



## “I Would Be Honored to Do It”

**Date:** 1963-11-29

**Conversation:** K6311-06-01

**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**Participant:** Gerald R. Ford Jr.

**Start Time:** 18:52

**Duration:** 01:32

**Place:** Oval Office

SCENE SETTER: President Johnson wanted the commission investigating the assassination of John F. “Jack” Kennedy to be bipartisan, selecting two Republicans and two Democrats—one each from the House and the Senate—to be among its members. In this call, Johnson reached out to Rep. Gerald R. “Jerry” Ford Jr. [R–Michigan], the House Republican conference chair and later House Minority Leader, vice president, and president.

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**Gerald R. “Jerry” Ford Jr.:** Yes, Mr. President. How are you, sir?

**President Johnson:** Happy Thanksgiving. Where are you?

**Ford:** I’m home, sir.

**President Johnson:** You mean Michigan?

**Ford:** No. No, I’m here in Washington—

**President Johnson:** You’re in Washington? Well, thank God, [there’s] somebody in town! [*Ford chuckles.*] I was getting ready to tell [James] MacGregor Burns he’s right about the Congress. They couldn’t function.

**Ford:** I thought your speech was excellent the other day.

**President Johnson:** Why, thank you, Jerry. Jerry, I got something I want you to do for me.

**Ford:** Well, we’ll do the best we can, sir.

**President Johnson:** I’ve got to have a top, blue-ribbon, presidential commission to investigate the assassination [of President Kennedy]. I’m going to ask the Chief Justice [Earl Warren] to head it, and then I’m going to ask John [J.] McCloy and Allen [W.] Dulles.

**Ford:** Right.

**President Johnson:** And I want it nonpartisan. I'm not going to point out I got five Republicans, two Democrats, but I'm going to do that, and I'm just—then you forget what party you belong to and just serve as an American. And I want [Richard B.] Dick Russell [Jr.] [D–Georgia] and [John] Sherman Cooper [R–Kentucky], John Cooper, of the Senate—

**Ford:** Right.

**President Johnson:** —Dick's on Armed Services [Committee] over there, and I want somebody on Appropriation[s] [Committee] who knows CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] over in your shop from Appropriation[s] angle, 'cause I'm covering the Armed Services angle with Russell.

**Ford:** Right.

**President Johnson:** Want to ask [T.] Hale Boggs [Sr.] [D–Louisiana] and you to serve from the House.

**Ford:** Well, Mr. President—

**President Johnson:** [Unclear] be McCloy, and Dulles, and Ford, and Boggs, and Cooper, and Russell, and Chief Justice Warren as chairman.

**Ford:** Well, you know very well I would be honored to do it, and I'll . . . do the very best I can, sir.

**President Johnson:** You do that and . . . keep me up to date, and I'll be seeing you.

**Ford:** All right. Thank you very much—

**President Johnson:** Thank you.

**Ford:** —and I'm delighted to help out.

**President Johnson:** Thank you, Jerry.

**Ford:** Thank you.

*End of excerpt.*

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