



What LBJ Told Bobby

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WASHINGTON.

High drama swirled publicly around the White House last week. High drama also moved inside the White House as the President held a meeting with the brother of the late President who has publicly labeled him a national disaster; then with the Vice President who may oppose Bobby Kennedy; then with the Cabinet.

The meeting with Sen. Kennedy and his adviser, Ted Sorensen, was without fireworks. The President had not been happy over Bobby's charge that he, Lyndon Johnson, had been responsible for dope addiction among students and for draft-card burnings. He had been hurt over Bobby's charge that he had torn the country to pieces.

But he did not say anything when Bobby entered. Instead, he called for a map of North Vietnam and proceeded to brief the Senator on the bombing pause, explaining why he had aroused the wrath of Sen. Fulbright (D-Ark.) by continuing to bomb up to the 20th Parallel.

He said Fulbright had been briefed by Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford on Sunday, before the President's fireside chat. Clifford had gone out to Fulbright's home to explain that bombing would have to continue along the supply routes into the southern corridor of North Vietnam.

Fulbright had telephoned the President after the speech to congratulate him, but later blasted LBJ in the press, denouncing the bombing pause as a sham. The President seemed to think Fulbright had rejected the proposal on behalf of Ho Chi Minh, who later accepted it.

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"I got together with some of my best advisers, including Arthur Goldberg," the President told Kennedy and Sorensen. "We figured we had to keep bombing this corridor. Clark Clifford has been working on this plan day and night. Nick Katzenbach urged that my speech not be in the form of an ultimatum. We are ready to follow up any overture."

The President did most of the talking. Bobby did not interrupt. At the end of the briefing, the young candidate, who had been trying to defeat

the man who is now bowing out as President, asked the President what his political plans were.

The President made it clear that he was going to remain aloof from the political rivalries of the candidates—for the time being. "I'm not interested in this job for the salary," he said, "nor for the social activities."

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A few minutes later, Vice President Humphrey came in. He and Johnson have become extremely close. The President has been increasingly grateful for Humphrey's devotion, especially recently when the going was rough. Last fall, the President had said in the presence of Mrs. Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk and Humphrey that he was not going to run again, and that he had considered retiring early to let Hubert take over so as to get a head start on the Presidency.

He added, however, that this would look like a deal, so instead he would throw his weight to Hubert to corral delegates at the Democratic National Convention.

But now the President explained that he felt he must remain aloof from the political arena. It was best for national unity and peace.

"The board of directors isn't satisfied with the management," the President had confided. "The shareholders aren't happy. I think I could get nominated. I think I could be reelected. But what's the use of leading a country which is divided, where the Congress won't pass a tax bill, where we're facing devaluation of our currency, where white men are against black, the Irish against the Jews, and where the press distorts everything you do? If I recited the Lord's Prayer, Newsweek would say that I didn't do it right."

The Vice President understood the President's mood. He was not surprised or hurt at the news that he would remain aloof from political combat.

From their talk together, the President and the Vice President stepped into the Cabinet room for the first meeting with the Cabinet after the news that Johnson would not run again. An account of this meeting will be published tomorrow.