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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 11, 1985

The Briefing Room

12:05 P.M. EDT

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#1491-07/11

THE WHITE HOUSE
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PRESS BRIEFINGS
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 11, 1985

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12:05 P.M. EDT

MR. SPEAKES: We have a number of intentions to nominate ambassadors. The President intends to nominate Harvey Frans Nelson, Jr., to be the Ambassador to the Kingdom of Swaziland; Gary Matthews to be Ambassador to the Republic of Malta; Irving Hicks to be Ambassador to the Republic of the Seychelles.

In addition, we're announcing four new ambassadors who will serve as deputies to the UN Ambassador. Herbert S. Okun to be Deputy Representative to the United Nations with the rank of Ambassador; Hugh Montgomery to be Alternate Representative for the United States for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations with the rank of Ambassador; Patricia Byrne to be Deputy Representative to the United States in the Security Council with the rank of Ambassador; and Joseph Reed, Jr., to be Representative on the Economic and Social Council.

This afternoon, the President meets with the Domestic Policy Council.

And we're pleased to welcome a group of journalism students who come from George Washington University with their professor, Phillip Robins. And I always admonish the visitors, this -- what you see here bears no resemblance to journalism. (Laughter.)

Anything else?

Q Yes. That's a good start, Larry.

Q I'd like to complain --

Q Now that you've set them up, what can we do for you?

Q I'd like to go back to Lebanon and the airport.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay.

Q I've now gone over the words you used in that statement this morning --

MR. SPEAKES: Where did you find the words? You made no notes.

Q Well, Ms. Kast has the tape recording. We always have that on you.

MR. SPEAKES: I see, I see.

Q And I can see nothing -- please instruct me. I can see nothing more than what we immediately said, which is you're backing away from the President's pledge to -- quote -- "close the Beirut Airport" -- unquote.

MR. SPEAKES: Now, how do you know what the President meant when he said we will -- want to close the Beirut Airport?

MORE

#1791-07/11

Q Well, that's the problem with this President. Of course, he often uses words that bear no relationship to the dictionary definition.

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q "To close" in the dictionary sense means shut down.

MR. SPEAKES: What did the President say in his speech to the American Bar Association?

Q Well, he was backing away from "close" there.

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q But not in such detail. So I -- let me not try to spar with you.

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q If there is more meaning to your statement this morning, I would appreciate it if you would tell us what you have in mind.

MR. SPEAKES: I understand. What I am transmitting to you today was what we have told the Lebanese government in private. These are among the things that we would like to see done to improve Beirut Airport's security.

Q Well, we got that, but does that suggest that if the Lebanese government will do those things and do it adequately that that will satisfy our concern about the use of Beirut Airport by hijackers?

MR. SPEAKES: These are among the things that we would like them to do and to do adequately. And we would like to - and it would certainly be a judgment call at the time that, if and when all these things were completed, it would be a judgment call as to whether it achieved the goals of us and the goals of our allies

about the -- whether it is no longer a safe haven for hijackers -- whether it is a safe airport.

Q We might --

Q Sort of --

MR. SPEAKES: You have seen the Athens -- the Greek government make improvements at the Athens airport, although we have not released -- relieved them of our travel restrictions yet.

Q One more question then I'll subside on this subject. So, in other words, we might make the judgment, if the Lebanese government will go forward with these measures we've suggested, that we need no longer take, with our allies, an action against the airport.

MR. SPEAKES: You're talking about two things. We're moving on the diplomatic front in consultations with allies to restrict air traffic into the Beirut airport -- to eliminate air traffic into the Beirut airport -- until they do make these improvements. So, in effect -- in effect it'll be to shut down or close -- as you tend to -- as you talk about -- that's --

Q I'm quoting the President.

MR. SPEAKES: That's what I'm saying. If you don't have any airplanes flying in there, is the airport open or closed? I guess it's open if somebody wants to fly in there. We don't want them to fly in there until these improvements are made.

The second thing that we're doing is we're telling the Lebanese government these are the -- among the changes that we would like. When they make these changes and more that I have not specified, then -- and we would make a judgement as to whether we wanted the --

Q Have we transmitted more changes we would like to see to the Lebanese government than you have disclosed today?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. That's what I've said four times --

Q Why don't you tell us what they are?

MR. SPEAKES: -- four times here and three times earlier this morning. This list is not all-inclusive. It is an example of the type things.

Q Why are you keeping secret the other things?

MR. SPEAKES: That's the way we prefer to do it.

Q Are -- does the Lebanese government know that if they do both what you've listed and these unspecified things that we will then take a different position and say this airport is safe to fly in --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Do they -- they're informed fully of what they have to do to comply with our definition of a safe airport?

MR. SPEAKES: These are the things that we suggest they do in order to alleviate the problem of hijackers being able to fly in and out of there. You notice there are some key points about control of the airport and the area around the airport that are important. So, yes, they're aware of this. I don't think we've said this is a checklist and we'll grade you on it. I think we've said this is what you ought to do to your airport and if and when you do

all this we'll take a look at it and --

Q Isn't there an inference there that we -- excuse me -- isn't there an inference there that if they do all of these things that the United States would then say the airport was --

MR. SPEAKES: Sure. Yes. But, once again, this is not everything.

Q Larry --

Q How much time have you given them to do this?

MR. SPEAKES: Haven't set a timetable. We'd like for them to do it tomorrow, but --

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: -- they may not get around to it by then.

Q Does the United States believe that the Lebanese central government, in its present state, is capable of carrying out these objectives?

MR. SPEAKES: I think it would take more consolidation of their power in order to be able to, for instance, control the area around the airport. I think the steps taken the other day -- the meeting and the factions -- things like that could

lead to some consolidation of power, but clearly it is a state that has a number of elements in it that you would have to consolidate in order to arrive at this situation.

Q So, what you're saying is not yet but maybe?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I really don't want to pass judgment on the Lebanese government's ability to run its affairs -- obvious the conditions in Lebanon and the state-of-play there is obvious. But you would have to -- it would be the ultimate if they could. So --

Q What about the Syrian role in this? Are you expecting a lot of effort on this from the Syrians --

MR. SPEAKES: You mean about the Airport?

Q Exactly.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know how direct a role that the Syrians are playing in the Airport safety. I think they would certainly have some influence on the factional groups there that, once again, would play a role in the overall picture. But as to whether you can ask the Syrians to fix the Airport, I don't think it's quite that direct.

Leo?

Q Larry, has anybody joined us so far in trying to close the Airport?

MR. SPEAKES: Anybody what?

Q Any other countries joined us --

MR. SPEAKES: There have been statements by the British, and we're continuing to consult with others about steps to take.

Q How do you interpret the -- statement, as being totally supportive of your position or simply that they're also going to wait for the other Europeans before acting?

MR. SPEAKES: I think they're in the process of discussions among themselves and with us.

Pardon?

Q You haven't got anybody yet to say we will also join the U.S. in --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, it's premature to comment on that until you've had an opportunity for people to say yes or no. Hadn't anybody said no either, Leo.

Yes?

Q On another subject?

MR. SPEAKES: Another subject?

Q Could -- one more question.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: I thought you were going to subside.

Q Well, on this subject. Go ahead, Sheila -- as far as I'm concerned. (Laughter.)

Q Can you tell us what your expectations were when

those plans were announced to revoke landing rights, etcetera -- what our expectation was about how our friends would respond? I mean, are we behind -- are you behind where you expected to be?

MR. SPEAKES: No. The Vice President did a series of consultations. You would note on -- if you look back in time, you would see that the Vice President was in the midst of his European travel when we talked about these restrictions, so he has done some consultation. Incidentally, he's making a 1:00 p.m. speech at the Press Club today, in which he will talk about his trip.

So, their consultations have continued on the ambassadorial or other -- through the embassy level.

Q But you had not expected that some two weeks later there would be other countries --

MR. SPEAKES: We didn't set a timetable.

Q You've noted today that, although the Greek government has taken some steps at the Athens Airport, we haven't lifted our travel advisory. Is that because we think they haven't taken enough steps or what?

MR. SPEAKES: We would like to see more, yes.

Q Which ones? Do you have a list?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have the specifics, no.

Q Do we intend to lift the travel advisory at some point?

MR. SPEAKES: We would lift it, certainly, if we were satisfied that it was safe to fly in and out of there.

Q Well, have we made a determination that, in fact, the weapons the hijackers used were put on that plane at the Athens Airport?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have the details on that, Sam. I just don't know.

Q Because as you know, there was a story that maybe they were put on in Cairo?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I know that. I don't know the answer.

Q A Senior Administration Official said the other week in a briefing that those airlines that did not -- that continued to land at Beirut Airport would be denied landing rights -- or at least the United States was considering denying them landing rights here. Does that condition still hold, or --

MR. SPEAKES: That is exactly where we are. I don't know whether the Transportation Department or the FAA has moved any further on it, but I think for the moment there is -- there are no airlines that fly in there that are landing in the United States.

So, Andrea, new subject.

Q Two -- clearing up two things from yesterday. Can you confirm what Tom Downey quotes the President as saying regarding poor people shouldn't go to Harvard, Princeton, or Yale -- that is what community colleges are for?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q We should not be funding luxury educations?

MR. SPEAKES: No, that is not what he said.

Q Can you tell us what he said?

MR. SPEAKES: No, that is just not what he said. Tom Downey wasn't listening well.

Q Tom Downey wasn't what?

Q Listening well.

MR. SPEAKES: He wasn't tuned in very well.

Q Did I miss something yesterday, or is The New York Times correct, that the President had a breakfast with the House Ways and Means Committee members on tax reform?

MR. SPEAKES: He did, yes.

Q That wasn't on the schedule we were -- informed of.

Can you tell us anything --

MR. SPEAKES: No, it wasn't. You are very perceptive. It took you 24 hours, but --

Q Well, I read it my paper this morning. Is there any reason why we wouldn't be told that the Ways and Means members and Baker and Darman and thee were all in with the President on tax reform issues?

MR. SPEAKES: They wanted it private.

Q They who? They Baker or they Ways and Means?

MR. SPEAKES: They the President. (Laughter.)

Q Well, why do you take a shot at reporters when you try to keep something secret, and then say to us, well, you didn't get onto it for 24 hours?

MR. SPEAKES: You didn't get onto it until somebody else got it. You didn't know it until she mentioned it.

Q No, I read The Times also.

Q I am just curious as to why, I mean, if we are all told not to believe reports that tax reform is no longer a priority item, why would you want to keep secret a breakfast meeting with the House Ways and Means Committee?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, that is --

Q Where the President reaffirmed his support for keeping the 35 percent --

MR. SPEAKES: That's the way we prefer to do it. I would direct you to the speech of Mr. Richard G. Darman, which we have copies of, that --

Q Is he a Baker aide?

MR. SPEAKES: -- that you could look at and determine how we feel about tax reform -- the status of it. You're going to have a hard time proving that line of thinking about tax reform.

Q All right. One more question. How do you feel about Packwood's threats on the timber preferences?

MR. SPEAKES: You obviously are, once again, not up to speed on the current situation.

Q Well, then help me out.

MR. SPEAKES: I regret to inform you, the AP writes, "Senator Bob Packwood today backed away from an earlier pledge that he would try to kill President Reagan's tax bill unless it preserved tax breaks to the timber industry. I will continue to propose provisions to change the tax treatment of the timber industry, but will not oppose the bill in its entirety on the basis of those provisions alone."

So --

Q He did that and he is still not coming to lunch?

MR. SPEAKES: No, that doesn't have anything to do with lunch.

Q Well, your point is well taken. I mean, I think you just make a strong case why you shouldn't, once again, allow us to have wire machines here in the White House, which we had, so that we could keep up with these things, before this administration took them out and made certain that we didn't have access to the wires.

Q How about the Xerox machine?

MR. SPEAKES: How many people do you have at ABC reading the wires? Maybe you should get more.

Q Well, the wire machines are over there on De Sales Street.

MR. SPEAKES: Is that part of the 350 you're going to lay off or does that include you? (Laughter.)

Q No, I'm looking after myself at the moment.
(Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: I see.

Q What do you mean, "at the moment"? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Okay, Lester's been very patient. Do you have -- Lester, do you have something or do you just come for the ride?

Q --the President, in his send-off of Maureen to the Women's Conference in Kenya, that nobody knows how much it's going to cost the United States, Larry. The President said nothing about Maureen's blast of Attorney General Meese for his holding up a \$625,000 grant to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence because of the nationwide activities of that coalition's lesbian task force. And my question is, does the President agree with Maureen or does he agree with Meese, since the Louisiana chapter of this coalition has pulled out because of the lesbian activists conducting pro-lesbian conferences all over the country?

Q And I have a follow-up. (Laughter.)

Q I'm delighted.

MR. SPEAKES: Did you -- what happened to your tape recorder? Did you lose your pawn ticket? (Laughter.)

Q Ohh.

Q No. As a matter of fact, my wife got up early this morning and took the tape and I came in and it was empty. Isn't that tragic?

Q Yes, but that's a legitimate question.

Q Now, can we get back to the question -- does the President --

MR. SPEAKES: About the pawn ticket?

Q -- agree with his daughter or his Attorney General?

MR. SPEAKES: The Attorney General has spoken on that yesterday and the President has not indicated to me either -- a stand on either side of that issue. And I would direct you to the Attorney General and to the President's daughter.

Q Well, the Coalition's Donna Medley refused to --

MR. SPEAKES: I didn't realize it had anything to do with lesbians until you told me that, though.

Q Well, this is the reason why they're holding it up down there, apparently.

MR. SPEAKES: I see.

Q And yesterday, Donna Medley refused to say if the new Executive Director, Sharon Parker, is a member of this task force. And since she's on her way to Nairobi, there's a shortage of hotel rooms, so the delegates are sharing hotel rooms. Could you tell us, Larry, does the President --

Q Come on.

Q -- feel that the U.S. should be represented -- sorry, lesbians; I'm sorry to have offended you -- does the President feel --

Q Wait a minute.

Q -- that the U.S. should be represented at this conference by any of the lesbian task force? What does he feel?

Q That's a great lesson for the journalism students.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. (Laughter.)

Q Trust The Washington Times --

MR. SPEAKES: If you people want to really get ahead in this world, model yourself after him.

Q What?

Q Ohhh.

MR. SPEAKES: Lester, I'm pleased to tell you that you're better informed on this than I am. So you take it and run.

Q Okay. I have -- could I ask one last one?

Q No!

Q No.

MR. SPEAKES: You've already gone.

Q This is on another subject.

MR. SPEAKES: No, you'll have to wait. Sorry.

Q All right.

Q New subject.

MR. SPEAKES: So, Owen.

Q Yes. On the President's operation tomorrow, can you tell us how --

MR. SPEAKES: Surgical procedure.

Q Surgical procedure.

Q Operation. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: An operation involves an incision, et cetera.

Q It's the male version of the D&C.

Q Can you tell me, first of all, who is paying for his surgical procedure or how it's being paid?

MR. SPEAKES: He will pay for whatever -- when the Bethesda Naval Hospital renders a bill, it will be reviewed by the Counsel's office and he will pay whatever's appropriate.

Q Not through any insurance?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm sure if he's got insurance he'll use his insurance.

Q Does he have insurance or is it Medicare?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, he has insurance.

Q It would not be Medicare?

MR. SPEAKES: I believe it's insurance.

Q Larry, this morning, you raised the possibility --

Q Won't he pay whatever he is billed for?

MR. SPEAKES: I'll finish with you.

Q Private insurance rather than Medicare?

MR. SPEAKES: I would assume, yes, but I don't know.
He'll -- the bill will be paid and it will be paid properly.

Q The medical expert --

Q Here's the intestine man.

Q Here's Mr. Polyp, himself. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: How are you going to pay the bill?

Q He's the rectal expert. (Laughter.)

Q I don't begrudge him taxpayers' money to pay for
this.

MR. SPEAKES: He does have Medicare.

Q There goes that Jewish paranoia again.

Q You're damn right.

Q The reason I asked that is -- could you explain the decision for him to stay overnight, because apparently a lot of elderly people have been complaining that under new Medicare rules that the administration issued this year that particular procedure -- (laughter) -- has to be done in one day and no longer -- (laughter) -- are patients allowed to stay overnight. (Laughter.) This is quite serious.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, but --

Q No, it is serious.

Q It is.

MR. SPEAKES: But it would come only from you.

Q Why are you laughing --

Q Wonderful question.

Q Why would it only come from me?

MR. SPEAKES: Because I haven't heard anybody else bring that subject up. Sam seems to enjoy it, but, other than that -- or Waldman, now, Waldman might join in a question like that.

Q Wrong. Let me just tell you something, I think it's a serious question and I'm not laughing at this at all.

Q -- would you answer the question --

Q I'm laughing at it, but I think it's serious.

Q You've had your chance to have fun --

MR. SPEAKES: The hospital, as I have pointed out to you many times, does this for all patients, requires that they -- require that they remain overnight. So, now, had he not remained overnight, I think you would have probably taken the other side of the issue, that we weren't taking proper care of the President. So, you can't have your cake and eat it, too. If you're dissatisfied with both methods, then that's -- you just have to be dissatisfied.

Q I'm actually quite dispassionate about this. Are you?

Can you tell me --

MR. SPEAKES: I'm dispassionate or you?

Q I said, I am. Are you?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Can you tell me, then, would Medicare pay for him staying overnight, or would he have to pay?

MR. SPEAKES: Whatever the regulations are --

Q The hospital requires that he stays overnight, is that correct?

MR. SPEAKES: -- they are. And the President -- I think you'd have to go down to the local Medicare office and ask them how they do that. I don't know.

Q Is that Commander licensed, Larry?

Q -- question of equity here, since the administration now has rules requiring other patients from staying overnight for the

same procedure, yet the President --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know about -- I don't know that there are rules to -- for people who have this procedure done at two or three o'clock in the afternoon to have to go home that night. I don't know that to be a fact.

Q We have been -- a lot of people have been phoning in newspapers, actually, complaining that they were told under Medicare now that that procedure has to be done in one day.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know the answer to that.

George.

Q Is that Commander licensed, Larry?

Q -- run down the timing of that again? Is it two or three o'clock? Is that when it's going to be --

MR. SPEAKES: He leaves here at 1:30 p.m., and it takes about 15 minutes to get out -- 15-20 minutes to get out to Bethesda. and he will then do whatever's required to be prepared for -- have this procedure. I don't know how long that takes. He will -- the procedure takes 30 to 45 minutes. Then, there'll be an hour or two there that we'll talk with the physicians and so forth. That's it. I don't really have a --

Q What time do you anticipate the results to be --

MR. SPEAKES: Don't have a firm timetable. When I'm satisfied that I know what I need to know to come talk to you, then I'll do it.

Q Do you know now whether he's going on a diet?

Q Is he on a liquid diet --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know his diet, but there will be some dietary adjustments, as are customary for this type of procedure. I don't know what they are and don't intend to go into them. But that's -- there will be some adjustments.

Q Will you be briefing here or there?

MR. SPEAKES: Right here. Right here.

Q They've set up a press room with cameras -- you're absolutely ruling out any briefings there?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. That's right.

Q Well, short of an emergency, God forbid, I mean, but if there's an emergency someone will brief there, will they not?

MR. SPEAKES: There or here.

Q Larry, let me make sure I understand. You're saying none of his bill is being paid by private insurance --

MR. SPEAKES: I really don't know, Jerry, what the answer is. Whatever is appropriate he will do. He will pay the bill. Whatever he owes, he'll pay.

Q Did you --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know how it comes -- whether it comes from Medicare or from his personal insurance, or out of his pocketbook. But whatever it is, he's going to pay it. I don't think we're going to go into all that.

Ann?

Q Larry, this morning --

Q Larry, wait. Larry, if I could follow up -- you're saying part of it is being paid by Medicare -- you're saying --

MR. SPEAKES: He does have Medicare and I would assume that part of it would be. I don't know that.

Q This morning you --

Q Larry, I'm trying to get some information for our office on Dr. Cattau. Bethesda says the White House is releasing his bio; the White House says Bethesda is.

MR. SPEAKES: We can get his bio and give it to you, sure.

Q Is he licensed, Larry, because Julian Barber said that --

MR. SPEAKES: Somebody's already played that game.

Q No, no, no. Julian Barber said that all the Navy doctors don't have to be licensed and I just --

MR. SPEAKES: Somebody's already done that here, Lester. You're about two days behind.

Q I see. What was the answer? Could you inform us, Larry, out of the kindness of your heart?

MR. SPEAKES: I would assume he is, yes.

Dave?

Q Larry, on that meeting with the Ways and Means Committee yesterday, was that a strategy session that planned how best to get tax reform through Congress or was that -- of what you had said earlier that there may be further changes in the President's tax --

MR. SPEAKES: It was just an opportunity to sit down with those key members of that committee and have a discussion on the status of it, the plans for markup, the plans for the House floor action, the President to underscore his desire to see tax reform approved this year, for the President to appeal to them not to -- to look at the package as a whole and not to look at its parts before they make their decision -- those kind of things.

Peter?

Q On the -- Downey's version of the meeting yesterday on his remarks, are you alleging that Downey's remarks on education

are completely out of context or are you --

MR. SPEAKES: As relayed to me by the correspondent from NBC, yes.

Q Can you give us a version of what the President said?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I'm not going to play games with Downey.

Q You made a number of announcements about new U.N. personnel. Has General Walters made a sweep there of Mrs. Kirkpatrick's people?

MR. SPEAKES: I think these four are new people, obviously. So Mrs. -- if there were Mrs. Kirkpatrick's people there before, these ain't them.

Q What's happening to Jim Rentschler? Did he resign?

Q -- Malta --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know what Jim is doing for Malta --

Q He's got a new appointment there --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I don't know. Ed, do you know where -- what's Jim's going to do?

MR. DJEREJIAN: I think he's going to retire, but I'm not too sure.

Q What was the answer to that?

MR. SPEAKES: I think Jim may be going to retire, but I don't know.

Q What did the President tell those two Senators this morning about the balanced budget amendment?

MR. SPEAKES: It was a discussion about how they wish to proceed and he, once again, underscored his desire to see a balanced budget amendment approved by judiciary and by the Senate and opportunity to go back to the House again this year, as it came very close to passage in '82.

Q What's your folks' opinion of the constitutional convention? Are you for it were there to be a convention called for the purpose of a balanced budget amendment?

MR. SPEAKES: I think we'd prefer the legislative route, yes, rather than a constitutional convention. But, whichever way, we'll see.

Q Larry, on the Fourth of July early in the morning at 4:00 a.m., a group called the Lafayette Liberation League

made up of Young Americans for Freedom, having consulted with the Park Service, who told them if those billboards out there are not attended, you can take them away, and they came down to take them away and they were stopped.

Does the President feel that we should have billboards in Lafayette Square, and does he feel that Mrs. John McLaughlin, second-in-charge of the Department of the Interior should refuse to answer reporters' questions about why the Department of the Interior hasn't helped clean this thing up?

MR. SPEAKES: Somebody tried to take one out with a car yesterday afternoon. Would that suffice?

Q The what?

MR. SPEAKES: Somebody tried to take one out with a car yesterday -- in an automobile. Would that suffice?

Q Right. Well, the President certainly doesn't appreciate putting billboards in the -- in national parks.

MR. SPEAKES: The President believes in freedom of expression.

Q Well, yes, but that -- they're not carried, Larry. They're billboards rather than carried. Could a commercial product put a thing up there, like --

MR. SPEAKES: It used to be on this side of the street; they're not there anymore.

Q I know that. So they got them away from here and they put them over there, and it's really an orchard of eyesores, Larry.

Q An orchard of eyesores?

MR. SPEAKES: Does the President intend to hold a news conference this month?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q When do you think he will?

MR. SPEAKES: Later.

Q Larry, before, you raised the possibility of the President getting medical care through the military as Commander-In-Chief. Have you got --

MR. SPEAKES: I just don't know the regulations on that.

Q Can't we learn something --

MR. SPEAKES: More on how the President is going to pay his bills. Does he get any medical care as Commander-In-Chief? I don't know. We'll check into all of this. If that -- yesterday it was a medical story, today it's a financial story, all connected with that --

Q Well, when is the news conference, can you tell us?

MR. SPEAKES: Not today.

Q But you just said the President intends to hold a news conference this month.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, he does. Later in the month.

Q The last week?

MR. SPEAKES: Later in the month, if he's not completely stripped of his funds from paying his hospital bill. (Laughter.)

Q -- his butt's not too sore -- he will stand there for half an hour. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q What does it cost him to hold a news conference?

MR. SPEAKES: He might not have a clean suit, yes, he might have to sell the house. You're right. Let's go.

Q Larry -- these are questions.

Q Did the First Lady have lunch at the Four Seasons with Larry Barrett and not with Tom deFrank and U.S. News -- World Report --

Q Hey, hey, hey --

MR. SPEAKES: Hey, hey, hey --

Q Why is there the discrimination --

MR. SPEAKES: You're going to meddling now.

Q It wasn't the Four Seasons.

Q Beg pardon?

MR. SPEAKES: You were discriminated against, so don't worry about it.

Q I realize --

Q Thank you, Helen.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

12:32 P.M. EDT
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