

Processing Note
Meeting Notes File, Addendum

The documents in Meeting Notes File, Addendum were added to the Meeting Notes File in January 2024. The documents in these folders are largely duplicated in the original material. One notable exception are the documents in the folder "[March 1968 Meetings with Correspondents]." Documents #1-3 do not appear in the original Meeting Notes Files. I could not locate the documents in the Personal Papers of Tom Johnson nor in Diary Backup. Documents #4-4j have the handwritten note "these notes to Bill Jordan" which we believe indicate they may have been photocopied for writing *The Vantage Point*.

The provenance of this material is largely unknown. The material was identified in the Library's classified records storage area and identified as duplicate Meeting Notes File. I opted to add the material in an addendum because some documents contain marginalia that are not recorded in the original series.

CARRIE TALLICHET SMITH

Archivist

January 30, 2024

March 20, 1968

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH PETER LISAGOR

March 19, 1968

In the President's Office

Meeting Began: 7:10 p.m.

Meeting Ended: 8:00 p.m.

Peter Lisagor: How was Daly involved in the Commission?

The President: You would have to ask the Mayor about his involvement.

For Commission, I am not going to proclaim any change in policy or repudiate the Secretary of State.

I sat with Senator Fulbright and three members of his Commission for three hours.

Fulbright wants to make the decisions. They didn't want to give us a solution. I met with:

Abe Fortas, Maxwell Taylor, Dean Acheson
Arthur Dean, Bob Murphy, General Ridgeway
and Mr. Reischauer

We don't have enough deployable reserves. They are down from 12 divisions to 1 1/2 divisions. We are going to fill them up with some reserves.

Reischauer wrote he's concerned about nuclear energy. Ike called me after California and said somebody sent him a wire saying we would use nuclear weapons. I told him absolutely not.

Peter Lisagor: Have Rockefeller's views on Vietnam changed?

The President: Not as far as I know. I like the Rockefellers.

Peter Lisagor: Are you having any problems with the old Kennedy people still in government?

The President: No, Secretary Freeman, Secretary Wirtz and Postmaster O'Brien are all working like dogs.

Peter Lisagor: What about Nick Katzenbach?

The President: Katzenbach might have a problem. I don't think so.

I made a deal with JFK. Kennedy was last to sign up when I was opposed for leader. In 1956, I told Mr. Sam I would vote for JFK rather than Kefauver. In 1960, I didn't fight until right at the last. I became a candidate. Mr. Sam said JFK will ask you to be Vice President. At 8:30 he came by and asked me to be Vice President. He said it could mean difference between the Democrats winning the election and not being elected. At 3:00, Bobby came down and said Rauh, Soapy Williams, Negroes and Reuther were against me.

Mr. Sam said to Bobby, "Who speaks for the Kennedys, you or Jack?" He said, "Jack." Mr. Sam said JFK had come to his suite and said LBJ would be Vice President. Then they came and read announcement to me. I have done all I could for the Kennedys. I have carried out all his programs and added to them.

When proposal came to me, there are four reasons why it wouldn't work.

Basic one was that President proclaim wrongness of current policy and if so, RFK wouldn't run in primaries.

I think RFK had made up his mind a long time ago. A senator told us that Pierre Salinger left American Airlines. He visited West Virginia.

He is going to have 12 books out this year, 12 against me.

Peter Lisagor: The word around town is that you indicated this at the Business Dinner.

The President: No. My guess is it came from a Senator who had talked to

Peter Lisagor: I saw on Monday. He didn't say anything about it.

Peter Lisagor: You have been hitting Vietnam hard. Is it better?

The President: We have difficult, mean war. It will require all we've got. We must not let Hanoi think they are going to win here what they can't win from boys out there. Hanoi is not ready to talk.

Peter Lisagor: What kind of reaction do you get

The President: Forty-three applauses in 34-minute speech in Minneapolis. Have had good reaction.

My daughter is under mental strain about church going.

Luci wanted to spend last few days with Pat. He wants to go out there like his brother.

The morale of the men out there has been good. Chuck has 8 years in. Pat has 3 years in Army National Guard.

We should bear in mind we owe it to those guys to let them know what they do is not wrong.

Peter Lisagor: Are you going to have an austerity package?

The President: We are consulting with the Congress.

I have gotten my budget as low as I can get it. They will sit down and make substantial reductions in non-Vietnam.

I hope fiscal people set a goal. You get Appropriation Committee to cut them.

I would like to see that done.

Re controllables - there are 30 billion in controllables.

Wisconsin - McCarthy will have a runaway.

Peter Lisagor: You have strong labor support.

I wouldn't rate Wisconsin a very strong state.

I am going to do about what they did in 1940. I can say I did my damndest.

I want to do what should be done. I don't want to be out when I am needed here.

Johnson really hasn't come to grips with a political division.

Yellow tablet

Will be some boys who helped out.

McCarthy has a gleam on his eye.

I like Dirksen. He likes my daughters. They like him. He will go with you if it's in the national interest.

Ford is petty and not like Dirksen.

2
March 20, 1968

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Meeting Ended: 1:35 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH
BRUCE AGNEW AND CHARLES GARDNER OF
BUSINESSWEEK

March 20, 1968

In the President's Office

On the economic picture --

It is not what we would like but what we can get that interests us.

We would like to go back to taxes we had before we lowered them when I came in. That would give us \$23 billion revenue this year.

We want this "penny tax" to get back less than half of what we took off. That would give us \$9.8 billion.

We are trying to get through the surtax. We have been trying since 1966.

Everyday the fiscal situation deteriorates.

We cut \$4 billion off our \$10 billion request last year. Now this year we know the failure to act has contributed to the gold problem.

We think the best we can get is \$9.8 billion. If they will tell us what they want to cut we will cut appropriations by \$9.8. That would only be \$3 to \$4 billion in expenditures.

I am going to try to get the 10% surcharge. I would like to get it, but plans may change.

I have had my hands full getting \$9.8. I am here trying to handle things as well as I can.

Penny tax should produce \$9.8

We must ask for several billion more for Vietnam.

We must send more troops to Vietnam.

Reasonably soon, within the next 10 days, we will make a decision on troops.

On the Balance of Payments:

We will have no change in the Balance of Payments Program, but we are asking for renewed efforts to do all we can.

We want to avoid a border tax.

On the Gold Crisis:

We expect the two-price arrangement to hold for some time.

Mob psychology comes into play on the gold situation. Inertia and delay cause us problems. Passage of the surtax is a signal we will pay our bills. We need it to be sure of the dollar.

On Senator Robert Kennedy:

No surprise he is running. He had gleam in his eye for some time. I am not going to say anything ugly about him.

On Vietnam:

The TET offensive resulted in much concern among Americans. They are trying to persuade Americans to pull out. They are trying to win here what the boys won't let them win out there.

On the National Alliance of Businessmen:

This is one of the greatest successes of business-government relations. It shows the strength of our systems.

Business has done much. I want to compliment them every time I can.

The National Alliance of Businessmen will try to place 200,000 in jobs this summer.

They have a long range goal of 500,000 hard-core unemployed being placed in jobs.

We hope this will avoid riots.

I am damn proud of them.

I wish you would say the President thinks businessmen have shown great compassion.

If we are to make this system work, we must make these men who have great talent apply it to other problems.

Businessmen in this administration have been progressive, enlightening leaders that their children can be proud of.

I do not expect to ask for a resolution supporting Vietnam.

We have a resolution. Unless they repeal it, we will abide by it.

Meeting Began:
Meeting Ended:

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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING

WITH BOB THOMPSON OF

HEARST NEWSPAPERS

March 21, 1968

BOB THOMPSON: The Vietnam situation.

THE PRESIDENT: The South Vietnamese will send and draft 18-year-olds.

The South Koreans -- if they send their troops it will upset the balance -- so we may not get any more South Korean troops.

Thailand will do more. We are equipping them. They will send more troops.

If the Philippines take care of themselves, I will be happy.

Ambassador Bunker, General Westmoreland, General Abrams will do a lot with South Vietnamese on land reform, troops, and corruption.

BOB THOMPSON: Appointment of the Philippine Ambassador?

THE PRESIDENT: I need to do something on that.

BOB THOMPSON: What about General Westmoreland?

THE PRESIDENT: General Westmoreland could be in charge of CINPAC or Army Chief of Staff, or Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

BOB THOMPSON: Are you thinking about replacing General Wheeler and General Westmoreland?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't made a decision on Westmoreland and Wheeler. I would like to keep both of them in place. I don't know yet what I will do.

BOB THOMPSON: How about the situation on the domestic front?

THE PRESIDENT: (a) We will have more jobs. (b) We will have more health programs. (c) We will have educational programs. (d) The ghetto problem is bad. We are going to carry out all the recommendations we can afford. (e) We are going to have to cut some programs, i. e., SST, Space, other places.

BOB THOMPSON: Are you worried about Bobby?

THE PRESIDENT: I am worried about any divisions in the party.

BOB THOMPSON: What about Rocky?

THE PRESIDENT: I expected it. I like him. I would like to put him in the Cabinet.

BOB THOMPSON: How are you feeling.

THE PRESIDENT: Fine. I lost my nap today. My family is good. Luci will go back to school. Lynda is going to go back to McCalls.

BOB THOMPSON: How about Chuck and Pat going off?

THE PRESIDENT: I feel like any parent would. I hate to think of the injuries and being shot up.

Pat's old unit may be called and sent to Vietnam.

Chuck Robb has been in eight years. Chuck Robb is going into the toughest area.

Every man in uniform feels the possibility of death.. What is bad is for us to make them think that what he is fighting for isn't worth it.

BOB THOMPSON: Do you foresee any change out there?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. (Gave summary of Westmoreland's report.)

The Tet offensive was bad psychologically.

South Vietnam should work out their problems together. Tet hit us. We hope they will start a dialogue. That will be the beginning of the end.

*these notes to
Bill Jordan*

4
February 26, 1970

NOTES OF MEETING WITH KEN CRAWFORD, MARCH 14, 1968

CRAWFORD: Are you making a large reassessment of our policy in Viet Nam?

PRESIDENT: We are working hard on a number of Viet Nam problems. We are trying to get General Westmoreland the people we already have promised him. We will give him some other people that he especially needs.

We are trying to get back in the field and to get the South Vietnamese better equipped. We also are seeking to get the gold cover passed. We are working to get the Tax Bill passed without much success. We are working at it every day and every week.

CRAWFORD: What are you going to do on gold sales?

PRESIDENT: We must work out a new plan. The situation now could throw the whole thing into a bad mess. I am working with Chairman Martin to pass the gold cover and to pass a tax bill to pay for all of these Viet Nam expenditures and domestic expenditures. We clearly need an austerity program to forego any needless expenditures. Some action must be taken on a new gold agreement.

CRAWFORD: What is your assessment of the current political situation?

PRESIDENT: I honestly do not know. I have not spent any time meeting on it. All I know is what I read in the newspapers. A lot of votes in New Hampshire were cast on the basis of the war. Nixon's war position is much more like my war position. If you total the amount of votes that went to the two in New Hampshire, it only leaves about 15% of the vote which went to McCarthy.

Bob Kennedy's conscience only came into play after he saw that McCarthy could pull off what he did in New Hampshire. After that, Senator Kennedy was "wishing it could be I."

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S NIGHT READING E PRESS

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RICO

Tom
FROM: Tom Johnson

son

ire early now?

efits.

quitting so early?

March 2, 1968

THE PRESIDENT: I have not given much thought to it.

Question: We were surprised by Puerto Rico -- why here?

THE PRESIDENT: It is a surprising world we live in.

Forrest Boyd: Does your intelligence indicate we can hold Khesanh?

THE PRESIDENT: We have never made a firm decision on whether we can hold Khesanh. I am familiar with all aspects of it. President Kennedy felt his information was bad -- and so his judgment was bad. He wanted independent judgment on intelligence, and set up a Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

Ray Scherer: What is your opinion of the Kerner Report?

THE PRESIDENT: I am generally familiar with it. I have generally reviewed but I have made no judgments on it. Kerner is a good fellow.

Question: How is George Christian?

THE PRESIDENT: No sign of wear.

Ray Scherer: He's got our vote.

THE PRESIDENT: Every man has some wear. George is unflappable.

March 15, 1968

46
Yd

Mr. Newton
in the Congress

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
SIR GORDON NEWTON AND JOE ROGALY
OF THE LONDON FINANCIAL TIMES

March 4, 1968
In the President's Office

Mr. Newton said that he had been talking to people in Washington about the gold situation. He said he anticipated an increase in Vietnam spending, and asked how it would affect the economy.

The President replied that this would depend on the degree of increase and on developments in Vietnam. "The odds are there will be an increase. Whether it is a net increase, I really don't know. We will be looking for every possible reduction in our budget to offset any increase. The effect would be inconsequential this fiscal year. Next year expenditures could go way up or way down, depending on circumstances. At most, Vietnam is costing us \$17.5 billion out of a Defense budget of \$70 billion. I could conceive of a \$2 or \$3 billion increase in the Defense budget, but could also conceive of a cutback in such things as housing for the military or something else."

Mr. Newton commented that "Europe does not believe the price of gold will hold."

The President replied that "If they don't believe the first statement, they won't believe the thirty-first. We think holding the prices is the wisest and best policy. We intend to do what I said."

Mr. Newton asked if the President foresaw the possibility of a trade war, assuming that Europe did not respond to U.S. efforts on a balance of trade.

The President said: "It is a possibility, but not a likelihood. We are going to do everything we can to prevent it. We have no desires to return to isolation or to Smoot-Hawley days. We have to take these things step by step. Now we expect surplus countries to take the same enlightened attitude we took when we were surplus."

The President replied: "They are just like always ... in ... we all pull together. There is no substitute for the ... you to the ... country ... all we are we ..."

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S
INTERVIEW BY MAX LERNER

MARCH 4, 1968

Mr. Lerner: It's been three years since I saw you at Max Freedman's home. It was in the middle of the Dominican crisis.

The President: On my way home, I heard the Turks were going to invade Cyprus. Right there in the car I told the Turks that all bets were off if they did that, and they turned the Turkish fleet around.

Mr. Lerner: The enemy seems to have taken the initiative in Vietnam. I wonder whether you feel this is a new phase of the war.

The President: Yes, it is a new phase. In the past we have had to look for them and chase them, and they have conducted hit and run raids. Now they are coming en masse. But our firepower counts more in this kind of battle. If they're giving up their previous tactics, I think that could be an advantage to our side.

Mr. Lerner: Except they're coming in many places. They seem to be concerned with keeping the initiative. There is presently disillusionment, not directed at Westmoreland, but at our general strategy. Do you think this new phase gives us an advantage we did not have?

The President: Yes. They suffered 40,000 casualties or more. They attacked at Tet, a sacred holiday, which aroused the Vietnamese. They thought they would get a general uprising and isolate the Americans. But they didn't do that. They are disrupted now and haven't been able to hit Khe Sanh. It's a kamikaze deal, almost. They're not as strong today as they were 30 days ago.

Mr. Lerner: But when we talk of people killed we don't really mean much, because they are being replaced. Aren't they getting new weapons from Russia?

The President: Yes.

Mr. Lerner: Do you equate this with our Civil War, as some people do?

MORE

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S NIGHT READING PRESS

FROM: ^{Tom} Tom Johnson

vacation? "

THE PRESIDENT: The weather is good year around. I spent time with the Chief of Staff. It was my first overnight with him.

Bob Young: What are your plans for this year's campaign?

THE PRESIDENT: No plans for a formal campaign.

Barbara Furlow: What is the situation on copper?

THE PRESIDENT: We recognize the right to strike and hope collective bargaining will work. The strike now injures the nation's cost on balance of payments, Defense, and jobs in the states. It is time now to get down to business. We're going to ask them to sit down and bargain.

Carroll Kilpatrick: What is the future of Vietnam?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing we can say right now.

George Packard: What is the situation in Khesanh?

THE PRESIDENT: We are not certain of attacks. They are attacking. The activity is confined to mortar and artillery.

Bob Pierpoint: Is Khesanh really worth it?

THE PRESIDENT: If I were in the enemy's shape, I'd keep us guessing. Ike said he would give love and money for the type of information the enemy gets free.

Bob Pierpoint: Are they capable for a second offensive?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Intelligence indicates two waves of 60,000

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Rec'd
3/11/68
5:52 pm

POINTS COVERED BY THE PRESIDENT AT THE
MEETING OF THE EDITORS AT THE
GANNETT LUNCHEON

March 9, 1968

THOSE ATTENDING THE LUNCHEON WERE:

Senator Harry F. Byrd, Jr.
Turner Catledge, Executive Director, The New York Times
Wes Gallagher, General Manager, Associated Press
Henry Gemmill, Chief of Washington Bureau, Wall Street Journal
Richard Helms, Director CIA
John E. Heselden, Vice President, Gannett Newspapers
William F. Kerby, President, Dow Jones & Company, Inc.
Benjamin McKelway, Senior Vice President, Washington Star
Robert Lucas, Washington Bureau Chief, Gannett News Service
Paul Miller, President, Gannett Newspapers and the Associated Press
Harry T. Montgomery, Deputy General Manager, Associated Press
Allen H. Neuharth, Executive Vice President, Gannett Newspapers
Walker Stone, Editor-in-Chief, Scripps-Howard News Alliance
Punch Sulzberger, New York Times
Don Maxwell, Publisher, Chicago Tribune
George Christian

for

I. VIETNAM

What did we know in advance about the city attacks? Not enough, but also a good deal. On January 24, Westmoreland said he wanted to be prepared to cancel the Tet Truce because they were taking advantage of it. We thought the attack would come at Khe Sanh and on the cities. The Viet Cong were told there would be a general uprising, defects from the Army and that the United States was willing to go along with a coalition government.

Because Tet is so important to the Vietnamese, many of their units were 50% decimated by leaves.

The attacks gave the Viet Cong a psychological advantage and demonstrated they had initiative. But neither side won a great victory. Nobody ever thought the Viet Cong did not have the capability to launch an attack. They made quite a mess, but did not achieve any permanent gains.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH MR. NORMAN
COUSINS, EDITOR OF THE SATURDAY REVIEW - MARCH 15, 1968

Mr. Cousins said there is much wavering in the educated community, and noted that while our population is up 7%, college enrollment is up 102% in the past ten years. He said he thought efforts should be made to get this community back on board on the war, and that the Vice President could play a big role by involving him in negotiations.

Mr. Cousins also suggested that the President make an appearance at the United Nations and take advantage of International Rights Year by speaking on "Human Manifesto."

Mr. Cousins said that when he went to the Far East with the Vice President two years ago, Mr. Humphrey told him to improve his contacts with the East European countries, which he did. Cousins said his best contacts were in Warsaw. He said he thinks if the President wants the Vice President to meet with representatives of North Vietnam, it could be done secretly in Warsaw in conjunction with a Vice Presidential visit to Poland.

He said U Thant believes that a bombing pause of 3 or 4 days will produce arrangements for talks between the Vice President and these representatives.

The President said that both suggestions are pleasing to him and asked Mr. Cousins to reduce them to writing and send them to George Christian.

However, the President expressed these views to Cousins:

1. Hanoi is not interested in negotiating until after our election.
2. Pauses in the bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong for 6 1/2 months last year, coupled with many approaches to the North

More

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NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT WITH
MR. JIM LUCAS - MARCH 18, 1968
17

Mr. Lucas asked the President for assessment of manpower needs in Vietnam. The President said General Westmoreland's needs are unlimited but what will be deployed has not been determined. He said it is his judgment the South Vietnamese will try to add the 18 and 19 year olds soon, that he thought we would have a Thai division by July 1 and possibly will get another ROK division.

For ourselves, he said, what Westmoreland really needs is 7, 8 or 9 battalions over a period of the next few months. The President said this would be 25,000 to 45,000 men and more depends on what the enemy does. Mr. Lucas commented that the Viet Cong pulled their elite cadres out of the country for the Tet offensive and a lot of them had been killed.

On the matter of negotiating, the President said he did not see much chance of settling the war by negotiation this year. He said Hanoi thinks the administration will lose its horsepower.

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J.L.

4h
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45

- 2 -

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