

Press Chief Talks, But What Did He Say?

WASHINGTON -- President's Press Secretary George Christian can parry with newsmen by the hour without answering a question.

The technique is variously known as "the handful of mush" or "turning on the fog machine."

Christian's repertoire includes the standard "no comment" and statements -- as the "handful of mush" technique -- that he does not want to or intend to discuss a given subject, that comment is precluded by established policy, that he does not know, has no information, or has not talked to the President about the matter.

In instances involving a sustained question -- and -- answer exchange, the press secretary relies on what has come to be known among newsmen covering the White House as the "handful of mush" technique.

Gives No Answer

This tactic has an element of response to questioning, but the net result is that Christian gives neither an affirmative nor a negative reply and in the end, the questioner finds he has no more information than he had at the beginning.

Recently, Christian demonstrated his skill, with the "mush" method in evading an answer to the question of whether Rep. Wilbur D. Mills (D., Ark.), chairman of the House ways and means committee, Sen. Russell Long (D., La.), chairman of the Senate finance committee, considered secretly with President Johnson Dec. 30 when he was at his Texas ranch for the holidays.

Christian previously had been asked about the presence of Mills and Long at the LBJ ranch -- purportedly to talk about the administration's program to deal with the balance of payments deficit and enactment of the President's proposed income tax surcharge. The press secretary had sidestepped simply by saying there were several unannounced guests at the ranch during the post-Christmas period and he did not know if Mills and Long were among them.

Exchange at Briefing

The questioning persisted and

Christian and newsmen had the following exchange at a White House press briefing:

Q.--Did Chairman Mills and Sen. Long, and perhaps one other key member of Congress, including (Secretary of State Dean Rusk) and a number of other officials from Washington just prior to our announcement on Jan. 1.

A.--"Others Came In"

Q.--George, is this a case of your not caring to say who saw the President during that period?

A.--I don't know everyone who did, I think at the time we said that Secretary Rusk had come in. There were obviously other people who came in and worked on this material (balance of payments) which was made available to you on the first of January.

Q.--Could you have been away from the ranch?

A.--I wasn't out there that day.

Q.--Is it possible to check whether Wilbur Mills was there?

A.--Yes, I could find out probably.

Q.--Do you know the names of any of the people who were there--the unannounced guests?

A.--No, I think the President himself inferred at his news conference on Jan. 1 that he had consulted with a number of people about it.

He's Asked Again

Christian was asked at another press briefing later the same day if he had checked on whether Mills and Long conferred with the President at the ranch. The press secretary also was informed that Mills was making no secret of the fact he was with the President at the ranch Dec. 30.

Christian replied that congressmen who visited the ranch while the President was in Texas "were off the record by mutual agreement just as they are here (in the White House) --and they are still off the record."

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- Thursday, April 11. Hitting, batting, defensive play, bunting situations, drills, and practice routines.

The clinics which are taught by Harry Kujawa are open to interested adults at \$1 per session.

School Starts Karate Class

Clarenceville School District started enrolling students for classes in Japanese Karate on March 25. The classes will be held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Larry Malo, representing the En Garde Karate Clubs, Inc. will conduct the classes; which will be offered at a reduced rate.

Malo holds a Third Degree Black Belt in Karate and is a member of the Japan Karate-Do Federation.

He had an opportunity to practice his skills recently when three armed thugs jumped him as he was leaving the General Motors Building. Needless to say, it was his assailants who got the biggest surprise. Malo invites men and women of all ages to enroll in the classes.

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