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The text from page 4, paragraph 1, through page 5, paragraph 3, is not included on the recording.

DATE: 3/13/68

TIME: 5:00 PM

CALLER: Richard Daley

Pages of Transcript: 7 pages

Barbara Cline  
Archivist

THE PRESIDENT (A)

returning Mayor Richard Daley's call (B)

5:00p, March 13, 1968

A I'm sorry I missed you. I was in a Cabinet meeting, and had Beebe, and Rusk explaining on his testimony, and then I had Clifford tell them about what we were trying to do on this problem, and when I got out, I called and they said you were out, and they they said you were in your car, and I said I wanted to take time when it's a good time for him and he can sit back in his rocking chair.

B Well, I wanted to thank you very much for the appointment of Governor Kerner as federal judge.

A I got a nice letter from him today. It was one of the most appreciative I have received.

B He's a very decent fellow. What about the Present situation? Let me ask you. Can you in any way entertain that idea of a appointing a Committee? I tell you why.... Kennedy called me, and he says a lot of people are pushing him on this thing of entering into the California primary. He doesn't want to do it if we can get some way of talking about, or some kind of a vehicle of an analysis or a review of this whole Vietnam thing. He says he's not opposed to the President. He doesn't want to be opposed. All of these other people are running around, but he does think that if some sort of a committee could be set up by you to handle or to review the whole situation and make recommendations to the President that it would be a great thing for you as well as a great thing for everyone. It would give him. It will give him..as he tells me..I don't know how accurate he will be, because I've been telling him right along, now all you're going to do is to try to defeat a Democratic President and you'll never be the President in this direction. And he said he doesn't want to do this. After this thing yesterday, I said, well the only thing about yesterday is that no one wants war. Everyone is opposed to war and naturally when a fellow goes running around talking about peace, he's got the women, he's got the young people, he's got everyone in his corner. He said this was true, but his people don't feel that he can pass up this California primary if the situation just as is...if there is something or some vehicle of this committee he's talking about of the top people in the country...not to take any power away from the Cabinet or the officials, but just to make an analysis and review.

Probably, they'd come up with the same things that you are doing -- or with something else. But it would be some way of taking care of this opposition, he thinks. And you'd have on it your own people and your opposition. And it would be a masterstroke, I think, if you would put Kennedy on and McCarthy and let people know that this guy is not worrying about what he's trying to do... all he's trying to do is find the answer. Put the candidate for the Republican Party one.. the leadership of the Republican Party in the Senate and in the House, Mansfield, and anyone else, and then you put enough college people on, and enough of your own people, and labor people, and have just a citizens cross section of country... not to take any power away from the President, but just to analyze and review the entire situation as to where we are and to what we are going to do and what they recommend the President should do, and maybe they will recommend nothing else but what you are doing now. But you would have another sort of an agency, that they wouldn't be saying, that Johnson is the one that does this, Johnson is the one that does that. And to me it has some sense. And not only that, but it might catch them entirely off their guard because they figure you won't do it, and for a fellow that is President, to say to someone who is totally in opposition to him, come on... come on in, I want to have you serve on this Committee, and you tell the American people, and you tell us what you think we should do.. in this very critical and serious situation.

A

Dick, after you talked to me I thought about that and talked to some of my people. And I made an appointment -- coincidentally -- yesterday at 1:30p. I had Teddy in and explored at great length his views on Vietnam with his staff. He had a Harvard man with him. Then I had Reischauer in with about seven of them.. he was the Ambassador. And yesterday at 1:30 I had Ted Sorensen who was Kennedy's closest man, I believe... the closest to Kennedy in the academic field and in the literary field, and in the really foreign policy field.. and he has been doing a good deal of speaking and counseling a good bit with Bobby.. very close to him, and they are always together. He came in yesterday. We spent about an hour and a half together. I told him that I was asking what he would do... what his recommendations. I talked to him a little about a committee.. he didn't know

that I had had one... I pointed out that I had had them in at least three or four times... at intervals of every two or three months. I had Doug Dillon on it who was Kennedy's Secretary of Treasury, but was on the Security Council, And I had Max Taylor who was Kennedy's chief of staff. And I had Mac Bundy who was Kennedy's counselor and advisor here, and I had Acheson and Clifford that he worked very closely with. I pointed out that they had come up with the San Antonio formula and the last peace offer we'd made... but we'd just had it turned down... and they said... well, I had them write it up, and they all agreed unanimously... Omar Bradley, and I went for Ridgeway from the other side. Ridgeway came in and had lunch with us. They all concluded that there was no alternative really better than this one. I told him though that Drew Pearson was very upset... one of the columnists... and he was quitting us tomorrow... and others were quitting us without getting any solution. I had heard about McCarthy several months ago, and I called him down here and had gone into all of it, and he had no solution. I asked Ted if he would consider serving on a committee, and what he thought about that. He said he rather thought a committee... a study... a task force to look into our Asia policy... not just with Vietnam, but with Thailand and with Laos and with Burma and even Indonesia, but would certainly cover Vietnam... but would border just a little bit more. I asked him who he would suggest be on it. He said he would like to think about that but would write me about it and go back and study it. He said that Bobby was being pushed on all sides. That he was very much against his doing it, but he didn't know what would happen. He thought that Dick Goodwin and others were shoving him. He thought it would be a tragic mistake to the late President's memory, and to the country, and to me, and to his party, but he thought that one of two things ought to happen... that I ought to ask for Rusk's resignation... that this would satisfy Bobby, or that he would give some thought to this Committee. I didn't tell him that you had suggested the Committee... I didn't want to be quoting you. But he said he would and he would talk to Bobby and he would get back to me. That was about... he left here about 3:30 yesterday. Bobby has put out a statement this morning that he was reassessing it, and he had Unruh put out one in California saying that they felt like he ought to run and they were going to urge him to put his name on the ticket. They

asked us for comment, and we told them we had nothing to say. I haven't called Sorensen, I hope I hear from him tomorrow. He said the only two he could think of besides himself to serve on a committee that would appeal, he thought, to the country, would be Bundy of the Ford Foundation, and perhaps Reischauer, a professor at Harvard who has been recommending that we get out. Bundy has not recommended we get out, but has recommended that we not accelerate. Westmoreland is asking for substantial troops in the emergency. We have told him that we have a limited number that we can supply and that will run in the neighborhood of 30-40,000 and that we will send those as soon as we can call them up. We will call up the reserves... we have a 12 division reserve and we're down to 6. We have to call up the reserves so that we won't just be sitting here without anything. We will not make a decision on what we do until Clifford can see if there is a better way. This pleased him because he had heard higher figures. I told him we would be sending probably 30-40,000. That's where we left it. I asked him to give me his suggestions. I thought he would go and ask Bobby, and if it wasn't too objectionable, then I would go and ask Rusk and we could see if we could set it up.

B It would be a master political stroke to set up this Committee with Rockefeller, and Nixon, and McCarthy, and Kennedy and Reagan if you wanted him, but put enough of your fellows on it to control it... a committee made up of political leaders throughout the country to advise me and analyze and review the entire Asian situation and make recommendations to the President of the United States. This committee would be called in the interest of the Unity of the Country and in the interest of getting the best minds to work. It would be a great stroke and no one would ever expect it.

A Would you put those individuals on it?

B Sure, and I wouldn't even ask them. I would appoint them and announce it to the press that this Committee is being appointed to review the entire policy in Asia. I can't think they would refuse to serve. They shoot off all the time, but never come up with a solution. This way you would have them in the bucket by saying that in the unit of our country I am asking these outstanding people to serve on this

Committee. Put all the ones who are running with criticism on the committee, and put the others on to balance it and it will be tremendous. All of them in one meeting -- and one recommendation.

A Would you put Nixon on?

B Sure -- Nixon, Rockefeller, Kennedy, McCarthy, and then get your own fellows on it... a university president.. and others. This would be done with a wonderful statement from you.. a committee made up of political leaders all of the country.

A Let me call Ted and see if he will give me some names.

B You take them all out of the box, and I would put all those candidates on. In addition to what he would give you.

A You don't think they'd just charge that as being a political trick?

B How can they charge you with a political trick, with your statement and everything. I don't think that politics should enter into this... American policy in Asia, and our international question. Go back and remember the old agreement that was made under Roosevelt and Vandenberg and all those fellows in which there was complete unanimity of the party when it affected international affairs and questions beyond the water line. Remember that policy that said we should settle our own disputes.

A What would you do about Fulbright?

B I'd put Fulbright on. No one would ever expect you to. And then find out what suggestions he would come up with. and What recommendations he would have.

A He spent three hours with me... he didn't tell them that... before the hearings. He came down the other night and spent from 6 till 9:30p ... about five of the members... and I asked him for his solution, and he said, just pull out and bring all of them home tomorrow.



B This could be his solution... then he would be out in front. But he wouldn't dominate, in my opinion, and control that Committee. You'd have enough of your own people on there too. And these other fellows cannot agree... if one comes out with one policy, they can't agree on the others, because they're all candidates, and they all have their individual program. Rockefeller was with your program, and now because he's a candidate he's sort of slipping a little bit. Nixon wants you to step things, but now he's backing up a little bit. McCarthy says he has some other way, Kennedy has another. You get them all together on a Committee, and they'll have their individual opinions and they won't unify on anything such as the Fulbright thing because then if they do if they do agree on the pullout and if this is the recommendation to you, then they're all there as agreeing to it, and they've all agreed, and they said they would agree. I don't think under any circumstances you get those four men to agree to anything. I don't think... and I also feel that you would put an 18 or 15 man committee, and you would have some pretty good sound people on there yourself. In the meantime you would have an opportunity to say to the American people that you know... everyone is getting a little filled up with it, because it is the appropriate time. They're using this war thing to make political preference and political advantage to themselves. All of them are changing around, they're making you the warmonger of the world, and this way you could call their bluff which no one has ever done in the history of the Presidency by calling in the opposition and especially the active candidates and put together one of the high class committees with your other people on it, and this is in the interest of the unity of our country. And they owe it, and they would, and they couldn't do anything but come, and when they come, you always do a pretty good job of meeting with people, and you just tell them that I'm calling this meeting in the interest of our country and the future of our country... and I want to help.

A Dick. I'll tell you what I'll think I'll do.

B They want me to call them back. They're pushing for an announcement and I'm holding them off. I told them that all they're going to be able to do is foul this thing up. I'd like to be able to call them back and tell them that you're working on something.

- A I would tell him that you talked to the White House and you found out that the President had met with Sorensen yesterday afternoon. And he had talked to Sorensen about getting some independent people to look at it, that he had a group in made up of Acheson, and Bundy, and Clifford, and Bradley, and that he talked to Sorensen about getting another group in and getting them to look at it, and that Sorensen said he would get some suggestions to the President and that the President is waiting for those suggestions, and that you talked to the President and you did not go into any of the Bobby details but that you did talk to the President about getting some independent people to look at it, and that the President seemed to be amenable and said that he would look and see if Sorensen's suggestions had come back, and if not, he would call Sorensen again and ask him to get them down tonight or in the morning, that he would then take it up with Clifford and his people and he would call you back very shortly.
- B Fine... okay.
- A And tell him in the meantime not to put this in the paper.
- B In the meantime, I'll hold him off on his candidacy out there if I can.
- A I think if he goes in, we just have a real problem.
- B All it's going to do is try to destroy our party. I still think we can win it, we have some guys with some guts with us, but a lot of these guys frighten pretty fast, and you can see them wavering and quivering now. But I think if you would keep it in the back of your mind, after Sorensen gives you his list, if you would have this other list... you would flatten them once and for all, because they would be put on this thing and then it isn't a question of making speeches. Then it's question of making intelligent recommendations before an outstanding board and the balance of the commission would have to agree with them.
- A Thank you, Dick. I'll get in touch with you tomorrow. Bye