

The President (A)
to Ray Bliss (B)

August 23, 1967

10:30a

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- A We're trying to do what we can to insure fair and free elections in VietNam. And we're thinking of asking twelve or fifteen of our most prominent people from various worlds -- the labor field, the newspaper field, etc....we're asking Gullander and the Chamber of Commerce fellow, and we'll have a labor fellow. I've asked John Knight of the Akron paper and Rhodes, the governor, and Gene Patterson from the Atlanta paper from the South. I will try to get a representative of labor and the veterans organizations, and the VFW, and send them out in my plane to spend the week. I wanted to ask you and Bailey -- if I could get both of you. I don't think it would be good to have the Democratic Man and now the Republican man. You don't have to take any position, and you can say what you please when you get back. The main point of the trip is that this government wants to have a fair and free election. We found in other places -- the Dominican Republic -- where we sent strongly recognized citizens, that it did a good deal -- sort of like the sheriff standing by the peach barn -- and we didn't try to steal any peaches. We thought that the most respected people in the parties would be the Chairmen -- but again, we would not want one without the other. We have John Knight....
- B Did he agree to go?
- A Yes, and we need to start shots -- and planning the thing and announcing it. We will have the head of the Mayors' Council -- a Democrat and a Republican -- we will have the head of the Governors Conference -- governors and mayors and particularly leaders of labor, business, veterans, and newspapers -- and heads of public associations, and heads of the leading television associations. General Westmoreland and Ambassador Bunker will take them to various areas and let them observe the countryside and let them see how they go about it. We think that their presence would have a good effect.
- B Let me ask you this. I have a national Committee meeting the week after Labor Day -- when would we return?
- A September 5.
- B Get back the 5th?

A The 5th or 6th.

B All right -- Ev called me.

A Marvin Watson was talking to him on some other thing and told him about it. We didn't want to ask one without asking the other.

B Sure, I understand that. I have two or three commitments and couldn't know until tonight sometime. Could I let you know some time tonight?

A Well, that will make me wait another day to announce, and I've got trouble with leaks. Rhodes is already announcing it.

B Well, I'm glad Knight is going. My wife told me she saw a bad article about the thing in the Journal.

A Everybody is on his own. We just appeal to them as good Americans to do what their good judgment dictates. We want to be sure that we have everybody's viewpoint represented. I have confidence in your judgement, and you can say whatever you please.

B I have problems relating to Chairmen of the Arrangements Committee. It is important to get somebody selected before I leave. I've got that National Committee meeting when I get back.

A Well, what would you think of this-- I might announce the other group and then later -- John Bailey says he would drop anything and go if we wanted him -- I just might announce the rest.

B What time do you want to make the announcement?

A If we can't make the 11:00 briefing, then the 3:00 one.

B Could you give me until 3:00 -- I'll let you know by 3:00p whether I have a problem or don't have a problem.

A All right -- don't say anything about it until then.

B Who do I call?

A Marvin Watson at the White House - my appointments secretary.

B All right -- I'll call Mr. Watson before 3:00p.

A Thank you, Ray.

B Thank you very much, Mr. President.

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