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DECEMBER 22, 1966 - Ranch

PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH THE GOVERNORS
AT THE LBJ RANCH

[This meeting was actually held on December 21, 1966.]

December 22, 1966

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Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting December 21
at the Ranch with the following governors:

Governor John Connally	Texas
Governor Dan K. Moore	North Carolina
Governor Robert E. McNair	South Carolina
Governor Hulett C. Smith	West Virginia
Governor Philip H. Hoff	Vermont
Governor Mills E. Godwin	Virginia
Governor Karl L. Rolvaag	Minnesota
Governor Warren Hearnesq	Missouri
Governor Harold Hughes	Iowa

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GOVERNOR HAROLD HUGHES: At the recent governors meeting at White Sulphur Springs we had a general discussion of the effects of the election and the problems each of us face in our respective states because of these elections.

There seemed to be general consensus on the following areas:

(a) The President's popularity is slipping. Because of this, it was our opinion that 1968 would be a very tough election for him and for the Party.

(b) We were unanimously dissatisfied with the Democratic National Committee and its chairman, John Bailey. (The other governors reaffirmed that this was the strong opinion of all governors present at the conference.)

(c) There was a general slippage in party standing during the last ten days before the election. This was attributed to:

press "letdown" after the Asian trip

Secretary Rusk's comments on the Southeast Asia conflict

McNamara's reduction in draft call

the Nixon-LBJ speeches during that time

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(d) Communication between the federal government and local programs is very bad, generally bypassing the governor in the management and implementation of these federally-funded programs (Cited HEW and OEO in particular).

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: Mr. President, the governors also discussed at the meeting at White Sulphur Springs Secretary Freeman and the program of the Agriculture Department, the general Health, Education and Welfare field and the topic of law and order in the country.

GOVERNOR HUGHES: Nobody questioned the value of the programs or their intent. In fact, we largely agreed that these programs have worthwhile objectives. You have done a very great job with the intent of your programs; it has been the implementation of these programs which we question.

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: There was general consensus that Vietnam could be a very significant issue in 1968.

GOVERNOR HULETT SMITH: There are no national committee programs in West Virginia. There are inequalities in the federal highway program. These are two of the significant areas in which problems exist in my state.

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GOVERNOR HOFF: Speaking of the programs and policies of your administration, I have no complaints. However, the Democratic National Committee has been very ineffective in my area, especially in states around Vermont. For example, I think Rockefeller was ripe for defeat this year. The same thing was true for many of the races in Massachusetts. The DNC has been inactive, as far as I am concerned. Its inactivity was a factor in the last elections. I am also concerned about the youth of this country. They could be the single most important group in the 1968 elections, and I do not believe they are on our side.

PRESIDENT: Pointed out that polls showed the youth supported the Johnson administration more than any other age group during the last elections.

GOVERNOR HEARNES: In 1966, you would have lost Missouri by more than 100,000 votes despite the fact you carried the state by 500,000 votes in 1964. Why would you lose the state? These are the reasons:

- (a) Frustration over Vietnam
- (b) Too much federal spending and too much taxation
- (c) No great public support for your Great Society programs

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(d) Civil rights and public disenchantment with the civil rights programs. Many people feel we have gone too far too fast.

(e) There has also been a very bad lack of communications on patronage between the governors and the federal government.

(Cited the case in his state where the man he opposed to head OEO program was appointed by the President. President said both Senators approved the appointment, and he understood that the governor had been aboard although reluctantly.) Hearnese said there must be better coordination on patronage jobs.

(f) Inability to get in touch with Sergeant Shriver on OEO problems.

(g) The President's image is quite bad. "If you could come over on TV like you do in the living room, you would be in good shape."

GOVERNOR HOFF: There are too many programs which are totally uncoordinated with the governors.

GOVERNOR SMITH: The poverty program is very frustrating. In West Virginia, there was a very light turnout of voters in this past election. I can't explain it, but things went generally the way we predicted anyway.

THE PRESIDENT: There were these reasons for the small turnout:

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(a) The President was not running on the ticket; it was on off-year election.

(b) People who are prosperous and content often don't go out to vote. This is some indication of what this administration has done in getting people jobs and raising the level of prosperity in this country.

There also were the factors that the Republicans spent a great deal of money during the last two weeks before the election. We didn't lose as many people who were supporting our programs as governors lost people supporting theirs. The Republicans also appealed to the conservatives and moderates in the South, which accounted for some of the loss.

As President, I am pledged and committed to our platform and our programs. I am familiar with Governor Hearnes problems. On the man who was appointed there, both Senators from the State were consulted and I thought the governor had agreed to go along, although he was reluctant to do so.

MARVIN WATSON: You have that in writing, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Basically, I think I should make these points:

(a) On the Democratic National Committee, obviously we feel differently. The best leaders in these elections are the people

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in the states. I am sure that John Connally, for example, doesn't want the DNC coming in to run his elections. It's the people in the states, and the congressmen themselves, who should manage their campaigns.

(b) On the matter of John Bailey, I frankly would rather have John Connally than John Bailey running it. But Bailey has done a good job in my opinion. He is loyal and hard-working, and he stands ready to help anybody anytime he is asked to do so. I'm confident of that.

(c) Basically, the committee is the same now as it was under John Kennedy. The people haven't changed (Bailey, Krim, and Mrs. Price.)

(d) The Committee has done quite a bit. We installed and purchased time on a computer to assist congressmen with their mailings. Also it sponsored a dinner in Washington for which most of the tickets were sold by Marvin Watson. This contributed about \$750,000 to congressmen. Also the Committee has spent thousands of dollars on telephone calls, broadcasts, advertising, and trips to send the congressmen back to their districts to campaign.

(e) If you want a new committee, then I welcome your suggestions. Give me the names of people you recommend. Bailey has done a good job, but I am not wedded to him.

(f) On the matter of law and order, I have made three major television speeches and have told the governors I stand ready to provide any assistance they require. I have sent in troops when

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requested.

(g) On Vietnam, sure you are going to have opposition. But when Westmoreland needs more troops he will get them. We are doing all we can to bring peace to Vietnam, and I think you all know that.

(h) On the Nixon speech, it was a very irritating exchange. But when he said I called the Manila conference to sell out this country, I thought it was necessary to clarify the matter. Anyway, what I say and what you hear and read are two different things in any case. Most papers are against me, just as they have been against most of the recent Presidents while they are in office. Many of them are Republican-owned.

(i) On Medicare problems, we had eleven conferences to discuss these issues. We think we have good legislation.

(j) On school legislation, the bills have come fast -- often faster than requested. John Gardner is here today. If you have any questions of him about anything in this area, he will be made available to you. Personally, I feel that medicare and education are very important to the future of this country and stand behind these programs.

GOVERNOR SMITH: Mr. President, I think you know we all stand behind you. What we need to know is what can we do. We need

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resource material for speeches to defend the administration on Vietnam. We need more guidance and closer coordination with the federal government.

THE PRESIDENT: I'll tell you what you can do. Eat out the Republicans as often and as strongly as you can, at every opportunity.

GOVERNOR MCNAIR: Mr. President, it's more in the implementation of the Great Society programs than it is with the intent of them. So many of the people in these programs have their own attitudes and philosophies. You create more problems in the implementation of these programs than if you had never sent the money. I've talked with Gardner's people until I'm blue in the face. The guidelines are implemented arbitrarily.

THE PRESIDENT: If there are any unfair items of people acting arbitrarily, you should tell Gardner. I'll ask him to investigate it and make changes if there is evidence of this. In any case, it does not help us to be publicly divided on these matters.

GOVERNOR CONNALLY: The governors are looking for a real avenue of communication, a go-between with the White House.

THE PRESIDENT: I have go-betweens. The Vice President has been asked to maintain communications with the mayors. I appointed

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Governor Bryant to act as liason with the governors. I thought Governor Bryant could influence this administration. We have had 39 separate meetings with governors since I became President.

On what you have said, I do think it is unfair to take your leader and publicly say that it is his image that has caused all the problems. There is nothing that does any more harm to hurt us than your statement last week.

GOVERNOR MCNAIR: Mr. President, the people would like for their leaders to speak out against violence.

THE PRESIDENT: I have.

GOVERNOR HUGHES: When the conference ended last week, I was totally unprepared for what took place. More than a hundred reporters descended on me.

THE PRESIDENT: It hurts and weakens me when you make statements like this. The lower I go down the lower you go down if you support my programs. I hope it will be possible for us to wash our dirty linen outside of the newspapers. We need to settle these things privately, not publicly.

LUNCH BREAK

Governors had lunch with President and other aides at ranch.

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AFTER LUNCH

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GOVERNOR CONNALLY: Mr. President, it is obvious that we haven't communicated with you this morning. All of us want to help you. All of us want to look forward to 1968. We are now all on the defensive. We need to analyze where we are now and frankly and honestly exchange views. In summary, we all know you are under attack from all sides. We want to enhance our capacity to help you.

GOVERNOR HUGHES: I honestly have not worked with Farris Bryant. I don't enjoy that type of setup, working through somebody. We as governors also have been very ineffective in communicating. We have our own problems with our state organizations. But you should know that our loyalty is with you. We know what we have said makes it look very bad. But our communications just broke down, that's all. We should elect three men to sit with the National Committee to discuss major problems. I do think the DNC has an obligation to teach us organization and to help us support the national party better.

THE PRESIDENT: The National Committee is ready to come in and help you when you need them. I doubt that I will make much use of the committee in the future, so you do what you please with it.

GOVERNOR SMITH: We really need a program to get behind. The 1968 election race is already underway. We want to unite to win in 1968.

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and I am confident that we will. We need your guidance, and we need to get started now.

GOVERNOR ROLVAAG: I bit the dust because of a protracted fight with my lieutenant governor. But I wanted to hear what has been said and done here today. I would like to see the governors meet each quarter. There are more things that pull us together than split us apart.

GOVERNOR GODWIN: The implementation of your programs have been my biggest problems. We need coordination at the top.

GOVERNOR HOFF: Mr. President, I say again we need to get the young people of this country behind us. Let's examine the youth in depth. We need to get them in behind us as a political organization.

THE PRESIDENT asked the following staff members into the room:

Secretary Gardner
Director Schuitze
Undersecretary Cohen
Acting Attorney General Ramsey Clark
Douglass Cater.

The governors talked with them on HEW guidelines, asking: "what is adequate progress."

The governors said one of their biggest problems was getting written answers from HEW officials on what the state governments are expected to do to comply with guidelines. The President instructed

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the Secretary to issue instructions to his people that all requests for guidance on the guidelines come in writing from the governors and that answers to their queries be given in writing by HEW officials. Secretary Gardner said he would comply with this directive.

Following this, the President held a news conference at which time Governor Hughes represented the governors as spokesman.

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