

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, February 11, 1965

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Began ~~with~~ slow^y with work at my desk, lunch on a tray, a walk around the grounds, and then the big event of the day. Tea for the committee on beautification.

How many things are launched under the name of a tea. I met everyone in the Blue Room. Old friends - Mary Lasker; and Libby Rowe, chairman of the National Planning Commission; and ^{Mr.} Milo Perkins, Stuart Udall, the real captain of this project; City Planner Victor Gruen; and ^{Mr.} Master architect, Nathaniel Owings, father of the Pennsylvania Avenue plan; Walter Washington, head of Public Housing here; Mr. Commissioner Walter Tobriner; Charles Horsky, the White House advisor for National Capitol Affairs; ^{Barney} Bouton, he used to be head of GSA, and has now gone on to be head of the National Organization of Home Builders. ^A man who must have been a surprise to some of those sitting there, Adam Rumonshoski, Director of Marketing for the American Petroleum Institute. What are there more of than filling stations², ^{And} if each of them, or many of them, should adopt even the idea of neatness, what a boon it would be for the city, and it would be great, ^{if} they had a minimum of landscaping and some excellence in design. And Bill Rogers, President of the Federal City Counsel. He used to be President Eisenhower's Attorney General. Katie Louchheim, no meeting would be complete without her. ^{Chayer} Pretty and bright Tony Chez; Admiral Neil Phillips, President of the Committee of 100 for the Federal City.

What a lot of organizations there are already working on this. Mrs. Kitty ^{Capital} Haines, President of the National/Garden Club League, and friend of Buford

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Ellington; and Bill Waldron, Chairman of the Fine Arts Commission, so friendly and likeable. And that number one conservationist, Laurence^a Rockefeller.

Fortified with tea, we went into the Red Room, and Stuart and I sat on the couch, with everybody else in a circle around us, and I began, alas, by reading (and herein lies one of my great dissatisfactions with myself) the statement that I had in my hand. Fortunately, the first part, ^{was} reading a British diplomat's account, back in 1913, of what Washington looked like; ^{it} had just come out in the paper the other day; so, hopefully, it didn't seem too awkward to be reading.

"Your admirable river, the Potomac, is quite as beautiful," said the diplomat, "as that which adjoins any of the capital cities of Europe, except, of course, Constantinople, with its ^{Bosphorus} ~~phosphorus~~. No European city has so noble a cataract as the great falls. You have such a chance for building ^{up} a superb capitol, that it would be an act of ingratitude to Providence and to history, and to the men who plan the city, if you did not use the advantages that you here enjoy." He ended with the prediction, "Someday the people are going to set the true values on these things."

Then I went on to say that "I think I have here in front of me today, you, who set the true value on these things, and to talk about what we might do to implement, to supplement, and to be a catalyst for action." I told them a bit

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about my mail and read the wire from the Vice-Mayor of Norfolk. They are going to send us 500 azalea bushes for our plans, because Luci is their azalea queen this year.

And there was a letter from Secretary Freeman that told me that there was available, ^{out} of the Department of Agriculture's inventory of shrubs, quite a few hundreds of azaleas, magnolias, rhododendron.

I talked about some specific things, big and little, that we could do - make a show case of beauty on the Mall, ^{that} would be used by the American people, ^{instead} of just looked at. Take the small triangles and squares with, which Washington abounds, and that now are quite barren except for a dispirited sprig of grass, and maybe one tottering ^{branch} ~~branch~~, and put shrubs and flowers in some of them, through the volunteer help of neighborhood associations or business firms (it would take some cutting of red tape to do that), and perhaps have a volunteer committee of landscape architects to draw up plans, so that there would be continuity and good taste and wise choice of plants.

And then I turned it over to Stuart Udall, who began to elicit from all the members, ^{their} suggestions. It was about a B plus meeting; lively interest, and many good suggestions.

^{1 7 May}
Bill Waldron's was that we adopt New York Avenue as well as the Mall. It ended with the appointment of small committees by Stuart Udall, to come back with suggestions, in their separate fields, as to how to proceed. Hopefully, we'll have another meeting in three weeks, get down to the

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suggestions, and I hope sometime in March, planting done.

Of course, the real risk we run, ^{is} just bogging down in conversations and committee meetings.

A little past six we adjourned, went out into the marble foyer, where there were set up huge charts, maps of the city, in front of which groups of us had pictures made, pointing out the Mall, or the Potomac, or other target areas.

And then, I rushed upstairs, about 6:20, and the butlers and I were going to be equally busy, getting ready for the 6:30 meeting, the second Congressional reception.

This time, ^{we} met them in the East Room, and then went into the Green Room to have our pictures made. They were still tidying up in the Red Room from the committee meeting 30 minutes before!

I had taken a look at the guest list earlier in the day, and ^{appalled} ~~amazed~~ to see what the Lincoln weekend does to such a reception, because there were as many regrets as there were acceptances. The only thing to be said for it, is that at least we invite them, ^{to} a small party at the White House! This will, no doubt, be the smallest party among the Congressional receptions.

On the list I had found some old friends - Helen Mahon; Lindy Boggs, I had called and asked them, ^{if} the briefing continued after the movie was over, would they be good enough to tell an anecdote about the first time, ^{the} most memorable time, ^{the} most amusing time, ^{they} had spent at the White House.

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We'd taken a few lessons from the first reception, to warm this one up a bit. In my invitation to the ladies, to come down to watch the movie, I made it very clear that if anyone had not seen the second floor, they were most welcome to do so. Homer Gruenther was standing by to conduct them, and they could join us in the movie, whenever they finished. Several chose to do this.

Then, when the movie ended, we got some good audience participation ~~for~~ when Helen and Lindy told their stories, and I was really sorry that I had just gotten the word that the briefing was over and the men waiting, because everybody likes to tell their own story. But I did give time for one more story, this being Ruth Burleson's tale of their first trip to the White House - Omar, in his college tux, thinking it was going to split any minute in strategic places, and she was a wonderful example to all of us, about what a difference it makes, even in telling a simple story, if you know how to speak, have presence, good diction, a vein of humor.

Then upstairs to join the men in the State Dining Room. Our old friends, the Paul Jones from the 81st Club were there; the Harold Johnsons from California; old timers Claude and Mildred Pepper; the Harley Staggers. ^{TP} In the middle of it, Lyndon was suddenly gone, and returned about 30 minutes later, having made an unexpected trip over to the State Department, where Virginia Rusk, with George Ball standing in for the Secretary, was having a reception for Diplomats. He can touch more bases, more quickly, than

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nearly anyone I know.

About 9 o'clock we went upstairs, Lyndon taking with him the Mahons and the Humphreys, who are in jeopardy for 10 nights along with us. I brought the Watsons with me a few minutes later; and ^{the} Jerry Josephs, and Fred Gates, special friends of Hubert's, joined us for a drink. And then Muriel and Jerry departed on a ladies trip to New York, shopping and ballet. Hubert's leaving tomorrow to shoot quail, I think, in South Carolina. He enjoys life more than nearly anyone I know.

The rest of us sat down to dinner about 10, everybody congratulating George Mahon on the swiftness with which his committee is handling the business. He had just played 18 holes of golf. He is a Texan who has grown with the years, in power, in attractiveness, and ^w good, solid information.

Humphrey said that the Cabinet meeting was the most tingling experience. While Lyndon and Hubert were talking, I was rather startled to hear him say something that I heard so often, but did not really expect to come out of his mouth in front of anyone else. "I'm not temperamentally equipped to be Commander -in-Chief," he said. They were talking about the crisis in Viet-Nam, and the long nights with phone calls about planes going out and casualties, the necessity of giving orders, that would produce, God knows what cataclysmic results. He said, "I'm too sentimental to give the orders."

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Somehow, I could not wish him not to hurt when he gives the orders.
who

Buford Ellington/is going to take the job as head of the Office of
Emergency Management, joined us about 10 o'clock. It will be wonderful
to have him here in Washington, to lean on him anyways.

Everybody was gone a little past eleven. It had been a useful, pleasant
evening.

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