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T H E W H I T E H O U S E

Washington, D.C.
Thursday, April 28, 1967

Following luncheon, a meeting of the First Lady's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital was held, commencing at approximately 2:30 o'clock, p.m.,

The First Lady,
Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson, presiding.

Hon. Stewart Udall,
Secretary of the Interior, Co-Chairman

PRESENT:

Members of the First Lady's Committee for
a More Beautiful Capital;

Officers and Trustees of Society for a
More Beautiful National Capital, Inc.;

National Advisory Society for a
More Beautiful Capital;

And other invited guests.

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OPENING REMARKS

By
THE FIRST LADY

MRS. JOHNSON: Welcome everybody!

It is such a joy to have you here, I wanted you to come and see what two years have done. Everyone of you here has added something special to this city. I wanted to have this chance to thank you for the time and the conviction and the creativity that you have put into it and to see an hour or two of the results this morning.

You know, I think one thing that has happened to me, as I became more and more, oh, just wrapped up in Washington, is that I see with new eyes; I get a keener enjoyment every time I see that splash of scarlet and yellow where the tulips have gone in a little square or triangle; or I see children playing in a tot lot, or a school where the planting is well done and well kept; and also, I get that impatience and that hope everytime I see the place where something needs to be done.

Of course, together with achievements this morning, we have seen a lot of problems in our city, and we cannot begin to tackle all of them, but it is not too much to hope that we can be catalysts and set the examples for things to be done as the years roll around, in this and other cities.

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1 I thought you might enjoy hearing a few remarks
2 from three of the distinguished members of the Committee for
3 a More Beautiful Capital: Secretary Udall; Mr. Laurance
4 Rockefeller and Mr. Walter Washington.

5 Secretary Udall will give us a glimpse of the
6 national implications of what we are doing;

7 Mr. Rockefeller will talk about the business
8 men and beauty;

9 Mr. Washington will talk about those city
10 neighborhoods where perhaps our greatest laurels are to
11 be won.

12 Stuart?

13 REMARKS BY HON. STUART UDALL

14 SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

15 SECRETARY UDALL: Thank you very much, Mrs. Johnson.

16 Before I get to my very brief speech, I want to
17 do something that I think might be quite appropriate. I am
18 sure it will be because I see Secretary Weaver and Secretary
19 Freeman -- I don't know whether Alan Boyd is here.

20 The President has a flag; the Secretary of the
21 Interior has a flag; The secretaries of Departments, even,
22 have a flag. I don't know whether you knew that.

23 This First Lady does not have a flag, but this
24 First Lady has adopted a flag -- and it is the flag of
25 beauty.

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1 I think it would be quite appropriate if we
2 would have a toast to the First Lady.

3 (There was a toast to the First Lady by all
4 present)

5 SECRETARY UDALL: Now, if we in this country
6 are to invent rites of spring, I can't think of a
7 better one than we did today, Mrs. Johnson, to travel
8 about, to see what has been done and what has been left
9 undone and to sharpen our own sense of beauty. That to me,
10 is a very good way to spend a part of the spring day.

11 I have been with Mrs. Johnson and with many
12 of you during the past three years in many places, in
13 deep canyons, on the tops of mountains, in city squares,
14 in the hearts of great urban centers, and I think we
15 have learned something as we have gone about, and it seems
16 to me if I may try to sum up what the last two years of
17 this Committee and of its work have meant, it does seem
18 to me that maybe in this whole process of talking about
19 beautification and conservation and model cities --
20 Bob Weaver -- and highway beautification -- if you
21 are here, Lowell Bridwell, -- that what we have been
22 saying to ourselves and to the American people, what
23 we have been asking is whether a country that is the
24 richest country in the world; whether a country that has
25 amassed, in terms of its military and its economic

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1 power, the greatest power that there is, whether there
2 is not a missing element in all of this, because the
3 thing that has distressed many of us as we have gone about
4 this country, is to see that although we are in one
5 sense, well-to-do and have a high standard of living,
6 despite our pockets of poverty, which gnaw at us and
7 should gnaw at us, that at the same time, we are an unclean
8 country. Our air is unclean; our rivers are unclean;
9 there is much ugliness abroad and what I think this
10 President and this First Lady and those who have rallied
11 about them, are trying to say is that this need not be so;
12 that we can have a country that is not only rich, but
13 attractive and beautiful; that we can rebuild our cities;
14 that we can have handsome and balanced cities.

15 I had, Mrs. Johnson, the privilege two or three
16 months ago, of going to ancient Athens, and of having
17 one of the great planners of the modern era, who also happens
18 to live there, show me about, and there is one thing that
19 the Greeks from that ancient time had. It was a sense of
20 order and balance and beauty. The fact that a life was
21 not fulfilled, nor a civilization, for that matter, unless
22 you not only lived well but you lived in beauty.

23 So what we are talking about today, what we saw
24 today, is not cosmetics. It was not something superficial;
25 it concerns the livability of life; the livability of that

1 environment that we inhabit every minute of every hour
2 of our lives.

3 This is what we are talking about, and none
4 of us pretend -- least of all, the First Lady, because she
5 is a very modest person as those know who have worked with
6 her -- that we have done anything that is particularly
7 great at this point. We have started something. That is
8 all, and it may take a decade or two or three to see
9 it through, and many of us will not be here, perhaps, when
10 the dreams and goals that have meant the most to us, are
11 fulfilled, because this is work that is not easily done.
12 But the thing that impressed me in this country, as
13 I have gone about, Mrs. Johnson, is how far the ripple
14 has been felt, when a Governor of the Virgin Islands
15 or a Mayor in a small city in Arizona, a week ago, or a
16 Mayor of a very large city a month ago, apologizes for
17 a billboard alley, or expresses pride in a newly planted
18 flower garden in a city square; or says that he has gone out
19 and picked up the cans from the garbage litter of the
20 streets the night before, so you would not notice it.
21 Whatever these things are, I think our country now is
22 developing a set of new eyes.

23 I think that we are not willing to settle for
24 the fact that a country that is rich and is heavily
25 industrialized had to be ugly and dirty. We can have

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1 have higher goals and this Committee and its leaders,
2 have set those goals before us.

3 And so we are here today and our little trip
4 this morning was not to celebrate anything, unless we
5 celebrate a beginning.

6 I hope we treat this as a beginning and I
7 hope that those of you who are enlisted in this
8 brigade of beauty are still with us 10 or 20 or 30
9 years from now, and it has been wonderful to me to have
10 a small part in this and to know that we are only
11 starting.

12 Thank you.

13 (Applause)

14 MRS. JOHNSON: Thank you, Stuart.

15 Laurance Rockefeller, may we ask you to talk to
16 us?

17 REMARKS BY LAURANCE ROCKEFELLER

18 COMMITTEE MEMBER

19 MR. ROCKEFELLER: We all heard so much about the
20 power of example and the power of leadership, yet anyone
21 that took the bus trip this morning has seen a living
22 example of how creative it can be and what an extra-
23 ordinarily magnificent tribute to you, Mrs. Johnson.
24 It is fantastic!

25 In talking to my friend, Henry Diamond, about

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1 my qualifications for talking on beauty and business,
2 I was being a little reluctant. He said, "After all,
3 you are interested in growing trees and businesses,
4 aren't you?"

5 I said, "Okay. I will do my best."

6 The fact of it is that business, by many
7 people, is sometimes thought of as being a reluctant
8 dragon or the sleeping giant in the beauty program.
9 Actually, this is not true. Business is awake and alert
10 and we need to be encouraged, as we all do, and we must
11 remember that it was business that first organized
12 Keep America Beautiful. There are many examples that all
13 of you know of, of the role of business; their sense
14 of responsibility and their desire to participate.

15 I am only going to mention two of them, because
16 of the context that I think is so important in which
17 they appear, and that is that it seems eminently vital
18 for all of us to help in any way we can to encourage
19 the partnership for beauty, and concern for our national
20 and man made environment through a partnership not only
21 of all levels of government but between government and
22 business on the one hand, and the citizen group on the
23 other.

24 So I want to tell you very briefly about the
25 talents that we are seeking to fulfill with members of

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1 the utility industry, through President Johnson's Citizens
2 Advisory Committee on Recreational and Natural Beauty.
3 We are trying to make meaningful suggestions in this
4 area and we have been delighted to find that the total
5 industry -- I mean both private and governmental elements
6 -- are willing to sit down with members of this Committee
7 and members of Government regulatory agencies, to sit
8 down as partners and discuss their responsibility and
9 what could be done if all three elements assumed their
10 share. There is too much for one group or another to
11 assume it all, or push it off on another element. So
12 we feel that this is a very pioneering venture and that
13 it can be productive.

14 We are going to quote this on the next step
15 in areas of possible achievement, partly because our
16 term is only 18 months. We want to get something done,
17 and hope we can go on, but the fact is, we are going to
18 try and accelerate the trend of the varying distribution
19 lines. This is already under way but it can be accelerated.
20 These three partners, in working together, can do it
21 better and do it much faster.

22 Then we are going to concern ourselves about the
23 air pollution through the use of atomic power plants,
24 but of course if in the next ten years, when our power
25 plants will double, if we can turn primarily to the atomic

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1 plants in the urban areas, we can make a major contribution
2 to air pollution; minimize the ugly transmission lines,
3 and, in other words, as a practical matter, contribute
4 greatly to these areas, and hopefully to lower the cost
5 of power at the same time.

6 So this group we hope, will not only make a
7 contribution but be an example of how business can most
8 effectively help in this area that we are so interested
9 in.

10 Now, the other group I want to mention is
11 representative of small business at its best and that is
12 a group of business men here in Washington, the far
13 Northeast area here. I was privileged to join them for
14 a luncheon meeting. This was in the Watts Branch area,
15 and these business men are working with the civic organiza-
16 tions. They are working with the municipal elements
17 of government: police, schools, all elements, and
18 are working together to concern themselves about the
19 economic, social and physical environment in which they
20 are doing business, and this is the concept that I am
21 convinced that business not only wants to accept, but must
22 accept if the job is to be done, and in the context of
23 partnership, as I tried to describe it, it can be done
24 better.

25 So I would just like to, from the point of view

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1 of business, say they have made a good start. They can do
2 better. I think they will do better, and with the spirit
3 of good will and partnership, it will be even more
4 productive.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause)

7 MRS. JOHNSON: And now, if Walter Washington
8 will come up and talk to us.

9 REMARKS BY WALTER WASHINGTON

10 NEW YORK, N.Y.

11 MR. WASHINGTON. Thank you, Mrs. Johnson.

12 Members of the Committee and friends, it is good
13 to be home!

14 I was asked how I like New York. I said, "It
15 is big and bad. I have been working for the most part in
16 what we call, 'How to keep the city cool, baby'".

17 So it is good to be back home.

18 It is really an opportunity for me and I would
19 say in the trip today, if there is anything that I saw today
20 that ran out to me, it was a trip that could be called an
21 opportunity in alternatives.

22 There are opportunities to do many, many things,
23 and alternatives in the sense that we provide something
24 for children and people other than rock throwing and damage.

25 We saw this morning, Mrs. Johnson, what gave me

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1 great joy.

2 I want to say, parenthetically, I too, would like
3 to toast you, but on a little different plane.

4 I am sure that everybody would agree with me
5 that you have struck what I think to be one of the greatest
6 impacts that the White House could describe today. You have
7 served us dessert in a flower box. And there are people
8 in the country who say they have been doing this all the
9 time. I think it shows how close we can come to each
10 other in understanding. It is going to be a new fetish,
11 obviously, and it is going to do a whole lot in many
12 areas of our towns, to stabilize our habits, because here-
13 to-fore, it was regarded as a poverty angle. Now it is
14 a little different kick.

15 So I am delighted and I certainly want to toast
16 you on it.

17 (Applause)

18 I think that the significant thing to me is
19 the fact that many regard our earlier efforts -- as Stuart
20 referred to them -- as somewhat cosmetic. Some of us thought
21 we were paying a lot of attention to the downtown. I think
22 the obvious thing that developed was it just was not so.
23 We blended many, many people and many interests. Mrs. Lasker
24 came forward with a handsome gift in Azaleas. This was to
25 be met more and more by interests in other parts of the

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1 community and I think today, there was a visual demonstration,
2 Mrs. Lasker, of what your society is doing in trying to
3 weave a web from our monument -- including our monument --
4 and the beauty of our downtown into the neighborhoods,
5 where people have an opportunity to appreciate beauty.

6 It is said that a child who can appreciate a
7 tool in his yard, can understand the Arboretum; can under-
8 stand downtown, our malls and museum. This is an impact,
9 I think of today, and an impact of the great leadership
10 of Mrs. Johnson.

11 She, too, has seen this, too, in the alleys
12 that she has traveled and in the back yards -- I know
13 she would not plan a trip without going in an alley to-
14 day. It is part of what she believes in and this is
15 again, so significant in the web that we are weaving, of
16 beauty. Beauty certainly, is God given. It is also
17 man made and it is not for any group of people. This
18 is what synthesizes, I think, the total interest that
19 we have here.

20 As we traveled today, it was so interesting to
21 see how large a group of people are being continuously
22 drawn to beauty in many dimensions. I think the hundreds
23 of small triangles that you saw, that cry out for help,
24 should suggest something to you and to us, that maybe we
25 could treat this; maybe we could take a little of our

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1 time and money and energy and resources and do something
2 to pull some of these triangles in. We cannot look to
3 our government to do everything that has to be done. It
4 must come from the people, ultimately, and people who
5 show concern then are working with the help of the city.
6 That is what I think I understand Mrs. Johnson's message
7 to be.

8 A school -- we fight a school; we fight the
9 conditions around the school and yet, we go into the
10 heart of the slums; beautify a school; give the people
11 a decent thing to look at, and a decent thing to see from
12 time to time, and we stay the misery of many problems that
13 develop in urban renewal.

14 You may not know that at Walker Jones, that whole
15 area that we planted, will be retained after the Urban
16 Renewal Program is concluded. That will become a pedestrian
17 mall. What we are doing for those people is to give
18 them some feeling of some help in between. They see the
19 boarded up buildings but then, they have some oasis of
20 beauty that they can turn to in the meantime, and it
21 is sort of like an oasis and a haven, and I think that
22 is significant.

23 It is important, I think, to look at Larry
24 Halpern's design on the car barn. He takes an old,
25 abandoned place and with his view and vision, it can

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1 become alive; it can become meaningful and provide many
2 opportunities and it joins with Nat Owings' beauty in
3 the mall, and these two things could become coalesced,
4 more or less, into something that bespeaks an age of
5 people. I think this is what I mean by opportunity.
6 And as we get out and see the vision that Laurance
7 Rockefeller had; and what happened in Watts, and what
8 Mrs. Lasker did downtown, they become one of a piece.
9 People can leave Watts and go downtown and see a projection
10 of what all of this is, and each time, I think, that
11 there is an opportunity, an alternative, and people will
12 see involvement. As was mentioned before, the Northeast
13 people -- they were involved. As we came around the horn,
14 we saw other things, of what this means to the Southeast.
15 What a monument this will be in taking a school that
16 Mrs. Johnson and I saw; a school with a couple of hundred
17 windows out, and now it will be transformed by the
18 initiative of Secretary Freeburg and Cy Braddus, and the
19 great help of Mrs. Aster, here, to put this project
20 together where you are talking about, not
21 barren, squalid land, but you are talking about
22 ground that opens up in an amphitheater with water
23 and with opportunities for play; with athletic equipment
24 out there, to keep the larger kids busy and the smaller
25 kids involved.

1 These are places where concern and opportunity
2 all sort of meet and make total progress; and I think, to
3 move from there, you see in the southwest something that
4 Kay Graham envisions as a private effort, as we passed the
5 park and saw her great initiative there, in trying to pull
6 together something that was meaningful. It linked the
7 recreation facilities together and truly created an opportunity
8 for kids to do other things than get in trouble.

9 So it is with the Star. We passed there. We
10 saw they conceived the idea of doing something before the
11 big project of the Capital unfolds, to give some immediate
12 opportunity for beauty and exposure.

13 What I am saying, I think is again, this is
14 what we saw today; it was opportunity and alternatives.
15 I think the help of our nation; the help of every city
16 in the nation, depends on people having an opportunity and
17 an alternative. I think if we turn our backs and show no
18 concern, we can very well expect to get what we will get,
19 and that is a response and a reaction that is completely
20 uncontrolled, and where concern is there, and where opportunitie
21 and alternatives exist, wholesomely, constructively, I think
22 we get quite another response. We get a response that is
23 truly American and this, in a sort of a summary fashion,
24 is what has kept me busy for two years, and I hope it
25 will keep me busy for many more years, under the leadership

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1 of this tremendous woman, actually whose heart just flows
2 in every aspect of it and whose concern for the American
3 people is so great that it sets a spark and those of you
4 that had an opportunity to see just the beginnings today,
5 I hope you will take this message with you. But you
6 must be careful, too. If she spots you, you are
7 really hooked because it is just that kind of dedication
8 and some of us know it and it is the kind of thing that
9 makes you want to work time after time, and day and night,
10 because you know she asks you to do nothing that she would
11 not do, and you know that the concern which she demonstrates
12 daily, is there.

13 So I thank you for this opportunity and ask all
14 of you to get hooked to us.

15 (Applause.)

16 MRS. JOHNSON: This is Sharon Francis, whom
17 you all know. She has an announcement to make.

18 MRS. FRANCIS: For those of you
19 who are going to the meeting of the Executive Council of
20 the Society for a More Beautiful National Capital of the
21 City, there will be a bus downstairs outside of the
22 Diplomatic entrance, after you have secured your coats.

23 Thank you.

24 (Whereupon, at 3:30 o'clock, p.m., the meeting
25 was adjourned.)

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