

## WH6411-01-6108\_scroller

**Date:** 1964-11-03

**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**Participant:** McGeorge Bundy

**Start Time:** 17:11

**Place:** LBJ Ranch

SCROLLER TITLE: "We Have Time to Get Organized"

SCENE SETTER: President Johnson and National Security Adviser McGeorge "Mac" Bundy considered the timing of actions they soon might take toward escalating the Vietnam War. Referencing current planning underway, Johnson and Bundy acknowledged the importance of making their decision in the wake of the 1964 presidential election taking place that very day.

**President Johnson:** How's [every]thing going?

**McGeorge "Mac" Bundy:** Everything's fine up here. We don't know any more than you do, yet, but we feel good.

**President Johnson:** What happened outside, out yonder?

**Bundy:** What happened, sir?

**President Johnson:** Vietnam.

**Bundy:** Nothing out there. We have recommendations and comment going back and forth, but there's no further event on the scene as far as I know. [*President Johnson sighs.*] [Maxwell D. "Max"] Taylor is of the opinion that you've seen, but he's also of the opinion that we have time to get organized. The [Joint] Chiefs [of Staff] and my brother [William P. "Bill" Bundy] are working on the staff work. We expect it to take several days to get the kinds of plans and counterplans and checks and balances that we were talking about yesterday worked out.

**President Johnson:** How should—

**Bundy:** The military have accepted that, as I understand it.

**President Johnson:** With . . . approval?

**Bundy:** Well, I don't—I haven't actually heard from [Robert S.] Bob [McNamara] back, but the messages back and forth show good humor. I don't think there's any immediate trouble, but I think they're operating under the assumption that we're really getting ready, and at the same time, we're not sending anything to the field that implies a decision. So Max doesn't yet know how sharply and clearly you indicated your intention to General [Earle G. "Bus"] Wheeler yesterday. We just don't want that in the cables until we're ready to go.

**President Johnson:** Do you—are you less sharp on it?

**Bundy:** Mr. President, I feel, in a way, that we—that nobody should ask you to make any decision until you're acting with today behind you.

**President Johnson:** Yeah.

**Bundy:** If I were deciding it, yes, I'd feel about as you did yesterday. But I don't think *anyone* should decide *anything* until your—[*President Johnson snorts*] until you have this day under your belt.

**President Johnson:** Have you heard from any of the politicians today? Any of the writers, the [Walter] Lippmanns or the [James B. "Scotty"] Restons or anybody?

**Bundy:** [Joseph W. "Joe"] Alsop's been around. He's of the mood to work on this problem right away. Lippmann talked to Bill [D.] Moyers. I haven't got back to Bill, and I don't know what he said. Alsop, of course, as usual, wants us to make up our minds to put the necessary amount of heat on in Southeast Asia. Walter doesn't really think that's problem number one. I think he thinks your most important problem is to get you to take time to . . . think about the problem in the new perspective that today will give. That's what he did think when I had lunch with him about two days ago. He wouldn't put Southeast Asia first on the agenda, although I think that's because he's not really as close to it as some of the rest of us.

The press, generally, are all of the view that you're going to get a very—[Philip L.] Geyelin, for example, came in this afternoon—are of the view that you're going to get such a mandate that you will be able to set any course you want in *any* part of the world. I'm a little less of the view that our election decides all the events everywhere else. But I think it will put [*unclear*]—

**President Johnson:** I am, too, and I'm less of the view it's going to be that big. [*Snorts.*]

**Bundy:** Well, that we just don't know yet.

*End of excerpt.*

CITATION: "Lyndon Johnson and McGeorge Bundy on 3 November 1964," Conversation WH6411-01-6108, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition [The Election of 1964]*, vol. 2, ed. Kent B. Germany, et. al.] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–).