

Transcript of the President's News

Special to The New York Times

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WASHINGTON, March 15—Following is the transcript of President Nixon's news conference today as issued by the White House:

Conference on Foreign and Domestic Matters

OPENING STATEMENT

Be seated, please. Ladies and gentlemen, I have an announcement with regard to our liaison office in Peking.

The office will open approximately on May 1, and Ambassador David Bruce will be the chief of the liaison office. In the office will be approximately a total complement of 20, of whom 10 will be what we call the expert level; the others, of course, for the support level.

The two top assistants, top deputies to Ambassador Bruce—however, we should note I call him Ambassador, but his title will be chief of the liaison office—will be Mr. Jenkins from the State Department, who, as you know, is one of our top experts on Chinese-American relations in state; and Mr. Holdridge from N.S.C., who is the top man in N.S.C. advising in that area there.

We selected these two men because Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Holdridge not only are experts in Chinese, they are bilingual, incidentally, in both Chinese and American; speak it well. I remember both assisted in translations when I have been there. But in addition to that, they are men who have from the beginning been participating in the new initiatives between the People's Republic and the United States. They have accompanied me on my trip and they have accompanied Dr. Kissinger on his trips.

A word about why Ambassador Bruce was selected. We call him out of retirement because I thought it was very important to appoint a man of great stature to this position. The Chinese accepted that view themselves, and we expect soon to hear from them as to the appointment of the man they will have as his opposite number here in Washington. Another reason that I selected Ambassador Bruce was because of his great experience. All of you know that he has been Ambassador to Britain and Ambassador to Germany, Ambassador to France, and also headed our delegation in Paris on the Vietnam talks in 1971 and '72, in the early parts of '72.

A third reason, perhaps, has even greater significance. Many of you in this room were on the trip to China, and sometimes I suppose the feeling must have developed, "Well, this is a one-shot deal." I never considered it that, and all of you who reported on it did not consider it that. It was the beginning, we trust, of a longer journey; a journey in which we will have our differences, but one in which the most populous nation in the world and the United States of America can work together where their interests coincide for the cause of peace and better relations in the Pacific and in the world.

It is necessary that this be, therefore, a bipartisan enterprise in the highest sense of the word.

Mr. Bruce, as you know, while he has not been engaged in partisan politics, as such, is a Democrat. He has served four Presidents with equal distinction, Democratic Presidents as well as Republicans, and we believe that appointing him as head of the delegation indicates our intention that this initiative will continue in the future, whether the Presidency is occupied by a Democrat or a Republican. Of course, I am not making any predictions as to what will happen when I leave.

But that is the end of my announcement. We will now go to your questions. Mr. Risher.

QUESTIONS

1. Issue of Dean Testimony

Q Mr. President, do you plan to stick by your decision not to allow Mr. Dean to testify before the Congress, even if it means the defeat of Mr. Gray's nomination?

A I noted some speculation to the effect that the Senate might hold Mr. Gray as hostage to a decision on Mr. Dean. I cannot believe that such responsible members of the United States Senate would do that, because as far as I am concerned, my decision has been made.

I answered that question rather abruptly, you recall, the last time it was asked by one of the ladies of the press here. I did not mean to be abrupt. I simply mean to be firm.

Mr. Dean is counsel to the White House staff. He has, in effect, what I would call a double privilege, the lawyer-client relationship, as well as the Presidential privilege.

And in terms of privilege, I think we could put it another way. I consider it my constitutional responsibility to defend the principle of separation of powers. I recognize that many members of the Congress disagree with my interpretation of that responsibility.

But while we are talking on that subject—and I will go on at some length here because it may anticipate some of your other questions—I am very proud of the fact that in this Administration we have been more forthcoming in terms of the relationship between the executive, the White House and the Congress, than any Administration in my memory. We have not drawn a curtain down and said that there could be no information furnished by members of the White House staff because of their special relationship to the President.

All we have said is that it must be under certain circumstances, certain guidelines, that do not infringe upon or impair the separation of powers that are so essential to the survival of our system.

In that connection, I might say that I had mentioned previously that I was once on the other side of the fence, but what I am doing here in this case is cooperating with the Congress in a way that I asked the then President, Mr. Truman, to cooperate with a committee of the Congress 25 years ago and in which he refused.

I don't say that critically of him now, he had his reasons, I have mine. But what we asked for in the hearings on the Hiss case—and all of you who covered it like Bill Theis and others will remember—what we asked for was not that the head of the F.B.I. or anybody from the White House staff testify. There was very widespread information that there was a report of an investigation that had been made

in the Administration about the Hiss case. We asked for that report. We asked for the F.B.I. information with regard to that report.

And Mr. Truman, the day we started our investigation, issued an Executive order in which he ordered everybody in the executive department to refuse to cooperate with the committee under any circumstances. The F.B.I. refused all information. We got no report from the Department of Justice and we had to go forward and break the case ourselves.

We did and to the credit of the Administration, after we broke the case, they proceeded to conduct the prosecution and the F.B.I. went into it.

I would like to say, incidentally, that I talked to Mr. Hoover at that time. It was with reluctance that he did not turn over that information. Reluctance, because he felt that the information, the investigation they had conducted, was very pertinent to what the committee was doing.

Now, I thought that decision was wrong and so when this Administration has come in, I have always insisted that we should cooperate with the members of the Congress and with the committees of the Congress and that is why we have furnished information, but, however, I am not going to have the counsel to the President of the United States testify in a formal session before the Congress. However, Mr. Dean will furnish information when any of it is requested, provided it is pertinent to the investigation.

2. Informal Senate Questions

Q Mr. President, would you then be willing to have Mr. Dean sit down informally and let some of the Senators question him, as they have with Dr. Kissinger?

A. No, that is quite a different thing. In fact, Dr. Kissinger, Mr. Ehrlichman, as you know, not only informally meet with members of the Congress on matters of substance, the same is true with members of the press. As you know, Dr. Kissinger meets with you ladies and gentlemen of the press and answers questions on matters of substance.

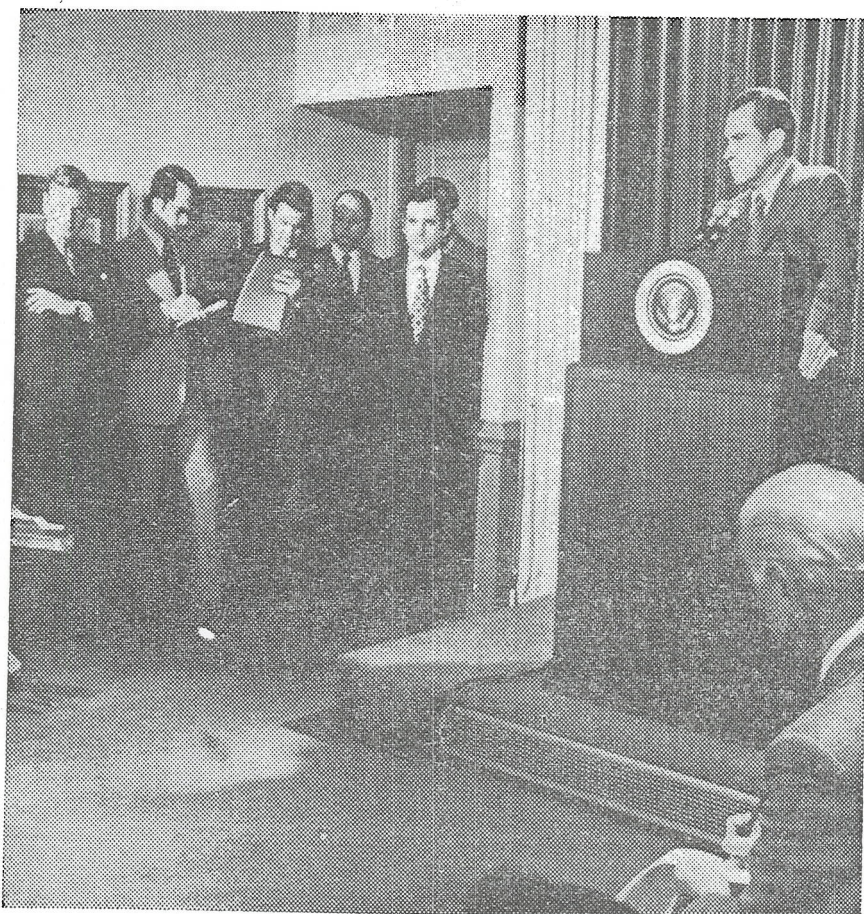
In this case, where we have the relationship that we have with Mr. Dean and the President of the United States, his counsel, that would not be a proper way to handle it. He will, however, the important thing is, he will furnish all pertinent information. He will be completely forthcoming. Something that other Administrations have totally refused to do until we got here, and I am very proud of the fact that we are forthcoming, and I would respectfully suggest that members of the Congress might look at that record as they decide to test it.

3. Cease-Fire Violations

Q Mr. President, can you say, sir, how concerned you are about the reports of cease-fire violations in Vietnam?

A. Well, I am concerned about the cease-fire violations. As you ladies and gentlemen will recall, I have consistently pointed out in meetings with you, that we would expect violations because of the nature of the war, the guerrilla nature, and that even in Korea, in which we do not have a guerrilla war, we still have violations. They recede each year, but we still have them. Long, 15, 20 years after the war is over.

In the case of these violations, we are concerned about them on two scores. One, because they occur, but two, we are concerned because of another violation that could lead to, we think, rather serious consequences. We do not believe it will. We hope that it will not. And that is the reports that you ladies and gentlemen have been receiving from your colleagues in Vietnam with regard to infiltration.



The New York Times

President Nixon listens to a reporter's question at news session

You will note that there have been reports of infiltration by the North Vietnamese into South Vietnam of equipment exceeding the amounts that were agreed upon in the settlement.

Now, some equipment can come in. In other words, replacement equipment, but no new equipment, nothing, which steps up the capacity of the North Vietnamese or the Vietcong to wage war in the South. No new equipment is allowed under the agreement.

Now, as far as that concern is concerned, particularly on the infiltration, that is the more important point, rather than the cease-fire violations which we think, over a period of time, will be reduced—but in terms of the infiltration, I am not going to say publicly what we have said.

I only suggest this: That we have informed the North Vietnamese of our concern about this infiltration and what we believe it to be, a violation of the cease-fire, the cease-fire and the peace agreement. Our concern has also been expressed to other interested parties and I would only suggest that based on my actions over the past four years, that the North Vietnamese should not lightly disregard such expressions of concern, when they are made, with regard to a violation. That is all I will say about it.

4. Infusion of Combat Personnel

Q Mr. President, in connection with this matter, there is a report also that not just equipment, but a new infusion of North Vietnamese combat personnel have been introduced into South Vietnam, which is apart from just equipment. Can you confirm this? Is this partly what you are talking about?

A. Mr. Theis, the reports that we get with regard to infiltration, as you know, are always either too little or too late or too much. And I am not going to confirm that one, except to say that we have noted the report having been made. We, however, are primarily concerned about the equipment, because as far as the personnel are concerned, they could be simply replacement personnel.

Q Mr. President.

A. Go ahead, you are up in front.

5. Channels for Complaints

Q. Sir, why have we not gone through the I.C.C.S. to complain about this infiltration?

A. The I.C.C.S. [International Commission of Control and Supervision] is being used. As you know, there are some problems there. The Canadians have expressed considerable concern about the fact they don't want to be on a commission which is not being effectively used and we will continue through

the I.C.C.S. and any other body that we can effectively appeal to, to attempt to get action there. I can only answer in that way at this point.

6. F.B.I., Gray and Watergate

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned, sir, that any of the confidential F.B.I. interviews that were conducted in their Watergate investigation were in any way compromised by Pat Gray's having given information to John Dean or talked about to John Ehrlichman or others?

A. No, I am not concerned about that. I would say that there is no possibility whatever that any information from the F.B.I. that may have been provided in the line of their duties to a member of the White House staff, would be bandied about in the press.

I would express concern on another point. In my long-time association with Mr. Hoover, he always was hard line in dealing with the members of Congress and with Congressional committees in terms of what he called "raw files," and when I first came into this office, he showed me a "raw file." I had not seen any before.

And when I saw the gossip, the hearsay, and unsubstantiated kind of slanderous statements, libelous, in this case, because they were in writing, having been made orally and transmitted into writing. I was really shocked.

Mr. Hoover, after showing me the "raw file," gave me an appraisal by the F.B.I. or what could be believed and what could not be believed. And in the case of this particular individual—the reason I saw the file, it involved a check on an individual who I was nominating for a position and I needed to get the facts and, of course, I always have access to those files—what we found was that every charge that had been made against the individual was false.

Now, for the F.B.I., before a full committee of the Congress, to furnish "raw files" and then to have them leak out to the press, I think could do innocent people a great deal of damage. I understand why Mr. Gray did, because his hearing was involved. But I would say that should not be a precedent for the future.

The way Mr. Hoover handled it with members of the Congress was that he would show the "raw files," for example, to Mr. Eastland, the chairman of the committee, and the ranking minority member, where a judge was up for a confirmation, but nothing ever leaked from those files, and the sanctity of those files must be maintained, and I believe that the practice of the F.B.I. furnishing "raw files" to full committees must stop with this particular one.

7. Strategic Stockpile Sales

Q. Mr. President, have you decided to sell materials from the strategic stockpiles and, if so, what are the safeguards from a security standpoint?

A. We have examined the stockpile question over the past four years. I have long felt that these stockpiles were really irrelevant to the kind of a world situation we presently confront. The stockpile numbers were set up at a time that we were thinking of a very different kind of conflict than we presently might be confronted with in the world.

Under the circumstances, after very full evaluation and discussion within the Administration, I have found that it will be safe for the United States to very substantially reduce our stockpiles, and we are going to go forward and do that.

Now, there are going to be some squeals, but while the complaints will be made on the basis of national security, let me just say, I have made the decision on the basis of national security. The complaints will be, and I understand this, from those who produce and sell some of the materials in which we are going to sell the stockpiles. But we are going to do this, first because the Government doesn't need this much for its national security and second, because in this particular period, we need to take every action which possibly can to drive down prices, at least to drive down those particular elements that force prices up, and selling the stockpiles in certain areas will help.

8. Kalmbach, Chapin and Segrett

Q. Mr. President, one of the revelations made by Mr. Gray during the course of the hearings has been that Mr. Kalmbach was involved with Mr. Chapin in the hiring of Mr. Segrett for amounts up to \$40,000. Can you tell us, sir, did you know of that relationship, and did you know of that transaction, and if not, can you tell your opinion of it now that it has been revealed by Mr. Gray?

A. This gives me an opportunity not only answer that question, but many others that I note you have been asking Mr. Ziegler.

committee, and if it does not, would you be willing to comply with a court order, if Ervin went to court to get one, that required some testimony from White House aides?

A. In answer to your first part of the question, the statement that we made yesterday answered that completely—not yesterday, the 12th I think it was, my statement on executive privilege. Members of the White House staff will not appear before a committee of Congress in any formal session.

We will furnish information under the proper circumstances. We will consider each matter on a case-by-case basis.

With regard to the second point, that is not before us. Let me say, however, that if the Senate feels at this time that this matter of separation of powers, where as I said, this Administration has been more forthcoming than any Democratic Administration I know of, if the Senate feels that they want a court test, we would welcome it. Perhaps this is the time to have the highest court of this land make a definitive decision with regard to this matter.

I am not suggesting that we are asking for it. But I would suggest that if the members of the Senate, in this wisdom, decide that they want to test this matter in the courts, we will, of course, present our side of the case, and we think that the Supreme Court will uphold as it always usually has, the great constitutional principle of separation of powers rather than to uphold the Senate.

13. Contrast With Hiss Case

Q. Mr. President isn't there an essential difference ready between your investigation of the Hiss case and the request of this subcommittee to Mr. Dean to appear? In the former, foreign affairs was involved and possibly security matters, where here they only wish to question Mr. Dean about the breaking into the Watergate?

A. Yes, I would say the difference is

very significant. As a matter of fact, when a committee of Congress was investigating espionage against the Government of this country, that committee should have had complete cooperation from at least the executive branch of the Government in the form that we asked. All that we asked was to get the report that we knew they had already made of their investigation.

Now, this investigation does not involve espionage against the United States. It is, as we know, espionage by one political organization against another. And I would say that as far as your question is concerned, that the argument would be that the Congress would have a far greater right and would be on much stronger ground to ask the Government to cooperate in a matter involving espionage against the Government than in a matter like this involving politics.

14. Elections Committee Responsibility

Q. Mr. President, you have talked about the responsibility within the White House and responsibility between Congress and the White House. Where do you feel your responsibility for the Committee to Re-elect the President begins and ends, Mr. Mitchell or any other people who were working for them?

A. Well, the responsibility there, of course, is one that will be replied to by Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Stans and all of those in due course. None of them have the privilege, none of them, of course, will refuse to testify, none has when he is asked to, and I am sure they will give very good accounts of themselves, as they have in the court matters that they have been asked to.

15. Arms to India and Pakistan

Q. Mr. President, I want to ask you about peace. You have concentrated on peace in your Administration. Don't you find an inconsistency there with continuing to give arms to India and Pakistan and perhaps a hundred other countries around the world? A. First, we are not giving them, we are selling them.

Q. Isn't that worse? That is even worse.

A. I just wanted to be sure that we understood the difference, because of all the concern about aid. But the point that is involved in the India-Pakistan thing has been a very difficult one for this Administration, because it involves commitments that were made before we got here. Those commitments were made during the Johnson Administration. I do not criticize the fact that they were made, but they were made.

As far as we were concerned, once the war between India and Pakistan began, we cut them off, as you recall. We stopped all economic assistance—not all, but some economic assistance to India, and we stopped all military assistance to Pakistan.

Let's look at the numbers: \$83-million in economic assistance to India and \$14-million in military assistance to Pakistan. We have maintained that embargo up to this point. The difficulty was that there were contracts that had been made, the materials had already been, in effect, sold, and under the circumstances, we felt that it was time to clean the slate.

So what we have done, the Indians are getting their \$83-million in economic assistance; the Pakistanis are being allowed to go through with their purchases of the arms, nonlethal arms and spare parts.

Now as far as the whole, the major problem—and Miss McClendon, you have put your finger on the major problem—and that is peace in the area. This in no way, in no way jeopardizes the peace in the area.

After the war that broke Pakistan in half, India's superiority is so enormous that the possibility of Pakistan being a threat to India is absurd.

All we are trying to do is to seek

good relations with both, and we trust in the future that our aid to both can be ones that will turn them towards peace rather than war.

I should also say in India's case—while our aid there, our \$83-million, was economic—India, as you know, purchases quite significant amounts of arms from the Soviet Union, and also has an arms capability itself. So there is no problem in terms of creating conditions which could lead to another outbreak of war by providing for simply keeping a commitment that the United States had made for the sale of spare parts and nonlethal arms to Pakistan.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

First—and incidentally, I am not complaining about the fact you are asking the question of me or Mr. Ziegler. It is a very proper question. A Senate committee is conducting investigations. These investigations will go on, I understand, over a period of many months. I respect the right of the Senate to conduct those investigations. We will cooperate; we will cooperate fully with the Senate, just as we did with the grand jury, as we did with the F.B.I., and as we did with the courts when they were conducting their investigations previously in what was called the Watergate matter.

As far as these investigations are concerned, there are all kinds of information, charges, etcetera, etcetera, that have been made and will be made in the future. I could comment upon them. Mr. Ziegler could in the future. I will not. He will not. And the reason that we will not is that when the committee completes its investigation, we will then have comments, if we consider it appropriate to do so. But it is the right of the committee to conduct the investigation, so that all the facts can come out.

I have confidence in all of the White House people who have been named. I will express that confidence again. But I am not going to comment on any individual matter that the committee may go into.

Let me say, with regard to the committee, too. Do not intend to raise questions about its conduct. I have been very pleased to note that Senator Ervin—at least this is the way I read what he says—has indicated that the investigation will be bipartisan; that it will look into charges that have been made against both election campaigns, and that is as it should be. He has also indicated that he, as a great constitutional lawyer, will accept no hearsay; that he will not tolerate any guilt by innuendo; he will not tolerate any guilt by association.

As long as the committee conducts its investigations with those very high guidelines—guidelines I tried to follow, incidentally, in the Hiss case; not perhaps as well as I might have, but I did what many thought was pretty well—but in any event, as long as it is conducted that way, I do not intend to make any statements with regard to matters before the committee. That is for the committee to look into.

9. Travel Plans Abroad

Q. Mr. President, can you tell us your travel plans outside of the United States during 1973?

A. Well, I have previously indicated that I had no immediate travel plans outside the United States. I have received recommendations from the State Department and from the N.S.C. [National Security Council] for what they consider to be urgent travel, one to Europe, because of our interest in NATO, second to Latin America because I have not yet had the opportunity to go to Latin America, and third to Africa because I have not traveled there.

I do not mean to suggest by that that travel by the President to these places is absolutely indispensable to foreign policy; but I think this is the concern that many of our foreign policy experts in the State Department and the N.S.C., the concern they have. They feel that the enormous interest that has been created by going to Peking and going to Moscow indicates that we don't care about our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere, we don't care about our friends in Africa, and we do not care about our friends in Europe as well. Incidentally, Japan is another on the list.

Now, how we will be able to work some of these trips in, I do not know. I would suggest that we are considering the possibility of a trip sometime during the summer or shortly before the summer begins, but we have not yet made a decision because there are so many other things on and there will probably be a trip in the fall, but how we can select among these, I have not yet determined.

10. Narcotics Convictions

Q. Mr. President, less than three years ago you signed into law a bill that removed mandatory prison terms for Federal narcotics convictions, as recommended by an earlier President's crime commission, and since then 73 per cent of those convicted in Federal cases have received prison terms. What evidence is there that cause you now to go the other way, to ask for a restoration of mandatory prison terms for narcotics traffic?

A. We have examined this situation very carefully. Here is what we have found with regard to this whole attitude in terms of the restoration of the death penalty, for example, and the mandatory prison terms in cases of narcotics offenders: Let me point out that the mandatory sentences, as you know, only apply to hard drugs, heroin.

It does not apply to marijuana. It does not apply to soft drugs, et cetera, et cetera.

Criminologists have honest differences of opinion on this, as to whether it will be more effective or less effective. We have examined it. We have, as you have already indicated, accepted a recommendation, and we were moving in one direction at one time, and now we have looked at the record since then, and we have looked at the record over the past 10 years. I will simply summarize it for this year.

During the '60s, the United States went far down the road of the permissive approach to those charged with crime, and we reaped a terrible harvest, the greatest increase in crime that this country has ever had, explosive to the point that law and order, so-called, became a great issue in '68. It was still a great issue in '72.

Now, under these circumstances, I believe that it is essential that we have not a permissive approach, but an approach where certain major crimes are concerned that the penalties will be ones that will deter those crimes. It is my belief that they will.

Let me suggest, also, that my discussions with criminologists bears that out. We will find some disagreement. I will understand there is a commission that will, in a couple of weeks, recommend that we move in the other direction. But I will take the responsibility.

As far as I am concerned, I oppose, as you know, the legalization of marijuana, although I had advocated a more equitable type of punishment which will fit the crime. I am for the mandatory criminal penalties with regard to

hard drugs because I think we have to move vigorously in this area. And in terms of the capital punishment. I do not think that Secretary of State of the United States can make a statement to the effect that terrorists in the Sudan should be executed when, if somebody picks up some diplomat in the United States, we would give him perhaps 20 years, 30 years, and then have him out on parole in five years.

So under these circumstances, I am taking this line. I realize many honestly disagree. I respect the disagreement. But that is what I believe. If it doesn't work, we will try something else.

Q. Mr. President, Mr. President — A. I thought that was your voice.

Q. I think you recognized the voice (laughter). A. You had three questions last time. I have got to give The St. Louis Post-Dispatch one. You are still with The Post-Dispatch?

11. Controls on Food Prices

Q. Yes. The last time I looked. There is a published report that the Administration, despite what has been publicly said, is considering at least the possibility of controls on meat prices, possibly on other raw agriculture products. We have housewives, strikes now against these tremendous increases in food prices. When are you going to be in a position to offer the American consumer some kind of assurance that this is going to be stopped, this price spiral in food?

A. The difficulty with offering rigid price controls on meat prices and food prices is that it would not stop, in the opinion of those whose judgment I value, would not stop the rise in prices. It might stop them momentarily, but as a result of discouraging increased production, we would reap the consequences of greater upward pressure on prices later.

You can be very sure that if I thought that price controls on farm products and on food prices would work, I would impose them instantly.

But the point is, that every bit of evidence that has been presented shows that it would discourage supply, it would lead to black market, and we would eventually have to come to rigid price controls, wage controls and rationing, and I don't think the American people want that. I think there is a better way.

The better way is, one, to open our imports to the greatest extent that we possibly can. For example, we have already taken some action in that on dairy products. We have already taken some action on beef products. I found, at a meeting with the Cost of Living Council, that we still have a 3 per cent tariff on imported beef. I have asked the Department of Agriculture to give me a legal opinion as to whether the President can remove that tariff. If I can, I will act. If I can't, I am going to ask the Congress to do it, because there shouldn't be any tariff on an item that is in short supply in the United States. That is on the import side.

On the supply side, we are, of course, reducing our stockpiles, whatever stockpiles are left and there are some in which we are able to act, provided we can get the transportation. That is the reason the Secretary of Transportation sat in the meeting with the Cost of Living Council, because we need flatcars and a number of other items in order to get it moved.

Finally, there is the production side and on the production side, as you know, our new farm policy is designed to increase production. We are continuing to examine the situation. If any further action can be taken that will work, we will do it. But I can assure you that I consider it the highest priority to get the pressure on prices down.

the pressure . . .
Let me say one word about the housewives. I had a letter from one the other day saying, "Should I boycott?" I am not going to suggest to American housewives or to any group of Americans to join in boycotts and so forth. I generally do not feel that that is an effective use of what we call "people power."

On the other hand, I would suggest that the greatest and most powerful weapon against high prices in this country is the American housewife. Her decisions, as she buys, whether she buys something that is more expensive or less expensive, have a far greater effect on price control than anything we do here. And I would suggest that the fact that some of the pressure on prices may be lessening now, as a result of housewives buying more carefully, may have some good effect.

12. Ervin Committee Testimony

Q. Mr. President, does your offer to cooperate with the Ervin committee include the possibility that you would allow your aides to testify before his