

WH6405-11-3539-3540

Date: 1964-05-28

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Robert F. Kennedy

Start Time: 11:45

Place: Oval Office

SCROLLER TITLE: "How We're Going to Do at the Olympics"

SCENE SETTER: In advance of the 1964 Summer Olympics, slated to take place in October in Tokyo, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy reached out to President Johnson to suggest measures the United States might take to improve its chances for success. Kennedy feared that "we're going to do badly there, and that the sports organization in the United States, it's not what it should be."

Robert F. "Bobby" Kennedy: I had some—couple of other things. I don't know if you have a moment.

President Johnson: Yes, I do.

Kennedy: This is outside the area somewhat, but it's in connection with the . . . how we're going to do at the Olympics. I was going to send you a memorandum on that. It looks like we're going to do badly there, and that the sports organization in the United States, it's not what it should be. I don't know if you remember, we tried to, oh, for about a year and a half, we have kept the two major organizations from fighting one another so that at least we could send a team to the Olympics. But when that Olympic—when the Olympics is over, they're going to go back to fighting.

Secondly, there's no real effort in the United States to utilize the manpower that doesn't go through college. You know, you might have some good athletes that get—went through high school and then just sort of disappear. We don't really know what we have in this country, and if we want to do well in the athletic field—and I think that it is important that we do—we could do much better than we have done in the past.

Therefore, I wanted to suggest to you that perhaps—I talked to General [James M.] Gavin about this, and they are in the process, the Arthur Little Company of . . . foundation's put up some money so that they're making a[n] assessment of what the situation is in the United States at the present time. After that occurs, or while that is occurring, if we could form some kind of a foundation—perhaps with General Gavin as the head of it—to make a study of what needs to be done and then come up with a sort of a program or suggestion in the field of athletics for you and for the American public, I think it would be very helpful in that field, but in also I think it'd be very helpful in—politically that you're on top of that. And . . .

President Johnson: I think that's excellent, constructive. Just send me what I'm supposed to do and I'll do it.

Kennedy: Well, I think the first step [is] if you would see General Gavin.

President Johnson: I'll be happy to.

Kennedy: And I will send you a memo on—

President Johnson: Will you bring him in?

Kennedy: Yes, that'd be fine.

President Johnson: Good. Good.

End of excerpt.

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