



The Chicago Seven

Date: 1968-09-07
Conversation: WH6809-02-13409-13410
Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson
Participant: Richard J. Daley
Start Time: 10:14
Duration: 05:31
Place: Mansion

SCENE SETTER: President Johnson and Chicago mayor Richard J. “Dick” Daley conferred about the recent violence at the Democratic National Convention and debated media reports of police brutality. Daley encouraged Johnson and Attorney General W. Ramsey Clark to pursue federal charges against protest organizers for conspiracy to riot, which culminated in the trial of the Chicago Seven in 1969.

Richard J. “Dick” Daley: You know what I’m trying to do? These fellows that have been harassing you for a year and a half, I think we got the dope on them once and for all on a conspiracy to riot.

President Johnson: Mm-hmm.

Daley: And if the Attorney General [W. Ramsey Clark] goes along with it, I think we’ll expose the [Rennard C.] Rennie Davises, we’ll expose the [Thomas E. “Tom”] Haydens, we’ll expose the [Jerry C.] Rubins, we’ll expose the [*unclear*], we’ll expose the whole goddamn outfit on that Mobilization [*President Johnson acknowledges throughout*] for Peace in Vietnam [National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam]. And we’ll also include some of [Eugene J. “Gene”] McCarthy’s [DFL–Minnesota] friends.

President Johnson: Yeah, yeah.

Daley: And the fellow himself, because if it were ever a planned thing and all these incidents affected you [*President Johnson acknowledges*], when you moved around this country, this is it.

President Johnson: Yeah, yeah.

Daley: And they had the whole thing set for Johnson on Tuesday and Johnson on Wednesday. [*President Johnson acknowledges.*] And we got the rawest deal, but I think we’re coming out. I don’t think they’re fooling the American people.

President Johnson: Well, I believe that you—the—that there’s been a great revulsion in the country as a result of your calling their hand. And I think the country is—for the first time has seen what the networks have been doing, and what—

Daley: They did a good job on you.

President Johnson: —what these revolutionaries been doing. Now, did you see the story yesterday? They're trying to cover it up now, but they violated a bunch of laws. They had hidden microphones in the platform committee.

Daley: Yes. Our whole town was bugged, including my rooms and everything else. Everyone [unclear]—

President Johnson: Well, that's just disgraceful. They ought to indict some folks on that. I told him last night that they ought to do that.

Daley: I don't think there's any doubt but what they should, Mr. President.

President Johnson: I noticed CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System] was down in Dallas [Texas], and they went to the same post office box that [Lee Harvey] Oswald had, and they rented a box down there, and—this goddamn [Walter L.] Cronkite [Jr.] crowd—and they wrote a letter to a[n] outfit up in Chicago [Illinois] trying to get a gun, and they were going to prove that you could mail-order guns, what all you could do. [*Daley acknowledges throughout.*] And they caught them in that, and they've exposed that now. It hasn't been in the paper; I think it ought to be. But CBS—there's a conspiracy between the two of them. I think you got some pinks operating both outfits.

Daley: I think you're right, and I think it's in the whole medium of communication, and I think they did a savage job on you and a[n] unfair job. They've been doing it for the last year and a half. But if the Attorney General would only stand up, we will turn up with a conspiracy on all—and show—and reveal it with documentation and with evidence and fact. We don't want to go after anyone on a witch hunt. But gosh darn it, Mr. President, I think these people should be exposed to the entire nation, and show what you've been up against for the last year and a half when you go about this country.

Organized behind it—Commie—they tell me that this guy [David T.] Dellinger talked here on Tuesday, and they broadcast it into Miami [Florida] from Havana [Cuba] on Wednesday. We're trying to get that through the U.S. Information Office [*President Johnson acknowledges throughout*], the broadcast. Well, this has happened. Now, all of these guys who were leader[s] out here, contrary to the government, were in Hanoi.

President Johnson: Yeah, yeah.

Daley: Now, by God, if this is going to exist in our country, then I'm going to fight the damn thing whether I ever hold office or go out of this—

President Johnson: Well, now, haven't you had a pretty good reaction out there?

Daley: We got a terrific reaction. We published a—and I'm going to send you a copy of it—a strategy of confrontation, and we published it last night, in which it documents date, going back to November '67, what they said they were going to do to Chicago.

End of excerpt 1.

President Johnson: Dick, have you got any pictures of this crowd that they didn't use, that you can show, [*Daley attempts to interject*] that here's what they were chanting, and here's what they were saying? And—

Daley: Yeah, we—

President Johnson: —and they wouldn't use them?

Daley: Isn't it amazing thing, Mr. President? No medium carried a picture, when they had them, of them lowering the American flag and burning it. And, you see, what happened there, some of our fellows that are policemen have sons in Vietnam. Some of them lost their boys. So anyone with any American blood, when he saw that, they went in—and goddamn it, I'd stand behind them until the end. And they whacked the hell out of them and raised the Am—they raised the Vietcong flag. Our fellows tore it down [*President Johnson acknowledges*] and raised the American flag. But there wasn't a picture anyplace shown. [*President Johnson attempts to interject.*] We're going to show that.

End of excerpt 2.

Daley: And in one picture—they printed "Police Brutality"—the policeman was hitting the fellow with a baton, and the fellow had—was biting his leg. He bit a big chunk of flesh out of the poor policeman's leg. [The] fellow went to the hospital. This was brutality. Another one, a girl and a boy injured, and the father called me up personally. "Goddamn it, Mayor," he said, "what kind of people we got? Your police saved my daughter and my son from being killed by a windowpane that was broken in by these terrorists. They weren't in—they weren't hippies. They weren't in this crowd. And for them to print pictures that this is another example of police brutality is the most shocking thing to me. I've telegraphed. I've called them." And he said, "Goddamn it, they better retract it."

End of excerpt 3.

Daley: So we've got to think if we just get a little help from our friend [Ramsey Clark] down there, and he doesn't get too—

President Johnson: Well, he doesn't see this as you and I see it—

Daley: No, no.

President Johnson: —and we just—I just worked on him a long time last night and told him that I wanted—

Daley: He doesn't see it the way his daddy [Tom C. Clark] would see it, either.

President Johnson: No, not at all. Not at all.

End of excerpt 4.

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