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PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S NOTES ON CONVERSATION WITH
SPEAKER McCORMACK NOVEMBER 29, 1963 4:55 p.m.

President Johnson told Mr. McCormack that he had planned to have the following on the Presidential Commission: the Chief Justice, John McCloy, Allen Dulles, Richard Russell, Senator Cooper, Hale Boggs, and Congressman Ford.

Speaker McCormack approved of all of the men selected.

Speaker McCormack then asked the President to speak to Congressman Otto Passman who was in the office.

Congressman Passman: "Mr. President, how are you? God bless you and remember that I will cooperate in every way that I possibly can and any time that I can help...I shall do anything within my power...."

President Johnson and Congressman Passman then discussed the Foreign Aid bill.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND SPEAKER MCCORMACK

LBJ evaluate this report. It is not going to be like the Nuremberg trial ... or the railroad strike or anything like that. . . but this is. . . new Edgar Hoover thinks he'll be ready tomorrow . . . or maybe Monday. We think we ought to announce this thing as quickly as we can because Rusk is rather concerned about it and. . .

JMc You mean. . . announce the. . .

LBJ The commission. . . say they are going to evaluate the report.

JMc I sent you down. . . You haven't got it yet. . . a complete memorandum on the Pearl Harbor. . . so you'd have it. . . you know on the Executive Order and the other things that happened. I just sent it down in case you'd want to have as a sort of guidance background.

LBJ Now here is who I would think . . . who we think. . . ought to make pretty good one. . . I want to talk it to you and I don't want you to repeat to a human being cause I haven't talked to any of them. I've talked to Russell. I've talked to Dick Russell. Got to have some outstanding states rights man and Eastland was kind of the head of the resolution investigating it over there. . . better get him to call off his investigation. I thought we'd take the Chief Justice and J. Lee McCloy and Allen Dulles, Richard Russell, Sen. Cooper and considering Representative Boggs who had been talking about this stuff all the time. . .

JMc What Boggs?

LBJ Hale Boggs. . . and Congressman Ford.

JMc Hmmm-hmmm. Good man.

LBJ Can I get any better ones that you think of. I've talked to nobody but Russell about it. . . now I've got to be sure that the House and Senate don't mess with them and that I've got to have someone who can work with the Justice, the Administration and with Hoover and that has been interested in it. . . so it is kind of like the author of a resolution. I really, just between us, I don't want Eastland. . . so that's why I got Russell.

JMc On the Republican member, I'd have to consult with . . . the House. . . you know you consult with Halleck.

LBJ Well that's on your appointments up there. . . but this is going to be appointed by the President.

JMc Oh, you're going to appoint it.

LBJ Yes.

JMc Well, what do we do up here?

LBJ Well, you give me advice. I'm just asking you do you think there's anybody better that I could get?

JMc No. No.

LBJ Do you know of an abler or better. . . or more patriotic fellow than. . . a Republican that would suit this mission. . . if you were President, than Ford?

JMc No. He's top-flight man. And who would rise to the consciousness of responsibility, too . . .

LBJ And, Boggs. You'd feel all right, too about him?

JMc Yes... yes.

LBJ Anbody shown more interest in it.. ?

JMc He's a good man.. those are two good men.

LBJ All right... now what do you.. don't you think... see I just want to make a Mr. Rayburn out of you.. Dick Russell and John Cooper.

JMc Yes, Cooper.. Dick Russell, too. Of course Cooper is a strong man..

LBJ Now who doesn't much like McCloy?

JMc Let me see... of course you'd have Cooper and Russell, more or less from the South.

LBJ Well, Cooper is a border state... Russell would be the South. Boggs would be the south.

JMc You wouldn't have any.. really from the North?

LBJ Got McCloy.. get Dulles

JMc Yeah.. I mean on the legislative level?

LBJ No.. No... No. I have Cooper border state, Ford from Michigan and they consider that pretty North.. but I'd have the Chief from California and McCloy from New York, Dulles from New York..

JMc You're the one to make the decision..

LBJ Yes, but I'm.. I just want to get the best of them.. but I'm going to make it.. do you know anything about McCloy yourself?

JMc Not myself. No.

LBJ My impression is very good of him.

JMc I.. everything I've heard about him.. has been very favorable.. about the man personally.

LBJ Now I told the Chief that E. A. Starn had promised me in the Senate that he wouldn't go on.. that I'd talked to you about it in the House.. I don't want to appoint a commission if they're going to start a whole bunch of investigations.. so..

JMc Well as far as the House is concerned I'll do anything I can to stop investigations.

LBJ I know it. Well, I think we ought to. Some fellow will be testifying.. coming up from Dallas.. and I think Khrushchev planned this whole thing and he got our President assassinated.. then television saying that Assistant Chief said today that he believes Khrushchev did so and so... you can see what that'll lead us to right quick.

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JMc Who said that?

LBJ Nobody said it.. but if they do, you know.

JMc When are you going to make the appointments?

LBJ Just as quick as I can talk to them and get an Executive Order drafted.. so forth. I'd better get on with it.. I just thought I'd better talk to you before I did it, my friend. You think it is all right?

JMc The theory of the commission is absolutely correct... I know nothing on the legislative level.. you see the only thought was.. on the legislative level with Russell, Cooper and Boggs... three from the South..

LBJ No... Cooper is not a Southerner.. and Boggs is not much of a...

JMc No... I agree with you on that.

LBJ Beggs has been kind of authoring the resolution, you know. He's been wantin to investigate it over there.

JMc Who? Boggs?

LBJ Yes. He made a speech about it today.

JMc Well, he was just answering some questions.

LBJ Yes, but he's been getting..he's been on television three or four times about ..there ought to be a Congressional investigation.

JMc Well, I haven't heard of it..if I had, I'd spoken to him..toned him down..

LBJ But, Cooper is considered pretty liberal fellow, you know.

JMc There's no question about that

LBJ And Ford is from the North...and Ceoper is from a border state..and you've got two Southerners..but you've got two Northerners..that are civillians.. you see what I mean, to offset them.

JMc Yes, I'm not...I wasn't undertaking to argue with you...I wouldn't do that under any circums tances...

LBJ Well, I should want you to if you disagree with me...just tall me.

JMc But...you couldn't have better men...but I was just thinking of the geographical location on the legislative level and that is something...I just simply called to your conscious mind for you to consider..but you would have ... Cooper..Kentucky up north is considered South..I agree it is a border state...

LBJ Well you see from the public..I wouldn't have any Southerner..

JMc What's that?

LBJ There are three men that are appointed to represent the public and none of them are Southerners..

JMc No, that is trus. Listen, you go ahead..

LBJ Well, you take care of the House of Representatives for me.

JMc Well, how am I going to take care of them?

LBJ Well, just keep them from investigating..

JMc Well, oh that, I've been doing it..now listen, outside, I had Otto Pass in here doing some state work and I want to call him in and would like for you to say hello to him..

LBJ You betcha. I've got a pack them bastards waiting on me..since 4:45...but put him on..

JMc Mr. President, Here's Otto. I was having a conference with him when you called me and he's in the outer office.

LBJ Well that's fine. I'd like to say halle to him.

JMc Wait a minute, Mr. President.

Otto Mr. President, how are you? God bless you..and remember that I will cooperate in every way that I possibly can and anytime that I can help..

LBJ Well, I wished I could trade jobs with you..Otto..

Otto Well I know that you do..but remember that my prayers are with you and I shall do anything within my power...I'm not going to make it any harder than I have to..and I was in here conferring with our great Speaker a little while ago about foreign aid..it is not going to be an easy thing..but if and when..

LBJ

Otto, remember this.. remember this.. this is just between you and me.. I don't want you to repeat it to anyone.. but you've been my friend and one thing I've found out since I've been down here.. in my relations with 110 other nations.. about all I've got is foreign aid bill to deal with them with.. and we've got more damned problems than you ever saw. I just finished talking to the Chairman of the AEC and he said the only one knew this was Kennedy and I'm the only one that knows it now and when he walked out.. I wished I hadn't. known it..

Otto

I know what you mean..

LBJ

But.. you can.. we're spending over a hundred billion this year.. the Budget is being made and coming up the 15th and the only thing I've got is a little checkbook of 3-1/2 - 4 billion dollars.. just whatever you give me .. and you'll cut it some but you've already worked on it.. and that's the only thing I've got is 110 nations.. now give me a year and I'll try to sit down with you and take your recommendations and try to make the clean-up over there in any way that I can do.. I'm practical.. I can't do it the first month but .. cause they'd say that the South is destroying everything.. but I'll get my teeth into that and try to clean that agency up where it will smell better to you but please go home and say your prayers and say now.. I'm the banker and I can let Johnson have \$400 a month or I can let him have \$300 but I'm ... that's all I'm going to have.. in foreign aid. That is the only way I can deal with the world and whatever you cut it to.. it is going to cause me trouble cause Kennedy is not here and I'm new and when I have to cut them back.. they're going to say, well hell, last year they did this.. and this is what he did to me.. I'm going to do everything I humanly can but you do it too.

Otto

Could I say one thing? Before we get off the line, Mr. President?

LBJ

Yes sir.

Otto

And this will be worthwhile at the proper time. As I told our great Speaker here.. I think in 17 years I've asked one President to see me for 15 minutes .. I don't fool with people when they're busy. If and when you want to discuss this with me.. I'll come running with our beloved Speaker..

LBJ

Will do it. I want to that .. I'll tell you right now. If you want to do it with me.. we'll just do it and as soon as I can move in this place, we'll just sit down and me and you and John will talk about it.

Otto

Let me.. let me do it with my Speaker because he's always been so helpful to me but I want to say this before we get off the line and I think this will be something you'll be churning over because when I come, I'll be factual. Last year, I guess maybe I was jumped on by more people and criticized more by cutting foreign aid a billion dollars than any other time since I handled the bill... but ... they came back this year and said, yes, you took out a billion ... but you still gave us a half a billion dollars more than we need.. and we're going to lose most of it.. see these are some things I'll have to talk to you about.. and I told the Speaker, I said these people don't know what they want.. what they need.. they just are full of bull.. and they never pin it down.. but I will say this.. there's a half a billion dollars .. almost a half.. 578 million clean, unobligated funds that we're going to give most of it up.. I've talked to the Speaker and I have arranged to tell these people how to keep a half a billion dollars... of unobligated.... and at the proper time, when you want to talk

Otto
Cont'd to me about this, I'll come running and I will lean over backwards, Mr. President, to help you and my Speaker.

LBJ Thank you my friend, I'll be calling you.

Otto Thank you.

LBJ I appreciate it..if you want to come in..I want you to come and you just invite the Speaker or anybody else you want to come with you.

Otto When you are ready, Mr. President, cause you have a....let..when you are ready, you tell the Speaker..and I want him with us because he knows that my word is my bond..

LBJ God bless you. Thank you Otto.

Otto Bye