

1965

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14

A beginning and an ending. A tentative sort of beginning this morning when smooth, attractive Sargent Shriver, and an Assistant, Holmes Brown and Dr. Eric Goldman, [REDACTED] met with Liz and me in the Queen's Room to give me a detailed analysis of Operation Head Start, an attempt to give to underprivileged children -- some one hundred thousand of them -- next summer, those in the five and six year old brackets just ready to enter the First Grade in September, a head start with some professional help and a lot of volunteer help, including a medical examination and a course of about eight weeks which provides one good free meal and the simplest rudimentary teaching in manners, such as how you would find your locker and hang up your coat and your galoshes, if you had any, when you went to school, to increasing your vocabulary <sup>with</sup> ~~to just~~ a few essential words. Sometimes they come to school from the slums or impoverished homes where one or neither parent is present most of the time -- just simply unable to use words because they don't hear them at home, and they never have seen a notebook or a pencil. So this is in reality Operation Head Start at a period when psychologists tell us most is being done to make the human being that will last for another seventy or so years.

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Then they talked about Operation VISTA which amounts to a domestic Peace Corps. The whole idea is which shall I interest myself in and how much, with my personal desire to work on Lyndon's Library, to take Spanish, to spend happy times with the children, and a very real interest in the beautification program. This is considerable competition. I know I won't do much, but I can identify myself with Lyndon's poverty program and maybe focus public attention in a favorable way on some aspects of it.

Sargent Shriver is a superb salesman. His great PR must have been one ingredient of the success of the Peace Corps. I guess he reassured businessmen, captivated women, and the crusading adventuresome streak in the American people did the rest.

After about an hour and a half session and even getting acquainted with the program is one of the most worthwhile things that happens to me in this job, I had a beauty parlor session, and then desk work and preparation for going to Texas which has finally been determined for late this afternoon. Buzz had made the suggestion that we have a little "farewell" for Martha and Luther Hodges who won't even be here at the Inaugural because they are returning to North Carolina before the 20th and this is the ending I spoke of. I immediately picked it up and said, "let me be in on it and let's let all of the wives be in on it." If we could just get together for one drink, and Buzz, and I expect Bess, took it from

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there and it developed into a delightful party about 7:15 upstairs in the Oval Room. <sup>#</sup> The house was bustling that evening. First Lyndon had a clutch of Ambassadors -- some three or four -- in the Blue Room and then downstairs in the library before a fire, a small group, a group of some twenty men, Arthur Krim, Sidney Solomon, Abraham Feinberg, George Killion, Senator Magnuson. So he was shuttling back and forth and arrived up in the Yellow Room with the first guests -- the surprise party for the Hodges and it was a surprise, just the sort of party I like best. Only the Cabinet Members and their wives, and all of them were there, except Stu Udall, and Lee <sup>was there</sup> ~~was there~~, and about ten of the top staff members and their wives. Drinks and hors d' oeuvres and good talks and happy reminiscences and sad goodbyes and this is one time I wanted to make the speech.

Once on our train trip, Luther had told me the story of his life in brief from cotton row to mill hand at an early age and then on up the ladder to head of the mill and Vice President of Marshall Field and then at about 51 or so he had made enough money to make the deliberate decision to ~~go~~ give the rest of his life to public service. He was Lieutenant Governor and then Governor of North Carolina and I think one of the reasons why North Carolina is a beacon light to the South and to the Nation is Luther Hodges, with its accent on education, the bringing of industrialization, the raise in income that

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<sup>I</sup>~~is~~ meant for the average citizen, and the research triangle.

I said all this in a few words and I thought I did it all right. I sincerely hope the country raises up more Luther and Martha Hodges and I ended "rest easy and be happy but don't think you might not be called on again." We gave them a silver tray -- all the Cabinet together -- everybody will pay his part, and on it were the words "To Martha and Luther Hodges for a job well done and a Nation well served, in admiring respect from your colleagues and friends," and the signature of all the Cabinet Members and I personally doffed my hat to Bess for getting it done so quickly. From idea to gift-wrapped tray there must not have been more than six hours! It is a good feeling to be reasonably satisfied with your own performance for once and I was. I was with people I loved and for once reasonably content with my own performance.

And then, close to nine, still in my pretty borcade theater suit and fur coat, we got in a helicopter, grabbing him in passing and left for Texas. Another one of Eric Goldman's good ideas had come to fruition, i. e., first he had suggested that we ask the Medal of Freedom winners to the Inaugural and then he had asked that a group of Arts and Letters people, architects, singers, writers, painters, dramatists, actors, dancers, poets, conductors, composers should be invited as guests of President Johnson, ranging from Jean Kerr, Harper Lee, and Ann Bancroft to Samuel Barber and George

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Balanchine and Leonard Bernstein and Bruce Catton. It adds a certain fillip and a luster to the Inaugural and I am delighted.

Tomorrow we will have a visit from the Pearsons of Canada, the smallest one we have ever had, with just the Secretary of State of each of our countries at the ranch and then three days to hammer out the Inaugural speech, rest in the sun and get all of those phone calls about who hasn't got what tickets.