

Transcript of President

Johnson's News Conference

Following is the transcript of the President's news conference yesterday:

The President: George said that some of you wanted to have a visit with me. I am available.

Q: Mr. President, what is your reaction to recurrent stories as recently as this morning about Gen. Westmoreland desiring quite a few additional troops in Vietnam?

A: We are constantly studying our force structure in Vietnam and in the world. I have discussed with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and our people in Southeast Asia, Gen. Westmoreland, Adm. Sharp and others, and our people in Europe, these structures.

We are making adjustments here and there. Gen. Westmoreland and Adm. Sharp submit their requests. The Joint Chiefs study them and evaluate them. They go up through Mr. Vance and Mr. McNamara. Then they make their recommendations and they are acted upon.

I have no recommendations at this time that I am giving my personal consideration to, although Adm. Sharp and Gen. Westmoreland and other commanders have made comments to the Joint Chiefs that they are evaluating. No doubt in the weeks ahead, perhaps Secretary McNamara and Gen. Wheeler will make recommendations to me which I will consider.

I do not consider anything immediately imminent; in the next few days or even the next few weeks.

Troops in Europe

Q: Mr. President, in regard to our withdrawal of troops from Germany, have the Soviets indicated they may

withdraw some of their troops, as well?

A: Our troop deployments are a matter that we will discuss with NATO. We trust they will be agreeable to NATO. Secretary Rusk is testifying before the Mansfield Committee this morning. Secretary McNamara has already testified.

What the Russians do is a matter for them to decide. We believe that such actions as we take will not materially affect our capability. We believe that such actions as we contemplate will be acceptable to our alliance partners. I discussed some of the prospective decisions prior to the time we made them with the affected people, particularly the Germans, and Chancellor Kiesinger. Our people will be discussing them more in detail with NATO people at a later date.

Vietnam Situation

Q: Mr. President, what is your assessment of the current military situation in Vietnam?

A: I couldn't add anything to the rather detailed assessment that Gen. Westmoreland gave you. He is my best authority. He has talked at some length about it in his report to the country, at the Associated Press meeting, and also to the Congress. There is nothing I can add to that.

Europe Pullout

Q: Mr. President, would the two brigades that are going to be withdrawn from Germany be available for service in Vietnam?

A: The reductions in Europe have no connection with the Vietnam picture whatever. I would not want to say that all of our people would not be avail-

able under certain circumstances. This is entirely independent of any Vietnam measure.

Q: I didn't mean to suggest, Mr. President, that it was related, but there is a story from Europe saying that some of those forces might be re-deployed to Vietnam.

A: The answer is still the same, Peter.

Q: Mr. President, in your talks last week with Chancellor Kiesinger and with Premier Moro of Italy, did you feel you overcame the objections of those two governments to the proposed draft of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty?

A: We did not speak in terms of objections. We were positive and talked about the language of the agreement that might evolve.

At this point, we are not in agreement with the Soviet Union. We are exploring areas of agreement with all concerned. But we expect certain safeguards. They feel they cannot agree to certain safeguards, so we haven't reached the point of agreement among ourselves. Our allies are being kept informed. Our allies are making their views known about the protections that they would like to have—the safeguards they would like to have from their national interest.

We have had some lengthy discussions here with the representative of the Prime Minister of India. I did discuss with Mr. Moro their views on the matter. I did discuss this with Chancellor Kiesinger. Both have made a number of suggestions which we will look at.

Q: Can you see any prospect that the draft will be ready as you had hoped

for presentation to the disarmament conference next Tuesday when it reconvenes?

A: I wouldn't want to predict when there would be a meeting of the minds. I think you get into difficulty when you do that. We are working on it. We want to have an agreement whenever we can get it.

Q: Mr. President, would you go all the way to recommending compulsory arbitration in the rail situation?

A: No, we do not plan to recommend compulsory arbitration. We do not plan to recommend seizure. We do not plan to recommend legislation of a specific formula. We have considered a good many alternatives. We are now reviewing those alternatives with the appropriate people concerned. We hope to be able to make our recommendations to

the Congress this week, perhaps tomorrow or the next day or the next day.

Some of the ideas that we are considering are the proposal authorizing the establishment for a 90-day no-strike no-lockout period, a five-member special board to be appointed by the President. The functions of the board would, among other things, involve a period that we have set aside for an intensive further mediation with the parties.

Another period designed to implement the collective bargaining contemplated by the board's recommendations and see they are fair and equitable, see if they could take collective bargaining, and see if they fulfill the purposes of the Railway Labor Act. This board would do that.

During the second period after mediation, if there are no agreements, the board would file with the President

and the Congress its determinations concerning the special mediation panel proposals—together with any modification that this board thought were necessary to assure that criteria above mentioned. These would be: fair and equitable, protect collective bargaining, fulfill the purposes of the Railway Labor Act, and protect the public interest. If there is still no agreement, then the modification which the board has found necessary to insure conformity with these criteria could take effect and remain in effect for a certain period.

So we are attempting to evolve a procedure that will permit and encourage further mediation for a period of time. We will carefully evaluate what has been recommended by the Ginsburg Board and the Fahy Board to see if they have met these criteria of being fair and equitable, promoting collective bargaining, serving the purpose of the Railway Labor Act and the public inter-



United Press International

President Johnson at his desk in the White House prepares to answer questions from reporters.

est, determine if any modifications, in the new board's opinion, are necessary, required and desirable. If so, we will get their recommendations.

Then, finally, providing that the situation as determined at that time be in effect for a certain period. The details of that are being worked on now.

I have talked to first the Cabinet officers primarily concerned—the Secretary of Labor, Mr. Wirtz, and Mr. Reynolds, Secretary Boyd and Secretary McNamara.

Then we have discussed it with the leadership of the House and Senate, with some of the people who have been active in this field like Sen. Morse.

I have reviewed with Justice Fahy some of his suggestions. I have reviewed this with Mr. George Taylor, an expert from the University of Pennsylvania in this field; and also with Mr. John Dunlop, a member of the Board from Harvard, who has made suggestions.

I am waiting to talk with Mr. Davis Ginsburg, the chairman of the first board. He is out of the country. He will be in today or tonight late. I want to get his suggestions and comments. Then we will try to put a message and resolution together to submit to the Congress. I hope during this 40-odd day period that they can act upon it.

Surcharge Outlook

Q: Mr. President, what is the outlook for your proposed six per cent surcharge?

A: Our position remains the same. The economy has moved along somewhat on the line that we anticipated. Our revenue estimates are not firm. They are within a reasonable degree of what we expected in our budget estimates—less than a billion dollars off, out of \$117 billion. We can't tell. We don't have it firm yet. They are coming in—the corporation taxes, the excise taxes, and other things. Some of them are up; some a little down. But they are relatively firm.

We still have a need for a tax from a standpoint of revenue. We think it will serve a good purpose from the standpoint of economy. We believe if we can get the investment credit bill passed and into effect—either the House or the Senate bill—that our predictions will be confirmed for the second half.

We would expect that when the com-

mittees get these other matters out of the way that they would give consideration to our request. We would hope they would act favorably.

Q: Are you sounding out what their feeling is right now?

A: Yes, I listen to the radio programs and read the newspapers. I don't know why you want to make me point out that some of them are against it. Yes, we think it has its problems. We recognize them. We are concerned with them. At the appropriate time we hope that the situation will be compelling and persuasive even to those who have their doubts now.

Draft Opposition

Q: Mr. President, do you consider Martin Luther King's urging of young men to not answer the draft call outside the bounds of reasonable dissent with your Vietnam policy?

A: We regret when any person asks the young people of the country to refuse to serve what we believe to be the needs of the country. We regret it very much.

Campaign Fund

Q: Mr. President, Sen. Long's campaign financing amendment seems to have been finally defeated yesterday. I wonder if you could tell us your thinking on this kind of legislation; whether you hope any such law would be enacted this year.

A: I have not talked to the leaders in the Senate about this. I think it is a matter for them to decide. I wouldn't go along with your description at this moment. I do not think they have really determined—from what I see—what the outcome of it will be.

I would like to see what I am confronted with before passing judgment on what my action would be when they finally pass the bill. I do not know what is going to come out of the Senate or the conference.

Labor Resolution

Q: Mr. President, to return to this question of the railroad resolution, the labor resolution, did the 90 days which you spoke of as being under consideration—is that 90 days in addition to what the Railway Labor Act now provides?

A: We will keep that flexible until our recommendations go up. I wouldn't get hard on that, but I would say that it will be 90 days from the time I sign the legislation. That would be my best guess, although it could be 70 or it

could be 110.

GOP in Vietnam

Q: Mr. President, do you have any views on the GOP policy statement on Vietnam?

A: I haven't read the details of the Senate Republican Leader's statement. I do not find myself in very much disagreement generally with him on these matters. I think that he is better able to express the Republican position in the Senate than I am.

What I have observed of his statements I am in general agreement with. I do not know what Senators, if any, are tied to this document. It looks kind of like—well, I don't know—

War Pessimism

Q: Mr. President, there seems to be a good deal of pessimism in the country about Vietnam—we are bogged down; not making much progress. Could you address yourself to that?

A: I would just quote Gen. Westmoreland. I do not know anyone who can give you a better evaluation of what is going on than Gen. Westmoreland did in those two speeches. I do not have any information that he didn't give you except what you see in the papers.

Generally speaking, there is more pessimism here than there. There are plenty of reasons for sadness in both places.

Soviet Missiles

Q: Mr. President, there were reports yesterday that the Russians are considering putting offensive missiles into Vietnam. Have you heard these reports,

and are they a matter of concern for the Government?

A: I have seen the newspaper reports on them. We are interested in all reports.

War Dissent

Q: Mr. President, do you feel that the general level of dissent throughout the Nation on Vietnam has reached a particularly critical point now? You addressed yourself to it a couple of times this week.

A: I think whenever you have men dying and men sacrificing, when you have a million or more committed to a theater of war, you have dissent. It occupies a stage of discussion in our lives every day.

I was just reading last night a speech by Mr. Thrumman Arnold, a department-

al lawyer, that he delivered a Valparaiso University. He reviewed what happened after the fall of France: how as late as 1941, when the vote on the draft in the House was 203 to 202, there were eloquent voices of dissent which, according to his quotations, said that we should shrink our army and concentrate our major efforts upon the Navy and the Air Force and Lend-Lease.

That was just a few days before Pearl Harbor, after France had fallen,

after Hitler had successfully invaded and successfully performed the conquest of France.

We will expect dissent in any period like this. We have always had it. We hope that a majority will support our proposals, our appropriations, and our recommendations. We hope it won't be that narrow.

You cannot overlook the fact that there are a good many people who think we are not doing enough. There are also a good many who think we are doing too much. From the information we have, we are doing what we really believe is the best course for the country. We carefully consider that every day and try to keep an open mind.

I read a statement to a group this morning from Benjamin Franklin, who, when he was presented a copy of the Constitution at Philadelphia, arose and said, "Having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information or fuller consideration to change opinions even on important subjects. The older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment and pay more respect to the judgment of others. Most men, as well as most sects of religion, think themselves in possession of all truth."

We try not to think ourselves in possession of all truths. We take the recommendations that we receive from all of the corners of the globe and the most experienced people we have, diplomatic and military.

I am meeting momentarily with the Security Council, and Ambassador Godberg. We will review various alternatives in the United Nations, on the diplomatic front and the military front. Whatever decisions we reach, there will be differences of opinion—that is democracy. They will be expressed. We will constantly try to make decisions that are supported by facts, by equity, and by the needs of our time and of our country.

But we will never have unanimity. We don't seek it. We don't expect uni-

formity.

We will be disheartened. We deplore and disagree with folks who burn our flag and who take rather extreme measures. So far as they express an honest difference of opinion, we expect it. We rather think that we will always have it in our form of government.

Demonstrations

Q: Mr. President, during the demonstrations in New York and in San Francisco a few weeks ago, we were told that you had received a report by the FBI Director on the degree of Communist leadership in this anti-war dissent. Since then there has been some public discussion about whether or not we have a revival of McCarthyism in this country over the degree of influence of the Communists?

A: I would go back and review that with George. I read that. I didn't read his saying what you attribute to the

report. I don't recall seeing a report along that line.

Communists

Q: Mr. President, could I just ask you the general question: How serious do you believe the Communist leadership is in this dissent, or how much influence do the Communists have on it?

A: There is a Communist position which you can judge from the Commu-

nist propaganda which comes out of Peking, North Vietnam, and the Soviet Union every day. One can judge their position on this general Vietnam question. We keep in close touch with it at all times. I don't know any purpose which would be served by my going beyond that.

I might find myself needing a defense attorney after you wrote your report on any comment I might make. I don't want to spend any more time doing that than I need to normally.

Education Bill

Q: Mr. President, how serious do you consider the threat to your Primary and Secondary Education Bill in the House?

A: I won't speak in terms of party. I do feel that there are those who have much want to change a measure which was put together with great care, which is working reasonably well. I believe that if it were torn to pieces now, as I believe it would be by certain recommendations which have been made, it would be disastrous for the school children of this country. Improvements can be made in this Administration and in the relationships between the Administration and the schools.

I don't think the "meat ax" approach of tearing the formula apart is good. I think it would take us back a decade instead of moving us forward.

I certainly hope that the Congress will not tear up the fine educational house which has been built. I hope they will strengthen it instead of tearing it down. I believe they will.

Q: Mr. President, Sen. Aiken said last night, in talking about this Republican report on Vietnam, that the North Vietnamese simply will not negotiate with you. Do you believe they are waiting for the 1968 elections, sir, or to hold out until then?

A: I am not privy to their thoughts. I don't know what may motivate them.

Vietnam Future

Q: Mr. President, what is the outlook for the immediate future in Vietnam, a greater increase in the war effort there, or are there any prospects for peace?

A: We will diligently pursue each day any route that we could think would lead to a peaceful settlement. We do not see any hopeful prospects at the moment. We are pursuing this week, as we have every week, every road that could lead in that peaceful direction.

Merriman Smith: Thank you, Mr. President.