



Pardners

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WASHINGTON.

Last week's Cabinet meeting, the first following President Johnson's announcement that he would not run again, was packed with emotion. Some Cabinet members were close to tears.

The President thanked the members of the Cabinet for serving him so loyally and faithfully. "Some of you were not my original appointees," he said, "but you have been just as faithful as if you were.

"The most sacred word down in Texas," he continued, "is pardner," and he pronounced it with a "d" instead of a "t." "My wife and I are pardners.

"When your pardner dies, you keep the business running. You pay off the farm hands and take care of their families. You don't throw the widow out of the house. You give half of what's left of the business to the widow and you keep the business running.

"I regarded this a Kennedy-Johnson pardnership," the President continued. "I lived up to my share of the obligation. I kept on all his people. I acted as if John F. Kennedy was sitting here watching us, and I think that if he is looking down on us, he would say that I carried out every one of his programs and did pretty well."

The President did not tell the Cabinet, though he told some friends later, that the Kennedy-Johnson partnership had worked well until Bobby broke it up.

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The President went on to tell the Cabinet that he was going to stick to his decision to retire and keep out of politics. He felt deeply about the unity of the nation and that the only way he could restore unity was to remain aloof from the political candidates.

Obviously, he had in mind Vice President Humphrey, for he went on to say: "I know what a hard job it is to be Vice President. I thought I was a pretty good Vice President, but Hubert Humphrey has been a better one. Hubert has been a triple A-1 Vice President.

"I hope that you will all remain with me to the end," the President continued. "But if anyone has to leave, I will understand."

Not one member of the Cabinet indicated any desire to bow out. There was a moment of silence, then Arthur Goldberg, former Secretary of Labor and now U. S. Ambassador to the UN replied:

"I am the senior member here in years, though not in service. I know that I speak for all when I tell you, Mr. President, what a great privilege it has been to serve you and how much we admire your courage. We know that your great achievements have not been entirely appreciated at this time, but we also know that history will show how great they have been."

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Betty Fulbright, wife of the scholarly Senator from Arkansas, says she was misquoted by her husband when he said that she had advised him: "Keep your mouth shut."

Actually, says Mrs. Fulbright, "I used an old Arkansas expression, 'Husha de mouth!'" She was referring to her husband's criticism of Johnson for not being more explicit about the area which was to be bombed in North Vietnam.

Before delivering his Sunday fireside chat the President had sent new Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford out to Fulbright's home to brief him on the speech, except for LBJ's decision not to run again. After it was delivered Fulbright telephoned the White House to congratulate Johnson.

Two days later, Fulbright took the Senate floor to blast the Johnson bombing pause as deceptive. Sen. Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) defended the President and later phoned the White House to report on the Senate repartee.

"What Bill Fulbright did was to answer for Ho Chi Minh even before Ho Chi Minh could answer for himself," the President told Mansfield over the telephone. Later Ho Chi Minh accepted LBJ's peace proposal.

It was at this point that Mrs. Fulbright told her husband: "Husha de mouth."