



“Unite Their Families”

Date: 1965-07-23

Conversation: WH6507-06-8374

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: John W. McCormack

Start Time: 15:11

Duration: 01:35

Place: Oval Office

SCENE SETTER: President Johnson and Speaker of the House John W. McCormack [D–Massachusetts] discussed the prospects for passing an immigration bill. The House and Senate had introduced such legislation in February 1964, but it would be another 18 months before Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act in October 1965. Johnson framed the matter as an act of compassion.

Poor audio quality throughout the recording.

President Johnson: Hello?

John W. McCormack: Yes, Mr. President.

President Johnson: Speaker, glad to hear you.

McCormack: [*Unclear.*]

President Johnson: Thank you.

McCormack: [*Unclear.*]

President Johnson: Yes, sir. He told me he was the man. He said he was going to do it Tuesday.

McCormack: [*Unclear.*], yeah. Yeah, he told me that he [*unclear.*]. [*Unclear.*] Today I tried to get them to vote, but he told me he was talking till ten o'clock last night.

President Johnson: I told him you were bragging on him, the great chairman. And that now they've got it 8–0, he oughtn't to stop around there, and get ready for that 21 days, so we can pass that. And I had the Senate in this morning, and [Michael J. “Mike”] Mansfield [D–Montana] and [Everett M.] Dirksen [R–Illinois] both said that they'd check and try to get it reported on the calendar over there, waiting for you to come over.

McCormack: [*Unclear.*]

President Johnson: I told him that in '49. [*Mansfield acknowledges.*] It was on his national origin.

McCormack: Yep. [*Unclear.*]

President Johnson: Well, next thing you make—

McCormack: Listen, [*unclear*]—

President Johnson: You call up that dairy out there, and get ahold of Howard [W. “Judge”] Smith while he’s milking that cow, and tell him that we have gotten a few hundred coming in here with some of Jack Valenti’s parents and his grandpas, out in here, and it’s not going to hurt him one damn bit, out of 200 million people, to let a few hundred come back and unite their families. And that this is something we got to have a rule on, and tell that bunch of Democrats, those [*unclear*] Democrats, they’re supposed to get together if we want to move this thing, so that they won’t let it get mixed up—

McCormack: Yeah, well, [*unclear*] got a problem [*unclear*].

President Johnson: Well, but they could give us a rule if they want to.

McCormack: They can if they want to.

President Johnson: John [A.] Young [D–Texas] and that crowd, they can vote for a rule.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: “Lyndon B. Johnson, William R. Anderson, John W. McCormack, and Frank Thompson Jr. on 23 July 1965,” Conversation WH6507-06-8374, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [Lyndon B. Johnson: The War on Poverty, vol. 2, ed. Guian A. McKee] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/4004982>

This conversation was transcribed by the [Miller Center’s Presidential Recordings Program](#) with the generous support of the [National Historical Publications and Records Commission](#).

Full information about this conversation: [“Unite Their Families”](#)