

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 10, 1970

*Mollenhoff
file*

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TO: Bob Haldeman

FROM: Bryce Harlow *BH*

Yesterday around noon, President Johnson requested me to visit with him at the Madison Hotel. I spent an hour with him.

Among other things, he dwelt very vigorously on the dangers of allowing Clark Mollenhoff to have access to income tax returns. As you know, the use of income tax returns by Clark was reported in the press a few days ago.

President Johnson told me that in meeting with large clots of Democrat Congressmen over the past two days, this activity by Mollenhoff came up very heatedly time and time again. Congressman Jack Brooks of Texas, who is on the House Government Operations Committee -- a committee which itself has official access to income tax returns -- said that if the Administration was going to play this game, then he was going to get his committee to start an investigation of the contribution reporting of the Republican Party.

This morning Senator Russell Long telephoned me. He said that Wilbur Mills had just called him to request that Long convene the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation in order to consider the Mollenhoff activity involving income tax returns. Long wanted to assure me that he had not spawned this idea; it was Mills. But he was trying to emphasize that this is a serious matter, likely to get out of hand.

He suggested that we make it known publicly that Mollenhoff will not have access to individual tax returns -- rather, only to aggregate figures and such.

Apparently the Democrats are convinced that if Mollenhoff has access to tax returns of major Democratic contributors, particularly in Maine (Muskie and so on) where, Long told me, Mollenhoff is supposed to concentrate his political effort, Mollenhoff will become a political menace. Moreover, Long said that Clark is a flamboyant reporter, and he is likely to take back to private life with him highly confidential

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information of this type to use in muckraking reporting.

I conclude from all of the above:

- 1) LBJ is behind some of the agitation, because of his intense dislike of Mollenhoff;
- 2) that LBJ may have some personal concern as well, knowing that Mollenhoff has an intense enmity toward Johnson;
- 3) that trouble is brewing, of a serious nature, on the Hill;
- 4) therefore, that we need some public manifestation that will defang the current Mollenhoff relationship to individual income tax returns.

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