

WH6411-07-6203-6204_scroller

Date: 1964-11-05

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Robert F. Kennedy

Participant: Hubert H. Humphrey Jr.

Start Time: 10:37

Place: LBJ Ranch

SCROLLER TITLE: Better Days [[km: no quotation marks around this title]]

SCENE SETTER: President Johnson and Vice President–elect Hubert H. Humphrey Jr. exchanged pleasantries and congratulations with several senators in this call, including the newly elected Democratic senator from New York, Robert F. “Bobby” Kennedy. This conversation between Johnson and Kennedy was one of their most lighthearted and good-natured dialogues recorded on the White House tapes.

Robert F. “Bobby” Kennedy: Hello?

President Johnson: By God, you learned how to smile in this campaign.

Kennedy: [*chuckling*] I told you. I did what you told me to do after you came up there.

President Johnson: Yeah, yeah. Well, I just picked up all the papers here and if you weren’t waving—you must think you’re going to be running up there a long time. I saw you smiling, waving [with] a bunch of kids.

Kennedy: No, you know what I was doing?

President Johnson: They’re not even registered.

Kennedy: I was just thinking of working with you. [*Laughter.*] And that made me smile.

President Johnson: [*Laughs.*] How you feeling?

Kennedy: All right. How about you?

President Johnson: It looks like you had a nice meeting with [Edward M.] Teddy [Kennedy] [D–Massachusetts].

Kennedy: Yeah, that was fine.

President Johnson: What’d you let him gut you that way for? He practically destroyed you in Massachusetts.

Kennedy: Of course he did. [*Kennedy and Humphrey laugh.*] And he brought up the seniority system.

Hubert H. Humphrey Jr.: [*Laughs.*] [*Unclear.*]

President Johnson: By God, he's already throwing his weight around even before he gets out of the hospital.

Kennedy: [*Chuckles.*] I know. He's impossible. But, you know, he won by almost a million up there? He ran almost as well as you.

President Johnson: Isn't that wonderful? Well, now, you tell him I'm coming back to see him about three o'clock some morning.

Kennedy: [*chuckling*] Yeah, right.

President Johnson: [*Laughs.*] How did we do in Brooklyn [New York]? That trip hurt us much?

Kennedy: No, no. I think—I think it was terrific. [*Humphrey laughs.*] It really was terrific. Now, if you can do the Brooklyn Navy Yard as you promised us.

Humphrey: [*Laughs heartily.*] God, there you go!

President Johnson: Those goddamn Navy yards. I bet I never hear the last of them.

Kennedy: Listen, I counted up the promises I made during the campaign. There are 220. [*President Johnson laughs.*] If I have to tell—

President Johnson: Here—

Kennedy: We have [*unclear*].

President Johnson: You better promise Hubert something here, because he won't—he may not recognize anybody up there but that preacher for the prayer. You may not even get recognized. [*Laughter.*] [*speaking to Humphrey*] Hubert get on here with him.

Humphrey: [*chuckling*] Bob, how are you?

Kennedy: How are you, Hubert?

Humphrey: Fine. I'll keep him reminded about that Navy yard. [*Kennedy laughs and acknowledges.*] Seems that—

Kennedy: Congratulations, though. That was terrific.

Humphrey: Yeah, it was wonderful, and I'm glad you and Teddy got together there.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Humphrey: Ted told me that he figured that the way to get elected [was to] just let the women do it. [*Kennedy chuckles.*] He said when he worked it over real hard he won by about 300,000. When he let [Joan] Joanie [Kennedy] do it, why, [*chuckling*] God, he won by a million.

Kennedy: Oh, I agree with that.

President Johnson: Somebody told me I ought to call you up and find out how to get them to concede early. [*Kennedy and Humphrey chuckle softly.*] How'd you get old [Kenneth B.] Keating [R–New York] to come out there and fold and give us that forced smile?

Kennedy: How did you get old Senator [Barry M.] Goldwater [Sr.] [R–Arizona] to run again?

President Johnson: Well, hell, he didn't—Goldwater didn't come till the next day. He waited 24 hours.

Kennedy: Yeah, and I know. Everybody was worried about who was ahead.

President Johnson: He got on there, and I lost my ratings. [*Both chuckle.*]

Kennedy: We were all concerned about it. You had a lot of sympathy [*unclear*]. You had a lot of sympathy.

President Johnson: [*Laughs.*] Well, I'm going to need a hell of a lot, I'll tell you that. I'll be seeing you. Meantime, if you get any solution to Vietnam, just call me direct, will you?

Kennedy: [*Chuckles.*] I just talked to [Robert S.] Bob McNamara.

President Johnson: Yeah, yeah. Well, he's the best one. You can't beat him.

Kennedy: When are you coming back up?

President Johnson: The weekend.

Kennedy: I got a thought about that.

President Johnson: All right. I want to talk to you.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: Conversation WH6411-07-6203-6204, 5 November 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Draft Transcript, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.