

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, February 26, 1964 WHD

This was one of those days when I had to decide quickly whether to make a trip to New York, and get my clothes fitted, the clothes that were my main standby all spring, or whether to just put it off until some indefinite time. So I went, leaving on a regular airline, United, about 11:30, walking into the Carlyle, and when I'm there I feel like something like an intruder in the boudoir of the fairy princess, it's so beautiful and elegant. , , But then I'm just passing through, too.

Ben Zuckerman and his fitter came up and carefully went over my coral suit and my green suit and Mr. Ferry came up and fitted my fur coat. We are going to shorten it. In the summertime, we are going to cut off enough to make a hat. And then we did all the measurements, to hopefully make a form for me.

Then Billie Marcus came over and joined us. She is on her way to Denmark, with Stanley, where they will stay about a month, readying the Danish fortnight for next September.

We had lunch in the room, Billie, Wendy and I, looking over the expanse of Central Park, all frozen in a fairyland of New York. And then, we left to drive to La Guardia and get back to the White House about six o'clock.

I was just in time for big news! The Tax Bill had been passed, completely, irrevocably, finally, passed - big step - victory number one! And the White House was being filled, the East Room, with all the equipment of TV and they were readying a press conference which was to take place

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at 6:30. So I fixed up a bit and went down with Lynda, and sat in the back row and watched the ceremonies. The table and microphone was right in front of the great urn of gorgeous flowers that I always think ought to be sitting in front of a great portrait by some Flemish painter of old. And there Lyndon had gathered all the people that had been so instrumental in working the Tax Bill - Senator Russell Long, who had piloted it on the floor of the Senate; George Smathers, Representative Wilbur Mills, without whom nothing financial gets done; Carl Albert; the Speaker; the Secretary of the Treasury, Dillon; in fact leaders of both parties and every committee, and every phase that had anything to do with the Tax Bill. I must say, it's pleasant, occasionally, to savor a moment of triumph - and this was one.

Lyndon's speech began Today, I have signed into law a eleven and a half billion dollar reduction in Federal Income taxes, the largest in history of the United States. It is the single, most important step we have taken to strengthen our economy since World War II.

Then he went on to say how the legislation was inspired and proposed by President Kennedy. It's been one year, one month and two days since President Kennedy's virgin appeal to get it passed - and I'd hate to put hour to hour all of the calls, the talks, the reading, the work, the effort, the late night hours, that Lyndon has put in during the last three months, to get it passed. And it did go, by the very happy

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majority of 74 to 19, with a generous Republican support. That is, in the Senate - I don't remember what the House vote was.

Lyndon's speech mainly tried to do two things. First, to try to explain to each person, how this would mean something to him, by putting an average of four or five dollars more a week into the pockets of most U.S. wage earners this year, beginning the following week. And then, secondly, by releasing millions of dollars into private economy from corporations that would otherwise be saving it up to pay their taxes, it will stimulate new expansion, and thereby encourage the growth and prosperity of the country.

One of his highest accolades was to Senator Byrd who had been staunchly against the bill from beginning to end, but had made it possible for the majority to work it's will, by letting it out of his committee where he could have bottled it up, for God'knows how long.

The line I like best in Lyndon's speech was No one can bury us or bluff us or beat us so long as our economy remains strong. It was a good moment for him, and I love to see him relish it. I hope he got all the joy out of it that he should.

Immediately after the signing was over, we were whisked off to Mrs. Kennedy's house, just Lyndon and I, where we met practically all the former members of the President's Cabinet, for what was a rather moving 45 minutes or so. This was supposed to be a surprise to Mrs. Kennedy, but there were refreshments on hand.

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Lyndon brought to Mrs. Kennedy ^g four of ^[the] historic pens which had been used in signing the Tax Bill; one for her, one for the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, and one each for Caroline and John-John. And the Cabinet had a gold tray, with coffee and cream and sugar service. The tray was engraved with the names of the entire Cabinet and also of President Kennedy's closest White House advisers.

Dean Rusk made the speech presenting the tray, and a very graceful one it was. It was a sort of a housewarming present and it was, of course, given in memory of the President.

Caroline was there with cute little stockings on, that disappeared somewhere up under her dress and she had a little friend, her own age, there with her and they were climbing around over the sofa, and I had a nice little talk with her. I told her how Lynda and Luci wanted to come with us, and she said, ... "why don't they?" I do think it would be a good idea if they did sometime.

John-John was there and he stomped all over the vast amount of tissue paper with which the gifts had been wrapped, while Dean Rusk was making his speech. He was also the official opener of the gifts.

As we emerged from the house, ^g there were many neighbors on the sidewalk, looking with great interest, and a lot of flashlight bulbs popping, and of course you were asked lots of questions. I quickly made my way to the car, Lyndon did stand long enough to say to the reporter

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something graceful about President Kennedy had worked so long and so hard on the Bill, and he had such faith in its integrity, and we were here to see Mrs. Kennedy and express our happiness at the fact that it was being signed, and he described the visit as very moving and very spiritual. I did note that none of the others that came out had anything at all to say. And that may have been the way that Mrs. Kennedy would have preferred them to act. But Lyndon was acting the way he is, and the way he would want the people to act about him.

As we drove off, he said... "Why don't we run by and have a drink with the Valentis[?]." So we did. Imagine having the President unexpectedly, when you have a four or five months old baby. Their place in Georgetown is very charming, very small. The baby came down and lay on Lyndon's lap and gurgled for a few minutes, and then went very quietly and pleasantly to bed. What a joy!

We had a drink and Lyndon said he just believed he would stay for supper! - so Mary Margaret said she could work it out very well indeed, and sure enough, we did stay and had some delicious steaks about an hour later. ^{Marianne} ~~Mary Ann~~ Means and a young man, ^{she is dating,} came in. She is somebody that Lyndon, and all men, ^{in fact,} have their eye on as considered an extremely attractive woman. So I guess I'll have to look her over harder! At any rate, her articles about Lyndon have all been very favorable, and that is, at least, pleasant.

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Summing it up, I can say I think this is the first time that
Lyndon has been on TV, that he felt alright about being on TV.
Probably because (he had a teleprompter,) he had a story to tell that had
some achievement in it, and it was something worth talking about.

The last thought I had before I dropped off to sleep, was
reading the inscription on the tray, that went something like this:
"In memory of three shining years together," and wondering what was
going on in the minds of the people assembled there... Rusk, Wirtz,
Dillon, Schlesinger, Sorensen, Bobby Kennedy - all of them.