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| 42a notes | <p>Meeting w/Democratic Cong. Leadership 6 p. Possible Classified Information</p> <p>[sanitized - placed in open file on 4-25-86]</p> <p><i>sanitized 1-10-89 NLS 86-159</i></p> <p><i>more released 3-14-03 NW/PAC 99-241</i></p> | 2/6/68 | |

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 2

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FEBRUARY 6, 1968 - 8:30 a.m.

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP
BREAKFAST

Vice President
Speaker McCormack
Senator Mansfield
Senator Byrd
Senator Long
Congressman Albert
Congressman Boggs

Mike Manatos
Postmaster General
O'Brien
Joe Califano
Barefoot Sanders
Tom Johnson

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 6, 1968

8:30 p.m.

FOR THE PRESIDENT

Tom
FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting with the Democratic Congressional Leadership at breakfast, February 6, 1968, in the Mansion.

Those attending were:

The Vice President
Speaker McCormack
Senator Mansfield
Senator Byrd
Senator Long
Congressman Albert
Congressman Boggs
Mike Manatos
Postmaster General O'Brien
Joe Califano
Barefoot Sanders
Tom Johnson

The meeting began at 8:30 a.m. The meeting ended at 9:25 a.m.

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Meeting ended: 9:25 a.m.

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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH THE
DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

February 6, 1968
Breakfast
In the Mansion

The President reviewed Vietnam and the Pueblo situation with the leadership. He read the 6:30 a.m. situation report and the CIA briefing on developments around the world.

The President: We are having meetings at Panmunjom, but they are getting nowhere. They have asked for another meeting. We need to give whatever aid is necessary to the South Koreans. They are among our best allies.

The North Koreans said at Panmunjom that we had three or four wounded. They have not turned over the body of the one dead man. They have met with us but they will not turn the men and the ship loose until they can get as much out of this incident as they can. We have no information different from what you know. We do not believe the ship was in territorial waters.

We are going through some dangerous times. North Korea has a treaty with the Soviets and with China. If a man has nothing to offer as an alternative, I advise that he say nothing.

We are trying to keep them talking. The Joint Chiefs have shown me twenty military plans, but none of them would get our men back alive. I wrote to President Park of South Korea. I told him we were sorry they had tried to assassinate him and that we wanted to do whatever was necessary to protect him.

The best thing that has happened to us was not sending U. S. aircraft in to try to rescue the Pueblo.

Senator Long: How would the Soviets have reacted if Chiang-Kai-Shek seized a Soviet ship?

The President said he sent a letter to the Soviets last night.

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Congressman Albert: I think the President's actions have been correct.

Senator Byrd: I think the President handled the Pueblo crisis in a commendable way. It was the only course open to us.

But the Pueblo was only one chapter in the book on Vietnam. I am concerned about:

1. That we had poor intelligence.
2. That we were not prepared for these attacks.
3. We underestimated the morale and vitality of the Viet Cong.
4. We over-estimated the support of the South Vietnamese government and its people.

The President: I don't agree with any of that. We knew that they planned a general uprising around TET. Our intelligence showed there was a winter-spring offensive planned.

We did not know the precise places that were going to be hit.

General Abrams said the Vietnamese are doing their best. There was no military victory for the Communists. Just look at the casualties and the killed in action. This year the Vietnamese have issued an order for 65,000 extra troops. They have put in a constitution. They have put in a Congress. They have had several elections.

Senator Byrd: I have never caused you any trouble on this matter on the Hill. But I do have very serious concerns about Vietnam. I think this is the place to raise these questions, here in the family.

Congressman Boggs: What about Bob Byrd's charge that we are under-estimating the strength of the VC? I personally do not agree with that.

The President: I have never under-estimated the Viet Cong. They are not push-overs.

I do not think we have bad intelligence or have under-estimated the Viet Cong morale.

Senator Byrd: Something is wrong over there.

The President: The intelligence wasn't bad.

Senator Byrd: That does not mean the Viet Cong did not succeed in their efforts. Their objective was to show that they could attack all over the country and they did.

The President: That was not their objective at all.

Senator Byrd: You have been saying the situation with the Viet Cong was one of diminishing morale. When I say you, I mean the Administration.

The President: I personally never said anything of the sort. I am not aware that anyone else has been saying that.

What do you think the American people would have done if we had sent in troops and had lost 21,000 of them as the enemy has?

Senator Long: If we had planned to have an up-rising in Cuba and you had caused 21,000 men to be lost as the Viet Cong did, I am sure you would have been impeached.

The President: I am of the opinion that criticism is not worth much. I look at all of these speeches that are in the Record. I look at all the people who are going around the country saying our policy is wrong. Where do they get us? Nowhere.

The popular thing now is to stress the mis-management in Vietnam. I think there has been very little.

I wish Mike (Senator Mansfield) would make a speech on Ho Chi Minh. Nothing is as dirty as to violate a truce during the holidays.

But nobody says anything bad about Ho. They call me a murderer. But Ho has a great image.

Senator Byrd: I don't want the President to think that I oppose you. I am just raising these matters.

The President: I don't agree with what you say.

Senator Byrd: I do not agree that the intelligence was good.

Senator Long: I am happy you raised this point, Bob.

The President: Everybody should say and do what they want to. But we have put our very best men that we have out there. I believe that our military and diplomatic men in the field know more than many of our Congressmen and Senators back here.

Anybody can kick a barn down. It takes a good carpenter to build one.

I don't know in the future how we are going to get as much information as we get now.

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I just wish all of you would expose the Viet Cong and Ho. We have got some very crucial decisions coming up.

Personally, I think they suffer a severe defeat. But we knew there would be a general uprising, and they did not win any victory.

It seems to be an American trait to ask why. I just hope that we don't divert our energies and our talents by criticizing unnecessarily. We've got all we can of this "What's wrong with our country?" Fulbright, Young and Gruening haven't helped one bit.

I have to send one of my doctors today out to treat President Ayub Khan of Pakistan. He has pneumonia and also they are afraid he had a heart attack.

Senator Byrd: I do not want to argue with the President. But I am going to stick by my convictions.

The following is the agenda discussed:

Message Scheduling

The Education Message went Monday. Tentatively, the Consumer Message is slated for Tuesday, the Crime Message for Wednesday, and the Foreign Aid Message for Thursday.

Joe Califano will have the most recent schedule in the event you wish to confirm these dates and dates of messages beyond this week.

The House will be out of session from the time it adjourns this week until Monday, February 19. The Senate will reconvene Wednesday, February 14. If you want to send any messages next week the House will have a pro forma session Thursday, February 15. But if you propose to send any messages next week I suggest you mention the possibility to the Leadership.

This week's schedule:

House: Export-Import Bank
Fire Research and Safety

Senate: Civil Rights Debate

Passage of the Export-Import Bank bill seems assured. We are supporting the committee bill even though it has two bad features. We need to fight off further damaging amendments and we will need the Leadership's help with the conferees, as the bill must go to conference.

Fire Research and Safety is a holdover from last week. It is a consumer bill and we hope to obtain final passage this week.

On the Civil Rights legislation we would hope that the Senate Leadership is looking toward a compromise or cloture. You may wish to sound them out on the current floor situation.

Authorizations and Appropriations

I am attaching a list provided to us by the departments of the dates set for commencing hearings on authorization and appropriation measures.

Can the Leadership help us accelerate this schedule or at the minimum hold to it - so that all appropriation bills are finally passed by June 30?

Rules Committee

Pending in Rules Committee are the following major Administration measures:

Arts and Humanities Foundation
Jury Reform
Highway Beautification
D. C. Constitutional Amendment

The House Leadership has asked Colmer to have special meetings of Rules to consider rules on the first two.

The Highway Beautification bill will be tough on the floor. Should we consider further reducing the authorization in the bill in an effort to gain support? Sometime we are going to have to get a rule on this bill and face up to it on the floor.



D. C. Constitutional Amendment is another tough one. We should decide soon whether to hold it in Rules pending Senate action, or whether to abandon it for this session and try to move the bill which would provide D. C. with a non-voting Representative in the House.

Perhaps the Senate Leadership could give us a reading on prospects for moving the Constitutional Amendment out of Senate Judiciary where it presently languishes.

Gold Cover

We hope for Senate passage this week.

In the House we would like to have the bill considered by Rules as soon as the House returns February 19, so that the bill can be finally passed that week.

This is a very urgent item.

D. C. Elected School Board

We hope that the Leadership can get the conferees together soon so that this bill can be enacted. It means a lot in the District of Columbia and its enactment will be a plus for the Administration.

February 3, 1968

AGRICULTURE

Appropriation

House
Senate

March 4
March 1 (est.)

COMMERCE

Appropriation

House
Senate

Early March
After House

Authorization

Maritime

House
Senate

February 19
Not set

DEFENSE

Appropriation

House
Senate

February 14
Early March

Military Construction

House
Senate

Mid-April
Late April

Authorization

Military Construction

House
Senate

Early April
Late April

Procurement

House
Senate

February 27
Underway

HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House Senate | March 4 Mid-March |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|

Authorizations

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <u>Higher Education</u> | House Senate | February 6 Not set |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| <u>Vocational Rehabilitation</u> | | Awaiting Education Message |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| <u>Health Services</u> | House Senate | Mid-March Not set |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| <u>Health Manpower</u> | House Senate | Mid-March Not set |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|

HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House Senate | March 18 Not set |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|

Authorization

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| <u>Omnibus Housing</u> | House Senate | March 13 March 4 |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|

INTERIOR

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House Senate | February 15 February 19 |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|

Authorizations

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| <u>Saline Water</u> | House Senate | February 29 Not set |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------|

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------|
| <u>Missouri River Basin</u> | | Pending at Budget |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------|

Pesticides Research

| | |
|--------|------------|
| House | February 8 |
| Senate | Not set |

JUSTICE

Appropriation

| | |
|--------|-------------|
| House | February 20 |
| Senate | Not set |

LABOR

Appropriation

| | |
|--------|-------------|
| House | February 19 |
| Senate | Not set |

POST OFFICE

Appropriation

| | |
|--------|----------|
| House | March 5 |
| Senate | April 22 |

STATE

Appropriations

| | |
|--------|-------------|
| House | February 26 |
| Senate | Not set |

Peace Corps

| | |
|--------|----------|
| House | March 18 |
| Senate | Not set |

Arms Control Agency

| | |
|--------|-------------|
| House | February 26 |
| Senate | Not set |

Authorizations

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| <u>Peace Corps</u> | House Senate | Late March Early April |
| <u>Arms Control</u> | House Senate | Underway Early March |

TREASURY

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House Senate | February 19 After House |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|

TRANSPORTATION

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House Senate | April 1 After House |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|

AGENCIES

AID

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| <u>Appropriation (Foreign Aid)</u> | House Senate | March 18 After House |
| <u>Authorization</u> | House Senate | February 26 Mid-March |

ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

| | | |
|----------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House | Not set |
| | Senate | Not Set |
| <u>Authorization</u> | House) | Underway by Joint Committee |
| | Senate) | |

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

| | | |
|----------------------|--------|-------------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House | February 28 |
| | Senate | Not set |

NASA

| | | |
|----------------------|--------|----------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House | March 11 |
| | Senate | Not set |

| | | |
|----------------------|--------|-------------|
| <u>Authorization</u> | House | February 7 |
| | Senate | February 27 |

OEO

| | | |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House | April 8 |
| | Senate | Not set |

OEP

| | | |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House | March 4 |
| | Senate | Not set |

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

| | | |
|----------------------|--------|-----------|
| <u>Appropriation</u> | House | Mid-March |
| | Senate | Not set |

USIA

Appropriation

House
Senate

March 25
Not set

VA

Appropriation

House
Senate

February 14
Not set

EEOC

Appropriation

House
Senate

Early April
Not set