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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:52 P.M. EST

MARCH 17, 1976

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry the briefing was delayed. It was for a variety of reasons.

You know about the meeting the President had with the Prime Minister of Ireland who is in this country for the Bicentennial. We do expect to have either a written statement or perhaps a joint communique later this afternoon.

Q     About what time, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I would say the thing to do would be to put a lunch lid on here after the briefing and then maybe, say 3 o'clock, when the lunch lid comes off, I would think we would have it ready by then.

Then, of course, there is a State dinner tonight, which has the usual State dinner arrangements. Sheila Weidenfeld will be taking care of that.

The President received his annual International Economic Report being sent to Congress, and that was delivered to him by Secretary Simon and Bill Seidman. It is being done now. You have copies of it, I think, for 12:15 embargo.

The weekend plans are shaping up a little bit, and I can give you some details, I believe.

These times are tentative, a little bit fuzzy, but they will smooth out a little before the end of the week. Press check-in at Andrews is 7 o'clock on Saturday morning and the press plane departs at 7:30. The President will leave the South Lawn by helicopter at 7:35 and leave Andrews at 7:55. Some of the airports being used in North Carolina are quite small, and the President will be flying in a Jetstar for that reason.

Q     From Andrews?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

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Q All the way, the whole trip?

MR. NESSEN: There is also some helicopter travel involved.

Q He is not taking Air Force One at all?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Will the pool go on the DC-9?

MR. NESSEN: If you want to, but in the past I found there wasn't any interest in anybody flying on the DC-9, since there was nobody flying on it except the staff.

Q How about the Jetstar?

MR. NESSEN: There is no room on the Jetstar for a pool. It only holds about seven or nine people.

Q What about the press? How are they going?

MR. NESSEN: They will have their very own airplane, which is a 727.

Q Will we be able to land in those places?

MR. NESSEN: No. (Laughter) But you will almost be able to land there, Bob.

Q We will try.

MR. NESSEN: That is right, and we will have pool coverage of your landing. (Laughter) The places where the 727 won't fit, we will have a fairly large parachute pool. (Laughter)

Q What is the chance of getting one pooler on the President's plane?

MR. NESSEN: None, Helen.

The President arrives at Douglas Municipal Airport, Charlotte, North Carolina, at 8:55 on Saturday. That is the arrival time. The first event is at 9:30 at the Woodlawn Holiday Inn in Charlotte. It is a Mecklenburg County Republican breakfast honoring Congressman James Martin.

Q Would it be more efficient if you just posted it or distributed it and got on to other business?

MR. NESSEN: That is probably a good idea. Do you want to do that.

Q Yes.

Q Just tell us the names of the cities he will be stopping in.

MR. NESSEN: Charlotte, and after the breakfast I just mentioned to you there will be a speech at the Charlotte Civic Center to the North Carolina Convention of Future Homemakers of America, some girls 14 to 18, and then on to Ashville, and from Ashville to a rural airport on the border of Avery and Mitchell Counties, and from the airport on the border of Avery and Mitchell Counties to Hickory. In Hickory is Lenoir Rhyne College, and then back home to Andrews Air Force Base.

Q When is he due back?

MR. NESSEN: The President is expected to arrive at Andrews at 9:20. These are going to be fun events.

Q A lot of that will be helicopter type pool coverage?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, one large helicopter for the press.

Q Will there be a news conference?

Q Ron, is the press going to be camped somewhere for the whole day while the pool goes off?

MR. NESSEN: No, everybody goes as far as Ashville. I think it is only that little --

Q What about Avery-Martin --

MR. NESSEN: That is Avery-Mitchell, where only helicopters can land. We will have all the details worked out for you by the end of the week.

Q It sounds like a fun trip.

MR. NESSEN: It is going to be a fun trip, actually, with a lot of country music.

I don't have anything else to tell you today.

Q What is Max Fisher coming in for this afternoon, please?

MR. NESSEN: He is bringing in representatives of a number of Jewish groups who want to express their views on the Middle East situation to the President.

Q Are they coming in to protest the proposed sale of six cargo planes to Egypt?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know exactly what their message is.

Q Does the President have any post-Illinois primary night comments this morning?

MR. NESSEN: Other than what he said on the phone last night to Dick Ogilvie, he doesn't really have any additional comments.

Q What about the reconciling of what Rogers Morton seems to be saying and what you say the President seems to be saying about Reagan? Morton is still claiming Reagan ought to get out of the race and you are saying the President doesn't have any thought on it still?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that there is any difference, Bob, because I talked to the President and Rog together at the same time this morning about this and both of them agree there had been no change in what the White House and the campaign had been saying, which is it is totally a decision by former Governor Reagan, that it is his decision and, obviously, the President would welcome him and his supporters but there is no change and there is no difference between Rog and the President on that.

Q Difference all right, but Morton told us yesterday that in fact he had asked some of his people to begin to contact some of Reagan's people to see if Reagan couldn't be persuaded to pull out. That doesn't seem to be what you are saying from this podium.

MR. NESSEN: Rog said that didn't seem to be what he had said either. He said there were a number of different people in political life who were maintaining their contacts with members of the Reagan team but that there was no feeler or anything like that going out.

I wasn't there when Rog talked to whoever he talked to but I did talk to him this morning about this and his memory of what he said was not quite exactly the way it has been explained to me.

Q Whatever he said -- and a lot of us heard him say it -- did he discuss it with the President before he made the move that he made?

MR. NESSEN: He says he hasn't made any moves.

Q He contacted Bob Michels, John Tower and John Rhodes. Did the President discuss this with him or was it something he did on his own?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know every conversation that Rog has with the President but I do know that they both agreed in the same room at the same time this morning that there had been no change in the position, which was that it is totally up to Reagan and that there had been no feelers sent out in this direction.

Q Would you anticipate that the President, now that he has won this primary, would let up in his campaigning or is he again intending to push forward?

MR. NESSEN: There have never been any travel plans made beyond, I believe, the California trip next week, anyhow. I assume there will be travel beyond that but, at the moment, there aren't any plans. But I don't anticipate any change in his travel schedule.

Q Does that mean he will be traveling every weekend through April as he has through January, February and March?

MR. NESSEN: There just aren't any plans one way or the other, Walt. The last trip on the schedule is California and there is nothing planned beyond that.

Q By way of guidance, do you anticipate we will be traveling every weekend in April, as we have been the three preceding months?

MR. NESSEN: I have no way of knowing since there has been nothing done one way or another beyond the California trip.

Q Does the President disavow any direct contact with the PFC to the Reagan camp with the idea of having Governor Reagan withdraw?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by disavow, Russ.

Q Would he disapprove of it?

MR. NESSEN: There hasn't been any of it.

Q But would he disapprove of it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he would or not. There hasn't been any of it. The position of the President -- and he has indicated that to Rog and the others -- is it is totally up to Reagan to decide.

Q Does that mean he thinks it would be inappropriate for Morton to go to intermediaries to suggest to Reagan he ought to get out of the race, or other members of the PFC, or other supporters?

MR. NESSEN: Tom, it hasn't gone anywhere and the conversation isn't going anywhere, either, because there is nothing to say.

Q Has the President instructed Morton that it not happen?

MR. NESSEN: The situation is that everybody is in agreement. It is up to Reagan to decide what he is going to do and there has been no contact.

Q To pursue that a little more, when the President was asked in one of his interviews a week or ten days ago about reports that such overtures have been made, he said he hadn't authorized any. He said sometimes in Washington people tend to appoint themselves to such roles and if such gestures were made, it was done without his authority.

Are you suggesting that as far as the President knows, no such gestures were made, have been made, and that he doesn't want any made?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding was that Rog Morton sat right there and said there have been no feelers put out to the Reagan camp.

Q By anyone?

Q No back fence discussions? That is what he said last night?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by back fence discussions.

Q Ron, are you trying to say that Morton did not contact Bob Michel and John Tower and people like that and suggest that they talk to Reagan supporters on the Hill?

MR. NESSEN: Rog says obviously people who support the President are maintaining their contacts with friends who are in the Reagan camp.

Q He told us last night he initiated that or suggested that. Are you saying that is not true?

MR. NESSEN: I am at a disadvantage because I didn't hear what Rog said last night. I do know what he said this morning -- that there have been no feelers put out to Reagan.

Q When they maintain these contacts, are they under instructions as to what sort of opinions to impart or not impart?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I think we are really over into an area the PFC should be handling.

Q Was there any discussion of the Democratic race?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q I thought Morton worked for the President.

MR. NESSEN: He does. He is the President's Energy and Economic Adviser.

Q Did his Energy and Economic Adviser discuss the matter with Senator Laxalt on a platform in Florida while both were waiting to speak?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q But he says this, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any additional information for you today on this subject. I really don't.

Q Then don't deny things he has said.

MR. NESSEN: I told you at the very beginning I have not heard everything Rog said except what he said this morning, and that was that he agrees with the President that it is totally a decision that former Governor Reagan has to make himself.

Q Ron, since Malcolm Currie has been fined \$3200 by the Ford Administration for accepting the hospitality of International Rockwell, I am wondering if anyone in the Ford Administration will be fined for what Senator Percy's office admitted this morning, which was the White House use of a military car and military helicopter enables him to make a Dulles flight to go skiing in Colorado in an effort to get his vote?

MR. NESSEN: That is the first I have heard of it, Les. I will have to look it up.

Q Ron, you read the Washington Post, I assume, and it was in Anderson's column this morning. Percy's office revealed it undoubtedly. Didn't you know about this?

MR. NESSEN: I did not.

Q Was this an arrangement made by the White House Legislative and Liaison Office to try to get another vote?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what transpired, Sarah, so I will have to check it first and see what transpired, if anything.

Q Will you let us know?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly will.

Q How about the Currie thing, did the President know Rumsfeld was going to do it? Did he tell him to do it, or was it a Rumsfeld action alone?

MR. NESSEN: Rumsfeld discussed the matter with the President and the President told him it was his decision, Don Rumsfeld's decision, and after the decision had been made by Don, the President said he supported that decision.

Q The Pentagon announced this morning it is closing 80 Naval bases, 80 Naval installations around the country. Is it just coincidence that announcement came after the President won his fifth straight primary, it was held up that long?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the procedure the Pentagon followed, Walt, you will have to ask the Pentagon.

Q On the antitrust bill pending in the House, what did the President tell John Rhodes yesterday his position was and, related to that, to the extent there was a switch in his position, why did the President switch the Administration's stance?

MR. NESSEN: There has been no switch in the President's position because he has never taken a position publicly on that piece of legislation. He has now had an opportunity to review the proposed bill, and later this afternoon he is going to be sending a letter to Congress explaining his position, and we will make that public for you later this afternoon.

Q You say he never took a position before. However, the Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust testified on behalf of the Administration in May of 1975, and he sent a letter to Peter Rodino on behalf of the Administration, saying the Administration supports the concept in this bill.

So, is that not a switch if he no longer supports--

MR. NESSEN: I said the President has never taken a public position on this legislation before.

Q Kauper testified on behalf of the Ford Administration.

MR. NESSEN: The letter and the testimony by the gentleman from the Justice Department was developed in the White House staff machinery through a process that is used to reconcile differences between agencies. When agencies have differences of opinion on legislation that originates outside of the Administration, there is a procedure which brings these people together to reconcile their positions. That was the procedure followed.

Now, in that procedure, it does not call for that legislation or that matter to be brought to the President's attention. The fact is it wasn't. It was not brought to the President's personal attention until either the 10th or the 11th of March, when it appeared that action on the bill in Congress was imminent and at that time it was brought to the President's attention. He has been reviewing it since then, and as I say will send a letter to Congress today explaining his position on it.



Q Will that letter outline a form of the bill which he would not veto?

MR. NESSEN: I think you ought to wait and see what he says about the bill, first.

Q Can we assume that when the letter goes from the White House to Congress saying this is the Administration's position that henceforth it doesn't really mean that the President in fact himself supports that position, it is just some kind of White House staff position that is somewhat divorced, as you seem to be suggesting, from the President's position?

MR. NESSEN: I think what I would rather do is explain to you what is the sequence of events relating to this bill. You know in general, sort of philosophical, what the letter means. I think we will put that off to another day.

Q Does the OMB speak for the President?

MR. NESSEN: I think I outlined what the procedure was on this bill. For a more general philosophical discussion of what the letter means, I think we should save it for another time.

Q Has the President discussed this with the Attorney General?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Will you find out?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Are you saying when a member of the Administration testifies before the Hill on the Administration's view of a bill, he does not speak for the President?

MR. NESSEN: I am saying that in this particular case and with this particular bill, the differences over the bill between agencies of the Government were resolved through a procedure that did not involve the President's personal attention. Now, that applies to this bill as it went through.

As you know, and some of you probably know, the bill has been in the White House staff system since March of 1974, which is quite a way back, and actually a different Administration. It worked its way through the staff system, and the differences between agencies were resolved within the staff system, but it did not come to the President's attention until either the 10th or the 11th of March.

Q Is that policy that it doesn't come to the President's attention and is testified to as being an Administration supported bill, or is it a breakdown in policy? In other words, are you telling us this is the way it should work or the way it just happened to work in this case, and that was a mistake?

MR. NESSEN: This is the way it happened to work in this case.

Q Would you explain to us what the procedure is? By the way, which of the agencies in this case disagreed, and if there is a disagreement between two agencies, what is the procedure for resolving it and, routinely, do they not go to the President for resolution?

MR. NESSEN: I need to do more research on that general subject, Mort. I tried to nail down as much as I could the details of this particular case.

Q Will the President attack this bill, as reported?

MR. NESSEN: This afternoon, when we distribute the letter --

Q I mean, it is already --

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I think, as some folks here will tell you, this is an extremely complex piece of legislation involving difficult legal concepts, as well as very specific, complicating provisions. It is not a question that you can say yes or no to, frankly.

Q Did the President meet with members of the business community who opposed the bill?

MR. NESSEN: He did not.

Q Who talked to him in Chicago about the bill?

MR. NESSEN: I think if you check back you will find the bill wasn't brought to his attention until after he had been to Chicago.

Q Somebody talked to him in Chicago.

MR. NESSEN: That is not correct.

Q On that whole trip?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't see any business group about the bill.

Q I am talking about an individual, Ron, maybe a PFC reception, or at the Palmer House or at the Marriott.

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, not.

Q When did he hear about the bill? He went to Chicago last Thursday and Friday.

MR. NESSEN: What were the dates?

Q A week ago was the 10th. That is when you say he heard it.

Q He was in Chicago on March 12 after the bill was called to his attention.

Q So, he heard about it before he went to Chicago?

MR. NESSEN: If those are the correct dates, that is correct.

Q Did he discuss this with Solicitor Bork at all?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know all the people he discussed it with.

Q Is the President aware of the Attorney General's position on this bill?

MR. NESSEN: Again, when you say the Attorney General's position on this bill, because of the extremely complex nature of the bill, I am not sure the Attorney General has taken a flat position on the bill.

Q Isn't it fair to assume that the head of the Antitrust Division testified for the bill, that the Attorney General and the Justice Department as a whole favored it?

MR. NESSEN: This bill, as you know, has been around for a long time, dating, as I say, back to the previous Administration, and it is not clear to me yet, you know, at what point various people gave their approval or disapproval.

Q The reason I ask the question, those of us traveling around the country with the President on his campaign trips are very well aware that every time a question about big business or antitrust or multinationals, he has only one answer; that is, Ed Levi: "I have myself a strong Attorney General who is an expert in antitrust, and he is going full blast ahead." I wonder how he justifies taking this position, which I think is very obviously against Levi's own position --

MR. NESSEN: Wait, I think you really should not say that, Ed, until you are sure in your own mind what the Attorney General's position is.

Q You are not, apparently, the President --

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Does the Attorney General support the head of the Antitrust Division, because the head of the Antitrust Division is clearly for the bill?

Q That is obvious.

MR. NESSEN: It is not obvious to me that the Attorney General's position is that.

Q You mean an Assistant Attorney General would go on the Hill and testify not only this was his position, it was the position of the Attorney General, and you wouldn't be sure that the Attorney General had agreed with that position?

MR. NESSEN: It is a matter, Jim, as I say, that was resolved at the staff level. I am not sure what the involvement of the Attorney General was, and I haven't had time to track it down. But, I will say on the general subject of antitrust that I think you know the President's record on antitrust. He has raised the penalties for antitrust violations quite high -- I think \$1 million in the case of a corporation and I forget what the upper limit is that he raised it for private individuals -- and he has increased the staff of the Antitrust Division and he has given instructions to undertake antitrust actions in areas where they had not been taken before, so I think you know he has a good record in that area, and I don't think that is the issue here.

Q If the President holds the Attorney General in such high esteem, especially in this area, that he would want to know his position on this bill ahead of time, I am rather surprised you don't know what Levi's position is.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know, simply because of a number of other things, and trying to track this down as much as I could, I didn't touch all the bases.

Q Is the President instituting a different modus operandi now so he will know when people go to testify in behalf of the Administration?

MR. NESSEN: I told Mort I would --

Q Are you saying this didn't come to his attention at all, until March 10, and it has been in the works since?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q He never knew such a bill was pending?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q What is a Member of Congress or a Congressional committee supposed to do when someone comes up and testifies on behalf of the Administration and then means later Congress is told this is not really the President's position, it is some White House staff member's position? Is Congress supposed to take seriously any statement of the Administration's position?

MR. NESSEN: As I said the three other times you asked the same question, I am not prepared to bite off that big a hunk today and discuss it.

Q You said you didn't want to have a general philosophical discussion. The fact is, as you well know, that as far back as anyone's memory goes in this town a statement by a witness before a Congressional committee that he was giving the Administration's view was unanimously and commonly interpreted that that was the view of the President.

The question is, does the President assume the responsibility for the statements made in the name of his Administration in this specific case and in other cases?

MR. NESSEN: In this specific case, Jim, I have explained to you the process that the bill went through. It is a process for bills not proposed by the Administration. I have explained that to you, and I have said that you will have the President's position in a letter to Congress later this afternoon.

Q When did the President's position change?

MR. NESSEN: The President has not taken a position on the bill, so it couldn't very well change.

Q Why is the President's position, as you are going to express it in these letters this afternoon, different from the position expressed by the Administration spokesman, the Assistant Attorney General?

MR. NESSEN: How do you know it is?

Q Are you suggesting he is going to change his mind again?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously, the President has not changed his mind because he has never taken public position before.

Q So, he disavows responsibility for the position taken by that witness?

MR. NESSEN: I think you should wait and see what his letter says, Jim.

Q I am basing it on your own words. You say the President has not taken a public position, that someone else has.

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q You dispute or you deny that previous position was the President's position necessarily, is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously, the President was not involved in the process until the 10th or the 11th of March.

Q Ron, are you aware that the minority leader who succeeded Mr. Ford in that position at the House told a reporter yesterday, "The President has changed his position"?

MR. NESSEN: He may very well have said that, Bob, but I am telling you the President had not taken a public position on this before.

Q You keep saying "public" as though that is important.

MR. NESSEN: Nor has he taken a private position.

Q So, Mr. Rhodes is wrong?

MR. NESSEN: I am trying to explain to you the sequence of events that have transpired, Bob, and I think I have explained them to you.

Q Ron, who was the highest ranking official in the Government who signed off on a position like this that is represented then to be the position of the Administration if it is not the President?

MR. NESSEN: Under this process that was followed in this particular bill?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure who was.

Q Will you find out?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Could we have a briefing after this letter goes up so we could get to the bottom of this? You would then have a couple of hours to find out what happened.

MR. NESSEN: I think you are the bottom of it, Bob.

Q I will ask you the same question --

MR. NESSEN: Let me finish answering Bob's question. I think you are at the bottom in that I told you the process followed that resulted in the testimony that you have mentioned. I told you when the President became aware of the bill, that he has been studying the legislation, reviewing it and has now reached his position on the bill, which we will make public this afternoon. I don't know that we have a deeper bottom to get to.

Q I think it would be important to know whether or not the President had been informed, at the time the Solicitor General was making his testimony, if he was informed at the time what his testimony was going to be and --

MR. NESSEN: I think I said, Ted, the President became aware of the legislation on the 10th or the 11th of March.

Q He was totally unaware of it?

MR. NESSEN: I think I answered that three or four times before.

Q Who brought it to his attention and why?

MR. NESSEN: John Rhodes brought it to his attention because, as I said, Congressional action on the bill was imminent.

Q Is this a climb down because of business pressure, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean a climb down, Jim. From what?

Q A change of position.

MR. NESSEN: I told you before it is not possible for it to be a change of position since the President had taken no position.

Q I will rephrase the question in response to your semantics. Is this a change in the Administration's position as a result of business pressure?

MR. NESSEN: The President had not taken a position on this bill until today.

Q I didn't ask that, I asked whether it was a change in the Administration's position.

MR. NESSEN: The President has not taken a position until today, and I think what Congress is anxious to hear is what the President's position is. They have not heard it before, and they will today.

Q Ron, could you tell us what the President's procedure was after Rhodes talked to him in deciding what he should do about this bill, who he talked to?

MR. NESSEN: I will pull together all the people he talked to. I know some of the people he talked to.

Q Including the person in Chicago?

MR. NESSEN: I think I said earlier I am unaware the President talked to anybody outside the White House about this legislation.

Q What time will the letter be ready?

Q Would you ask him that question directly?

MR. NESSEN: He addressed that question this morning when I was talking to him, and he indicated he had not talked to anybody outside the White House about this legislation or the concept of the legislation.



Q Ron, there are a lot of unanswered questions, obviously, and you may not agree with me, but I would still like to ask that you consider at least getting the facts we have asked about and having a briefing after the letter is released.

MR. NESSEN: If there are any additional facts, Bob, I will try to arrange that.

Q Ron, you referred several times to this process used to straighten out a conflict. Who is in charge of that process? Who are we talking about? Is it OMB or staff people here?

MR. NESSEN: It is White House staff people.

Q In this specific case, who was in charge of resolving the conflict between the Justice Department and the other agency, whoever they may be?

MR. NESSEN: It is the OMB that normally directs it.

Q Who specifically?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who specifically worked on this case.

Q Who were the other agencies involved besides the Justice Department? Whose views had to be reconciled?

MR. NESSEN: I will find out for you, Jim.

Q Is the President unhappy that the Administration position has been put forward in the public that he is apparently now going to repudiate? We were told he was opposed to it.

MR. NESSEN: As I said repeatedly, the President has not taken a position until today, so there can be no change or repudiation of what he said before because he hasn't said anything before.

Q Is he unhappy an Administration position has been put forward?

MR. NESSEN: I would not say so. He has had time to study the legislation now that action is imminent, and he will come forward with his position.

Q Doesn't that make it seem like a contradiction that might make it seem like nobody seems to know who is running the store?

MR. NESSEN: I know who is running the store.

Q Ron, the Post reports that no action was taken on Mr. Currie until hours after reporters began asking questions. I am wondering, is it possible the Ford Administration knew nothing at all about the activities of Mr. Currie, Mr. Middendorf, and Mr. Callaway until the press began asking questions?

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

Q Is the press so much more alert than the White House or what?

MR. NESSEN: I am probably not the best judge of that.

Q Ron, on that issue, did the President see any difference between these circumstances of Currie and Middendorf and the Earl Butz trip?

Q . Question?

MR. NESSEN: Dick is wondering whether there was any difference that I saw between the Middendorf and Currie matter and the Earl Butz trip.

I forget the exact details of it. But, as I understand it, that was resolved by the General Counsel of the Agriculture Department, with corrective action.

Q As I understand it, about the only thing that was done was the Secretary paid his own expenses. Certainly no reprimand was issued in that instance..

Q He didn't lose a month's pay, you mean.

Q And no penalty.

Q Ron, did you have time to answer his question?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an answer to the question.

Q What is the White House going to do about the Post Office Department? I understand they are running out of money in about a month. The Postal Service, I should say.

MR. NESSEN: In what specific sense do you mean?

Q They just spent all their money and are not going to get any more subsidy under the White House policy, and there is no legislation, and legislation has been tied up for months in the Senate because some people apparently disagree with some of the legislation pending.

But, something has to be done for the American people. They have to still have the Postal Service, and they are about to run out of money in another month.

MR. NESSEN: I will have to look into that. I have not looked into it.

Q When will that letter be available, the antitrust letter?

MR. NESSEN: I would guess somewhere around 3:00 or 4:00.

Q Ron, is the White House doing anything or even following the events down in the Panama Canal Zone right now? I understand there is a work stoppage that has virtually halted any ships getting into the Canal, and a couple of letters have been sent to the President and to Members of Congress because the work stoppage was apparently caused by workers concerned about a wage freeze implemented indirectly by the President. Do you know anything about that?

MR. NESSEN: I do, and the President has been given a report on it.

Q What is the outcome?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that there is any outcome. There is a strike down there, I understand.

Q But he is studying the report?

MR. NESSEN: It was an oral report.

Q By who?

MR. NESSEN: By a staff member.

Q Excuse me, if this has already been answered. I have been out of town. Is the President talking to the Irish Prime Minister about any means of getting a settlement. Is he pressing for any settlement in Ireland to stop the terrorism?

MR. HESSEN: I wasn't in on the meeting, and we will have a report on it, but I think both Governments understand each other's positions on the Northern Ireland question, and I think both Governments have said before that they hope for a settlement and an end to the bloodshed and the establishment of peace and justice in Northern Ireland.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 1:30 P.M. EST)