

Transcript of the President's News

Following is a transcript of President Johnson's news conference held in the East Room of the White House yesterday, as recorded by The New York Times:

QUESTIONS

1. Physical Condition

Q. Mr. President, in view of the report you gave us on your health yesterday, could you tell us whether your doctors at any point advised you not to go on your Asian trip or to cut down on your rather strenuous pace while you were over there?

A. No. They never at any time considered doing it. I think the best indication of my general physical condition is that notwithstanding the minor problems I have with my throat and with the little stitching they need to do—the repair work—is that even though I had both of those problems I did make the Asian trip; I didn't get weary; I didn't stay tired and I got plenty of rest throughout.

I had an advantage that some of those that accompanied me did not have. For instance, from Korea to Alaska I could sleep six hours in a bed that was as comfortable as a hotel room. From Alaska to Washington I could rest five or six hours and you had to sit up in a chair. And most of this weariness, I think, was some of you engaging in introspection after you got home.

2. Election Influence on War

Q. Mr. President. In your estimation, will the outcome of the election have any influence on the Communists' willingness or attitude toward continuing the war in Vietnam?

A. I am not a good judge of just what the Communist reaction will be. I think in the past that some foreign nations have misunderstood the American system. I hope they will be very careful not to make any mistakes of judgment about this election. I see no reason why the election should greatly affect any decision they might make.

The President is not a candidate in this election. I cannot conceive if the people go out and vote that the decision of the election could in any way change the Government's policies. There's no one that I know of that thinks there's going to be any great change in the Senate.

And although my delightful friend, Senator Dirksen, optimistic as he is, feels that there may be at least a gain of 75, I notice the chronic campaigners like Vice President Nixon have begun to hedge and pull in their horns and I would doubt that there's going to be any substantial change.

But I could point out that with the

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House of Representatives it's now 295 to 140. There could be a change of 40 or 50 as there has been on an average since 1890 and not adversely affect the government program. And I don't think it's going to affect the Vietnam situation in any event.

They may talk and argue and fight and criticize and play politics from time to time but when they call the vote on supporting the men—the Defense Bill—in the Senate it'll be 83 to 2 and in the House it'll be 410 to 5 and everybody can understand that.

3. Outcome of Trip

Q. What do you consider to be the most significant outcome of your Far East trip?

A. I think it served several good purposes. First, I think it was highly successful. I think it demonstrated to all the world that the seven participating nations were united—united in their determination to support the men at the fighting front, united in their determination to preserve the integrity of territorial boundaries, united in their determination to develop a new Asia with prosperity and plenty, united in their determination to walk the last mile to go to any corner, any time, meet with any government who try to further the search for peace.

Several nations on their own have already communicated a communique on the results of that conference to other nonaligned neutral nations.

Mr. Harriman, as my representative, visited several important capitals. Mr. Bundy is presently visiting important capitals. Mr. Eugene Black is following our tracks through Asia and following up on some of the economic programs.

I think it put the spotlight of the world on a very neglected part of the

world. I think that we realize that two out of every three people living today live in that area.

And the problems are there and we faced up to those problems and presented some solutions. And I think in due time you will see that they will be effective.

4. Outlook Toward Operation

Q. Mr. President, how do you feel personally as you approach these two operations both physically and mentally? For instance, does your throat hurt you when you talk. Do you have any feeling of dread about going under surgery again?

A. No. I don't recommend them. I don't favor them. I don't think it ought to be a part of your vacation but those things come to you and you have to face up to them. And I think that I'm very fortunate that I have a job that I can kind of regulate myself, that I have a lot of good health, that I have the finest doctors and the best hospital facilities in the country and actually, after all, it's not anything to make a great show over.

They're relatively minor. Most of the people in this room have suffered considerably more serious problems than I'll face with getting a little polyp out of my throat and I don't think it's going to be necessary that I use my throat much anyway in the next few days.

5. War Manpower Needs

Q. Sir, as a result of your talks with the leaders of our allies in Vietnam would you anticipate more manpower would be forthcoming from them in the near future for that war.

A. General Westmoreland made it clear that we would need additional manpower. All the participants in the conference heard his presentation. When and as and if he asks for additional manpower, we will supply it and I think that every

nation involved would do what they thought was desirable and necessary to support the men that they have protecting the territorial integrity of that area.

I think it's bad for you to speculate in Andrew H. Brown figures about how

many hundreds of thousands are going to be needed when General Westmoreland himself doesn't know. But I think suffice to say, without involving any credibility, that whatever is needed is going to be done. We're not going to leave those men there asking for support and not give it to them.

I think that we have reasonable strength there now. I think we will add to it from time to time. I would hope, of course, the adversary would see the utter futility of continuing this confrontation and would agree to go from the battlefield to the conference room. But until he does the men there are going to give a good account of themselves.

General Westmoreland said no commander in chief ever commanded a more-proficient or competent group of men. And if they need some more to help them, they'll be sent.

6. Soviet Outlook on War

Q. Mr. President. On that point you said recently that only two nations want the fighting continued. Does this mean the United States has had some positive indication from the Soviet Union that it would like to see the fighting stopped?

A. Yes, I believe most of the nations of the world would like to see the fighting stopped. I just can't conceive of any nation enjoying what's going on. I think most of 'em can realize the danger of continuing this unpleasantness.

I don't know that many nations have much power to do anything about it. I know we want it stopped. We'd like to stop it tomorrow. We'd like to stop it today. We'd like to stop it this minute. We'll do anything we can with honor to stop it. We seek peace. We search for peace. We will do anything we can to get peace except surrender.

We're not asking any unconditional surrender on the part of the adversary. We're just saying to 'em: "Come into the room and let's reason together. Let's talk out our difficulties."

And they refuse to do that. Now, I don't know why they refuse to do it. I think that as time goes on and they see that that is the better course—I hope that they will do it and when they do they will find us a willing participant in any meeting that can be agreed upon.

7. Soviet Outlook on War

Q. Could you be more specific, sir, about the Soviet position? A. I said that I thought every nation except our adversaries would like to see the fighting stopped. I'm not a spokesman for the Soviet Union. I cannot speak for Mr. Brezhnev nor Mr. Kosygin and Mr. Gromyko, but I have every reason to believe that they would like to see the fighting stopped as much as we would like to see it stop. And I think everybody else in the world would like to see it stopped.

Perhaps the North Vietnamese would like to see it stopped. But our communications are bad and at least up to this time we have been unable to convince them that the way to stop it is to come to the conference room. Now we don't know why. We wish we did know why. We'd go more than halfway if we just knew which way to go.

Mr. Harriman's going one way now and Mr. Bundy is going another way now and Mr. Black's going another way and Mr. Rusk will be going to the NATO meeting and I asked him to go back through Asia on his way there, the other way around.

But until we can reason this thing out we must maintain the strength to defend our men and to defend territorial integrity of the boundaries of our allies. We intend to do this.

8. Pause in Bombing

Q. Mr. President, the Pope is reported to be mounting a drive for another Christmas truce, accompanied by another pause in the bombing. Would our Government be receptive to that?

A. I would not want to speculate. I don't know what proposals His Holiness might make. Whatever proposals he would make would be very seriously considered and evaluated. I can't conceive of anyone feeling that one side ought to stop bombing and the other side ought to continue it.

I would hope that all this talk about stopping the bombing would have some reference to the bombing that they did on Independence Day when General Westmoreland and then the day before yesterday intended to go out to a ceremony they were having and they tried to bomb the place where he was supposed to sit. I would hope that some of this stopping the bombing agitation would be directed to the folks that throw the bombs at our embassies in Saigon.

We've never bombed the North Vietnamese embassies. We have never bombed their population. Sure, we try to hit a military target, a petroleum target, or an electric plant. But here they come in and try to bomb the seats where our Ambassador; where the head of state, where our general commanding forces were to sit. And if they want us to stop bombing we ought to see what they're willing to stop. And we'll be glad to carefully consider anyone's proposals that represent two-way streets.

We don't want to talk about just half of it, though.

9. Situation in Korea

Q. Mr. President, in view of the North Korean attack on an American patrol in Korea, could you assess for us the situation at the 38th Parallel today.

A. We have had some increased incidents there of late. We are filing a very strong protest for this totally unjustified murder of six of our men. We will make the strongest representations. We would hope that it is not indicative of any continued desire on the part of the North Koreans to violate the terms of the armistice and certainly United States of America does not prepare—plan to vio-

late the terms of that armistice. And we hope they won't either.

10. Campaign Plans

Q. Does the cancellation of your big campaign trip mean that you do not intend to do anything to help Democratic candidates before election such as one little speech in Texas or maybe a TV pep talk before elections?

A. First, we don't have any plans. So when you don't have plans, you don't cancel plans. We get invited to come to most of the states. In the last six weeks, we've been invited to 47 of the states by the candidates for Governor, the Senate or the Congress. We've been invited on

nonpolitical invitations to the other three states, I might say.

But we have not accepted those invitations. We do contact the local people who extend them. We do investigate in some instances going there and we do express the hope that we can go. But until it's firm, until we know we can, we do not say we accept and schedule.

And the people in this country ought to know that all these canceled plans primarily involve the imagination of people who phrase sentences and write columns and have to report what they hope or what they imagine.

We have no plans for any political speeches between now and the election. We know no requirement that we forego 'em. I just don't think they're necessary and I have had a very active year and I would hope I could spend a relatively quiet weekend, and go vote on Tuesday morning.

I hope every American will go vote on Tuesday morning and if they do I have not the slightest doubt but what their good judgment will prevail and the best interests of our country will be served. But I have no plans to make any speeches.

I have not canceled any plans that I had agreed to although I did express the hope early in the year that I could visit as many states as possible and I visited approximately 30 this year, which set some kind of a record itself. If I do schedule anything between now and next Tuesday, I feel that I'd be perfectly at liberty to do so and if I did I'd give you due and adequate notice.

11. Inflationary Pressures

Q. Could you give us your estimate whether the inflationary pressures on the economy are easing up or increasing at the present time?

A. Well there's been a very healthy movement toward price stability in recent weeks on the economic front. I wouldn't say in the newspapers or the radio or television but the statistics would indicate that. The Department of Labor this morning released the wholesale price index in October. From February through October—that's roughly 10 months—we've had only a gain of eight-tenths of 1 per cent.

And the index released shows that we had a decline of six-tenths of a per cent from September and it brought the

average level of prices back below any month since June. So I think that that's a very healthy movement.

I want to reiterate that while we have had some gains—some increases in prices—that that's been brought about by in-

creases in wages that we thought were very desirable in the low-earnings group. The lowest paid people in this country got some increases—the hospital workers, the bus drivers, the lower paid group. And that did bring up prices some. You can't do it without it.

But prices have increased less in the six years of the Kennedy-Johnson Administration with Vietnam on and all the pressures that it brings; they've increased less than it did the previous six years in the Eisenhower Administration.

But the wages have increased much more and you have more money to pay the increased prices with than you did in the previous six years. So I don't think anybody can make much out of that.

All you've got to do is say well now if you're worried about inflation, you're an expert on it because you had a much better record in that field than we had.

12. Data on Kennedy Death

Q. Mr. President, as you know an aura of mystery has developed around the assassination of President Kennedy and I'm thinking of two or three books that were written and some lawyers and others casting doubts on the works of the Warren Commission. Now, the case as I understand it, was based on the alleged mysterious disappearance of photos, X-rays and so forth.

Now the Justice Department discloses that the Kennedy family had these documents. They've now been turned over to the National Archives. I wonder why that was not disclosed before and also why this material is still not available to competent nongovernment investigators.

A. Well first I think it's been available to the Warren Commission any time it wanted to see it. Second, I think it's available to any official body now. Third, I think that every American can understand the reasons why we wouldn't want to have the garments and the records and everything paraded out in every sewing circle in the country to be exploited and used without serving any good or official purpose.

And it is my understanding—all this took place while I was away—but it's my understanding that there's never—most of this has been over in the archives, stored, all the time. It's always been available to the Warren Commission or the Government, the Justice Department, the F.B.I., to the late beloved President's brother, the Attorney General, during the period the Warren Commission was studying this thing and I certainly would think he'd have a very



United Press International Telephoto
ACCEPTS QUESTION: President Johnson fidgets with microphones as he listens to question at conference. He discussed U.S. elections and Manila.

thorough interest in seeing that the truth was made evident and I believe he did have.

And I think that he and the F.B.I. and the entire Government made available everything that the commission wanted and I think they made a very thorough study. I know of no evidence that would in any way cause any reasonable person to have a doubt about the Warren Commission, but if there is any evidence that's brought forth, I'm sure that the commission and the appropriate authorities will take action that may be justified.

13. Spanish-Americans

Q. Sir, I know that you have been interested in doing something for the Spanish-speaking people of the country but would you fill us in on your plans somewhat?

A. Well I've been interested in seeing that the Spanish-speaking people of the country were treated equally ever since I've been in public life. I have had very excellent cooperation from them. I've appointed a good many of them to very high places in the Government.

I have done what I could to improve their economic conditions by passage of legislation I think would be helpful. I've tried to do what I could to provide equality of opportunity in employment, in education and health and in other Government programs, and as long as I am in this office I will try to see that

all Americans are treated equally and I have a very special fondness for the Spanish-Americans because I grew up with them.

I learned to speak their language as a child. I went to school with them. I taught them and I've been getting them to vote for me for 30 years.

14. California Election

Q. Mr. President, last week Senator Barry Goldwater predicted that Ronald Reagan would win the Governor's seat in California by either a minor or a major landslide. Would you care to give us your assessment of the Governor's race in that state?

A. I would just express the hope that there's been no improvement in Senator Goldwater's judgment since his predictions of '64. And when I see these predictions about elections I would commend to all of your attention before you use the people's airwaves and the advertisers columns that you review their predictions two years ago and four years ago and see just how accurate they were.

I did that the other day. I went back to the predictions of how many seats they were going to gain in '64. Instead of gaining, they lost. How many seats they were going to gain in '62 and what was going to happen in '60. And I just hope that the predictions of Senator Goldwater and Senator Dirksen and the ex-Vice President Nixon are

as accurate this year as they were then.

I found them very undependable as prophets, although they are fine individuals.

15. Tax Rise Prospects

Q. Sir, can you evaluate the prospects for a tax increase in view of the price developments that you announced earlier?

A. We have the appropriation bills being evaluated at the moment. There are 1,250 separate appropriations. They will cover 2,500 various items—fields. We are going to withhold as many of those appropriations as we feel that we can in the national interest. We hope to announce those sometime between now and the end of the month or the early part of next month.

During that same time Mr. McNamara has got his fine-toothed comb and reviewing every request of the military to see how much we can forego of the requests they have made. When we get that request, as we hope to, before the Congress gets back here, we will then look at the revenue figures and there are indications now that we have had a great increase in revenue.

And if we do not have to have a substantial supplemental—I think we will have to have a substantial supplement—I don't think we need any tax increase

at all. But our tax increase will be determined largely by how much I can cut out of the appropriations the Congress made and how much our men at the fighting front will require in the way of equipment and support for the rest of this year.

I will know that sometime in the early part of next month and as soon as I know it I will make appropriate studies and recommendations that will be available for the Congress when they come back.

16. Vietnam Withdrawal

Q. Mr. President, since the Manila meeting there's been some uncertainty as to how to interpret the withdrawal terms that were included in the communique. Yesterday, for example, Mr. Nixon said that it appears that you had proposed—or the seven powers had proposed—getting out in a way that would leave South Vietnam to the mercy of the Vietcong. Could you comment on that?

A. I would be glad to comment on the communique. I do not want to get into a debate on a foreign policy meeting in Manila with a chronic campaigner like Mr. Nixon. He—it's his problem to find fault with his country and his Government during a period of October every two years.

And if you will look back over his record you will find that's true. He never did really recognize and realize what was going on when he had an official position in the Government. You remember what President Eisenhower said: "that if you'd give him a week or so he'd figure out what he was doing."

Now since then he has made a tem-

porary stand in California and you saw what the people—what action they took out there. Then he crossed the country to New York and then he went back to San Francisco hoping that he'd be in the wings available if Goldwater stumbled, but Goldwater didn't stumble and now he's out talking about a conference that obviously he is not well-prepared on or informed about.

You can read the communique and I think it's very clear that the seven participants in that conference felt that they wanted the entire world to know that if infiltration would cease, if the aggression would cease, if the violence would cease from the standpoint of our adversary, that the allies would gladly reciprocate by withdrawing their troops and that they would withdraw them in a period of not to exceed six months.

Now most of the nations—if not some of our own citizens—most of the countries know that we do not plan to occupy Vietnam or dominate it or try to determine its official life once the aggression and the infiltration and the violence there ceases. But some of them can't understand—because I guess they wouldn't make huge investments and walk off and leave them—how we could do that.

We have explained that we'll pull out just as soon as the infiltration, the aggression and the violence ceases. And we made that statement and we set a time limit on it. Why would we want to stay there if there was no aggression, if there's no infiltration and the violence ceased?

We wouldn't want to stay there as tourists; we wouldn't want to keep 400,000 men there just to march up and down the runways at Camranh Bay.

But we felt that if we stated again and each of us subscribed to it, including

the Government of South Vietnam, that they would ask us and ask all the other allies to withdraw their forces if the other side withdrew them and if the infiltration ceased and if the violence ceased, that it would probably clarify our position.

Now we think we did that. Until some of the politicians got mixed up in it and started not trying to clarify it but confuse it. And it shouldn't be confused. Every participant in that conference, acting on good faith with the best of motives, wanted to say to North Vietnam and every other nation in the world that we intend to stay there only so long as our presence is necessary to protect the territorial integrity of South Vietnam and to see that the violence there ceases, and the infiltration and the aggression ceases.

Now we know that and we oughtn't to try to confuse it here and we oughtn't to try to get mixed up in a political campaign here because attempts to do that are going to cause people to lose votes instead of gain them. And we oughtn't to have men killed because we try to fuzz up something.

Our position is clear. We don't want to occupy that country. We don't want to occupy the Dominican Republic. We went in there because our people were being shot at, because aggressive forces wanted to establish a form of government that was not in keeping with the will of the majority of the people of that country and once we were able to let the people have a free election, supervised election—let the majority speak its will—we pulled our troops out and came home. That's what we will do in South Vietnam.

If the aggression, the infiltration and the violence ceases, not a nation there wants to keep occupying troops in South Vietnam and Mr. Nixon doesn't serve his country well by trying to leave that kind of impression in the hope that he can pick up a precinct or two or a ward or two.

17. All-Asian Conference

Q. In that connection, President Marcos of the Philippines has called for an all-Asian conference. Do you see that this might carry on the work that was begun in Manila?

A. Well, I think that Asians who have the same interests, same problems not only have the right but duty to take such initiative as they may think is desirable. That's a matter for them to decide. Now if you were talking about—I think it's one thing to decide which Asians are going to participate in that conference, where it's going to be, what kind of a conference, what governments are going to be invited.

We have encouraged regional meetings. It's not a matter for us to decide. It's a matter for Asia. But the policy of the United States Government is to encourage the people who believe in freedom in Asia to get together and to talk out their problems and to try to find solutions for them.

Q. Thank you Mr. President.