

WH6406-02-3624

Date: 1964-06-04

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Lee C. White

Start Time: 13:17

Place: Oval Office

SCROLLER TITLE: "A Pretty Worthwhile Undertaking"

SCENE SETTER: In advance of a meeting with Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, who had communicated previously with President Johnson about the underperformance of U.S. athletes at the Olympics, Johnson tapped White House counsel Lee C. White to stay on top of the matter so that the American team, in White's words, could "really concentrate on making a good showing."

Lee C. White: Yes, sir.

President Johnson: Lee, the Attorney General's [Robert F. "Bobby" Kennedy's] coming to see me, due at one o'clock. Now, what problems do we have with him that I may need to know about on the racial thing and civil rights?

White: Well, there's quite a range of them, sir. I have a memo. It's a little long, but it's broken down into sections with subsections, and I think you might just glance through that. I can bring it right up to you.

President Johnson: All right. Now, do you know what he wants to talk about today?

White: I'm not sure. I believe the information I had was about the . . . General [James M.] Gavin and the Olympics.

President Johnson: Yeah. Well, I've got a letter from him on that, [*White acknowledges*] and I'll just tell him to bring General Gavin on in. Who would handle that for us on our staff here, you?

White: It had been [Timothy J.] Ted Reardon [Jr.], and I've been checking around. It looks like nobody else has quite fallen heir to it yet.

President Johnson: Well, why don't you take it?

White: All right, I will.

President Johnson: Take it, and just tell him, and I'll tell him, too, and tell whoever's handling this for his department to—I don't—he suggests here that I may want to write General Gavin. I don't know enough about the movement. I'd suggest he just tell General Gavin that he'd like for us to get together and bring General Gavin in.

White: Hmm. Sure.

President Johnson: Whenever he's ready.

White: I'd say—you know, the whole thing's a pretty worthwhile undertaking, [*President Johnson acknowledges*] trying to move up that situation. Instead of being 8th and 10th in every international competition, to let our people really concentrate on making a good showing.

President Johnson: That's good.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: "Lyndon Johnson and Lee White on 4 June 1964," Tape WH6406.02, Citation #3624, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition [Mississippi Burning and the Passage of the Civil Rights Act]*, vol. 7, ed. Guian A. McKee] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/9070017>