

Official White House Transcript

of

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S PRESS AND RADIO CONFERENCE #161

(Filmed, Taped, and Shorthand Reported)

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Held in Room 474, Executive Office Building
Wednesday, June 17, 1959
At 10:32 o'clock, a.m., EDT

This Copy For:-

The President



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Q. Bailey, Minneapolis Star and Tribune. The Senate and House Conference yesterday agreed on a new wheat bill that would raise price supports five per cent and at the same time cut acreage allotments by 20 per cent. Could you give us your comments on this last approach?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I don't think I can comment very much on it this morning because it just came in to my desk, and I have not yet talked to the Secretary of Agriculture on this particular thing.

As you know, we still do not believe in raising price supports in any kind of a formula -- because we just believe it's not good for the farming industry or for the country.

Q. Lisagor, Chicago Daily News. Mr. President, back to foreign policy for a moment. Have you been in direct communication with Mr. Khrushchev in recent days in an effort to end the stalemate on the nuclear test ban talks in Geneva?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I have said several times that my communications with heads of State or heads of government are never made public by me unless there is mutual agreement, or unless someone else has done it. Therefore, I don't advise publicly whether or not I have communicated with any other head of government.



Q. Oberdorfer, Knight Newspapers. A Congressional committee, investigating what some people have called a munitions lobby, is looking into the employment of high ranking, former high ranking officers by defense contractors. Do you think that improper pressures are exerted when former high ranking officers take jobs with companies which solicit defense contracts?

THE PRESIDENT: Well really, I don't know anything about it. No one has certainly ever tried to do it to me, and anyway, I don't have anything to do with the contracting business.

But I think there is justification for the Congress informing itself as to exactly what connections, not necessarily with former officers of the government, but with the contracting officers of the present government. I think it's all right to look into these things because we must be careful and I think anyone that is acting in good faith would have nothing to fear of such an investigation.

Q. Mohr, Time Magazine. Mr. President, this is also a question about nuclear test cessation. The Berkner Report on new seismic techniques for detecting underground blasts suggested a, or contained a section that suggested that there were muffling or decoupling techniques

available to the Russians which would allow them to possibly reduce the seismic signal from a ten Kiloton blast to a one Kiloton sound level. And in view of that, in view of the fact that we have already offered to inspect only twenty per cent of events below five Kilotons, do you still think it will be safe to conclude and sign a cessation agreement with the Russians without danger of cheating or evasion?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you've asked a question that has about as many technicalities in it as I can imagine.

Now, this decoupling is, as you know, it's the possibility of setting an explosion off, the full effect of which is not communicated to instruments that are related around the whole locality, the whole country.

Now, what we have done, we have filed these reports and I believe that there is a fixed date when they will come up, I mean will come out for the public.

Isn't that so? (conferring with Mr. Hagerty) Yes.

And everybody will have a chance to take a look at them and the conclusions of the panel.

They are -- this coupling with those reports is new -- is the production of a new technique that makes the possibility of detecting now very much better than it was when we made the first settlement with -- at Geneva.

Now, this means that the very time when you have found out that some of the possibilities of concealment have grown up, the possibilities of detection have gone up at about an equal rate, apparently, so that you have a tremendously difficult technical problem to solve if you're going to get equality in this business.



But I do say this: We would be foolish if we expect 100 per cent from any system. There is no system, whether it be defensive or detection or intelligence or planning or anything else, that is 100 per cent perfect. What we do have to do is to minimize the risk or minimize -- let's say refine the process to the point where we minimize risks and indeed bring them down below the level where they could be truly dangerous to our country.

C. Donovan, New York Herald Tribune. Mr. President, in thinking about your heavy responsibilities with nuclear warfare, I have often wondered, have you ever seen a hydrogen bomb?

THE PRESIDENT: They won't allow me (laughter). I have seen the

bomb, yes, I mean they won't go -- they won't let me see the test, that's -- they want me not to go.

Q. (Donovan) You have actually seen the hydrogen bomb:

THE PRESIDENT: I have seen the bomb, I haven't seen the test.

Q. (Donovan) An atom bomb, too?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh yes. Oh I have seen the bomb, I have seen all the weapons, I just haven't been allowed to go to the tests.

Q. (Donovan) You couldn't give us any details on your visits --

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q. Belair, New York Times. Mr. President, with respect to a meeting at the summit, you made it quite clear in our last meeting, I think, that no head of a self-respecting government could go into a negotiation with other heads of government under any kind of ultimatum such as the Soviets have imposed on Berlin.

I wondered, does the Soviet failure to withdraw that ultimatum mean to you that you could not go into a summit negotiation on other questions such as disarmament, nuclear test suspension, or any others?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Belair, I don't recall that I put my conclusion and my statement of a couple of weeks ago on the basis just of Berlin. I said that if a Foreign Ministers meeting made such progress as to give to any reasonable person the belief that that progress would make a summit meeting fruitful, then I would be glad to go; because certainly I am not going to indulge just prejudice or preconceived notions or anything else to such an extent that it will stand in the way of some kind of tiny step toward easing tensions in the world.

So, if I did tie that directly to the Berlin bit, I did it only as an example. If there is any kind of reasonable progress that justifies a summit meeting, why of course I would never decline the opportunity.

Q. Morgan, ABC. Mr. President, your political opponents have accused you on a number of occasions of lack of leadership. But now the shoe is on the other foot. The Democratic Advisory Council, by implication anyway, is criticizing its own leadership in Congress, or the lack of it. Could you give us the Eisenhower definition of leadership in government, and could you spell out for us, sir, a little more your concept of the role of the Presidency now? (laughter)



the bills of which I speak are laid on my desk and then I know what the program is, and I don't think it's profitable to begin to guess what their views are and what they are doing. I'll just have to wait until I get the bills.

Q. Voss, Washington Star. Mr. President, you probably noticed in the papers this morning General Creasy's statement about nerve gases. I am wondering if you can tell us what you think about the possibility of persistence of a balance of terror, even if we were to get a nuclear disarmament such as we are seeking?

THE PRESIDENT: Well I think, you say we get nuclear disarmament. I think that always we have, that is the Western world, has coupled nuclear disarmament with a degree of general disarmament. Now there are many ways of bacteriological war, nerve, or gas warfare. There are other terrible weapons of mass destruction that are now in the, well just let's say they are capabilities that anybody could use, along with the nuclear terror.

So, I would think that when we talk about nuclear warfare, we shouldn't talk about it alone, we should talk about its results, and what is done with it, rather than merely on nuclear warfare; and so I would think that disarmament is a matter that has to be dealt with pretty well across the board.

Q. Spencer Davis, AP. Would you comment, sir, on the action of the International Olympic Committee in expelling Nationalist China from its ranks, and refusing to recognize it under the name of Republic of China?



THE PRESIDENT: Well of course, it's been known for years, even after it had to occupy Taiwan, as its, what it considers a temporary abode. I believe there are some 40 or 45 nations now recognized under that name and frankly, it seems to me that the Olympic Committee has gotten into politics rather than merely into international athletics.

Q. Herling, Editors Syndicate. Mr. President, this relates to the steel problem, sir. There are just about ten days left before steel companies start banking their furnaces, and without intervening in actual negotiations, as you have declined to do, do you believe, sir, it would be useful if you were to invite union and industry representatives to the White House to establish a kind of a climate of accommodation within which they might hammer out an agreement?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I will tell you on that one: You have got a historical incident, and I believe the outcome was an attempt to seize