

WH6411-04-6174_scroller

Date: 1964-11-04

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Edwin L. Weisl Sr.

Start Time: 12:46

Place: LBJ Ranch

SCROLLER TITLE: "We've Got to Build That Up"

SCENE SETTER: Fearful that postelection commentary would fixate on disapproval of Republican presidential candidate Barry M. Goldwater Sr. [R–Arizona] rather than on his own popularity, President Johnson enlisted confidant Edwin L. "Eddie" Weisl Sr. in a campaign to redirect attention to an analysis of LBJ's electoral victory. Johnson asked Weisl to tell publishers that the American public "liked [LBJ], and that he came, and he saw, and he conquered."

President Johnson: Eddie, you got to do this, and you're the only one can do it. And you're the one that get things done like this Walter [W. Jenkins] report; the rest of them just talk about it. We don't have any propaganda machine, and we don't have anybody can get out our stuff. Now, [Raymond C.] Ray Moley started this story that they're just voting against [Barry M.] Goldwater [Sr.] [R–Arizona], and they didn't like either one of us. And that Johnson didn't have any rapport, and he didn't have any style, and he was a buffoon, and he was full of corn. And everyplace I went in this campaign, and I went to 49 states with Lady Bird [Johnson] and [the] two girls [Lynda Bird Johnson and Luci Baines Johnson]—I was in 44 myself—I had the biggest crowds they'd ever had before. And I got the biggest vote anybody ever got before. And I had the greatest affection that ever been demonstrated before, and the greatest loyalty, and more big businessmen, and more labor men, and more Negroes, and more Jews, [Weisl acknowledges] and more ethnic groups, more everybody. But they say, "Oh, that doesn't amount to anything." That—so the [Robert F.] Bobby Kennedy group, they kind of put out this stuff and the little Kennedy folks around there [say], "Nobody loves Johnson." They're going to have it built up by January that I didn't get any mandate at all, that I was just the lesser of two evils, and people didn't care, and so on, and so forth.

End of excerpt 1.

President Johnson: And somebody like [Richard E. "Dick"] Berlin has got to sit down with the staff. And somebody's got to sit down with [Samuel Irving "S. I."] Newhouse. And somebody's got to try to get the [New York] Times to give us a little approach, 'cause first thing they're going to do is going to try to make a Warren [G.] Harding out of us on account of [Robert G. "Bobby"] Baker and Jenkins. [Weisl acknowledges.] Second thing they're going to do is say there's no mandate. Third thing they're going to do is try to have a Southern Coalition—they're already working at it—to combine with the Republicans and not let us get anything. And if we don't show that even [Franklin D.] Roosevelt [Sr.] in '36 never captured the number of people and never had them jumping in the air and yelling and giving the loyalty that we did.

Now, we've got to build that up. And you're going to have to get that advertising agency that we got there in New York and call them in—that Bill [D.] Moyer[s] hired—find out who they are.

Edwin L. "Eddie" Weisl Sr.: All right.

President Johnson: And say, "Now, how in the hell do we create this image? Now, here's Newhouse, and here's Dick Berlin, and here's Roy [W.] Howard, and here's the *Washington Post* and [Washington] *Star* that are our friends."

Weisl: And we've got *Life*, and *Look*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*.

President Johnson: [*speaking over Weisl*] "We got all of these folks. Now, damn it, let's give this guy a chance. Let's give him a chance to try to hold the country together instead of dividing and face the world. He's got problems with [Charles] de Gaulle and the alliance [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] right now. And he doesn't want to be any hero. And he's not going to revolutionize things. And he's not going to send a program to Congress that's going to pack the [Supreme] Court. He's going to be a moderate, temperate man. But let's say that the people want this, and that they saw him, and they liked him, and that he came, and he saw, and he conquered." Now, I can't do that, because—

Weisl: I'll do it.

President Johnson: —I can't be that immodest. But you can just raise hell with them and call that agency in and then put the dozen telephone calls in to Dick [Berlin] and folks and tell them that [Richard J. "Dick"] Daley said this, and here's what happened over the country, and . . .

End of excerpt 2.

CITATION: "Lyndon Johnson and Edwin Weisl Sr. on 4 November 1964," Conversation WH6411-04-6174, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition [The Election of 1964, vol. 2, ed. Kent B. Germany, et al.]* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–).