



“I’d a Whole Lot Rather Dick Daley Do It”

Date: 1964-08-07

Conversation: WH6408-12-4815-4816-4817-4818

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Bill Moyers

Start Time: 20:35

Duration: 01:39

Place: LBJ Ranch

SCENE SETTER: Following the passage of his administration’s Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which launched the War on Poverty, President Johnson was in no mood to celebrate. Instead, in a conversation that foreshadowed conflicts over the War on Poverty’s Community Action Program, he complained to special assistant Bill Moyers that the bill did not give adequate authority to mayors and local government agencies.

President Johnson: But now, we’ve got to get—and I don’t want to commit—I—see, I’m going to rewrite your poverty program. Y’all, you boys got together and wrote this stuff, and I thought we were just going to have [another] NYA [National Youth Administration]. As I understood it—do you know what I think about the poverty program, what I thought we were going to do?

Bill Moyers: What?

President Johnson: I thought we were going to have CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps.

Moyers: We got that.

President Johnson: And I thought we were going to have community action [programs] where a city or a county or a school district or some governmental agency could sponsor a project—state highway department—sponsor it, and we’d pay the labor and a very limited amount of materials on it but make them put up most of the materials and a good deal of supervision, and so forth, just like we used to have.

Moyers: We got that.

President Johnson: I thought that we’d say to a high school boy that was about to drop out, “We’ll let you work for the library or sweep the floors or work in the shrubs or pick the rocks, and we’ll pay you enough so you can stay in school.”

Moyers: We got that.

President Johnson: I thought you’d let a college boy do the same thing.

Moyers: We got that.

President Johnson: And college girl.

Now, I never heard of any liberal outfits that's where you could subsidize anybody. I think I'm against that. I just—if y'all want to do it in the Peace Corps, then that's your private thing and that's [John F. "Jack"] Kennedy. But my Johnson program: I'm against subsidizing any private organization. Now, if we had a hundred billion, we might need to, but with all the governmental agencies in this country, I'd a whole lot rather [Richard J.] Dick Daley do it than the Urban League. And he's got heads of departments, and he's got experienced people that are handling hundreds of millions of dollars.

In every one of these places, I'd make them come in [and] sponsor these projects. And I just think it makes us wide open, and I don't want anybody to get any grants.

End of excerpt.

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Full information about this conversation: ["I'd a Whole Lot Rather Dick Daley Do It"](#)