

FOREWORD

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Punctuation:

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

- * * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.
- [?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.
- To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.
- . . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.
- _____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.
- [] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as */Meeting appears to be breaking up/* or */Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./*

Names:

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

Preparation:

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made.

Dictabelt 9A, Item 9A5

March 4, 1963

Baggs¹: . . . what we call Interama.

JFK: Oh, yeah, that's right. Right, right.

Baggs: I'm, I'm told that after you, the committee you referred this to-- an interdepartmental committee--is now writing a report favoring Federal participation.

JFK: Eh-yuh.

Baggs: This has taken on a new importance, Mr. President, in our community, because of the economic dilemma here, because of the Cuban agitation to go invade the island. Uh, it would seem to me after generating some cerebral wattage with some other people on it, it seemed to me it would be a very prudent investment on the part of the government, which is making a considerable investment here already . . .

JFK: Yeah.

Baggs: . . . to create jobs, and possibly if, if the, the theme of this Interama of, of, of progress through freedom in the Americas is properly, uh, done, that it might divert some of these more militant Cubans to a positive, uh, thing, an Interama here.

JFK: Well, I, uh, let me say I . . . What, uh, sort of threw me off about the presentation was, number one, the great emphasis on free enterprise, that this was going to be an ornament to the free enterprise system. I thought that was sort of, uh, rather nonsensical. If we're, if the Federal government's going to have to put 50 million dollars into it . . .

Baggs: I don't . . .

JFK: . . . uh, to prove that, uh, the government ought to stay out of everything.

Baggs: Yep.

¹ William C. Baggs

JFK: And the other thing was the amount of the Federal participation. It would really add up to, uh, sort of a permanent fair, uh, which would be constructive, but it was, uh, the question I have was it really worth the dough? We're going to end up really building the Latin American, and contributing the Latin American, uh, pavilions, and I didn't really think we're gonna get much out of it. There'd be a lot of visitors pass by it, but, I didn't know whether it would really make much difference.

Baggs: Well, here's what we have done. We've put up land--uh, 17 hundred acres of bay-front land--roads, road money, and, uh, self-liquidating bonds, uh, to the amount of 80 million dollars. Our own community has done this. Uh, uh, this will be more than just. . . . This will be more than a serious Disneyland.

JFK: Uh-huh.

Baggs: Um, we have many little projects, such as getting, uh, a hundred students from each country, say from Venezuela, and fifty of them would work as guides in the Vene-, Venezuelan hall every morning, while the other fifty went to the University of Miami.

JFK: Yeah.

Baggs: A Peace Corps idea in reverse. There're many little items like this, which would make this more than just a Seattle fair.

JFK: Yeah.

Baggs: And the idea of the free enterprise system, uh, the theme of this is, is, is, "Progress through the Environment of Freedom," not necessarily economic, uh, uh, free enterprise as Barry Goldwater mouths . . .

JFK: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Baggs: . . . just what free man can do.

JFK: Yeah. Who is that fellow that made the presentation up here, I . . .

Baggs: Dr. Irving Muscat.

JFK: Yeah. What's he like?

Baggs: Uh, he's a good, uh, solid man, who started out with Bob Hutchins /Robert Maynard Hutchins/ at the University of Chicago and then went into private industry. And, uh, has many of the basic patents on plastics in this country.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Baggs: He's a retired, active person.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

Baggs: The reason I bother you is that, uh, this thing is. . . . I think if we could. . . . Uh, Dr. Muscat and a couple of us would like to come up there, uh, before you go to Costa Rica, and present this thing to you, uh, and to show you. . . . Uh, and your own interdepartmental committee is now working on a draft to you . . .

JFK: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Baggs: . . . recommending this. Uh, and . . .

JFK: Yeah. What's the Federal contribution? Do you, you remember? I thought it was 50 million. Now that may be too much.

Baggs: No, I think, I think what we're talking about is something like 25, and much of this I think we could get out of ARA money.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Baggs: Uh, but what I wanted to do is, uh, to intrude upon your calendar, uh, uh, some time, say the first of next week if I could.

JFK: Yeah, I'll be glad to see you, uh, Bill. As I say, I thought Muscat had an awfully sort of, uh, ceremonial presentation, and it made me feel that it was really a sort of, was not the sort of thing we ought to put that kind of money into, because it would add up to, well, as you say, a serious Disneyland. It would add up to a tourist attraction, but would not have any particular political significance. Now it may have some domestic political significance, which is not to be sneezed at, I didn't think it had any inter-American political significance.

Baggs: Well, what we were hoping was this. We're hoping to. . . . I hold to the old view that the only way you're going to break, uh, start any reform down in South America is through these wealthy families . . .

JFK: Uh.

Baggs: . . . which have the land and own the generals, or the generals and the families.

JFK: Yeah.

Baggs: We're going to try to get these people here to look at this and to see what homesteading, for instance, did for this country.

JFK: Yeah.

Baggs: Uh, what social reform has done in this country. Uh, we'll get their cultural expressions here.

JFK: Well, I'll tell you what, I'll be glad to see you next, uh, Monday.

Baggs: All right, sir.

JFK: Uh, now would you talk to Mrs. Lincoln, and, uh, you can work out a satisfactory time?

Baggs: All right, sir. Can I impose on you for one more thing?

JFK: Sure.

Baggs: Probably when you were at Harvard you remember Dr. Fabien Sevitzky, who is the nephew of Serge Koussevitzky, who built that Boston Symphony.

JFK: Yeah. I knew, oh, I knew Serge, uh, Koussevitzky, right.

Baggs: Well, Dr. Sevitzky came to this country as an immigrant in 1923, in March, and the town is having a celebration for him on the evening of March 31. Uh, he is the conductor of our symphony . . .

JFK: Oh, I see. Yeah.

Baggs: . . . orchestra here.

JFK: Right.

Baggs: And we wanted to solicit--we have a committee here putting this on-- and we wanted to solicit a letter from you . . .

JFK: Right.

Baggs: . . . and I will send a letter to Mrs. Lincoln, outlining the facts of the matter, and, if you could give us, uh, a letter we . . .

JFK: Okay.

Baggs: . . . we'd like to read it on that evening.

JFK: Fine. Why don't you just give me a draft, and I'll be glad to send it.

Baggs: All right, sir.

JFK: Good. Fine. Well, now you'll be in touch with her, and, and, uh, I'll see you on Monday.

Baggs: All right, sir, and Mrs. Lincoln can set up the time?

JFK: Right.

Baggs: All right.

JFK: Okay. Good.

Baggs: Thank you, Mr. President.

JFK: Thanks, Bill.

Baggs: Bye.

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