

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, April 24, 1964 WHD

This will be one of the biggest days we'll ever live in this business. It began at 5:30 in the Conrad Hilton, with an early breakfast, and then departure for Meggs Field, and a chopper to South Bend, Indiana.

The first stop on the five state tour that would take us to Illinois, Indiana, across the Ohio to Pennsylvania, down into West Virginia, and finally, by late night, back to Washington.

As we rose above that great city on the lake, Chicago, in the freshness of early morning, 7 o'clock, it was magnificent ~~site~~ to see its steel plants giving forth vast plumes of smoke, some white, some grey-blue, some terracotta red. I'm sure this would mean something to steel men and they know what was going on in those furnaces below. To me, it was just a beautiful sight. There were huge ships plying their way across the lake below us, and I was reminded of what Mayor Daley said that Chicago was now the largest inland port in the United States. Five years ago it had been no port at all. But vision and daring planning had brought into bearing this child of the St. Lawrence waterways, and now this great ship was carrying out lard and wheat to Europe, and all over the world, and other ships were returning with small European-make cars, and I believe the Mayor said precision tools. What a sizeable achievement for the mind of man!

Our first stop was at South Bend, Indiana, where we arrived about 8:45. We landed on the grounds of Klein High School, and there we got mobbed by a crowd of about 15,000, the police said, who gave the police lines a bad time in their enthusiasm to get to Lyndon and shake his hand. This town has been

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very hard hit, because 8700 people were thrown out of work last Christmas eve, when Studebaker stopped production. What we had actually come to see, is the way it is fighting back. Here in Klein High School, there's a retraining program, fired by local initiative, but fed with Federal government help.

We saw three adult literacy classes, and what nerve it must take to go back to school, when you're 30 or 40 years old. But that's one of the reasons people let out of jobs, can't get other jobs.

We saw a computer class, very white-collar people, taking lessons in how to run office machinery. I asked one young woman why she was doing it and she said that with typing and shorthand, she knew she could always get a job, but if she learned how to work these machines, she would be capable of getting another job.

To my great delight we saw a class in practical nursing, and I told them that the world was waiting for their output, and so it is, as anybody would know who has tried to find a practical nurse for some elderly, ill member of their family.

And then we went into another room, where a group of retarded children sang a song.

Then we went out the back door into the crowd, and Lyndon climbed up something, and made a speech. It was really a surging crowd, kids climbing up on trees, or on the goalposts (it was an athletic field), anywhere they could.

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I saw the police carrying one lady who had fainted, out, through the crowd. I myself have found, that the best way to behave in such a situation, is to be very calm and walk quietly, smiling and shaking as many hands as possible, towards my destination.

Along on this trip with us, were Cabinet Members who have to do with the war on poverty, Secretary Wirtz, Secretary of Commerce Luther Hodges, and Under Secretary Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., and Secretary of HEW, Anthony Celebrezze. There were some six or more Congressmen along, from the Districts that we went into, and in and out the day, Governor Welch of Indiana, I believe, ^(Brent) ~~Byron~~ of West Virginia and ~~Beckett~~ of Kentucky.

From South Bend, we flew in the helicopter over the beautiful, rich, black land, with spring blooming - some of the prettiest farm land I have ever seen.

I asked Senator Vance Hartke how much that cost per acre, and his answer was something like this .. "It's almost never for sale, but it would be about \$1,000 per acre if you could buy it."

We landed, amazingly, at a town called Peru, and this in Indiana, at an Air Force base called Bunker Hill! The purpose was to leave the helicopter and to get on a fast ship, to take us to Pittsburgh, and there along the fence, were crowds and crowds of people, typical montage of the day.

Lyndon went one way, and I another. We shook a lot of hands, saw a lot of excited youngsters, and adult citizens, curious, admiring, hopeful, and some, I reckon, just out for the side show.

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And then on to Pittsburgh, where, at the airport, Mayor and Mrs. Barr and that old "alcalde," Governor Lawrence, met us. Hospitably enough, Senator Hugh Scott, Republican, and Senator Joe Clark, and David MacDonald, that big, handsome head of the United Steel Workers, some six Congressmen or so.

Our first stop was to address the National Convention of League of Women Voters, some 1300 delegates, and I think it had come as a last minute surprise to them, because Willard Wirtz was supposed to be the speaker and he had called up the night before and said "How about me just bringing the President along?"

Lyndon's talk was brief that his program of economic development was aimed at providing work for a half million young Americans, that were now facing a bleak future. That he expected the women of America to be the first to enlist in this war against poverty, because it was their children and the children of future generations that were going to live for better or for worse with the results of this war on poverty.

As the result of his usual prodding, I got up and said a few words, quite true - that we and all the country were in the debt of this organization for bringing the issues out before the people and trying to get everybody to go to the polls and use their right to vote. It does irritate me very much when I see a state like Texas, in some elections, using only a 50 or 60% of its voting potential.

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We left Willard Wirtz to be their main speaker, and then we departed.

And now began the phenomenon of the day, for me! We went by motorcade, to Pittsburgh's southside section, headed for David MacDonald hall, headquarters of a United Steelworker's Local, the home local, where Lyndon was going to address the union members. And along the way we saw some quarter of a million of people, so the Chief of Police estimated, this in an eastern industrial town, which I would not have thought would be Lyndon's stronghold, by reason of our place of origin, and his reputation for conservatism.

It began to dawn on me, and perhaps upon the nation, that Lyndon was more of a national drawing card, a national candidate, somebody who caught the imagination of the great mass of eastern industrial city, than we had realized.

Pretty soon he had transferred to an open convertible, and along the way, he had made three unscheduled stops, standing on the trunk of his car, and having, from somewhere, acquired a bull horn, blaring out in a few short sentences, his determination to fight the war on poverty - and unemployment - and to end discrimination.

Pretty soon he sent back for me and I squirmed my way among the crowd, climbed up on the back seat of the convertible with him, and made a mental note that flat heeled shoes were the best thing for any kind of campaigning.

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Inside the union hall, there was another new experience too. David MacDonald, in introducing Lyndon, pledged that ^{the} Union shall do all of the down-to-earth work that is possible, to elect you this November. ^{The first} really, ^{outspoken,} such assumption that he's running and pledge of support, that I can remember.

But looking at the faces of the union members themselves, was even more interesting to me, and I found myself, ^{curiously} at home, in making my little one minute talk to them, which included the line of Carl Sandberg's poetry about "...they make steel with men in Pittsburgh." It was an exciting atmosphere, the power this organization wielded in America, industrially, politically, what automation might hold for their future, who would be smart enough to handle it, and to turn its threat into ^{potential} good that it does hold, ^{for} more leisure, for more material wealth in this country. Most of all, ^I watched the faces, for the individual stories they contained.

There was one man who had been out of work, I think 16 weeks. He got up and talked very simply about his predicament. His wife and children, all dressed up, were in the front row. It's a good thing that all the power in the country doesn't run one way, that is, ^{that} there is somebody to speak his ^{peace} for him.

After the union hall, we went back to Allegheny Airport, feeling once more, the adrenalin in the blood of the vast crowds along the way, and after more speeches, and handshaking at the airport, enplaned for Huntington, West Virginia.

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There at last, about 2:30, we had some sandwiches for lunch. I had begun to wonder if the day was going to hold any lunch, and it had been a long, long time since that 6 a.m. breakfast.

Addressing the luncheon of the League of Women Voters hadn't meant a bite for us.

We stopped at Huntington, and after the usual airport ceremonies, helicoptered into Eastern Kentucky, to Inez. And here began a completely different picture. Can this be the same country as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania?

We flew over beautiful spring-green mountains, dotted with dogwood, the hillside pockmarked here and there by the mouth of a small mine... Swift, rocky little streams in every valley, and very indifferent dirt roads, ^{curling} their way along the mountainside.

We landed in a meadow, close to the community of Inez, and drove up the mountainside to the home of Tom Fletcher. Now, all the signs were home made, with crayon, on cardboard, probably a piece of a grocery box. School bands, with the school mates along side of them, that went something like this, "Mouth-of-Turkey School Welcomes You, Lyndon." I wonder if some of the newspaper women knew what mouth of turkey meant. I am sure it was a creek. All the names of the schools had ^{this} ~~this~~ delicious geographical names.

Going up the mountainside, the roadway led along winding Rock Castle Creek, ^{Crescent} ~~here~~ and there by a suspended foot bridge, homemade certainly, and leading to one or two houses, ^{nestled} against the mountainside, ^{on} the other side of the creek.

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This is the area where mining once was king. It's become a sick industry, nothing has really come along to replace it. And now, two or more generations have lived here, trapped in a sort of fate of stalemate and hopelessness.

We arrived at the Tom Fletcher's home and I asked Lyndon to please keep the newspaper people, the photographers, away as much as possible. This mustn't be a sideshow for these people.

But I found them [—] ~~at~~ the Tom Fletcher's [—] ~~at~~ their parents and eight children, lined up on the front porch of their three room, tarpaper house, composed, friendly, welcoming, rather gently dignified. Somehow I would have liked it better if they'd been sort of hostile and angry at this imposition upon their privacy.

Mr. Fletcher, so Mrs. Fletcher told me, had been in mining work for many years, had become unemployed, had gone into being a sawmill worker, worked only sometimes as little as three or four days a month; last year had earned \$400.

Two of their children had dropped out of school; that was the worst part. She was a thin, tired looking woman, deep down acceptant, not expecting much of life, but there was another lady there, whose name I don't know, ^gbut I wish I did. She had just ~~walked~~ up from a little store in the valley right below. She runs the store, she told me, and makes a living for her four children. Her husband is ill and hasn't been able to work for years. She had lots more get-up-and-get, ^gand was articulate. I asked her what that

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area needed most. She said, and she was quick to say, "Jobs - we need something to come in here." And then she said, "Next, we need a hospital, the closest hospital is over the mountain, in Louisa, and if anybody gets sick they have to go to Louisa, and more than likely they don't find hospital beds when they get there."

I remembered that ~~the~~ Louisa was the home town of Fred Vinson, who went into the great outside world, to become almost everything in government, and finally the Chief Justice of the United States. So you can't say that this part of the country doesn't raise strong men.

This lady told me that as soon as the children got old enough, they left, they went to Columbus, or Cincinnati, or somewhere looking for a job. She said, "Don't nothing ever happen anymore in Martin County."

Later, someone told me that Martin County had the lowest per capita income in Kentucky, and I believe in the United States.

As the New York Herald Tribune reported it, and I didn't really know they would understand this word, they said, "The President hunkered down on the porch with Mr. Fletcher, for a talk." Which is exactly what they did. They talked about keeping the children in school, and how he made out to live on \$400 a year with eight children. It goes something like this, "Their living is mostly on commodities." That over-all word covers surplus food which is passed out on a certain day of the week, or maybe it's the month by the Federal government, in little towns throughout this area. I expect it's a very

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limited diet, and enough years of that could be the reason why Mrs. Fletcher looks so faded and dissipated, and why there were no steps up to the front porch of the house. Hoisting myself up onto the front porch, I had wondered why somebody didn't at least go down and saw off a stump and put it down for a step. And then I realized - ^{How} could I know what it was like to try to raise eight children on \$400 a year?

When we said goodbye, the lady who was the store owner, ^{put} her arms around me and embraced me and said, "God Bless you." Well, that too, is the sort of people they are. And for the children, at least, there must be something or some sort of a way out.

We took a 10 minute helicopter ride to Paintsville, and there we visited the Mayo State Vocational School, ^{and} I walked into several of the classes. We saw an automobile shop, a lathe shop, a hairdresser class - and there, all the women in the party, Frances Lewin, ^{Helen} Thomas and I, all said we wished we could stop and be customers. Somewhere in the wide world, everyone of these girls can get a job. And how smart they are to be starting in on something, a skill, any skill, that they can exchange for a paycheck.

Then we saw a class in typing, very much to Lyndon's delight, and it was easy for me to make little three or four minute speeches to these people along the way, because they are the sort of folks I can identify with, and I'm glad they have enough get-up-and-get, ^{to} try to find their way out of the morass of unemployment and despair.

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Next we went to the Court House, that traditional place for talking to the folks. Lyndon made a speech, and in the course of it, ^{he} introduced Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz. Now it happened that poor Mr. Wirtz, not having had any lunch, had gone across the street, to snatch a quick ice cream cone, ^{with} Anthony Celebrezze, so no Willard Wirtz arose to receive a bow. Then Lyndon went on to say... "And we have with us, in the crowd somewhere, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Mr. Anthony Celebrezze. Will he stand up please?" Both of these gentlemen, at the first call, started sprinting from the ice cream parlor, back toward the Court House, and Willard Wirtz arrived just in time to receive his bow as Anthony Celebrezze.

It was after six when we left Paintsville, for Huntington. Once more by helicopter, above the green mountains. And there was the big plane waiting for us, and there Lyndon had a conference with the Governors of the Appalachian states. Welch of Indiana, ^{Breaht} ~~Beckett~~ of Kentucky, ^{Bair} ~~Byron~~ of West Virginia were there, and the representative of William Scranton of Pennsylvania, to discuss the proposed Appalachian recovery plan, which would cost the Federal Government some three billion over a five year period. The talk was supposed to last about 30 minutes. Actually it lasted closer to two hours. During it I went aboard the airplane, was interview by Helen Thomas and Frances ^{ine} ~~Lewen~~, only that is hardly any longer my way of thinking of them. They are just my traveling companions.

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And then Lyndon made a short, televised speech, and I, just a word of

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farewell. The gist of the speech was what he had hammered away all day -- that poverty and unemployment are unnecessary evils in modern America, and he means to do something about them.

I guess the whole purpose of this trip, if I may presume to summarize it, is to draw back the curtain to the American nation, on how some 20% of its people do live; to get the people thereby, to apply the prod to the Congress so that the poverty bill can pass, so that we can get a foot in the door.

All the day long Lyndon had said, "We are going to have a Civil Rights Bill if it takes all summer, and we don't want any Democratic label on it, we want it to be an American bill - the war on poverty is not a Democratic job or a Republican job - we must do it together." It was a great day and I was real proud of him.

And ^twhen we finally left, oh, about 9 o'clock or perhaps 9:30, for Washington, with him wandering around among the reporters on the plane, and me talking to Bill Wirtz and Secretary Celebrezze, - ~~We~~ dropped off poor dear Secretary Hodges a little earlier in the day because he was flying on to Alabama, to make a major speech at the University at night (terrific days preparation for a major speech), most of us were right ready for our dinner, to sit down but I had a hard time getting Lyndon/long enough to have his, in the last 15 minutes before we arrived at the White House.

We arrived unutterably weary, but with a great feeling that it had been a great day - a successful day, one of accomplishment.