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Notes of June 25, 10:00 A. M.
Staff Meeting with the President
In the Cabinet Room

The President expressed concern over some recent press reports that the White House staff is tired...that many officials are soon leaving...and that the machinery of government is grinding to a halt.

He said that he hopes the entire staff will stay with him until January, but that if anyone needs to leave, he will do everything he can to meet their timetables. In the meantime, however, he said, there's a lot of work to do and no room for a letdown.

He asked, first of all, that the staff be on the lookout for major announcements by the departments and agencies which could be released by the White House and used as speech material.

Second, he asked for ideas on what the government should be doing between now and January 20.

Third, he said there were indications that some of the staff members have been holding off-the-record press briefings -- and giving an inaccurate impression of what the President is thinking. George Christian, he said, knows what I am thinking and speaks for me to the press. He suggested that if a staff member has to brief the press on a given subject, he should ask the President what his thoughts are on it before speaking for him.

Fourth, the President said he is asking each Department to prepare a history of the Johnson years -- its accomplishments, its personnel actions, its failures -- and what still needs to be done in the major programs. He said he is planning to have each Cabinet officer brief the Cabinet on this history and allow time for questions and answers. He asked Joe Califano to take charge of this operation.

Fifth, the President also asked Joe Califano to coordinate a staff study of what can be done to develop specialized speeches on major subjects. Position papers will be prepared on which the speeches will be based. Ideally, the papers would take the following form:

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- What has been done in a particular area -- education, for example -- during the past 180 years.
- What we have accomplished in the past eight years.
- The unfinished problems; what needs to be done in the next eight years, between now and the anniversary of our independence.

Sixth, the President asked the staff to be thinking about what statements and letters might be prepared to get our legislation moving.

Finally, the President presented the staff with inscribed copies of the new book of his selected speeches and messages, To Heal and to Build.

You can show this book to your grandchildren, he said, so they can know what you were doing during these years. You can tell them I presented you with this book with my thanks and gratitude for a job well done. "You can even embellish on what I said if you want to, so your grandchildren will be proud of you." (Laughter)

In this regard, the President noted he had presented plaques to Henry Ford II and Nelson Rockefeller for their efforts -- as captains of industry -- to promote social welfare. I did it, he said, so their grandchildren would be proud of them. (Pause) "I didn't mention anything about their grandparents' contributions." (Laughter)