



“Finest Advertisement He Could Give Me”

Date: 1964-01-08

Conversation: WH6401-10-1278

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Thomas G. Corcoran

Start Time: 19:45

Duration: 01:07

Place: Oval Office

SCENE SETTER: Throughout the 1964 presidential contest, President Johnson ran far ahead of the Republican nominee, Sen. Barry M. Goldwater Sr. [R–Arizona]. In this call from early that year, Johnson and Democratic strategist Tommy G. “Tommy the Cork” Corcoran lampooned Goldwater’s campaign stumbles.

President Johnson: But what do you think about [Barry M.] Goldwater [Sr.] [R–Arizona]? How do I answer him when he said I out-Roosevelt Roosevelt? I think that’s about the finest advertisement he could give me, isn’t it?

Thomas G. “Tommy the Cork” Corcoran: [*Unclear.*] You could say that’s—

President Johnson: Huh?

Corcoran: —the nicest tribute you could have. [*President Johnson chuckles.*] I mean, that’s wonderful.

President Johnson: He said, “He out-Roosevelted Roosevelt, he out-Kennedyed Kennedy, and he made Truman look like a piker.”

Corcoran: [*laughing*] Well, that’s *wonderful*.

President Johnson: Well, how do you think I ought to answer? [*Laughs.*]

Corcoran: Well, you [*unclear*] simply say, “Thank you for the compliment, [*laughs*] my friend.”

I also wanted to tell you something else that was amusing. You know, I laughed at him one night, when . . . many months ago, I laughed at him one night when he said he was going to run for president. I said, “I hope you’re going to be wise enough to do what Lyndon did and run for the Senate at the same time.” And he said, “I can’t, goddamn it. I criticized him at the time! But,” he said, [*President Johnson laughs*] “he was right.” And now, Jesus Christ, two days ago he comes out and does the same thing. [*Chuckles.*]

Lyndon, I really—I was thrilled by—

President Johnson: I thought I might say, “Well, I’m sorry my student is not following teacher anymore, just one day.”

Corcoran: [*Laughs.*] That’s right. That’d be good.

President Johnson: [*Chuckles.*]

End of excerpt.

CITATION: “Lyndon Johnson and Tommy Corcoran on 8 January 1964,” Tape WH6401.10, Citation #1278, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [The Kennedy Assassination and the Transfer of Power, vol. 3, ed. Kent B. Germany and Robert David Johnson] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/9030096>

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