

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 14B

Conversation #1: President Kennedy and C. Douglas Dillon

March 12, 1963

[Continued from Dictabelt 14A, Conversation #5]

Sec. Dillon: Oh, we have been trying awfully hard to avoid that, and, uh, we'll . . .

President: But we don't want to make it so complicated nobody ends up knowing what they can do.

Sec. Dillon: That is right. That's what we're trying to . . . That is why we have taken as long as we have. To try and simplify the damn thing and make it better, which we realize is a terrible problem. We haven't been happy with it a bit.

President: Okay, fine. Well, I would like to find out a little more about how much it is causing outside a few restaurants in New York, as far as our difficulties with it, and then also what are we going to do on it. And if you can have . . . make sure Kaplan . . .

Sec. Dillon: Yea.

President: Okay, thanks, Doug.

Sec. Dillon: Fine, Mr. President.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 14B

Conversation #2: President Kennedy and Paul B. Fay

March 12, 1963

President: . . . close down San Francisco, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, or Boston.

Sec. Fay: Well, I am with you all the way. We have no results of this thing. This thing is a . . .

President: But, make sure that it's a . . . let me tell you . . . let me know before anything begins to even surface on that thing. 'Cause . . .

Sec. Fay: Very definitely.

President: Because those places are home.

Sec. Fay: Yea, there is some rumor that they're even gonna think about shutting down, uh . . . uh . . . Treasure Island. Which is just like drilling a hole through me.

President: Yea, I understand that, but I wouldn't close down anything in San Francisco, Philadelphia, New York or Boston.

Sec. Fay: Alright.

President: Because we might just as well go home ourselves, then. If you like it down here, you better not close down those . . . any of those yards.

Sec. Fay: Alright, I will stay right on that. I know exactly where I got it from.

President: Okay.

Sec. Fay: Listen, one other thing, I wanted to bring up that San Francisco as far as the convention will meet any price of any city in the country. They've got a they

have got a hotel tax fund out there which has over a million dollars in it. So they will come in with a proposal of 700 thousand.

President: Okay, I will check into it. I will let [John] Bailey know that.

Sec. Fay: Okay, thank you.

President: Bye.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 14B

Conversation #3: President Kennedy and Richard Goodwin

March 12, 1963

Mr. Goodwin: I haven't read it yet.

President: Well, there's one part that I think is good, which is the amount of a . . . what our situation was in the '30s in regard to farms being like and all the rest. And then to show what progress we've made in the last years. I think that's the good part of the speech. The rest of it you may have some other thoughts about it.

Mr. Goodwin: Alright, fine.

President: And I have to make an opening statement, I guess, too, don't I?

Mr. Goodwin: Yea, you got two others. You got one at the airport when you come in the helicopter and meet all the other Presidents, and then you got your opening remarks at the conference, which every President will make about a ten minute little talk. Those are the only other ones of any consequence. Some off the cuff remarks at, uh -- we will prepare a sheet or two, you know.

President: Well, you are getting some stuff together, are you?

Mr. Goodwin: That is right, I will be getting it all together.

President: Okay, fine.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 14B

Conversation #4: President Kennedy and Roswell Gilpatric

March 12, 1963

President: The way you stood up there and took an oath and all the rest made me proud of you. I thought that you looked terrific and thought it was very good and thought that you did a terrific job on that TFX. It was very good.

Sec. Gilpatric: Well, I am really working on that now. We are going to hit hard tomorrow with a statement that will be read, and then Bob /Robert S. McNamara/ will be cross-examined on it next week. But I think we can regain the initiative.

President: Well, when you think, as you pointed out, that both the planes were satisfactory. It isn't as if, you know the way they have been handling that thing, but if they had only done that on the stockpile, we could really, uh, when you think that that case, uh, we never got that thing off the ground in a year and they have made the TFX, you know, when there hasn't been any scandal. But, anyway, I thought that it was very good.

Sec. Gilpatric: Thanks very much, Mr. President.

President: Fine, Ros, okay.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 14B

Conversation #5: President Kennedy and Lawrence F. O'Brien

March 12, 1963

President: -----construction will add a billion dollars to the budget, the pay raise will be almost automatic. Construction you have to have appropriation for, so maybe we will be back with our budget figures. But it does . . . There are two things, first, as a practical matter, it does raise our budget, secondly, it is not a bad point to make. I mean, it takes a lot of the guts out of the attacks on us.

Mr. O'Brien: Yeah.

President: If we can made the point that the House of Representatives, in one week, went a billion dollars over the President's budget, it seems to me it is pretty important for us politically. Indicating we, after all, sent up a pretty hard budget, and maybe we are not the ones who are the great spenders, etc., etc.

Mr. O'Brien: I gather the reluctance . . . the reluctance of the leadership in this instance in some degree is that there is unanimity in this area. You know that is the problem we will be faced with.

President: Well, you will have a voice vote. We don't want a roll call. What we're wondering is whether Kermit Gordon should write a letter of the budget, indicating what this will cost. And indicating that it will also cost about 60 or 70 million dollars in our gold flow. Now, if he wrote the letter gratuitously, that's rather hard, or added a statement. The other way would be if a Congressman wrote and asked him. I would just like to have the point made, because I don't want to have a fight with [Carl] Vinson. I think it is a goddam good point.

Mr. O'Brien: I think it is is a damn good point, and I know that [Hale] Boggs for one, at least, it is perfectly willing to make the point on the floor, and I am sure that he could do it in a way that wouldn't get us in a jam up with Vinson. But it . . . it a . . . I think this it is worthwhile. Actually, I think there would be some real mileage in this in the press if they catch it.

President: Well, now, there are two issues. You really have to put them together. Isn't the other one the construction bill that will come out Thursday, supposedly?

Mr. O'Brien: Yeah, yeah.

President: Now, maybe we could oppose that better than we could the pay raise. Kermit Gordon could then let it say what you did in the House 691 million plus this, adds a billion, and we just feel that this, you know, makes our budget problems more difficult, etc., etc. So it is is a question of whether he writes it on the pay raise or waits and does it Thursday on this other matter, or whether he puts the two together or what he does. Would you think about it?

Mr. O'Brien: Alright, I can see your point on the pay raise. That it is a little touchy. Not only in the same area as we have the other one, but also in the area of the reaction of the military and their families, et cetera.

President: Well, the Budget Bureau it is not me and it is is not McNamara. It is looks just like discussing what, uh, I mean, they will pass it, but it will, a . . . it's a valid point.

Mr. O'Brien: Why don't you let me think about the procedure on it.

President: Alright.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 14B

Conversation #6: President Kennedy and Arthur Sylvester

March 12, 1963

President: How did you do?

Mr. Sylvester: Well, I don't think that they're happy and I didn't make any personal friends, but I think that we loused up the record and used up half a day to give Bob [Robert S. McNamara] his half day insurance to get some more ready.

President: Did they eat on you?

Mr. Sylvester: Oh, they were . . . they were pretty mad about everything.

President: Yeah. Oh, you mean they just like to give it out, you know, they never like to take it up there.

Mr. Sylvester: Well, they sort of got it, and I know my counselor was aghast. He said, "Oh, God, you didn't make any friends, they will kill you." I said, well.

President: Who said this?

Mr. Sylvester: Jack Stempler, who was there from our law, our office.

President: This is after you finished?

Mr. Sylvester: Yes, after we finished. They had me there, and then when we were all through, they said, why don't you apologize and we wouldn't be here for two hours. Well, I didn't make any comment.

President: I thought you did that in your letter.

Mr. Sylvester: That's what I told them.

President: What did they say?

Mr. Sylvester: Well, then they . . . then they . . . I don't know what they wanted after that. Then they didn't like it because I said that I thought that the full picture hadn't come out, and the way it is coming out, the Defense Department view of this whole thing which was a matter of high defense policy came out in a way that the public got a distorted view. Well, that started them off. I was making a record and this was making them wild, of course.

President: When did they release your record?

Mr. Sylvester: Right away it is being released.

President: Oh, is it?

Mr. Sylvester: I read to them the story out of the Chicago Daily News by Jim McCarthy, whom I talked to this morning, which began by saying that the Senate investigators has made up their minds that this is a bad contract. And then a quotation from investigator who said, quote,

President: About the plane?

Mr. Sylvester: That is correct. Well, they didn't like that. I kept reading that as many times as I could.

President: And what did they say then? They denied that they said that?

Mr. Sylvester: Oh, they didn't even ask. They wouldn't ask, you know.

President: Was [Senator Henry "Scoop"] Jackson there? . . .

Mr. Sylvester: Was who? Oh, every one of them were there. They were all there.

President: And Scoop, how is he defending his?

Mr. Sylvester: Oh, he was belting the hell out of me, saying that I had made many mistakes, and I . . ., you know, etc., etc. Then [Senator Karl] Mundt finally said to me, "well, you know you have been quoted as saying that you don't believe in telling the truth, would this affect your testimony." Then I said, Senator, this is an insulting remark on your part, I have taken an oath. Well, he backed away from it then. You know, they were trying to give me the works there. It was quite an enjoyable day. The record will be thoroughly confused, but we will

have a lot of things on the record that these guys will pick up, and that is what bothers them, really.

President: When does Bob [McNamara] go up there?

Mr. Sylvester: I have not been back this morning.

President: How was [John] McClellan?

Mr. Sylvester: He got pretty mad when I kept reading the Chicago Daily News thing. I didn't read it once, I think I read it four times. [Laughter] That made them wild.

President: Okay, good, fine, righto.

Mr. Sylvester: Okay. [Laughter]