

Official White House Transcript

of

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S PRESS AND RADIO CONFERENCE #184(Filmed, Taped, and Shorthand Reported)

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Held in Room 474, Executive Office Building  
 Wednesday, April 27, 1960  
 At 10:28 o'clock a. m.

This Copy For:-The President

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THE PRESIDENT: Well, it should be, I think it's simple. Congress is in session and there are a number of bills that are important before the Congress. If they should come at an awkward time for me, and I felt that they should be vetoed -- now, I have quite a tough time schedule because any important bill that requires a veto, not only requires the most, the deepest study in the departments concerned, but it demands daily consultation with me because I am the one that has got to be convinced that this is a bad bill or a good bill and therefore you cannot do this if these, as I say, if these bills are important, from a distance.

Now, the only reason that I happen to have said this in this particular case, we don't know how long this Summit meeting is going to be. In 1955 we had a rather -- a pretty good understanding of the number of days. Everybody agreed that this time it should go as long as it was felt necessary, so since I am leaving on the 14th and had to fix a date for my visit to Portugal on Sunday, I took the 23rd, the 23rd to the 24th. This is getting along at a rather long period. So I said if domestic requirements did bring me back, I would have to ask Mr. Nixon to serve for me. Now, as the head of the delegation. This doesn't mean that I expect him to be there, but I was -- simply put the warning.

Q Mr. President, May Craig, Press Herald, Portland, Maine. For more years than you have been in the White House, the pitiful children of the West Virginia unemployed coal miners have been starving for proper food. We do give them whatever surpluses we have. While you and Congress talk about helping the needy in foreign countries, isn't there something that you could do for needy Americans in this rich America of our own?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Mrs. Craig, you say they haven't been helped. I thought they had. Now I'm not going to try to generalize here or make any alibis. I will find out exactly what has happened because in talking to the Secretary of Agriculture over the years, I assumed that for those people that were really destitute, that there were methods for helping them so that they got enough to eat.

Q Burd, Chicago Tribune. You and President de Gaulle agreed that disarmament should have, be a priority subject at the Summit. If we should have substantial disarmament somewhere along the line, do you think it would send this economy into a tailspin?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I can't believe that it would, for this simple reason. We are now scratching around to get money for such things as school construction, a bill that I recommended a year ago. We are trying to build our roads before they become obsolete and have to get a new program to bring them around. There are all sorts of things to be done in this country in the way of reclamation, and so on, that have to take over the years. I see no reason why the sums which now are going into these sterile, negative mechanisms that we call war munitions shouldn't go into something positive.

Q Sarah McClendon, El Paso Times. Sir, I've been over there several times and asked that question -- (more laughter) ---

THE PRESIDENT: Well, do you think you or I should do the correction from Mr. Hagerty, one of us will have to do it.

Q Kenworthy, New York Times. Mr. President, several leading scientists last week testified before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, that the art of concealing underground tests was outstripping the art of detecting them. Would the views of those scientists be taken into account in our negotiations at Geneva or at Paris, and would we request an increase in the number of detection stations for a treaty on a nuclear test ban?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know the plan that we suggested was to agree on the methods for eliminating those above the atmosphere, those in the atmosphere and those under the sea. And then, underground down to I believe what they call a seismic index of 4.75 which is supposed to show a size I believe somewhere in the order of 20 KT.

Now, up until that point, that would require an inspection system about like that that was laid out in 1958 at Geneva; but to go below that is going to take a very much more elaborate system. Now, what we have asked is for a group of the three countries that are working on this to get their scientists and see whether they can come up and develop the kind of plan that would be needed for these below the critical point, and that is as far as it has gone.

I don't know, I have heard them say, I have heard it said the number would have to be multiplied three times, or something of that kind as to the number that was agreed first, but I am not sure.

Q Bailey, Minneapolis Tribune. Mr. President, earlier this year the Secretary of Agriculture indicated that a wheat bill raising price supports in any way would not fall within the guide lines you set down in your message. More recently, Republican leaders have come away from meetings at the White House, including one meeting at which you were present, with the impression that it might be possible to have some small increase in wheat price supports in order to get a new piece of legislation this year. I wonder if you could help us out with your view on that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I am against higher price supports because the only effect I can see of them is that we put more and more wheat in storage; we have surpluses that overhang the market, depress prices and make the problem much greater and greater, and more severe.

Now, if there were any kind of reasonable plan that connected with other features of the thing that they could bring something about that seemed to be reasonable and fair to the farmers, well I would be glad to look at it --