before yesterday, that he will campaign where helpful for the President.

Somebody asked me where he has or where will he. I can quickly give you a rundown on the kind of political activities the Vice President has had.

MORE

#431

Q Would you answer my question, why the President has not asked him to campaign in New Hampshire?

MR. NESSEN: Specifically, the Vice President has said that he will campaign, plans to and is, in fact, campaigning where helpful.

Q He would not be helpful in New Hampshire?

MR. NESSEN: As I said yesterday to the same question, you have to draw your own conclusions.

Q He is a Dartmouth graduate, you know.

MR. NESSEN: I know that.

Q He has not campaigned except for Dearborn, Michigan. That was the first this year.

MR. NESSEN: Was that the first?

Q Yes, this year.

Prior to that it was mid-December that he went to the Southern Republican Conference?

MR. NESSEN: Let's run through what he has done. December 11 in Houston with the Southern leaders, clearly campaigning for the President.

Q It was not paid for by the President Ford Committee, was it? It was paid for by the Republican Party.

MR. NESSEN: You want to do the briefing or you want me to do it?

Q Is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: Do you have a question about the Vice President's campaigning?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: What is it?

Q I was pointing out the times I thought --

MR. NESSEN: I thought I was going to do the pointing out and you were going to do the questions. Do you have a question?

Q My question was --

MR. NESSEN: Where has the Vice President campaigned?

Q No. Go ahead.

MR. NESSEN: What is the question?

Q Why don't you let her state it?

Q Can't we have a little civility here? Couldn't you be more courteous to Connie?

Q Let the lady speak.

MR. NESSEN: I am trying to.

Q I thought that he has not campaigned on behalf of the President Ford Committee. The only one paid for by the President Ford Committee, as I understand it, was the Dearborn, Michigan trip. Isn't that correct?

MR. NESSEN: I believe the Vice President said the other day when he was here that a portion of the Dearborn trip was paid for by the PFC. The exact payment arrangements for the Rockefeller trips, I don't know. You can get them from his office. But, I do know that his own office lists a fairly extensive group of appearances that they consider to be campaign appearances.

Q Go ahead and give us the list, please?

MR. NESSEN: Houston on December 11, with the Republican Southern leaders, in which his purpose was to motivate the leaders to get out and work for the President; New York City on January 28, in which the Vice President held a fund-raiser cocktail party for the President Ford Committee, raising between \$150,000 and \$200,000; Dearborn, Michigan, on the 30th of January.

He spoke at a President Ford Committee fund-raiser at the home of one of the President's supporters there. The same day, in Dearborn, Michigan, January 30, at a dinner of the Midwest Governors Conference, he spoke and urged the President's election.

Q You mean the Midwest Republican Conference?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry. That is a typo.

Westchester, New York on January 29, a fund-raiser in support of the President, at which the Vice President was the principal speaker; on February 6, which is tomorrow, the Vice President will speak at the same Northeast Republican leadership conference in support of the President.

Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky, on February 12, the Vice President will speak at three separate political events in support of the President's programs. New York City on February 13, the Vice President will be the primary speaker at the annual dinner-dance of the Governor's Club at the Waldorf Astoria. That is not a specific PFC event. That is to raise funds for the New York State Republican Party.

There are several other party fund-raisers, which I will not bother with. Lansing, Michigan on the 20th of February, the Vice President will be the chief speaker at a Lincoln Day dinner. I would anticipate he would support the President in that.

Q What was that date and place again?

MR. NESSEN: Lansing, Michigan, February 20, a Lincoln Day dinner, and planned for March is a trip to the South on the President's behalf -- I don't have the specific cities or States, and in April a trip to Iowa on the President's behalf. I don't think really there is any doubt about the Vice President campaigning for the President where he could be helpful, as he said.

Q On the 20th, if he goes to Lansing, Michigan for a Lincoln Day dinner and speaks on behalf of the President, would the President Ford Committee pay for that or the local Republicans who invited him pay for that?

MR. NESSEN: That is something you need to get from the Vice President's office.

Q According to the Vice President's office this morning, the local Republicans are going to pay for that.

Q Ron, do you know for a fact -- according to the Vice President's office, the Dearborn, Michigan trip was the only one paid for by the President Ford Committee.

MR. NESSEN: Some of these were fund-raisers for the PFC. For instance, in the private fund-raising dinner in Dearborn on the 30th and the one in New York City on the 28th of January.

Q I mean the other trips, like in December to Houston and the one to the Republican Governors Conference in November.

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have any way of keeping track of who pays for what. But, either the PFC or the Vice President's office could help you with that.

Q Aren't the Kentucky appearances, the Lincoln Day appearances really for the party and not for the President?

MR. NESSEN: It is listed by the Vice President's office as three political events in support of the President.

I am sorry. The Lincoln Day was the February 20 in Lansing.

Q The New York Governors Club is also something that Rockefeller has been doing for years as a Governor.

MR. NESSEN: I said that was to raise funds for the New York State Republican Party.

Q One more question on Rockefeller. Does President Ford think that Rockefeller would make a fine President?

MR. NESSEN: I think he has said that one of the qualifications in selecting the Vice President was, among the other qualifications, a person who could succeed to the Presidency.

Q Is he bothered at all that Rockefeller is quoted as saying that he wouldn't rule out the possibility, if Ford dropped out of the race?

MR. NESSEN: I would like to read the Vice President's remarks more carefully. I saw a headline, but I didn't read the story very carefully.

Q We confirmed the headline and the story with Rockefeller's office and they stood by it.

MR. NESSEN: The President thinks he is going to be nominated. I understand the Vice President says he will be nominated, so I guess that is sort of academic.

Q My question is, does the President approve of Secretary Kissinger going around the country and in order to unify foreign policy has been attacking Congress flagrantly?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that I can take on quite that big a bite, Helen. If I read the Secretary's speeches correctly, he is certainly restating the President's policy in a number of areas.

Q So he approves of the speeches he is making around the country?

MR. NESSEN: The Secretary is, as far as I can tell, stating American policy on various issues.

Q Does he consult with the President when he goes around the country and, you know, works it out with him as to -- is the President encouraging the Secretary to fan out around the country? Does it have a political connotation?

MR. NESSEN: I think it goes back quite some time for years and years. The Secretary, I think, feels that foreign policy is something that members of the public are interested in and should be interested in, and he wants to have an opportunity to explain and expand on foreign policy.

He has been doing these for years. I don't know what political connotations it has.

Q Not as widespread and not as much. So Ford approves of him doing this?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. I want to cut away the approval of the Secretary going around the country elaborating on foreign policy from your characterization of it, though. That is what I want to make clear.

Q Mansfield is maintaining Kissinger is attacking Congress all over the place and he says if any Administration expects Congress to lay down and play dead, it has another think coming. So, does he approve?

Q Does the President and his Secretary of Defense agree with Kissinger that the Russians have not cheated on any of the detente agreements or violated any of them?

Q Answer the other question, will you?

MR. NESSEN: I can't quite grasp what the other question is. I am not going to reply to Mike Mansfield's comments.

The question of violations of SALT I, I think the President has said a number of times that there are no proven violations of SALT I, that there have been a number of ambiguities that have come to light, and they have been referred to the Joint Consultative Commission and have been resolved.

Q Is the President and Secretary of Defense in agreement with this view?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what Don's view is, but I assume so.

Q Ron, on the Florida primary, has the President mentioned this to you in the last day or two, any views on it? If yes, then I will frame another question.

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean?

Q Has he expressed his feeling on how the primary is going? Is he satisfied with the Ford Committee in Florida, which has undergone some changes along that line?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard him talk about it in the last few days. I know he thinks all the primaries are going to be tough.

As far as I know his view, from the reports he has received from Bo and Stu and Lou Frey are that they are encouraged and are making progress.

MORE

#431

Q And the changes in that Florida organization are of no major significance?

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

Q Lou Frey is the chairman but Roberts was sent down there recently and there are reports on that, that it seems to have an effect. Is something lacking in the organization, something missing possibly with Lou Frey? That is why I am asking whether he is satisfied with the Florida organization.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, he has received reports from there and the reports are that progress is being made and that the people who are running the primary are encouraged by it.

Q You said a moment ago you know he thinks all the primaries are going to be tough.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Are you telling us the President expects Reagan to be in the race all the way down to the convention?

MR. NESSEN: I think I meant the first five or six primaries.

Q Yesterday I asked you a question relative to the Washington Post story relative to the CIA ceasing to send the National Intelligence Daily to the Foreign Relations Committee and the Armed Services Committee, and you sidestepped the question by --

MR. NESSEN: I didn't know the answer to the question.

Q My question today is, if the President thinks Congress should have oversight responsibilities for the Central Intelligence Agency, does he approve of the CIA or did he order or approve the CIA cutting out the Armed Services Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee from the national intelligence data?

MR. NESSEN: What happened there is, for quite some time there has been consideration -- and I don't know the exact details -- it is a CIA bureaucratic matter of how they are going to supply the 50 or so Members of Congress with daily intelligence reports, and what they have done is substitute one form of intelligence reports for another form of intelligence reports but they are getting daily intelligence reports, the 50 Members.

Q That is not quite accurate. I talked to both the Chief Counsel of the Foreign Relations Committee and the CIA. They didn't really substitute because, prior to this, two documents were going up -- the National Intelligence Daily, which was cut out; and the second was the intelligence check list which continues. So there has been no substitution in that sense.

There has been an elimination of the more detailed and elaborate, the National Intelligence Daily, and instead law makers are still allowed to get the intelligence check list, but the Chairman and the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee have protested and think that is inadequate for them to perform their oversight responsibilities.

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is there was another document substituted for the Intelligence Daily.

Q That is not so according to CIA people and the Foreign Relations Committee. There are two documents. So, does the President approve of the more detailed version of the Daily being withheld from key Members of Congress?

MR. NESSEN: It is a bureaucratic CIA matter that has never gotten to the White House.

Q How can they perform their oversight responsibilities if they are denied this information?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, they are getting daily intelligence information.

Q Ron, last week you made reference to the Law of the Sea Conference and I would like to ask, is the President aware that, since the Mayaguez, all seizures of American fishing ships has ceased when we used to lose as many as 40 a year? Does he know about this? Is he aware of it and what is his reaction to it?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check.

Q This intelligence they are getting, is that equal to what they got before, or is it more curtailed? What is it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that much about it. As I say, it is a bureaucratic matter the CIA has been working on for some time with the Members.

My understanding is that only the form has changed; that they are getting their daily intelligence information in a different form, the way it is presented on paper.

Q But not less information?

MR. NESSEN: I just haven't gotten into that much of it.

Q The difference is that the National Intelligence Daily which they used to receive and which goes to all top intelligence officials has the sources of information on it and that is what Members of Congress are now being denied. It means they can no longer weigh the information being given to them because the checklist doesn't include this source material in it. So it is not in that sense as elaborate or detailed.

MR. NESSEN: It is just something I don't know that much about, Walt. It is something the CIA deals with Congress on.

Q Will you find out if the President had a position on the House committee's vote to abolish the DIA?

MR. NESSEN: The primary position is that he is going to be sending his own recommendations for revising the intelligence community very shortly, within the next couple of weeks. But, specifically, he would not favor that.

Q With the coming visit of Premier Cosgrave and the statements by members of the British Government -- not the press -- about private Americans supplying the funds to the IRA in Ireland, has the President commented on that or taken any action on that matter?

MR. NESSEN: I don't like to tie it to some sort of new position related to the coming visit, but --

Q I don't recall any sort of statement on the subject, not necessarily tied, of course, to Cosgrave.

MR. NESSEN: No, but I think the situation continues to be the same on this, Dick, which is whenever there is any evidence of illegal involvement in the affairs of Northern Ireland by people in the United States, the Government has enforced the laws against such involvement and will continue to enforce the laws against such involvement.

Q What was the President's reaction to the disclosure that Lockheed had paid about \$7 million to a former Japanese war group?

MR. NESSEN: I did not talk to him about it. I don't know that much about the story or whether that is an accurate description of it.

Q It came from the Lockheed auditors.

MR. NESSEN: I did not talk to him about it.

Q I may not have been here for this, but has he expressed to you at any time any reaction to the Gulf payments, to the Northrop situation, to the whole involvement of American business in paying off foreign politicians at one time or another?

MR. NESSEN: I have not talked to him about it.

Q Ron, has the President been in touch with Governor Carey or does he plan to be in touch with Governor Carey regarding the New York option to reject the landing of the Concorde?

MR. NESSEN: No, he has not played a role in the Concorde matter.

Q Does he expect to continue hands off on that, or does he expect to get into it?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't call it hands off. We went through it at great length yesterday. It is a matter that is the Transportation Secretary's assignment -- he did it. And I told you what the President thought of his decision. There is no plan at this time to review the decision and whatever it generates in the way of opposition and so forth will be handled through the regular channels but I know of no plans for the President to get involved in it.

Q There are bills that have been introduced already or are going to be introduced on the Hill to ban the landing. At the point where such legislation might reach the White House, it would certainly fall back into the President's court, so, since he is standing by Mr. Coleman's decision, has he given any thought to vetoing such legislation if it gets here?

MR. NESSEN: That is so far away that I think we will wait and see what, if any legislation, gets here.

Q Is he afraid of any involvement in this decision?

MR. NESSEN: No, Helen. The same question came up yesterday and I said --

Q Since this involves foreign governments, it seems to me he would be --

MR. NESSEN: If you look at the Secretary's lengthy report on this, it is his statutory responsibility. He took into consideration environmental issues, transportation issues, economic issues, foreign policy issues -- all those issues were considered by him in making his decision, as he spells it out.

Q Ron, did the President have a preference in this case?

MR. NESSEN: It was a decision for the Transportation --

Q Didn't the President have any feelings about it one way or the other?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear him express them if he did.

Q Was there any mail or telephone count on reaction to the President's abortion statement?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't checked it.

Q There has been some, hasn't there?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't checked it.

Q Senator Durkin of New Hampshire has raised a question on the President's appointment of Warren Rudman -- as a fellow with no background in transportation -- to the ICC. Do you have any comments on Durkin's objection?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything on Durkin's objections. The President picked him because he is considered to be the best man for the job and --

Q How could he be considered to be the best man for the job if he himself admits he has no experience in transportation?

MR. NESSEN: He is a highly respected administrator in New Hampshire and his record was reviewed and found to be well suited for the job.

It is an election year, you know, which sometimes accounts for some of the comments that are made about things.

Q Or the appointments? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Not about the appointments.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:57 P.M. EST)

#431

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 6:58 P.M. EST

FEBRUARY 5, 1976

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: The meeting lasted -- I guess you know the length of the meeting.

Q No, we don't.

Q We know nothing, actually.

MR. NESSEN: It was over about seven minutes ago.

Q And it started late?

MR. NESSEN: Not too late. It started about 5:40, I guess, a little more than an hour.

The President began the meeting by saying that the basic goals of the Federal election laws are sound but, obviously, the court decision has created some problems, both short-range and long-range problems. Therefore, he said he would like to throw out on the table for discussion two very broad suggestions that he has for dealing with the current situation.

The first of his suggestions was to reconstitute the Federal Election Commission in a manner in keeping with the court decision; in other words, the President would nominate the members and the Senate would confirm them.

The second of his broad suggestions for discussion was the possibility of terminating the law and/or the Commission sometime during 1977, after the election.

The purpose of this would be to give the Congress a chance to review the law in the light of the experience gained from an election campaign. Then, in the light of that experience, Congress would have a chance at that point to review the law to correct anything that showed up through the experience of a campaign and rewrite it in a way that would assure the overall intent of the law, which was to guarantee clean elections.

The President said that what is done now needs to be done in a way that will inspire public confidence, that Congress has an obligation to move rapidly to make sure that the basic intent of the 1974 law, which was clean and honest elections, is continued.

That didn't take very long, to present the President's views, and there then ensued a discussion by the Members in which they offered their views. I am not going to try to report to you on their views. I think that is their responsibility.

At the end of it, the President indicated that he had gotten the discussions started with two broad suggestions and that he will now consider the views of the Members which were given during the discussion and then would prepare and send to Congress his specific recommendations.

Q What were some of the views of the Members that they considered?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it is fair for me to represent the views of Congress.

Q Not individual Members.

MR. NESSEN: Let me summarize, if I may, by saying a number of Members agreed with the two broad suggestions of the President and other Members -- and I wouldn't try to give you a numerical line-up, but there were other Members -- who clearly had other ideas of how to handle the current situation.

Q Did it break in party lines?

MR. NESSEN: I would say certainly not, no.

Q Ron, would suggestion number two preclude an adoption of number one, or would the President prefer both to be adopted?

MR. NESSEN: It was not either-or. These were two suggestions that could go together.

Q The legislative recommendations would deal with only choice one or would it be choice two? Is it necessary --

MR. NESSEN: If the President concludes, after hearing the views and weighing it again, that these are indeed his final recommendations, he could very well send up both recommendations, although he has not decided. He could, though.

Q If the President was serious about this, why did he wait six days until Wayne Hays' position had firmed up against any continuation of the Commission?

MR. NESSEN: I can assure you from the President's tone and demeanor, Adam--and I am sure the Members on both sides will tell you--he is quite serious about this. He talked about time is of the essence, that they have an obligation to move rapidly, the great need to reassure the public and to inspire public confidence.

I think you know the ruling of the court was extremely complex. He did want to hear from his Attorney General, and from his counsellor here at the White House, and six days is not a long time to put together some thoughts on such a complex opinion.

But, I can tell you -- and I think every Member in there will tell you -- I don't know any Member that I sensed that felt he was not quite serious on this matter.

Q Ron, can you, without specifically identifying the source of the various alternatives, describe for us some of the suggestions that came out of the group? What are some of the alternatives the President will be considering as a result of this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: This is skirting very close to the line, but they ranged from, I would say, complete agreement with the two broad suggestions of the President across the entire spectrum of possibilities, up to allowing the Commission to expire in 30 days.

Q Do you have an explanation for Congressman Hays and why he wasn't here?

MR. NESSEN: There was a small list of Members who were not invited or for some reason they sent their regrets. They include the Speaker, Tip O'Neill, John Anderson, Wayne Hays, John Dent, James Eastland, Senator Byrd and Senator Curtis. They were all invited and for their own reasons, or whatever reasons, were unable to come.

Q Doesn't that mean you have the people in the House who matter absent?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you had John Rhodes, John McFall, Phil Burton --

Q Bob Michel?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, Bob Michel. I am sorry.

Q Did each one speak?

MR. NESSEN: Let me look down the list here.

Q Did the Vice President say anything?

MR. NESSEN: The Vice President said he agreed with the President's broad suggestions -- (Laughter) -- but at the same time said he had listened to the various views of the Members and felt that the views of some of the Members really reinforced the need for the President's suggestions.

I think just about every Member spoke. I think every Member did speak, actually.

Q How soon do you think the President will send his proposals up? He will send them soon, won't he?

MR. NESSEN: He told them he would send recommendations.

Q Within the 30-day limit?

MR. NESSEN: Absolutely. He said a number of times in there that time is of the essence.

Q Are you talking of a time frame of a week or 10 days, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: The hearings begin -- you will have to check this on the Hill -- I believe slightly beyond the middle of the month and so as these hearings begin I think the President would make his recommendations known.

Q Can you give us any kind of idea of what some of those alternatives in that whole wide spectrum are?

MR. NESSEN: Ann, I think it is wrong for me to speak for the Members. You have the list. Did any talk out here as they left?

Q We didn't know they were leaving.

MR. NESSEN: I would just prefer that you talk to the Members. I really think it is not proper to represent their views. I did give you the range of what they were.

Q Those that want it to expire, did they give you any reason why they would want it to go out? Do they think it is impossible to enforce the campaign law?

MR. NESSEN: They all have different reasons which I would like them to speak to.

Q Were many in favor of letting it die?

MR. NESSEN: No, not many.

Q Ron, I lost you when you talked about the two suggestions. Is it possible that the President could suggest the second of those without the first?

MR. NESSEN: Let's see, the second being the possibility of setting a termination date in 1977 for either the law and/or the Commission in order to give a chance to review.

Well, I think the problem here is, Dick, that -- I mean, the real time factor is on reconstituting the Commission --

Q It wouldn't be legal otherwise.

MR. NESSEN: -- because it will go out of business on the 30th unless they file for a stay or something like that.

Q So are we safe to conclude the President's primary plan is to offer a reconstitution of the FEC?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't separate primary and secondary because he threw both suggestions out on the table.

Q He has to reconstitute, doesn't he, under the decision?

MR. NESSEN: The President doesn't have the power to reconstitute.

Q It has to be reconstituted?

MR. NESSEN: It will, unless the court grants a stay, expire on the 29th of February.

Q The question I am interested in is, does he definitely want the Commission to stay alive with its present powers?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, as modified by the court decision.

Q The only modification is in the way they are nominated.

MR. NESSEN: The Commission as presently constituted? I thought you said the law. He did suggest reconstituting the Commission in every way except the way they are appointed. Yes, that was suggestion number one.

Q Does that include enforcement and all the other powers they have?

MR. NESSEN: The only change being the way they are appointed.

Q Did he commit himself to, if this were done, to nominating the members who were already on it?

MR. NESSEN: It was mentioned in passing. These were two things, as I say, for discussion. He thought six members had worked reasonably well, and he thought that the six members have had experience now, the present six members have had experience, but it really never got to a question of him committing himself either to numbers or to the present members, but he spoke in those terms when it was raised.

Q Did they address the issue of the Supreme Court decision relating to campaign financing other than dealing with the Commission?

MR. NESSEN: No, they didn't get into any details of the Supreme Court decision and its particular segments.

Q Ron, in terms of this reconstituting, is there anything other than that that he could recommend in a short-term manner?

MR. NESSEN: The two things he threw out as suggestions, one reconstitution --

Q But the second has nothing to do with the immediate problem, as I understand it.

MR. NESSEN: It does because you get into problems, if the Commission dies, who enforces the law and that sort of thing. He does see, you know, certain problems in the law but, since candidates have started their campaigns under this law, it would be very difficult to change it in mid-stream.

At the same time, he does think there ought to be a definite review time set in 1977. I mean, he suggested that there be a definite review time in 1977 when it would be reviewed. I don't want you to think this was tossed off as something; these were two suggestions.

Q But that sounds to me like a second step. I just want to be sure I follow your thinking. The immediate problem is what to do with the Commission before --

MR. NESSEN: In terms of the Commission dying, yes. It is linked to the second because there would be grave difficulties in enforcing the laws if there is no Commission.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 7:12 P.M. EST)