

April 26, 1968

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH
MUTUAL BROADCASTING COMPANY EXECUTIVES

October 2, 1967

Points made by the President on Vietnam:

1. Defending Vietnam is important to the security of this country. It is unfortunate we are there, but throughout history we have had to face this situation where aggressors try to capture their enemies. Eisenhower told Kennedy this would be his biggest problem. Kennedy attempted to solve the South-east Asian situation with the negotiations on Laos, but they didn't stick. I think we have to stay the course; I know we will as long as I am here.
2. A selective blockade would not be effective, because the enemy could get his supplies in regardless.
3. It is doubtful you can close all the infiltration routes into South Vietnam. The enemy is paying a terrible price for what he is doing, but you cannot stop all infiltration.
4. The United States performed a great logistical effort in moving a half million men 10,000 miles in 18 months.
5. Colonel Olds, our number one pilot, says he has never seen any boys like the ones we have sent out there. They are superior to any soldiers we have ever had.



George Christian

SERVICE SET

October 6, 1967

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S INTERVIEW WITH
NICHOLAS CARROLL, LONDON SUNDAY TIMES
October 5, 1967

Mr. Carroll: I have been here eight days, and the thing that has struck me is the popularity charts showing the trends in public support of the President and his policies. At what point do you decide that public support is such that it affects decisions?

The President: I attribute these polls largely to propaganda. You cannot govern your actions by polls. You make decisions when you determine it is the right thing to do. The best poll is a roll call in Congress on such matters as the draft, appropriations and recommendations involving foreign policies. We have differences in our system, but considering everything, I don't think we have ever been in an engagement where we have had any better bipartisan support for basic policies. (The President traced the history of U.S. wars and the dissension of those periods.) I think we spend far too much time on weighing the protests. Speeches don't have much to do with the war or our policies. Certain people are frustrated and want to be Secretary of State. The reasons for our being there are clear to most people. Morale of the fighting men is good. There has been phenomenal progress in the last two years in building a democratic government in South Vietnam and in the conduct of the war. North Vietnam hasn't won a single victory.

Mr. Carroll: Then you believe this dissension is fairly normal and it doesn't depress you?

The President: You expect these things in a political year. Every candidate has to show that he is strong and his opponent is weak. Polls are designed by a candidate to show that he is strong. (The President showed Mr. Carroll a recent New York poll showing him running far ahead of his prospective opponents.)

Mr. Carroll: You must envy Mr. Kosygin, since he doesn't have to put up with disagreement.

The President: No, he has worse handicaps than I do.

Mr. Carroll: In England there is considerable feeling that political polls have undue affect on public opinion, and there is some thought about restraining polls.

The President: I watch the polls, of course. Generally speaking, it is like a horse you own. It does what you want it to do. I don't think people are the victims of polls.

Mr. Carroll: Among the Republicans, which combination would pose the most serious threat?

The President: Nixon has the best organization, more campaign ability and experience. Percy is a little boy blue. Romney has demonstrated what he is. Reagan is new and attractive. I guess a Nixon-Reagan ticket would be the strongest.

Mr. Carroll: There is a feeling in Britain that the U.S. is fed up with its European allies and doesn't believe we pull our weight.

The President: I think you do well under the circumstances. I sent the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary a message this morning. (The President had Miss Nivens in Walt Rostow's office read the message over the telephone; the message thanked Wilson and Brown for standing firm despite party pressures.) We all have our peculiar problems; all of us have our setbacks. But there is no substitute for British character, courage, comradeship and guts. I never cease to be thankful for the British. I would be a slave if it were not for Churchill's voice. I have never had any experience with the British that I wouldn't want my son to take lessons on.

We have our problems -- Kennedy Rounds, NPT, monetary matters, Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia -- but I don't know of any period when my relations with the British have been any better. And I have never known the British not to use power to protect their own defense, so I think they really understand what we are doing in Vietnam.

Of course, I don't like to see everything pulled out east of Suez. I think I can get along with Mr. Wilson's party or with the opposition party, and I don't think the British are going to be anti-American if a Republican is elected.

This country is basically sound. Some of our people may go on demagogic jags, but we ought to thank the Lord for what we have. Vietnam is chicken feed compared to the Battle of Britain, Normandy and Stalingrad. I know that Americans do a lot of big talking, but when all is said and done, we will make it.

Mr. Carroll: You seem to be fairly sanguine about your relations with Russia.

The President: We do not have the rapport with the Russians that we have with Wilson and others in the free world, of course. Everything Kosygin said at Glassboro had been rehearsed, and there was little choice in what he could say. But allowing for their sheer hypocrisy, I think our relations have been good. They always talk about how nothing can be done because of Vietnam -- much of this is for China's benefit and North Vietnam's benefit -- but I don't know of any period in history when there have been more agreements between the U.S. and the USSR.

The President and Mr. Carroll concluded with a discussion of the press. The President said he thought too many foreign correspondents followed the lead of a few columnists, and did not portray the facts. He said he wished the foreign press would cover the White House more closely and not follow "like sheep" after a handful of self-proclaimed intellectuals like Walter Lippman who have a very bad batting average on foreign policy.


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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S CONVERSATION WITH
MR. AND MRS. JACK ZAIMAN OF THE HARTFORD
COURANT

Mr. Zaiman is doing a profile on the President. The President gave him a little more leeway than the average interview, with the understanding that he would not bill the discussion as an exclusive talk with the President.

The President praised the people of Connecticut, referring to them as forward-looking on national and international affairs. He had praise for both Senators and Congressmen.

The President: We have had a great many international problems -- the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Berlin -- which we refer to as crises. But relatively speaking, in light of what our country has gone through in other times, these crises don't necessarily mean disaster or unavoidable danger. (He showed Mr. Zaiman a card listing the difficult decisions of the last 90 days).

Mr. Zaiman: What is your reaction to pressure?

The President: It is not really pressure, but it keeps you employed. The big problem is to find out what is right. Everybody wants to do right; the hard thing is to know what is right. Nothing non-controversial ever gets to me. The staff handles all of those. I just get the difficult ones.

Mr. Zaiman: Do you feel you get a fair shake from the press?

The President: We get along reasonably well with the working press. I respect all the press; I guess we are normal in the sense that we like those who like us. Of course, there are elements in the press that don't like us.

Mr. Zaiman: What is your opinion of John Bailey?

The President: He is a dedicated Democrat who works hard and never asks anything for himself. I get along fine with him. (He showed Mr. Zaiman the recent New York poll.) We try to carry out our party responsibilities, without getting overly partisan. Mr.

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Bailey is very helpful in that regard. As far as I know, he has never asked a favor of me.

Mr. Zaiman: Which Republican do you think will be running next year?

The President: I don't like to guess. The polls indicate Nixon is pretty far out front.

Mr. Zaiman: Senator Ribicoff seems to wobble a great bit.

The President: I think Senator Ribicoff has a good knowledge of his needs in Connecticut. He was a good Cabinet member. I like him.

Mr. Zaiman: Are you going to run again?

The President: I will cross that bridge later.

Mr. Zaiman: I've heard your troubles compared with those of Lincoln.

The President: All Presidents have problems. Most of the 36 have gone through many problems. Mr. Hoover had a depression. Mr. Roosevelt had a two-ocean war and barely got the draft bill passed by one vote. Mr. Truman had Korea. John Kennedy had Cuba and Berlin. People require their Presidents to make decisions. When you decide for someone, you are deciding against someone else. I am thankful for what we have had during this administration. I got elected with 61% of the vote. About 85% to 90% of my program has been passed. I have had unusually good cooperation from the other party. Every President has to resolve the conflicts and problems which emerge. He has to get all the information, make the decisions, and hope they are right.

Mr. Zaiman: What about the Vietnam war?

The President: I think we are making steady progress. We are glad their government is in a constitutional process. They have had the presidential and senatorial elections, and will elect a house this month. They have a lot of weaknesses but we have to remember

that they haven't had the opportunity. We are glad they are moving ahead with social reform, land reform and getting more civilians in the government. We have got a lot to be thankful for.

Mr. Zaiman: You carried Connecticut in 1964 by 450,000 votes. I don't think you will do that well this time, but you will carry it by 75,000 to 100,000 votes.

The President gave Mrs. Zaiman an Asian medallion and a deck of cards.


George Christian

October 17, 1967

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S CONVERSATION WITH
HOBART ROWEN, WASHINGTON POST

October 14, 1967

Rowen: You don't have to convince me about the need for a tax bill. You have an airtight case. But how are you going to convince those on the Hill?

The President: They would be better able to tell you than I am. The Committee may feel the majority of the House doesn't favor the tax bill. They have had a lot of reasons for not wanting to move. First they said the economy was too sluggish. Then they said we would have to have \$5 to \$10 billion in expenditure cuts. Then they wanted us to prepare alternatives. I sent Henry Fowler up there with three proposals, but the Committee said they were in no mood to consider them and resisted the hearing. Now they want to get into the program themselves. I would think these forces just do not want to vote for a tax bill. The polls show 80% of the people against the tax bill. The New York Times is against it. Your paper has been critical on it. All we can do is get our justifications together. We have given ample information to business, labor, and Congress.

A year ago we had no support at all for a tax bill, so we tried to prevent inflation by savings. This year we felt we ought to have a surcharge for several reasons -- revenues are down, and we need restraints on the economy -- so we recommended it in January. There was no action on the 6%, so by August we felt we should go to 10% to get \$7 billion. I went over this with Mills in July, with the Committee Chairman, with Mills and Byrnes, who made some suggestions which we embraced.

It has been my experience that everybody is against taxes, although some will vote for a tax bill if they need to. Bill Martin convinced me that I had to have a tax bill. The business leaders felt we needed a tax. I had a series of 5 or 6 meetings with the Congressmen -- the freshmen Democrats and freshmen Republicans, and every Democrat in the House. I have spoken out in press conferences on occasions. I talked to the lending people and the consumer groups. I haven't tried to pressure, but only to show the country the record. I don't want to overdo it, but think the record ought to be there. I don't want to be stubborn, but this is my view of the economy.

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There are mixed feelings among the House and Senate. They don't agree. There is division in the House. I don't know what size budget they want. We are looking now at a budget of \$144 to \$145 billion, with revenues of \$115 to \$116 billion. That means a deficit of \$29 to \$30 billion.

Rowen: You have a compelling case for your position.

The President: Expert opinion is close to unanimous. But what the Congress is going to do I don't know. You can get a better evaluation from them than from me. I don't want to be charged with twisting arms. Those men are as patriotic as I am. The good Lord in his wisdom divided up power; it is my duty to propose and their duty to dispose. Roosevelt had a bad tax fight. Truman had three vetoes on tax bills. My aim is to shed light, not to contribute to the controversy. This is not Johnson's tax bill. If I dropped dead this moment, it would still be a need. I think it is bad to have 5% inflation rather than 2 1/2%. After election last year people were saying, "Boy, those Republicans have sure checked Johnson." My view is that they sure have; they are screwing up everything good.

Rowen: People on the Hill are saying the bill is dead.

The President: Who said it was dead? I am getting tired of reading stories quoting people as saying something, and the papers not printing who it is who is saying it. All I know is that I am going to try to pass the bill.

Rowen: You think they will see the light?

The President: I thought my message would appeal to them. After that, I thought our statements would. I think they will respond to what their constituents want. The leaders of the people are pretty unanimous, but obviously the people aren't for a tax bill. I don't think I would use the veto savagely if they do some reasonable cutting. There seems to be a great interest in cutting the space program. After a while, when people see we are second class in space, they are going to say why in the

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hell did you do that. I can't understand why some of the doves and super-Liberals are against the tax bill. Some of them think they are getting back at us on Vietnam by taking this position. But Defense bills are going through; there is no question about that. If I wanted any city program, I would sure be trying to get a tax bill passed.

George Christian

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October 17, 1967

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH
JACK LEACACOS, CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

October 14, 1967

Leacacos: I am trying to get the gold dust of authenticity in writing my book. But before that, I wonder what is going to be the follow through on your Williamsburg speech.

The President: I have talked to everybody about the TV question. What I would like to do is shift the interest of these developing countries from steel plants to education. If we can make next year the International Education Year, that will be a step forward. We have to get all the countries thinking in that direction. We can have a demonstration that will catch on and spread. The mix between capital investments and health and education is lopsided. For example, if India educates the minds and builds the bodies of its people, it can build its own dams. We have got a good deal of scholars in the government -- Rusk, McNamara, Gardner, Rostow -- who are interested in this. Maybe next year we can get a pilot project.

Leacacos: On the mechanics of the San Antonio speech how did you decide and how did you choose the setting?

The President: I think it started with a luncheon with former Prime Minister Menzies. He told me that the people forget things, and need to be reminded. He said he once made 72 speeches on the same subject, but that he spoke to 72 different audiences.

In a Cabinet meeting I asked Secretary Rusk a series of questions on Vietnam, which gave us a framework. I told the boys to get a speech together. The best opinion was the legislative conference, so we chose it. Rusk followed up this week with more comments on Vietnam. I have had several press conferences devoted to nothing but Vietnam. (The President instructed that Leacacos be given a memorandum on divisions in the country on other wars.)

Leacacos: Is there any thought of your going to Cleveland to help Stokes?

The President: No.

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Leacacos: I would like to have your judgment on people -- a comparison of styles. Bundy and Rostow?

The President: Bundy is sharp, humorous, incisive, decisive, scintillating, positive. Rostow is philosophical -- this is pro, this is con. He doesn't try to shove anything unless it is wanted. Both of them are ideal staff men. Rostow doesn't try to win an argument and lose a sale. He says "Here's my judgment" as an able analyst, more erudite. McNamara is more of an advocate.

Leacacos: Rusk and McNamara?

The President: If you went in with a Cabinet with 13 men and you asked who is the ablest, wisest in the group to bet the lives of your wife and daughters, Rusk would get 12 of the 13 votes. The 13th would be his. If you wanted an organization run right, wanted to make a profit, and wanted a thoroughly honest operation, McNamara would get the vote. He is a genius as an organizer. McNamara has a deep understanding of the diplomatic side, and Rusk was only 20 minutes from being a professional military man, so they understand each other's job. Neither has disagreed once a common denominator has been reached. They know everything there is to know about their departments, because they have been there a long time. I am going to hold them as long as I can.

Leacacos: Does McNamara have a political touch?

The President: No, because he is not interested in that. He could if he wanted to.

Leacacos: On your 1961 trip who among the Foreign Service Officers briefed you the best?

The President: I don't really know. Galbraith was good, and Nolte in Saigon. Kennedy had good Ambassadors generally.

Leacacos: Do you feel the Diem thing was an error?

The President: Yes, after we killed Diem we had to start over. It was a fool thing to do.

Leacacos: What was the rationale of not hitting hard on the bombing right at first?

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The President: You have to have the wherewithal to do this. We didn't have the airfields or the means. You also have to get your pilots some experience. And if you throw your weight in all at once, you almost force Russia to help, whereas if you wear them down slowly, you may avoid World War III. We try to do this carefully and discreetly.

Leacacos: After the inauguration, will Thieu try to entice the Viet Cong?

The President: I think very shortly after the inauguration you will get to see social reforms, military reforms and a lot of steps toward improving the country.

George Christian

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October 19, 1967

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
ROBERT MANNING OF THE ATLANTIC

October 19, 1967

Manning gave the President a copy of George Kennan's memoirs, just published by Atlantic.

He told the President that Atlantic is also publishing George Ball's book, and that he believes the President will find it rewarding for the most part.

The President: I am proud of George Ball. He still renders dedicated, patriotic service to his country. I don't believe he has any motivation other than public service. I had him down here to argue the case against India wheat, since all of my people were strong for it and I wanted another viewpoint. He studied it and gave a terrific argument. He called me later to suggest that I might moderate the amount from 1 1/2 million to a million, and this was what I did. When Ball was here, he was good about arguing the opposite viewpoint even when he, Rusk and McNamara were actually together on something.

Manning: Do you ever find yourself regretting not taking his argument on Vietnam?

The President: I don't recall many decisions where there was not full agreement. I have never thought there shouldn't have been intervention or bombing. If history indicts us for Vietnam, I think it will be for fighting a war without trying to stir up patriotism. We are charged with everything in the book, but when we try to say something in a press conference about our commitments, we are accused of attacking all those innocent men who disagree with us.

Manning: I have always thought that my experience in government helped me see both sides. The Atlantic tries to stay on top of major events, but we have decided to do an in-depth story on what's happening in this country because of Vietnam. I told a reporter to cover the U.S. for eight months and come back in December. We will devote a whole issue to it.

The President told Manning he could guess what the results would be. He mentioned a 1951 poll showing that while 81% of the people favored our entry in Korea in June, 66% said in January that we should pull out and only 20% said stay in.

The President said this has been the pattern throughout American history, mentioning difficulties in the Revolutionary War, the Mexican War and the Civil War, and 203 to 202 vote which extended the draft in 1941. He said in his 30 years he was prouder of his vote on the draft bill than any other.

The President said that one of our weaknesses is that every hippie tells us of the evils of war, but we won't let those who have been there say anything about it. This was quite contrary to what took place in World War II. He said he had to be careful not to get the country on an anti-communist binge because it tears up what we have gained with the USSR (Consular Treaty, NPT and the others).

The President related incidents in World War ^III involving his father, who helped defend an oppressive anti-German bill in the Texas legislature, and his uncle, Judge Martin, who was indicted for speaking up for a German in Fredericksburg who got drunk and said he hoped that Kaiser would win. The President used these as examples of how inflamed people become in wartime.

Manning said that he hoped the Atlantic story would pick up what happens to veterans who come back after being in Vietnam.

The President said a man at a university had told him that his school had 21 Marines, 20 of whom were sound men and one was a sorehead. The sorehead got all the attention.

Manning asked if the President was worried about the size of the dissent. The President said he was not, although he regretted the faultfinders who make our job more difficult. Fulbright's basic argument was, he said, that "these are not our kind of people." He said division is quite a problem for the government and the country. If you walk with Justice Douglas up the Canal, a good many will drop by the wayside, the President said, and he expressed the hope that it doesn't get to the point that we don't have supporters or people to fight the war.

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Manning asked if the Republicans would likely turn to a peace candidate like Gavin if the majority of the people reach the stage of wanting a pullout.

The President said he didn't see any change in policy from now until June, and that the country would do the same thing that it did in 1951. He said all he knows about the Republicans is what he sees in the polls, and pointed out that those who want to do what we are doing now or want to do more make up two-thirds of the country in the polls, according to the polls.

The President pointed out that the Defense bill and the Draft bill didn't have a corporal's guard opposing them.

He said one of the worries was that the dissenters would get us in shape whereas the reactionaries would reduce our domestic programs, pointing out what has happened to the Poverty Program because of efforts to increase the amount he recommended and thought it was possible to get. One group wants to raise and another group wants to cut, the President said, and the result will probably be a substantial cut in the budget.

"We can't give up and retreat and surrender on either front," the President said.


George Christian

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