



“It’s Just So Unfair”

Date: 1966-12-05

Conversation: WH6612-01-11113

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Nicholas deB. Katzenbach

Start Time: 10:46

Duration: 01:35

Place: LBJ Ranch

SCENE SETTER: President Johnson’s performance in the days following President John F. “Jack” Kennedy’s assassination had won virtually uninterrupted praise until the publication of *The Death of a President* by William R. Manchester. Written at the urging and with the cooperation of the Kennedy family, the book recounted the events in Dallas and their aftermath and painted an unflattering portrait of Johnson. The President blamed Sen. Robert F. “Bobby” Kennedy [D–New York] and complained to Attorney General Nicholas deB. “Nick” Katzenbach about the book’s inaccuracies.

President Johnson: It’s just like this [William R.] Manchester stuff about [John F. “Jack”] Kennedy and I having a[n] argument. I never had a[n] argument with him in my life. And . . . incidentally, Nick, that thing [*The Death of a President*] is full of 46 mean, vicious errors. And they’re coming either from Mrs. [Jacqueline B. “Jackie”] Kennedy or [Robert F.] Bobby [Kennedy] [D–New York] or both of them. And it’s just so unfair. Like my calling him up and making him put a deer head in his outer room [when] he didn’t want to. I never called him in my life on it. [*Slight chuckle.*] He had his fish up there that he caught on his honeymoon. He put his deer head up there. And my forcing him to go to Texas, I never *heard* of it. Matter of fact, I tried to postpone it. Told him my popularity’s too low. But all that kind of stuff, it’s just going to really rock us when it comes out. I want to talk to you about it sometime to see if there’s anything that we can do to at least moderate their charges. My yelling around that John [B.] Connally had 300-dollar suits, I never did it in my life. He never had one. He buys them off the rack. He’s got a good figure. He doesn’t have to do like I do. But just pure stuff. All of it makes Bobby look like a great hero and makes me look like a son of a bitch, and 95 percent of it is completely fabricated.

Nicholas deB. “Nick” Katzenbach: Mm-hmm.

President Johnson: A visionary—he doesn’t even remember that I talked to Bobby. [*Laughs.*] Yet he’s got you calling in his instructions and reading the oath [of office]. Just all kinds of stuff. And that thing is going to require a book or two to answer it, you see. And when it does, they’re going to hit back the other way. And it’s not going to do the country any good.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: Conversation WH6612-01-11113, 5 December 1966, 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: ["It's Just So Unfair"](#)