

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 #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./--