

FOREWORD

Transcript Warning:

All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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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.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 27D

Conversation #1: /Preliminary/ William R. Tyler and W.H. Operator

Tyler: Hello?

W.H. Operator: Hello.

Tyler: Hello?

W.H. Operator: He is In New York until Sunday. They think that he could be reached there. They wish to know if the minister, Mr. [Robinson], could help.

Tyler: Yeah, I'll speak with Mr. [Robinson], please.

W.H. Operator: Thank you.

[Pause]

Tyler: Charles Bridgeby [phonetic] is in New York, but I'm going to speak to the minister, Basil [Robinson].

[Pause]

W.H. Operator: I'm awfully sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Secretary, . . .

Tyler: That's alright.

W.H. Operator: . . . They referred me to another number over in the, uh, residence. I'm trying to reach him.

Tyler: O.K. I'll hold on.

W.H. Operator: Thank you There you are.

[Then conversation begins]

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Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 27D

Conversation #1A: Bill Tyler, calling from the President's Office, and Basil /Robinson/

October 12, 1963, 11:00 a.m.

Mr. Tyler¹: Hello, Basil.

Mr. /Robinson/: Good morning, Bill.

Mr. Tyler: Good morning, Basil, greetings, I am calling from the President's office.

Mr. /Robinson/: Yes.

Mr. Tyler: He has just talked with the Prime Minister . . .

Mr. /Robinson/: Yes.

Mr. Tyler: . . . and I am going to read to you a statement which they have both agreed should be immediately released.

Mr. /Robinson/: Thank you.

Mr. Tyler: And soon as I get back to my office, if you like, I can have it copied and sent over to you, though it will be released at 11:30, so that we can get a copy for you from here. But the President did want you, uh . . . the Ambassador and you to be informed of it. It goes as follows:

“President Kennedy and Prime Minister Pearson of Canada today discussed by phone the difference which has developed regarding Maritime Union Organization on the Great Lakes. Following this conversation, the President issued the following statement: ‘I share with Prime Minister Pearson the hope that the Great Lakes maritime matter

¹ William R. Tyler

can be settled quickly, fairly, and without further misunderstanding, and join in his appeal for a responsible solution.

“There has been earnest efforts on both sides to find a basis for settlement in an agreement between the Canadian and U. S. Labor organizations. These efforts have apparently failed. This is cause for serious regret, but not for mutual recrimination that might prejudice future relationships between the two countries.

““The U. S. government has not and will not express any judgment regarding the legislation which is now pending in the Canadian Parliament. We stand ready, at the same time, to pursue any course of cooperative action which will serve the public and private interests which are involved here.””

That is the end of the press release.

Mr. [Robinson]: Right.

Mr. Tyler: So the Prime Minister knows this. The President read it to him and this is the final agreed version, and it will be put out quite shortly, in about ten or fifteen minutes.

Mr. [Robinson]: Well, I think what we will do, if we may, Bill, is to send a man to the White House.

Mr. Tyler: If you would, yea, that would be good. I will tell Pierre Salinger.

Mr. [Robinson]: We will do that immediately. And we appreciate very much your calling.

Mr. Tyler: Right, Basil, will you let Charles know? Will you, if you can reach him?

Mr. [Robinson]: He is waiting for a call.

Mr. Tyler: He is, fine, I heard he was in New York, but I thought that it would be easier to call you.

Mr. [Robinson]: He is on the point of leaving, but he was anxious to hear from you.

Mr. Tyler: Oh, fine. O.K., good bye.

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Dictabelt 27D

Conversation #2: President Kennedy and Robert S. McNamara

October 16, 1963, 5:00 p.m.

President: I don't know, I assume that once this thing starts to go, it goes pretty fast. The personal letters will not come out, but the ones the committee have will become general knowledge. Now, that does not include some of those letters about that judge and so on. And I told him that they should be found in his really personal file and not be lying around. Nobody had those, I guess.

Sec. McNamara: No, although they will probably eventually get at them by questioning of Fred [Korth].

President: Well, they will have trouble with that. I told Fred that, uh.

Sec. McNamara: We are cleaning out all his files. We got Abe Fortas who is functioning as his personal counsel and going over all the papers and segregating them into groups.

President: I see. I would have that one group, really.

Sec. McNamara: We are going to stash it away as best we can, but there are a lot of copies floating about, and if they get him under oath, it is going to be a little difficult, because there are a lot of other people who have seen them. But we are doing everything we can to limit the amount of material that will eventually come out.

President: Yea, I turned back my copy.

Sec. McNamara: That is right. We are trying to collect all the copies that are available in the building, but there is a Navy Captain that is aware of this and there is another civilian aware of it. There is so many people involved that it is going to be

damn difficult to eventually keep them from disclosing it. This [Senator] Mundt questioning, for example, is really probing.

President: Yeah.

Sec. McNamara: But Fortas we are making completely aware of the whole set of papers and he is counseling Fred on how much he can dispose of. And we have our own people going through the files as well.

President: Bob, what about now? It seemed to me a statement may be called for before the end of the day.

Sec. McNamara: I thought not, Mr. President:

President: No, I think that is right. It may not be, but it just depends. It may come out worse than it really is, and I think that in that case, it would seem to me we ought to have a statement ready. Then we can decide at 6:30 or so and we see how much press pressure we get.

Sec. McNamara: Alright.

President: So, I didn't know whether you could get to work on it.

Sec. McNamara: Yes, we will do that. I was just going to go through this day with no comment. But I think you are right, we ought to have a statement ready.

President: Well, we would say about not being TFX and no financial inducements were, uh, in fact, he had to borrow money from a bank in order to continue, uh, I mean, in other words, to his credit, so it doesn't look like he was making some killing up here. And the third thing would probably be when it was pointed out to him that my order of January or whatever it was in '61 about no business, he felt, uh, I don't know, this was just an embarrassing thing to the Defense Department or the Navy or the Government and, therefore, he asked to resign.

Sec. McNamara: Yes, I would like to avoid at least for a short run any indication that we forced him to resign.

President: That is right. He ought to be on the grounds that he decided rather than embarrassing the Navy, or the Defense Department, that he would resign.

Sec. McNamara: Yea, I think he should take the initiative that these were completely unrelated to TFX and no way was an illegal or unethical act.

President: Unethical it might be. But it is not an illegal act.

Sec. McNamara: I think that he could say unethical, we couldn't, but he would say neither illegal nor unethical, but that it could have been embarrassing to the Administration. He wanted to have full opportunity to fight it with all the time at his disposal to do so, and he thought that it would be unreasonable to try to accomplish that while Naval Secretary.

President: Why doesn't he have one ready, and perhaps you would have one ready.

Sec. McNamara: This is what I thought we would do.

President: And I could call you back around 6:30 and see where we are.

Sec. McNamara: Very good.

President: Right, fine.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

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Dictabelt 27D

Conversation #3: President Kennedy and Prime Minister Lester Pearson

October 21, 1963, 11:45 a.m.

P. M. Pearson: ----- maritime workers.

President: Right, how many they got up there?

P. M. Pearson: Oh, they got some hundreds and they're still coming in. This was a terrible thing for them to have done when we were so close to a settlement.

President: Right.

P. M. Pearson: And this has got the backs of our Labor Congress up and in spite of our best efforts over the weekend, we can't get them to resume any kind of negotiation as long as this sort of thing is going on.

President: Right.

P. M. Pearson: Because, you can understand, with these people bringing this kind of pressure, and I think our friend Paul Hall knew all about this, and New York, too. Now I will have to back up to the Labor Congress in this attitude. We have demanded that these people go back to work. At the present, this morning 28 ships are struck in Montreal harbor. And this is illegal, entirely illegal, and we will try to make that clear. No, what we hope to do, we will have to proclaim our law, and we will have to put, uh, see the best end we can find. And then what we will have to do up here is wind up the public trusteeship as quickly as we can.

President: I see, but you are going to go ahead with the public trusteeship.

P. M. Pearson: If we didn't do that now, we would be pilloried both by the labor movement on one side and by [John] Diefenbaker and his people on the other. And we would be in a hopeless position. We are going to do this if it is not too badly,

it won't be badly received in this country. In fact, all the newspapers are attacking us for our delay.

President: Yeah.

P. M. Pearson: But the main thing now is to have a minimum of violent reaction to this in American ports, so that if the reaction isn't too bad, then the first job, really, of the three trustees, once they get this union situation cleared up will be to turn the union back to the workers.

President: Yeah. Yeah.

P. M. Pearson: And that can be done in a short time, but it can't be done in a short time if this is the beginning of a really serious trouble between the two labor groups.

President: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

P. M. Pearson: So I would beseech you to do what you can do to tell [George] Meany and his people not to react violently.

President: Yeah. Yeah. You are familiar with our problem with Hall here. Well, our relations with Meany are good. Our relations, uh, we don't have much influence with Hall. But I will talk to them again, and I got Secretary Wirtz with me now. And, uh . . .

P. M. Pearson: The thing that blew the Labor people up here was the fact that Hall knew all about this proposed action apparently a week ago, when we were negotiating and we were real close to agreement, and for him not only to have known about, but apparently approved of this kind of pressure. And it is very serious pressure on a government to have these people march on us like this. Banks himself is here today, by the way. I do want, though, and I hope to make this public, I want you to know how very much--

--/This was the end of the tape and none followed./--