

This Copy For _____

NEWS CONFERENCE

#525

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:24 P.M. EDT

JULY 2, 1976

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: I think you have seen the schedule for today. Basically, there are no changes in that schedule for today.

Q What is he going to do this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: He is going to be working on his Bicentennial speeches.

Q No convention delegates coming in?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Do you have a text of tonight's speech?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it will be available immediately after this briefing, or it will be available shortly.

Q When will the text be available on the Philadelphia speech?

MR. NESSEN: Tomorrow.

Q Tomorrow sometime?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is that the only speech for the Fourth of July?

MR. NESSEN: Here is what I thought we would do; that is, put out the President's remarks at the Honor America event at the Kennedy Center for 6:00 p.m. release tomorrow night. Then the two Sunday speeches -- they are Valley Forge and Independence Hall -- put them out for 9:00 p.m. release Saturday night. That means they will be okay for the Sunday papers, but I think it is too early to put it on the television and radio, at 6:00 Saturday night.

MORE

#525

Q At night?

MR. NESSEN: 9:00 p.m. Saturday night.

Q You mean the speeches being given on Sunday can be run in the Sunday morning papers?

MR. NESSEN: If you want to. If you don't want to, we can embargo them for delivery.

Q Then why go?

MR. NESSEN: Let me rethink that issue. You want to have those? Okay.

Q Save one speech for Sunday.

MR. NESSEN: For tonight at the Archives --

Q What have you decided?

MR. NESSEN: Let me rethink the whole thing.

As I said, you will have the speech this afternoon for tonight.

The coverage at the Archives tonight is a combination of travel pool and pre-position pool. We have already posted both of those groups by name, and the travel pool will go inside and then become part of the coverage inside the Archives.

The travel pool will go over with the President. The pre-position part of the pool needs to show up at the Archives at 7:30 at the Constitution Avenue entrance, where you will be escorted into the Rotunda in a group. Steve Studdert from the Press Advance Office will be there to help you along.

For Sunday, the helicopters are leaving from a slightly unusual, obscure portion of the Page Airways area at National. We have posted a little chart that shows you where the helicopters are parked, and that is back there on the press bulletin board, so you can see where that is.

If there aren't any other questions, I am not going to bother to go through the details of the weekend because I think everybody pretty well has it in mind.

Q We don't know about Monday morning, how the pool goes.

MR. NESSEN: We don't either.

Q What about tomorrow during the day?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't seen the President's schedule for tomorrow. Let's wait until we get the schedule and then decide on plans for tomorrow.

Q What about the fireworks on Sunday night? Is the press invited to watch them?

MR. NESSEN: The President has invited four or five couples to watch the fireworks with him on the balcony, and I will post the names as soon as I get them.

Q What is the coverage?

MR. NESSEN: There is no coverage of that.

Q You mean reporters?

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean to watch with him on the balcony? No, he has invited four or five couples, civilians, real people. (Laughter)

Q If you had a roped-off area on the Truman balcony -- would that be all right? (Laughter)

Q No coverage from the lawn?

MR. NESSEN: No, there is no coverage at all of that Sunday evening event.

Q Is the press invited to watch the fireworks from the South Lawn?

MR. NESSEN: I checked on that, and it appears that the President has invited so many people from his staff and their families and children that we are just not going to be able to accommodate 1,500 members of the press and their families.

Q How large is the staff now, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: The staff is around 481, or something like that.

Q But this invitation goes to the OMB, way beyond the immediate staff.

MR. NESSEN: I guess so. I don't know who the invitation list has been.

Q You are having all the campaign staff, too.

MR. NESSEN: Is that right? I don't know.

Q How many delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. (Laughter)

Q Is there any way we can get a report on how the President watched the fireworks and so forth? Will you give a readout on that?

MR. NESSEN: I hadn't planned to.

Moving right along, the unemployment figures came out today, as you know. The rate showed a two-tenths of 1 percent increase, as I guess you saw.

The Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, Alan Greenspan, has told the President that the rise in the unemployment rate for June is apparently largely, if not wholly, the result of faulty seasonal adjustment factors.

Q Ron, the Acting Commissioner of Labor Statistics, testifying not more than an hour ago at the JEC, said the precise opposite.

MR. NESSEN: I would like to see his testimony.

Q Is a faulty seasonal adjustment factor a statistical aberration?

MR. NESSEN: I thought about various ways to make that into a shorthand or headline word, and I think you all know that my feeling is that during the recovery we have never claimed more for the recovery than was justified. We have never tried to palm off sharp ups or unexpected downs in any way, and I am not going to try to find any kind of abbreviation.

This is an extremely complex seasonal adjustment factor, which I don't fully understand. The seasonal adjustment factor is calculated on the basis of the increase or the decrease of employment for that month over the past couple of years.

Now, there was a very sharp decrease in employment in May of 1975. Now, that became one of the factors that was used in calculating the seasonal adjustment factor for June of 1976, and that is about as close as I can come to giving you a technical explanation.

Q Are you saying there really wasn't any rise in unemployment?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not clear yet whether the rate in May, which parenthetically was 7.3, was estimated too low or whether the rate for June, which came out today -- 7.5 -- was too high. But, it is probable, according to Alan Greenspan, that the actual change in unemployment between the two months was small.

Q Who is to blame for that, Ron, for the fall decision?

MR. NESSEN: Nobody is to blame for it. It is the formula or mechanism they use, Peter, and have used for a long time.

Q He said it is because it is the result of faulty seasonal adjustment factors?

MR. NESSEN: That is right. Last year's unusually large drop in unemployment in June was a factor in this month's --

Q By saying faulty, it indicates a mistake was made, someone is at fault.

MR. NESSEN: Nobody is at fault. Using the formula that is in place and following the formula precisely, you get an unemployment rate in June which appears to go up two-tenths of 1 percent.

Q Ron, is Alan Greenspan trying to mitigate the significance of the statistics for political reasons?

MR. NESSEN: No. Let me say two things in that line, Phil. First of all, Alan has not changed his view that the unemployment rate by the end of 1976 will be below 7 percent. That is one thing.

The second thing is that I don't want you to think that there isn't concern by the President for an unemployment rate, whether it is 7.5 or 7.3. Unemployment is too high in the United States, the President believes, and he has said that before.

Now, in answer to your question, Phil, you have sat here, I think, month-in and month-out, and I think you would agree that we have never attempted to hype the news or play down the bad news. I recall standing right here on this same spot and saying whereas the trends are in the right direction, we do not expect unemployment to go straight down in a straight line; that we are going to have monthly upticks from time to time. I have said that in those exact words, so this happens to be one of those moments.

Q What is an uptick? (Laughter)

Q Is this an uptick? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: It is a statistical uptick.

Q A little upturn?

Q Why should you put up with a faulty formula? Doesn't the President care?

MR. NESSEN: Suppose I came out today, Andy, and said we have just decided to change the formula? There would be a lot of whooping and hollering, I suspect.

Q Does this mean he will sign the \$4 billion public works bill?

MR. NESSEN: There is no relation between the two, Helen.

Q There was a story on the wire that said because of problems in the construction industry, unemployment is expected to go up in July, as well. Was that Mr. Greenspan's prediction?

MR. NESSEN: Walt is asking about a report on the wire, I guess, from the Labor Department when they issued these statistics, suggesting there could be a further increase in the figures for July, and that is a possibility.

Q How does the President feel about the statement of Senator Durkin that Secretary Usery has acted as a cheerleader of the Teamsters, who is he supposing to be investigating, when this comes in the same week Dr. Kissinger snubbed the NAACP? (Laughter)

Q Have you finished the economic part?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't we finish the economic part first?

Q Ron, is the President concerned that the economic policies he and his aides are pursuing is producing an upturn in both unemployment and inflation simultaneously?

MR. NESSEN: No. You know in both cases, Phil, I have said that we did not expect the inflation rate to continue at the very small increased rate of one or two-tenths of a percent, which it had for several months, and as I said before, I have said that we did not expect the unemployment rate to go straight down without a monthly uptick here or there.

But, as Alan says today, he does expect the unemployment rate to be under 7 percent by the end of the year, as predicted at the beginning of the year, and there has been no change in the predicted rate of inflation for the year, either.

Q When Helen asked a moment ago if this would mean the President would sign the public works bill, you said there was no relation. Why isn't there? It is a bill designed to create jobs and alleviate unemployment.

MR. NESSEN: It is a bill advertised as creating jobs, but I think you know all the faults the Administration finds with the public works bill, and a statistical showing of a two-tenths of 1 percent increase in unemployment for a month does not change any of the faults of that legislation.

Q Are you forecasting a veto?

MR. NESSEN: I am not adding anything to the already publicly stated position on this bill.

Q He has said he would veto that on the campaign trip, hasn't he?

MR. NESSEN: I think it has been recommended for a veto by people.

Q It seems I recall at several points when he was asked about it he declared flatly he would veto it.

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall that.

Q Who recommended this, because Simon said he had not decided?

MR. NESSEN: The President has not officially decided, that is correct.

Q Who among the advisers?

MR. NESSEN: Jim Lynn has publicly recommended a veto of the public works bill.

Q Ron, what is the President going to do on --

MR. NESSEN: I want to get Les' question about the -- would you repeat it?

Q Are you suggesting that Kissinger did not snub the NAACP?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know anything about it. I hadn't heard about it.

Q By way of explanation, he was invited weeks ago to address the convention in Memphis of the NAACP. The State Department said his schedule is too crowded. But, I discovered the schedule include lunch with Malik of Indonesia, a two-hour meeting in the afternoon with Malik of Indonesia, and in the evening with Malik of Indonesia.

I just don't see why the Secretary of State would turn down an organization of this size and magnitude to continue meeting. I am wondering, is the President aware of this or what? I would just like to know.

MR. NESSEN: What is the question?

Q In other words, I would like to know, what is the President's reaction to (a) this reaction to the NAACP and, secondly, to Durkin's statement about cheer-leading, those two things.

MR. NESSEN: On part one, which I take it has to do with the Secretary not being able to accept that invitation, I think I would have to defer to the State Department and their explanation of his schedule because I don't know the details of his schedule.

The second part about Usery -- was it Usery appearing at the Teamsters' convention?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I think we explained several times, Les, when asked about that, that the Teamsters' Union is the largest Union in the United States in terms of membership. He is the Labor Secretary, whose department deals with the affairs of working people and labor unions, so it is logical they would invite him and that he would accept.

His remarks about the Teamsters, as he has explained over and over and over again -- and as I think I have -- I believe he praised some of the leadership of the Teamsters' Union.

Q He said, "I am on your team," I believe, Ron, didn't he?

MR. NESSEN: In the context, as I understand it, of the job they have done in representing their union members in contract negotiations. Now I think he has explained both to the press and in testimony yesterday that the Teamster leaders have represented their members well in contract negotiations has no effect whatsoever on his responsibilities for looking into allegations that have been made about the Teamsters' pension and welfare funds.

Q Investigation, as I understand it, isn't it?

MR. NESSEN: That is right. I think it is.

O My question is, what is the President going to do about the bill that provides States with more income from mining of Federal properties?

MR. NESSEN: He has asked all the agencies to submit to him by noon today their recommendations on what he should do about that legislation.

MORE

Q Has there been a recommendation for a veto?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the recommendations are not due in until noon today -- well, it is afternoon now, but I don't know what the recommendations are.

Q Has he talked to anyone about the bill by Senator Hansen.

MR. NESSEN: Senator Hansen requested an appointment last week to come over and talk to the President. Actually, the purpose of the requested meeting last week was to deliver a letter to the President, a letter signed by 67 Members of Congress from really, I guess, all over the United States -- a bipartisan letter signed by people from both parties and from all parts of the country, including Mike Mansfield, who is from Montana, whose State I think has an interest in this -- Lloyd Bentsen, Hugh Scott, John Glenn, and so forth.

Q Can we have a copy of the letter?

MR. NESSEN: This is a letter to the President from the Members. I think the normal process would be to get the letter from the sender.

Q After the meeting with Senator Hansen, is that when President Ford asked his staff to come up with recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: No, the bill has just arrived here and the decision needs to be made, I guess by midnight tomorrow, whether to sign or veto.

Q When did he ask for the recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know at what point he asked.

Q Ron, could you give us your best understanding of the nature of the discussion between the President and Senator Hansen as it dealt with delegates from Wyoming?

MR. NESSEN: I don't feel comfortable speaking for Senator Hansen or paraphrasing Senator Hansen. I could characterize the meeting this way, Jim: It is a meeting, such as the dozens of meetings that the President has had at the request of Members of Congress and, you know, actually representatives of other groups, who want to come in and express to the President their views on legislation that either affects their State, their region or whatever industry or special interest they represent.

This is a very routine, normal thing to do. It happens all the time. The President himself mentioned this morning, for instance, that he had had similar delegations come in and talk to him about the energy bill, representatives from petroleum producing States who came in and urged him to veto that bill; representatives of New England, for instance who came in and urged him to sign the bill.

MORE

Q But you are not offended that delegates were mentioned? That doesn't outrage you?

MR. NESSEN: Who said they were?

Q The Washington Post?

MR. NESSEN: Senator Hansen issued a statement -- I don't want to paraphrase his statement, it is out and available. I will simply say that -- well, I don't want to paraphrase Senator Hansen, but the President says that no offer of "I will give you 7 delegates if you sign the bill, I will give 7 delegates to another candidate if you veto the bill" -- no such offer was made at the meeting.

Q Ron, was the President affronted by the suggestion, however, that some delegates may be swayed in their vote?

MR. NESSEN: Was he what, Marilyn?

Q Was the President affronted by the suggestion that is acknowledged now that certain delegates would be swayed in their vote if he vetoed the bill?

MR. NESSEN: Marilyn, I don't know that there was such a discussion. Senator Hansen, as people do when they come up here to lobby for or against legislation, reported to the President what he believed the effects on the general public opinion would be on States like Nevada, Idaho, Montana, and so forth, of a signing or a veto. That is common. As I say, the people on the energy bill gave a similar assessment of what the public reaction would be in their States and so forth.

Q Was the President affronted by that?

MR. NESSEN: The main thing to remember is that when the President comes to decide whether to sign this bill or veto this bill, he will do it just as he does every other piece of legislation, and that is on the merits of the bill. That is the only consideration that there will be.

Q Ron, what was the Administration's position on this bill?

MR. NESSEN: As I understand it, Secretary Kleppe testified against the originally-introduced bill.

Q Has it been changed?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is there have been changes made in the legislation.

Q Major changes or minor changes?

MR. NESSEN: I am not that familiar with the legislation. I mean, another thing to remember -- well, go ahead.

Q You said that Hansen, like a lot of other people, told the President the likely effects on public opinion in his State and throughout the West of a veto or a signing of the bill. Did Hansen also discuss the likely effect on the opinion of delegates in Wyoming to a signing or a veto?

THE PRESIDENT: I was not at the meeting and so I don't know every single --

Q You know that he discussed the effect on the general public opinion.

Q That is the only question that makes any difference, whether they discussed delegates or not?

MR. NESSEN: Hansen has said himself, and I have confirmed with the President, that at no time was there any offer of delegates or any offer to withhold delegates depending on the signing or non-signing of this bill.

Q We are not talking about an offer or the quid pro quo. We are talking about was the question of the political effect brought up?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly, the subject of public reaction in Wyoming, Montana, Nevada and so forth --

Q Not an offer, but did he say, look, this is going to hurt you in getting delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I wasn't there.

Q How can you discuss the general public reaction then if you were not there?

MR. NESSEN: Because I did some research.

Q Ron, you talked to the President. Did you ask the President if delegates were discussed at the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: He told me there was never any such offer of delegates or non-offer of delegates; that Hansen gave him his view of what the public reaction would be in the areas affected by a signing or a veto.

Q Did he mention delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I wasn't in the meeting. I don't know.

Q Did the President tell you that Hansen also mentioned the effect on delegates?

MR. NESSEN: That wasn't mentioned to me, no. You can ask -- the point is, I am not the right one to speak for Hansen or to paraphrase Hansen.

Q We are asking you to speak for the President.

MR. NESSEN: I have spoken for the President.

Q Did he discuss delegates with Senator Hansen?

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge -- I know for a fact that there was no such offer made. You know, every sentence of the conversation, I don't know, I wasn't there.

Q Were delegates discussed in the context of that bill?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I wasn't there. As I say, the important thing to remember is how the President is going to make his decision.

Q The President said there was no offer that: "I will give you 7 delegates." The President told you that. Did the President tell you that there was no mention of delegates, Ron, or not?

MR. NESSEN: Let me read my notes, Les, okay?

Q Go ahead.

MR. NESSEN: Hansen took about 10 minutes to tell the President why Hansen thought the President ought to sign it. The President then spoke up and said he was not going to make a commitment one way or another. Then there was a discussion of the impact of the legislation and of any Presidential decision one way or another on the West, the States of the West, and my notes show that I have jotted down that they never talked about the effect of the signing on delegates. That is what my notes show.

Q Was it assumed that the delegates are the delegates from the West that Mr. Hansen controls?

Q Could you repeat that sentence?

MR. NESSEN: My notes show they discussed the impact of this legislation and of a Presidential decision on the Western States and that they never talked about any supposed effect of a signing or a veto on delegates.

Q Those are your notes from being briefed by somebody since you were not in the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: They would have to be, and, because I wasn't in the meeting.

Q The White House denies that the subject of delegates ever came up at this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: That is what my notes show.

Q I wish you had said that 10 minutes ago.

MR. NESSEN: I just took time to read through my notes again.

Q Senator Hansen has not disputed the point which Ford campaign workers in that State --

MR. NESSEN: You know Hansen himself says -- I haven't had time to read much of this -- it says, "I did discuss likely attitudes in the affected Western States with the President." That is what my notes show, the President's recollection.

Q That is delegates, isn't it, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Let me just clear that up. I think it is important -- I just have the feeling that you don't see this in the context of other similar meetings that are held all the time by people who come in and discuss legislation.

Now, you say when Hansen says that he discussed the effect on the West of this legislation -- this is not the only communication with the President urging him to sign or veto. The United Mine Workers of America has sent a telegram in here urging the President to sign the bill.

That is the kind of impact on the West or reaction in the West that Hansen, I think, is talking about. He has messages from other Members of Congress --

Q Who else?

MR. NESSEN: -- bipartisan letters.

Q Before the President made this rush order for recommendations, had he made up his mind in any way?

MR. NESSEN: What rush order for recommendations?

Q When did he send out the order for recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know when the order was sent out, but the clock was running and it runs out at midnight tomorrow.

Q He hadn't made up his mind one way or the other --

MR. NESSEN: Not as of this morning.

Q Can you find out when the request for recommendations went out?

MR. NESSEN: Gaylord, that is a standard staffing mechanism. The bill comes from the Hill, it gets staffed out to the Counsel's Office, it goes to the Interior Department, and so forth.

Q Can you find a piece of paper going out two days ago, three days ago, four days ago, this morning?

MR. NESSEN: That is a routine staffing mechanism that is triggered here when the bill comes from the Hill.

Q What was OMB's position on the final version of this bill?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. That is one of the things that will come in to the President in time for him to review and decide whether he will sign or veto.

Q That should have been available before final passage of a bill?

MR. NESSEN: How could it be? You can't get started reviewing the bill until it is finally passed.

Q Does the President feel that his action on this bill may affect the action of delegates to the Convention, any delegates to the Convention?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't think he would have any way of knowing. It has nothing to do with his weighing on whether to sign or veto the bill, Dick.

Q Whether or not it has anything to do with it, does he think it will affect the delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that he is even thinking in that direction.

The fact of the matter is, if you give me a little chance to again try to put this in some kind of perspective, not only is a meeting with a Senator to explain why he favors the bill and why he thinks the people of the Western States favor it -- you know, to say that the President makes these kinds of decisions for political reasons is just to ignore a whole set of decisions the President has made this year, which you, yourselves, have written about as being politically dumb.

If the President is interested only in votes and only in delegates, why does he have the Pentagon draw up a list of bases to be closed, why does he propose an energy program which is going to raise prices, why does he propose an increase in Social Security taxes, why does he hold New York City's feet to the fire, and so forth?

I am just trying to say, why did he veto a tax cut on Christmas Eve, for goodness sake? You know, to ignore bills that are politically unpopular and to focus on a decision that an article has put in terms of his decision will be based solely on, you know, its political effect, is to ignore what I think is the record of this President in taking positions and ignoring their political effect. I think that is a factor that should be taken into consideration when you are weighing this particular allegation.

Q Ron, just let me try and understand this. I am fairly new around here and don't understand what you are saying.

Hansen has said that he discussed delegates. Now, you are saying --

MR. NESSEN: Where does he say that?

Q According to the story today.

MR. NESSEN: How about Hansen's statement?

Q Let me ask a question. Hansen has made it clear that the word "delegates" came up. Are you saying that the word "delegates" never came up?

MR. NESSEN: My notes show that they never talked about the effect of the President's decision on delegates.

Q My question is, Hansen has clearly mentioned it and I want to know, was the President affronted by the suggestion that he could --

MR. NESSEN: The President told Hansen flatly that he was making no commitment on the bill; he had not made up his mind on the bill, and he still hasn't. And when he does make up his mind between now and tomorrow midnight, he will make it up on one consideration and one consideration only, and that is the merits of the bill, and whether it is good for the country or not.

Q Ron, your campaign supporters in Hansen's State have said he has made clear that his judgment on the nomination will be affected by the President's decision on this bill.

MR. NESSEN: Just as a guess, Jim, I would guess this fairly constant flow of Members of Congress and representatives of interest groups come in and make their views fairly strongly known, too.

MORE

Q Are you saying he did not convey that attitude to the President?

MR. NESSEN: I wasn't in the meeting, and I don't consider it proper for me to speak for or paraphrase Senator Hansen.

Q Did the subject of delegates ever come up?

MR. NESSEN: In terms of legislation?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: In none that I have ever attended.

Q You say your notes show that they never talked about the effect of the President's decision on delegates?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q What are your notes based on?

MR. NESSEN: On my research.

Q Did you talk to the President about this?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously.

Q Did you talk to Friedersdorf?

MR. NESSEN: I talked to all the players involved, Gaylord, as I try to do with every story.

Q Did you talk to Senator Hansen?

MR. NESSEN: No, I did not.

Q Ron, the President was not offended by anything he thought might have been a form of blackmail for delegates, is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: I will not even take that question, Aldo, because of the words you use. I told you precisely what happened at the meeting.

Q No, you haven't told us precisely what happened. You said you weren't there.

MR. NESSEN: I told you what happened at the meeting short of quoting word for word what each party said because we don't normally do that.

Q You haven't told us whether the word "delegate" was used.

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I don't know. I wasn't in the meeting.

Let me just answer Aldo.

Q No, I prefer to get this straight.

MR. NESSEN: I prefer to answer Aldo, and I think Aldo probably prefers to be answered.

I don't feel that I can answer that question, Aldo, because of some of the words involved. I have told you what happened at the meeting. I told you what didn't happen at the meeting. I told you the basis on which the President will make up his mind.

I told you how this particular meeting fits in with the endless series of similar meetings on other legislation, and I have told you what the President's record is in making decisions which are politically harmful. But, I would like to hear Dick's contradiction.

Q Maybe I am confused. In answer to my question, you said that as far as your notes are concerned, they never discussed the effect of the President's decision on delegates. You said your notes were based on conversation with the President and all the players involved.

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q I think you told Bob Pierpoint you don't know whether the matter of delegates ever came up because you weren't there.

MR. NESSEN: Bob's question was, did the word "delegate" come up. I said, "I don't know, I wasn't in the meeting."

Q How can you answer those two questions in that manner? You seem to be saying the President told you they didn't discuss delegates. Yet, you say you don't know because you weren't there. We don't care what you know personally from firsthand experience. The question is, did the President tell you the matter of delegates was not discussed?

MR. NESSEN: My notes say they never talked in this meeting about the effect of a Presidential decision on the delegates and others.

The question that Bob asked me was whether the word "delegates" came up. I didn't know. I wasn't there.

Q Does the President feel he has been pressured by Senator Hansen to sign this bill?

MR. NESSEN: Gaylord, as I have tried to say, this is a process that happens literally dozens of times every week, if not every day, or Members coming here, and representatives of regions or States, or any other special interests coming here, and urging the President one way or the other on a piece of legislation.

There is nothing wrong with that. That is the process. That is the way our Government works, that people have a chance to come here and explain their views to the President.

Q But now this is a big flap so my question is whether, because it is a major issue, that will impact on his decision on whether to sign the bill?

MR. NESSEN: His decision will be made as his decision on every single piece of legislation is made, Andy, on the merits of the legislation and no other factor.

Q Ron, you said earlier the President told you there was no offer from the Senator that I will give you seven delegates. Apparently the President didn't say there was no mention of delegates.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, my own notes show they never talked about the effect of a Presidential decision on delegates.

Q Your notes don't show there was an absence of that kind of discussion? Is that a verbatim statement from the President?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is my notes.

Q This would be a damaging admission in view of the story that happened this morning. Do you think, if the matter of delegates had been discussed in this meeting, do you think your notes would show they were discussed?

MR. NESSEN: I have tried to set the story straight, and I have tried to do that, Howard.

Q You haven't done that. At the risk of belaboring the issue --

MR. NESSEN: What do you want me to say? Do you want me to say Woodward and Bernstein are absolutely correct in every detail? I can't do that. I can only tell you what happened.

Q You said you had done research.

Q Ron, are you saying they were wrong in every detail?

MR. NESSEN: I won't start from that base. I will start from the base of what happened and tell you what happened.

Q Can we accurately report that the President said to you in his discussion with Mr. Hansen they never talked about the effect of the President's decision on delegates? Would that be correct?

MR. NESSEN: I thought I said that 14 times here.

Q You said this was based on conversations with all the people involved.

MR. NESSEN: Did that come directly from the President? I can't tell from the shape my notes are in.

Q You said you tried to give us a full picture, yet the only thing we know from the President, according to my notes, is that he said that no offer was made.

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q That is the only thing we can say about the President, is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: You can quote me as saying they never talked about the effect on delegates of any Presidential decision on this legislation.

Q So far as you know?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q So, everyone can understand how he makes these decisions, when these people come in to make their pitches -- obviously that is the way things run -- do they just talk about the merits of the bill? How does the President feel if someone comes in and says, "Look, Mr. President, I can get you three or four delegates if you will do this, Mr. President"? Wouldn't he sort of be insulted by that kind of talk and say "Listen, I make my decisions on the basis of whether this is good or bad legislation"?

MR. NESSEN: As I said earlier, I have never been in a meeting where such a thing was said, and I feel I can't take a hypothetical question of what the President might say.

Q I would be kind of irritated if someone came to me with a deal like that. Hasn't the President said something about that to you?

Q That was my question. If that kind of thing happened, would that be in your notes, that this offer was made and refused?

MR. NESSEN: All I tried to do this morning was start at zero and recreate -- I tried to start at zero and find out what happened. That is what I have done and I think I have reported fairly fully to you what happened.

Let me refresh my memory on one point with John.

John has better notes than I have, and you can say that the President says that he never talked about the effect of a veto or a signing on delegates.

Q The President said that or the Senator did?

MR. NESSEN: Nessen, reading from Carlson's better notes, quoted the President as saying that the effect on delegates of a signing or vetoing of this bill never came up at this meeting.

O That is what you told us earlier.

MR. NESSEN: No, that is what I was beaten over the head for about 15 minutes, to try to put that in the President's mouth instead of one of my anonymous sources.

Q To rephrase Aldo's question, without use of the words that sound offensive, was there anything that came up in this meeting that insulted, or irritated, or offended the President?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't ask him that question.

Q To pursue Bob Schieffer's point, you seemed not to answer the question as to whether or not the President would be offended if someone offered him delegates in exchange for an official action.

MR. NESSEN: Jim, why take on a hypothetical question? I have been asked about a specific meeting, a specific discussion with a specific Senator on a specific piece of legislation. I have done my damndest to try to fill in all your questions. To ask a hypothetical question of what would the President's reaction be if any guy ever came in and made that offer, I don't see the usefulness of it.

Q Let's ask it this way. Will the President make any deals to get delegates?

Q Wouldn't he want to assure the American people that he wouldn't?

MR. NESSEN: Force him to deny it, as Lyndon would put it.

Q That is the basic question here.

MR. NESSEN: That is not the basic question here, Gaylord. The basic question is what happened at a meeting with Senator Hansen last week, and I think I have given you a lot of answers to a lot of questions.

Q You make a self-serving statement?

MR. NESSEN: You want me to make a self-serving statement?

Q He came in to talk about this bill and he talked about the effect on the opinion in the West?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

MORE

Q In the course of this meeting, did he also discuss the delegate situation in Wyoming?

MR. NESSEN: Again, for the fourth time, I wasn't there so I don't know. But, in the context of what we were talking about, I don't know.

Q But, according to Senator Hansen, he also discussed the --

MR. NESSEN: As I said, Marilyn, I am not going to speak for Hansen. He is up on the Hill and available, and I know you can ask him that question.

Q What if he says yes?

MR. NESSEN: I don't feel compelled to report what he may or may not have said.

Q Are you saying the President would never, under any circumstances, be influenced by such an offer?

MR. NESSEN: I am saying the President will decide whether to sign or veto every piece of legislation that ever comes before him on its merits alone, period.

Q Can I ask about Kleppe's testimony?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q In the past, we found sometimes testimony offered by an Administration spokesman, it turned out not to reflect the President's views. At the time Kleppe testified on the bill, was he in fact reflecting the President's views on the bill?

MR. NESSEN: He was reflecting the Administration's views on the bill.

Q Why is it being reconsidered? On the basis of the changes in the legislation?

MR. NESSEN: There have been changes in the legislation and I think, of course, it is obvious that there have been occasions when the Administration has opposed legislation and then it is either modified and then it comes up here and then there is another decision to be made whether to sign it or veto it.

Q Does the President have an opinion on the Supreme Court's ruling on the death penalty?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't had a chance to ask him.

Q Would you expect a reaction on that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't expect one, but I will check on it.

Q Do you recall what President Ford's past statements on the death penalty have been?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I do.

Q What are they?

MR. NESSEN: He favors the death penalty in certain Federal crimes. I will have to look that up.

He favors the death penalty -- first of all, you know, in keeping with the previous Supreme Court decision which had to do with having some standards -- that was the previous ruling before this one, that you had to have a set of standards on which to impose the death penalty -- the President favored a set of standards, an objective set of standards that would favor the death penalty for certain Federal crimes like treason, sabotage, espionage, murder of certain Federal officials and so forth.

Q Ron, in the current political atmosphere, isn't it true that when the President meets with Republican officials, or Republican legislators, doesn't the subject of the race, the Reagan-Ford race, the Convention delegates generally or frequently come up these days?

MR. NESSEN: Well, not in the meetings that I have attended. You have to look at this, Ed. As I said, the purpose of the meeting was to deliver a letter that had 67 signatures --

Q I am not talking about the Hansen meeting. You say these meetings are held all the time.

MR. NESSEN: They are.

Q When he gets these people in from Wyoming, or wherever, don't they get to small talk when they are not talking about heavy Government issues, and wouldn't a Senator, say, from Washington State or Idaho or what-have-you, give the President a little assessment of how it is going?

MR. NESSEN: If I were to try to answer that, I would be answering on the basis of guessing. I haven't sat in on the meetings.

Q Given the context created by this story of the Hansen meeting with the President, does the President feel free to make a decision either way on this legislation?

MR. NESSEN: The President feels free to make this decision as he would make -- you mean, does he feel that he has to prove Woodward and Bernstein wrong by vetoing the bill?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Absolutely not. He will make this decision, as he makes every decision, on its merits. If he decides to sign it, it will be on its merits; if he decides to veto, it will be on its merits and unrelated in any way to allegations in the newspapers.

Q In the past, when you have seen a story at which you have taken umbrage, you have pointed out the factual errors of the story, but would you please point out the factual errors in the Woodward-Bernstein story?

MR. NESSEN: No, my base was to start from zero and gather together all the facts I could to explain what happened at that meeting.

Q Did he have an emotional reaction when he read the story?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I wasn't with him.

Q When you discussed it with him, did he show anger?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't detect any anger. I have rarely seen the President angry. It was a factual re-creation of what happened, Muriel, so why would he be angry?

Q When Rogers Morton came to the White House, I seem to remember a lot of talk about politics being inseparable from Government. Is that still the nature of the situation, that his job at the White House could be both political and Governmental because he can't separate the two?

MR. NESSEN: He is not working in the White House. He is working at the Committee.

Q Does that theory still apply to some of the Governmental things President Ford asks him to do?

MR. NESSEN: I think I better not answer that.

Q Was he surprised at what Woodward and Bernstein found out?

MR. NESSEN: About what?

Q About this story?

Q Ron, what does the President feel would be the effect on the country -- as I understand it, there are over 600 people under the death sentence now on Death Row. They have been held up, exhausted appeals, and so forth. What does he think will be the effect on the Nation of a tremendous number of executions?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, that story just came through before I came out here and I haven't had time to talk to him.

Q Could you ask him?

MR. NESSEN: I will ask him for his reaction to the story.

THE PRESS: Thank you.
END

#525
(AT 1:14 P.M. EDT)