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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

September 18, 1984

Mr. Speakes' Office

9:25 A.M. EDT

INDEX

SUBJECT

PAGE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

President's schedule.....1-4

FOREIGN

U.S. fishermen/Soviets.....4-5
Farm meetings.....3, 5

#1202-09/18

9:35 A.M. EDT

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September 18, 1984

Mr. Speakes' Office

9:25 A.M. EDT

MR. SPEAKES: I'll start with the schedule. At 9:45 a.m. this morning the President meets in the Rose Garden with the U.S. Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation. We'll have a photo op which is going to squeeze us a bit here. The President will point to the growing importance of the Pacific to the United States and reiterate his personal commitment to strengthening and expanding America's cooperative ties with that region. The President will make remarks during the reception of prominent Americans that have been active in U.S. relations with those nations.

Q Is that open coverage?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. The White House reception precedes the founding meeting of the group -- United States National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation. The bipartisan committee includes 50 leaders of the country's business, government and academic communities and is an outgrowth of regional economic discussion held over the past four years. The committee's a private, non-profit body and corresponds with similar bodies being formed elsewhere in the Pacific region. Among its roles will be the coordination of the United States' contribution to region-wide economic dialogue carried out under the auspices of the Pacific Economic Conference; also expected to serve as a focal point for U.S. economic policy and strategy toward the Pacific.

Serving on the committee are members of Congress, corporate executives --

Q Zzzzzz.

MR. SPEAKES: -- representatives of the executive branch, departments and agencies --

Q Zzzzzz.

MR. SPEAKES: Would you like to be excused? Who was that?

Q I didn't see him. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: -- numerous Asian-Pacific scholars, and representatives of such organizations as the Asia Foundation, Asia Society. We'll have a list of attendees; they include Secretary Shultz, Senators Glenn and Inouye and Ambassador Richard Fairbanks.

Q But what's all this about?

Q -- Secretary Shultz?

MR. SPEAKES: At 1:00 p.m. today, we will have a meeting with the Executive Committee of the American Farm Bureau and a number of agricultural organizations which include groups that are involved in farm production, banking and trade interest. We can make available these people; they include a number bankers associations, agriculture associations and credit institutions.

The President will --

Q Will we have a list?

MR. SPEAKES: The President -- Yes. The President will meet with this group and be prepared to discuss problems in the farm area, particularly centering on the farm loan situation where many farmers are facing difficulties with interest rates and making payment in their areas.

Q Is that open?

Q Larry, what question did you say yes to? (Laughter.) Earlier you said yes. I didn't hear the question.

MR. SPEAKES: Will there be a list? Yes.

Q Will this be open?

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q The answer is yes.

MR. SPEAKES: No, it's in the Cabinet Room. Possibly the President may have a statement at the conclusion of that meeting. If so, we'll cover that statement.

Q Larry, is this --

Q Is this --

Q Larry --

Q -- Columbia, Missouri -- at the Missouri campaign stop a couple of weeks ago, that panel discussion -- some of the farmers recommended a moratorium on repayment of farm loans. Is his statement likely to deal with that.

MR. SPEAKES: There have been discussions. I wouldn't characterize it as a moratorium. But there have been a number of discussions and a task force within the Agriculture Department

MORE

#1202-09/18

which is focusing on ways to alleviate the problems in the farm sector, particularly with credit. And that will be one of the focal points of this meeting today. And the President, as I say, possibly will have a statement at the end of the meeting which would come about 1:30 p.m.

Q Will that be if he makes a decision on what steps he might take?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q That will be in the Cabinet Room?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Will he discuss the steel issue and the impact that will have on farmers?

MR. SPEAKES: Probably not.

At 1:30 p.m., there are a couple of farm -- Congressional farm groups coming down. We can give you a list of those. They include Senator Helms, and then there's another meeting with a -- Is there a second meeting, Marlin?

MR. FITZWATER: No, that's the --

MR. SPEAKES: All right.

MR. FITZWATER: That is the second meeting.

MR. SPEAKES: Helms is coming down with some representatives from North Carolina farm associations.

Q What time did you say that was?

MR. SPEAKES: 1:30 p.m.

And at 2:00 p.m., the Cabinet Council on Commerce and Trade, taking up the steel issue. I don't anticipate a decision in the meeting but I cannot rule it out. So you just have to hang loose on that.

Q Larry, the farmers are real concerned about the steel issue. Does the President intend to talk to them about --

MR. SPEAKES: Somebody just asked that. I do not know. It is for the President mainly -- "I'm glad you're here. I would like to listen to your concerns and I have some ideas myself." I don't know whether he will specifically raise the deal or not.

Q Which meeting?

Q I tell you my ideas in the end of November.

MR. SPEAKES: Farm meeting.

Q Larry, if you don't get --

Q The 1:00 p.m. farm meeting or the 1:30 p.m. farm meeting?

Q -- will you expect an announcement on the road either Wednesday or Thursday?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have a -- won't have a timetable for it, Peter. It could be the last -- it could be any day.

Q How long is the steel meeting scheduled?

MR. SPEAKES: For one hour.

Q What's the -- will Helms be here for the other -- for the earlier one as well?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think so. The Senators due for that meeting are -- yes, I'm sorry. Helms, Cochran, and Jepsen, Congressmen Evans, Coleman of Missouri, and Madigan of Illinois.

Q I'm sorry -- they're going to be in the first meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

All right. On the wire, which you may not have seen, is a statement by Senator Stevens' staff member indicating that the U.S. fishermen held by the Soviets will be released later today.

We're in progress -- we're involved in discussions with the Soviets in Moscow and have been here in Washington. We're hopeful that this will be the outcome of our discussions. We are not ready at this moment to go quite that far to make an announcement of the release, but we may have something later this morning.

Q Like an announcement of the release?

MR. SPEAKES: Possibly. But will just have to wait and see.

Q What time are you going to brief?

MR. SPEAKES: We remain hopeful.

12:30 p.m. briefing. Anything else?

Q Has Senator Stevens been involved in these negotiations in any way or is he free-lancing?

MORE

#1202-09/18

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think so. I think he's probably been in touch very closely with the State Department in that there was a phone call -- from him to the fishermen, I heard on the radio. So, he's certainly been concerned and actively involved. And I would assume that he's been in close touch with the State Department.

Q He said on the radio today that -- television -- that these men were being questioned so much. In fact, they talked to him on the phone, said they were being questioned so much about the Soviets and being -- they were trying to force them to sign a lot of papers. Are we making any protest over that?

MR. SPEAKES: We've seen that. I think right now our discussions with the Soviets will remain private. And our position is that we're hopeful.

Q Is the President praying for the release of those men, as the skipper requested?

MR. SPEAKES: No. We don't have all that when you don't come.

Q Well, no, I mean, you don't pray except when I'm here?

MR. SPEAKES: Anything else? Anybody?

Q What is the 1:30 p.m. meeting about, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: That 1:30 p.m. Jesse Helms meeting? It's to hear the concern, specifically, of North Carolina farm economy and farmers from North Carolina.

Q Tobacco?

MR. SPEAKES: The tobacco people will be here, be grain discussions and so forth.

Helms is bringing down the President of the Farm Bureau from North Carolina, some tobacco people, farmer-elected Committeemen, National Cotton Council.

Q It's a tobacco garden campaign.

Q Does it have anything to do with his battle with Governor Hunt for reelection.

Q Nooooo.

Q Politics?

Q We don't have any of that when you don't come -- (laughter.) Just start praying.

Q -- that list of farm organizations that are coming in, does that include wives involved in farm economics?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. Kim will give you a list.

Anybody got anything else?

Q Larry, would you listen to Sam any more carefully if you heard that Parade Magazine was going to report his income at \$500,000 a year?

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, that's down from what I assumed. (Laughter.) I'd think it was much higher than that.

Q Well, that's a lot lower than I had thought --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, me, too. I'd say it was much higher than that. Did they tell you -- They put out a release? Any comment, Sam?

Q Yes, I'm going to apply for Food Stamps on Monday. This administration has driven me into the cold. (laughter.)

Q They also say he's leaving this beat; but we've heard that for a long time.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes -- (laughter.) Yes, that's a tale.

12:30 p.m. briefing.

Q One of us will go this time, I assure you.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

#1202-09/18

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