

November 23, 1963

15

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION.
PRESIDENT JOHNSON AND SENATOR SMATHERS.

A Tell me, what is their situation on the tax bill? I am going to meet with the Cabinet at 2:30 and I -

B I'll tell you what it is. I made a deal just confidentially, with the knowledge of the White House with Larry and the President with Harry Byrd, that Ribicoff and Long and myself and Fulbright would vote against any motion to take the bill away from the Chairman. If the Chairman would agree on that if we didn't tell the press if he would agree to hurry the - close the hearings, which he did. He's out them off - he's cut them off - announced they would be out off the week of December 6th, that weekend. Now, I asked him the other day what Byrd was really trying to accomplish is to hold up the tax bill until he could prove that Kennedy was going to have the budget announcement over one hundred billion dollars, see. So he could then argue you know that we are financing this tax amendments, debt, etc. So I sort of felt him out with the approval of Henry Fowler, Joe Fowler, you know _____, and tell him that I would try to make another arrangement with Byrd and if we, the President would come out and tell him now in December that what he thought his budget was going to be would Byrd cooperate and help them to get the clearance in the Executive Session overwith. So that we could at least when we close the Congress in December we would at least have finished writing the bill in the Committee. And I had just gotten started on that good when we said well as far as he was concerned he said I don't have any problem. He said your problem is Hartke's got six amendments, Gore's got twenty, etc. He said now I will, if the President will do that, I will try to expedite it, but he said I've got no ~~assessable~~ inkling, which is right, over Gore. I said I agree with you, but if - so this is what we are working on trying to get it into a position where by the time we end at Xmas we can go ahead and have a tax bill passed. Now at the last Legislative breakfast you were not there. I very strongly said that I thought we had enough votes on the floor to pass the tax bill this year. But we are going to require sort of a Caesarian operation. We were going to have to go around Harry Byrd in the Committee. And Mansfield spoke up and said he didn't want to do that and he thought we didn't have that many votes. And so I said, and Kennedy was there, without pushing it too hard, Hubert was with me, I said now if Frank Valeo or somebody would go and ask every member of the Senate on our side "Will you support the tax bill and then put this condition in, would you support the the tax bill if it came over from the House and would you support it if it were added as an amendment to some pending bill after a reasonable time had expired for the Committee (Finance) to operate in Executive Session. I said if we get those numbers figured out

then we will know which way to go, but until we do that and until we do that and until we know exactly how many votes we've got, I don't know that and very frankly Mr. President Mr. Mansfield is sorta poo-pooing the idea that we can't do it. That way we lose to many votes if we upset Harry Byrd. He said you'd lose Ribicoff, you'd lose others. I said I don't believe you'd lose Ribicoff and these guys - we just can't - this is the type of bill you're either going to vote for or against it and I think By God I'll vote for it. Now if you want it passed this year I said you're going to have to this is the only way you going to have to be able to do it.

A Do you think you could get him to close hearings and table these amendments in the week and give them reasonable time to explain it - thirty or forty minutes and then table them and report it in time to pass it this year.

B I don't think Byrd will do make that kind of an agreement. I think that the only thing he would do because he really doesn't want it, you know, he's really against the tax bill. But I think

A Well, if you put that to him you didn't, then you could you have some justification for that

B That's right, that's right, we can put that to him. Now how Halleck, and these fellows, we were talking over there last night, they are going to strong feeling, and I don't know if you want to do it or not, but the smart thing to do in light of developments would be for you to get the appropriation bill through real quick and then just

A No, no, I can't do that. That would destroy the Party and destroy the election, and destroy everything. We've got to carry on. We can't abandon this fellow's program because is a national hero and they are going to those people want his program passed and we've got to keep this Kennedy aura around us through this election.

B Yeah. Well, in that connection I think I can tell you I had a most instinct visit with ~~xxxx~~ last night after we met with you. He invited me over to his office to have a drink so I said sure so we went there and sat down and we went into the intricacies which might arise at the convention etc., and the danger there would be if this if we let this break out into a liberal versus a conservative fight in the Senate or anywhere else and give responsibility that he had etc. Now as for myself, Hubert, and I think that the new President has just got to have a liberal running with him as VP candidate and I am just speaking for myself and I think my God that most of the southerners would be for Hubert, and I said you'd have to keep them and their views in mind and keep things going, so he was not at all adverse to the idea and as a matter of fact does this I am not going to tell anybody but I will have a chance to talk to the President about it and I am going to just tell him very frankly that this is just one man's thinking but so he jumps for it and I says that can you hold Joe and can hold Paul and can you keep them lined up. And he said well I'm sure that I can.

He said well this is going to be the problem. Is to They have just been cussing - they are going to try to make the new President look immediately like he is an old Texas oil man and that he is now the President of everybody and duvert says I couldn't agree with him more but

Continued

November 25, 1965

TELEPHONE NOTES
THE PRESIDENT AND SENATOR SMATHERS.

A before I have to leave.

B Now we have eight Democrats and if we can get Bobby to stay with us.

A He has told us ----- and other people that he would - fought with us to cut off the _____ and to bring it out this year. Now then he went to Byrd a little later on and told Byrd that he had not said that. But he told me to my face that he would do it. So with this cost, -

B Well the real problem is what Ribicoff

A Ribicoff's enjoying his independence from Kennedy very much and Ribicoff denied to me the other day when I quoted him to Byrd that Ribicoff would vote with us to expedite the ? and try to have a vote this year. Then Ribicoff told me I didn't have any right to do that and I had to go tell Byrd that I had apparently misquoted Ribicoff. So it still, Mr. President --- one more part and we don't know really what

A Are you already counting Ribicoff?

B I am counting Ribicoff. With Ribicoff and with Morton we can do it.

A You've got to have both of them.

B - We've got to have both of them.

A Well that means if you could get those two and _____ amendments and report a bill.

B Right?

A It will be a long ⁱⁿ two weeks.

B- I think we can do it, in two weeks.

A How many more witnesses you got.

B Oh, we've got 88 to go and Byrd has agreed to cut the hearing down to December 6th and so I have personally gotten rid of about 20 and I think he gotten rid of about 18 so we have only got about 30 to go. But

A What of your holidays. What are you planning on holidays - Thanksgiving.

continued - Mathers & Johnson - November 23, 1963

B Holidays I plan on to start on Thursday you know we are having a holiday here Monday and Tuesday I guess there is going to be one day so I guess there are only two more days in this coming up week. ~~That~~ Then that puts us into December so there is one more week of public hearing

A Well then you mean it will go over Monday and Tuesday you won't have anything and we will probably have a joint session probably Wednesday

B Wednesday - and that week .

A Well then you won't have anything that week.

B Byrd doesn't plan any hearings from now onto that week on Thursday on the grounds that there wouldn't be - he couldn't get a quorum. He told me. That _____ have told him they would be gone.
See, Long has been going down and running a campaign down there so it's been a little rough going. beat on the debt ceiling down there

A You think we ought to have a joint session?

B I think right now as many appearances. Yes. First yes. I think you are terribly popular over here and this is your bailiwick. People respect you here and they know you you know this business I think we ought to have a joint session.

A You think we ought to ask them in this session to pass a tax bill this year.

B I think you got to say that the country needs it yes. And the sooner the better and it would be my hope that it can be passed. But I tell you, Mr. President, I hate to see you make that a big issue, but I am afraid we are not going to be able to do it. I am willing to hang short of anything to get it passed. I am willing to make anybody mad at me to do it. But

A Don't say anything about this conversation or about the Joint Session because I don't know when the funeral is and I don't know if I'm going to do it and I have got to talk to some of the other leaders, but I wanted to give some thought to it and if you think about it if you have any suggestions call me .

B I'll do it.

A Thank you.

B Thank you sir.

15a

November 23, 1963 2:10 pm

**NOTES
TELEPHONE CALL
THE PRESIDENT TO SENATOR SMATHERS**

The President told Senator Smathers he was going to meet with the Cabinet at 2:30, and asked the situation of the tax bill.

The Senator then brought the President up to date on the status of the bill.