



## “He’d Have Been Beat”

**Date:** 1964-11-04

**Conversation:** WH6411-03-6161-6162

**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**Participant:** McGeorge Bundy

**Participant:** Bill Moyers

**Start Time:** 10:34

**Duration:** 01:56

**Place:** LBJ Ranch

SCENE SETTER: Reflecting on the victory speech that Robert F. “Bobby” Kennedy had given after winning a U.S. Senate seat from New York, President Johnson complained that Kennedy had failed to acknowledge Johnson’s help in securing that result. Johnson aides Bill Moyers and McGeorge “Mac” Bundy sought to still the President’s pique.

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**President Johnson:** And I thought I’d satisfied everybody on [the] New Frontier with [Robert F.] Bobby [Kennedy] in New York, ’cause if I kept my mouth shut he’d have been beat.

**McGeorge “Mac” Bundy:** I should have thought, myself, Mr.—I’m not talking really about that—

**President Johnson:** And very frankly, though, I thought last night it took him a long time to get around to admit the President had anything to do with it. And there’s a thousand people in the room. And they kept thanking, about “he got county judge so-and-so, and county surrogate so-and-so, and county so-and-so.” But the guy that campaigned up there through 33 miles of Brooklyn and all the places and carried it over 2 million, he just never could find it while I was out bragging on his brother. And I just—I just don’t—I just guess he can’t bring himself to it. Did y’all see his victory statement?

**Bundy:** No, I did not.

**Bill Moyers:** I saw it.

**President Johnson:** Did you feel that way, Bill?

**Moyers:** No, I really didn’t. I thought he saved the best for the last [unclear]—

**President Johnson:** Everybody in the room—everybody in the room just sat there, including Lady Bird [Johnson], and just couldn’t believe that he wouldn’t acknowledge that [the] President had had anything to do with this landslide victory in the [unclear]—country. But he just couldn’t do it. He had [William H.] Billy McKeon, and he had Mayor [Robert F. “Bob”] Wagner [Jr.], and he just had—[W.] Averell Harriman was the hero of the deal.

**Bundy:** Well, Mr. President, he didn't realize you were in that room, and all those other sons of bitches were, [*chuckling*] you know? [*All laugh.*]

**President Johnson:** He called me and thanked me and privately said to me as strong as he could. But if I had been making a statement, I would have said, like I did in my statement, that "we carried on John [F. "Jack"] Kennedy's program." And I would have made a statement that "I think that President Johnson and Senator [Hubert H.] Humphrey [Jr.] [DFL-Minnesota] . . ."

**Bundy:** No, Mr. President, the way I heard it from their headquarters, and I haven't talked to Bob myself in two or three weeks, but I think they know who was in Brooklyn on those 33 miles, and I think they're *damn* grateful, and I don't believe—let's not start up that war in the morning. [*Laughs.*]

**President Johnson:** Well, we ought to—we ought to try to get along.

*End of excerpt.*

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Full information about this conversation: ["He'd Have Been Beat"](#)