

WH6410-15-5969_scroller

Date: 1964-10-27

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Kermit Gordon

Start Time: 13:32

Place: Oval Office

SCROLLER TITLE: "A Better Way to Do It"

SCENE SETTER: Congratulating Bureau of the Budget director Kermit Gordon on generating positive publicity during the last week of the 1964 presidential campaign, President Johnson nevertheless upbraided Gordon for referring to LBJ as "the President" instead of as "President Lyndon Johnson." Johnson wanted Gordon at all times to invoke the President's full name, as it was "worth 10 dollars' television time."

President Johnson: Kermit, [*Gordon acknowledges*] I want to congratulate you. I haven't read the financial pages, but I don't know how you and the *Wall Street Journal* and these business journals, *Business Week* and the rest of them, get along, but the story on your budget, I thought, was exceptionally good. And only one suggestion: don't you ever refer to me as "the President" in a campaign year. These Swarthmore [College] professors . . . sophisticated and respectful . . . and you get down, though, in the ward heeler from now till next Tuesday. [*Gordon laughs.*] You refer to him as "President Lyndon Johnson."

Kermit Gordon: [*Laughs.*] Yes, indeed.

President Johnson: Fellow always told me every time that name's mentioned, it's worth 10 dollars' television time.

Gordon: I'll remember that, Mr. President.

President Johnson: You did a beautiful job, but it was always "the President."

Gordon: Yes, I'm afraid I just slipped into that habit.

President Johnson: All the good qualities that you possess you attributed to me, and all the prudence and the fiscal responsibility and everything, but you always attributed it to "the President." And they don't know whether you're talking about [Herbert C.] Hoover [Sr.], or I guess they know Hoover's dead . . .

Gordon: [*speaking over President Johnson*] Well, I think most of them are clear on who I mean, Mr. President, [*President Johnson laughs*] but I would still accept your correction. I think that would have been a better way to do it.

President Johnson: Now, find anything else that we can use between now and Tuesday. We are *really* hard up. If you got any good figures on September employment or October—I guess October employment will be too late; we won't have that. If you got anything on Defense Department's employment. I'd just really search around these things.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: “Lyndon Johnson and Kermit Gordon on 27 October 1964,” Conversation WH6410-15-5969, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [*The Election of 1964*, vol. 2, ed. Kent B. Germany, et al.] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–).