



## “A Wasteful Thing”

**Date:** 1966-06-02

**Conversation:** WH6606-01-10204-10205

**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**Participant:** Richard B. Russell Jr.

**Start Time:** 20:05

**Duration:** 00:37

**Place:** Oval Office

SCENE SETTER: Speaking with Sen. Richard B. “Dick” Russell Jr. [D–Georgia], President Johnson criticized his own War on Poverty’s Community Action Program as “a wasteful thing” and “a dangerous thing, too.” He then turned to the Democratic Party’s prospects in the upcoming midterm elections.

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**President Johnson:** They’ve got too much for nearly everything, Dick. We’re spending—we’re appropriating about 10 billion [dollars] more for health and education than we did when I became president. And that’s going fast enough. It’s going fast enough.

**Richard B. “Dick” Russell Jr.:** That’s too fast. Too fast. You haven’t got scientists to handle it.

**President Johnson:** And this Community Action Program, poverty, is a wasteful thing; they ought to cut it out.

**Russell:** It’s terrible.

**President Johnson:** It’s a dangerous thing, too. These folks are liable to—

**Russell:** It is terrible, and the way they handle it is just like that they got a gift from on high, and then there’s no accounting for it. And all [*unclear*]

**President Johnson:** What do you think about the elections? How many seats you think I’m going to lose in the House?

**Russell:** The House? About 28.

*End of excerpt.*

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CITATION: "Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard B. Russell Jr. on 2 June 1966," Conversation WH6606-01-10204-10205, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [Lyndon B. Johnson: The War on Poverty, vol. 2, ed. Guian A. McKee] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–).  
URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/4021377>

This conversation was transcribed by the [Miller Center's Presidential Recordings Program](#) with the generous support of the [National Historical Publications and Records Commission](#).

Full information about this conversation: ["A Wasteful Thing"](#)