PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S NOTES ON CONVERSATION WITH
SENATOR RICHARD RUSSELL NOVEMBER 29, 1963 4:05 p.m.

President Johnson discussed the possibility of a Commission to study the assassination with Senator Russell. Senator Russell agreed that it would be a good idea.

President Johnson said: "...They're taking this Court of Inquiry in Texas and I think the results of that Court of Inquiry -- Hoover's report and all of them would go to this group and they would ... evaluate it for the general public. Now here's who I am going to try to get on it. ...going to try to get Allen Dulles...Senator Russell and Senator Cooper from the Senate...."

Senator Russell: "oh no--no--no--get somebody else...I haven't got time..."

President Johnson continued: "Jerry Ford...Hale Boggs....Cooper as a Republican and you're a good States Rights man...I think we might get John McCloy, Allen Dulles and maybe somebody from the Court..."

The President then asked Senator Russell to let Senators Fulbright and Hickenlooper come into his CIA Committee. Senator Russell agreed to invite them on a personal basis.

They then discussed appointments for the Committee and Senator Russell continued to protest that he could not serve on it.

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November 29, 1963
4:05 p. m.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND SEN. RICHARD RUSSELL (t)

LBJ .....
it concerns Hoover and Secretary of State and some others. We're trying to avoid all the House Committee, Hale Boggs and a bunch has got some things started over there and Jim Eastland and Ev Dirksen and a bunch has got them started in the Senate...and Bobby Kennedy has got his ideas.. Hoover has got his report and they want to have Dewey in ...so I've about concluded that I can get people pretty well together and I talked to the leadership on trying to have the three branches..have two Congressmen and two Senators..and maybe two or three outsiders..and maybesomebody from the Court...or at least some person of a judicial background..that are absolutely top-flight folks..on about a 7 men board to evaluate Hoover's report and it would be largely done by staff..but they can work on it.. and I want to get your reaction to it. I think it would be better than the Judiciary running one investigation, the House running another investigation ..and having four or five going opposite direction..

RR I agree with that..but I don't think that Hoover ought to make his report too soon..

LBJ He's ready with it now and he wants to get it off just as quick as he can

RR Oh..Oh.

LBJ And he'll probably have it out today..at most on Monday..

RR But he ain't going to publish the damned thing..is he?

LBJ He's going to turn it over to this group and there's some things about it I can talk about.

RR Yes, I understand that..but I think it'd mighty well if that thing was kept quie another week or ten days..I just do.

LBJ Well I think it would be turned over ..as they're taking this Court of Inquiry in Texas and I think the results of that Court of Inquiry..Hoover's report and all of them would go to this group and they would evaluate it and then maybe evaluate it for the general public. Now here's who I'm going to try to get on ...I don't know..I don't think I can get any member of the Court..but going t

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LBJ Contd try to...going to try to get Allen Dulles..going to try Senator Russell and Senator Cooper from the Senate...

RR Oh no..no..no...get somebody else, now..

LBJ Well, wait a minute, now..I want to try to get..

RR I haven't got time..

LBJ Jerry Ford. ...It is not going to take much time..but we've got to get states rights in there and somebody that the country has confidence in...and I'm going to have Boggs ...he has entered a resolution over there and I haven't talked to anybody about the membership but you...but I would think that Ford and Boggs would pretty good..they're both pretty young men..

RR Both solid citizens..

LBJ And I think that Cooper as a Republican and you're a good states rights man. I think we might get John McCloy, Allen Dulles and maybe somebody from the Court...

RR If you don't get somebody from the Supreme Court..I don't know him personally but this Judge Medina..that tried all those communists..is known all over the United States..I don't know what kind of man he is..he might not do ..but Judge Medina..I think he's on the Court of Appeals up in New York now

LBJ Who would be the best then if I didn't get the Chief?

RR I don't know..you wouldn't want Claude Harvey.

LBJ I understand none of the Court...no, I can't have a Texan.

RR No, that's why I say..that would disqualify him.

LBJ Hoover tells me all three of these shots were aimed for the President... and that this telescopic sight will bring this thing up where you could shoot a man as easy as you can get a man sitting talking to you.

RR I thought it was just a $7.50 thing...

LBJ Well, it was a $21.00 job...but he said he looked through the telescopic sight himself and he said, Mr. President, I could hit a man on that street

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LBJ going 20 miles an hour...as easy as I could hit you..talking to you. That's his language..

RR Well, really, Mr. President, unless you...really think it would be of some benefit...it would really save my life, I declare I don't....

LBJ I know you don't want to do anything but I want you to and I think that this is important enough and you'll see why and now the next thing...I know how yo feel about this CIA...but they're worried about having to go into a lot of thi stuff..with foreign relations committee...how much of a problem would it give you to just quietly let Fulbright and Hickenlooper come into your CIA Committee..

RR As long as it is confined to those two..it wouldn't be any problem at all.

LBJ That's all we make it now..

RR But there'd be changes made up there and I don't want some of those fellows ...some of them have got no business there...I've got a lot of bad talkers on that committee..

LBJ Why don't you do by invitation then?

RR And we've had a splendid record up to now...there's never been one thing

LBJ You've got a perfect one..yes sir..but they know that..they're worried abou they can't do it...

RR Yes, I've been very careful..I've even kept Margaret Chase Smith off that committee so..even though I've got a lot of faith in her...but I've kept her o because I just want to be sure that I knew what I was doing.

LBJ Couldn't you do it quietly by invitation? Just on a personal basis..and then that invitation could end anytime you wanted it to and I'd say that to them.

RR Yes, I'll be glad to do that. Invite them over there.

LBJ OK. When you coming back"?

RR Well, I just got down here..came in here Sunday afternoon.

LBJ I had a nice visit with your Governor and told him..

RR Yes, he told me you'd invited him up here..

LBJ I didn't invite him up here...

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RR Well, how did he happen to get ahold of you?

LBJ You told me that he was coming up here...so I came in back in my office ...I told you to tell him that I wanted to see him..

RR I know it..that's the reason I couldn't understand it..

LBJ Well...when I came back in my office...I told him that you said he was going to have lunch with you and to get ahold of him and tell him I wanted to see him before going back...hell..I hadn't invited him up here...never heard of it..

RR Oh..I saw where he was in the box there with Lady Bird...

LBJ Oh..well they..they heard that he was coming you see when you told me that afternoon that he was coming..and so they wanted some Southerner..some outstanding Southerner...

RR Well....it was a good thing.. I don't think you could have done better...but I just was surprised you didn't say something about it.

LBJ No..I didn't know at the time I'd seen you that he was invited. See Bird got up the list for the folks..and I guess we got...

RR Well, you coulda't have done better...he's an awful nice young fellow...

LBJ Well, I just told him how much I loved Georgia and he told the Press ..said he was damned happy he came from there...laughter..

RR Yes. Well he's a good boy.

LBJ Well, Georgia is a good state..that's what I like about it.

RR Yes, it is a good state...Mr. President..see if you can get someone else ...

LBJ Well, if I can, I will. But I'm not going ..this country has a lot of confidence in you and if I have it my way, you'd be in my place and I'd trade with you..

RR Well...no.no..that would never do.

LBJ The country would be in a hell of a lot better shape...it would too...

RR You're...going to run it the next nine years...I'd be dead in another 2 or 3 ;

LBJ You get your rest..I don't want to bother you anymore but I'm going to have

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LBJ Contd — to be calling you every once in awhile...

RR — Well, you know, I'm always available..

LBJ — OK ..all right..Goodbye . You think about anybody else, now ..besides Medina. What about that old man...died..that was on that Circuit Court down there..

RR — Oh, he would have been ideal..but he's dead. He was a magnificent man.. he would have been perfect.

LBJ — That fellow you've got on there now, though, he's not too good, is he?

RR — No. Tuttle? No.

LBJ — No...Eisenhower appointee ?

RR — Yes. He's a pretty good man, but...

LBJ — They tell me he gives them some problems..

RR — He's going to give them more problems..he's the kind of fellow thinks he's the last word...isn't there someone there...

LBJ — You know Prettyman?

RR — Yeah.

LBJ — What do you think about him?

RR — Pretty good man..he's getting a little old isn't he?

LBJ — Yeah..Yeah..I don't think he's known.

RR — Well, he's not but he don't have to be..he doesn't have to be..now you're go to let the Attorney General nominate someone, aren't you?

LBJ — No...

RR — Well, you going to have Hoover on there?

LBJ — No..it is his report.

RR — Oh, that's right...that's right..it wouldn't do..

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LBJ ...but he is agreeable to folks like Dulles.

RR Well Dulles is a good man...

LBJ McCloy

RR McCloy..good man ..I don't hold him in near as high regard as I do Dulles.. but he's all right..he's got a big reputation.....let me see..if I think of a judge in the next 30 or 40 minutes...I'll call you..but you can get plenty of them...

LBJ Thank you.

RR Some of these Circuit Court judges...is there somebody there in the District

LBJ What do you think about a Justice sitting on it?

RR I think..I don't know...I think it would be all right.

LBJ Why shouldn't you...how many..you don't have a President assassinated but every 50 years.

RR Well, they put them on the Pearl Harbor inquiry, you know..

LBJ I know...that's why he's against it now..

RR Afraid it might get into the Courts..

LBJ I guess so, I don't know.

RR That's probably the theory of it...that's probably the theory of it. I'm not very good on thinking about things like that..

LBJ Well, give me the arguments why they ought to.

RR Well, the only argument about it is that..of course...a matter of this magnitude...that the American people would feel reassured to have a membe of the highest Court..that's the only argument you've got..you have many more Circuit Court judges that are far abler than some of your Supreme Cou justices..but that is the argument..only argument you can make for it..if yo would have some top-flight Supreme Court justice...State Supreme Court Chi Justice..but they're not known all over the country..don't care how able they are..this thing in television and radio has narrowed the group of celebrities ....I don't know..you've got some smart boys there around you who can give

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RR
Contd you the name of some outstanding United States Circuit Court judge..

LBJ OK. You be thinking. Bye

RR Bye

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