



Dr. Spock on Medicare Politics

Date: 1964-11-06
Conversation: WH6411-11-6269
Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson
Participant: Benjamin M. Spock
Start Time: 12:52
Duration: 01:26
Place: LBJ Ranch

SCENE SETTER: A few days after the 1964 election, the nation's most popular parenting handbook author, Dr. Benjamin M. Spock, described an appearance on a public affairs television program in which he had discussed the Medicare bill. Spock reported to President Johnson that the network had had trouble finding a guest willing to deliver an opposing view.

Benjamin M. Spock: I certainly appreciate this. You might be interested that on ABC [American Broadcasting Company] yesterday, we taped a—my half of a half-hour bit for Medicare, which ABC is putting on on Sunday afternoon. So—

President Johnson: Oh, I'll watch it, I'll watch it.

Spock: —I'm going on to the next step.

President Johnson: Do you remember what program it's on? What they call it?

Spock: It's something with *Issues*. It's—

President Johnson: Yeah, *Answers and Issues—Issues and Answers*.

Spock: For Sunday afternoon. You'd be interested—first, they had ex-president [Edward R.] Annis of the AMA [American Medical Association] to tape the other half of the program, and when he found that I was going to do the other half, he or the AMA withdrew him. And they said that they didn't want the country to get the impression that the [*slight chuckle*] medical profession was split on this issue.

President Johnson: [*Chuckles.*]

Spock: And then they got—ABC got Senator [John G.] Tower [R-Texas] of Texas, and he called them—this was to be taped yesterday afternoon—then when Tower called up ABC yesterday morning and said that Texas was a shambles and that he couldn't come up to do it. [*Laughs.*]

President Johnson: [*Laughs.*]

Spock: So they finally got Congressman [Carl T.] Curtis [R–Nebraska], and he was doing it sometime today. He’s doing the taping today.

President Johnson: Well, that is very, very interesting, and I’m [*Spock acknowledges*] so grateful to you for doing it. And I want to thank you again for your wonderful help in the campaign.

Spock: Thanks for calling.

President Johnson: And I’ll try to be worthy of your confidence.

Spock: I’ve got great confidence. [*Unclear.*]

President Johnson: Thank you so much.

Spock: Bye.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: Conversation WH6411-11-6269, 6 November 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Draft Transcript, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.

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Full information about this conversation: [Dr. Spock on Medicare Politics](#)