

TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A TELEPHONE
CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND JOHN
DEAN ON MARCH 20, 1973, FROM 7:29 TO 7:43
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PRESIDENT: John Dean, please.
Operator: Yes, Mr. President.
PRESIDENT: Hello.
DEAN: Yes, sir.
PRESIDENT: I hear you're having rather long days these days, aren't you?
DEAN: Yeah. (Laughs)
PRESIDENT: I guess we all have. Yeah.
DEAN: Well, they'll continue to be longer.
PRESIDENT: What happened, uh, today in the, uh, the Senate. Anything, uh ...
DEAN: Well, I understand that Gray, uh, took a little beating up there today. Uh, he was-- apparently, the approach they're working that he's been an abandoned man. Uh
PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible).
DEAN: Evidenced by the fact that Kleindienst, uh, would not let him (cough) excuse me--insert things in the record that he desired to insert in the record and it was quite clear that he has been left hanging by, uh, countermanded by you and your decision.
PRESIDENT: Well, you know in a sense that I didn't countermand him at all, I...
DEAN: No, I know, this is a theme they're playing.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, fine.
DEAN: Uh, they're trying to play. And, uh...
PRESIDENT: This is in the Committee or on the floor?
DEAN: It's in the Committee.
PRESIDENT: Open or executive?
DEAN: Uh, this was in open session.
PRESIDENT: Yeah.
DEAN: They are, they subpoenaed, uh, three additional witnesses,

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PRESIDENT: Yeah.
DEAN: ...used to run their PR section.
PRESIDENT: Good, that's good.
DEAN: And, uh, he was Just trying to pull him in there on sour grapes and...
PRESIDENT: Good. That wouldn't bother me. Does it bother you?
DEAN: No, and it sets a precedent...
PRESIDENT: Um hmm.
DEAN: ...for this fellow Sullivan going up.
PRESIDENT: Right.
DEAN: Which is interesting.
PRESIDENT: Yeah.
DEAN: Then, uh...
PRESIDENT: Well, uh, the fellow that we could--isn't Gurney a member of that Committee?
DEAN: Gurney is.

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PRESIDENT: He could just ask for Sullivan.

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: How would that be?

DEAN: That wouldn't be bad at all.

PRESIDENT: You don't have Sullivan's report yet?

DEAN: Uh, no, Sullivan, uh, told me-- he was out of town--he will have it for me tomorrow.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: He will skip a meeting that he has in the morning to make...

PRESIDENT: Just a second.

DEAN: ...sure he gets it (unintelligible) and over to me.

PRESIDENT: Just a second.
(Privileged material deleted)

PRESIDENT: Yeah, go ahead.

DEAN: Uh, so, he will have it over to me tomorrow, and, that...

PRESIDENT: Right.

DEAN: I absolutely have to have it tomorrow. There just can't be any further deadline. The time is here to look and see what you've got and he said, "Well, I think I've got good stuff. I think it's supportable, (unintelligible)." I said, "Well, Bill, I want to see it just as quickly as possible tomorrow morning."

PRESIDENT: Good.

DEAN: Cause it will be over. And the other witness they've now subpoenaed--there are two other witnesses--there's the Hoback girl from the Re-Election Committee, who, she was interrogated by Committee staff and counsel as a result of her confidential,, uh, interviews with the FBI--alleging that that had been leaked by me to them and then, of course,, that was not

PRESIDENT: That's not true.

DEAN: ...not true. And the other fellow they're calling is a fellow by the name of Thomas Lombard who is trying to establish a link between Dean on that one. Lombard did volunteer work for me in my office and, uh, and, uh, did volunteer work for Liddy and at one time he saw Liddy in my office. Big deal. (Unintelligible) purely campaign, uh. you know.

PRESIDENT: Well, is that what Lombard will testify to, or will he testify to, uh...

DEAN: Well that's what he'll--he's, he's written a very lengthy letter to the Committee asking, declining to testify originally and saying this is all I would have to say and it's obviously not relevant. I know nothing of Dean and Liddy's...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: ...connection...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, right.

DEAN: ...other than the fact that they...

PRESIDENT: That's not bad then. Maybe he'll make a pretty good witness.

DEAN: He might. He might. Uh...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) the Hoback girl?

DEAN: The Hoback girl should, uh, be broken down. She should come out in tears as a result of the fact that she's virtually lying about what she's saying. And, uh, our people will, beyond a...

PRESIDENT: Well, mean, do our people know what to ask her?

DEAN: Yes, they do. Yes, they do.

PRESIDENT: Um hmm.

DEAN: Uh...

PRESIDENT: Why is she doing it? Do we know?

DEAN: She, uh...

PRESIDENT: Disgruntled? Somebody...

DEAN: Disgruntled. She's been fairly disgruntled all along. She's, she's a Democrat that worked over there in the Finance Committee. She professes a personal loyalty to Maury Stans but that is about the extent of it, (unintelligible) loyalty.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: I never did figure out how she got in there. Uh, so, all tolled I'm told that today was a bad day for Gray and, uh, not much of a, uh

PRESIDENT: (Laugh)

DEAN: ...(unintelligible). They're taking a whip...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

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DEAN: ...out on the floor to see what the
(unintelligible) there.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: We'll have that tomorrow morning.

PRESIDENT: What's your feeling, though, John, about
Gray? Uh, aren't you, just as comfortable
to let him go down?

DEAN: I don't, I don't

PRESIDENT: Which do you want? I mean, we can, we can,
put some pressures on, and, uh., I,, I just
wonder.

DEAN: I don't think it's worth saving, sir. I
really don't.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, well that's my point. Isn't it really
a case of-if they, they want to make him the
martyr, they're gonna make him the martyr.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Do you agree or not or er...

DEAN: I would...

PRESIDENT: You feel differently, let me know.

DEAN: I would, I would agree that they're trying
to make him a martyr. I think that, that
Pat Gray's been so damaged by these hearings
that he will...

PRESIDENT: shouldn't be the head of the Bureau.

DEAN: ...will be difficult for him to be the head
of the Bureau.

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PRESIDENT: That's right.

DEAN: It will be a year, two years for him to recover.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

DEAN: It's like Dick Poff when he decided to withdraw even from consideration for the court knowing that there had never been an effective justice for years.

PRESIDENT: That's right. The thing is too--that Gray though has got to make up his mind on that pretty soon. Don't you think so?

DEAN: I would--you know, I thought I'd be a called...

PRESIDENT: In fact, I, I was thinking you ought to do it fairly soon.

DEAN: Um hmm.

PRESIDENT: Excuse me, what were you gonna say?

DEAN: I was, I was thinking he might call today, very easily, and say, uh, uh, you know, at least make a pro forma gesture to see if, uh, someone over there--you know, if you were interested. Now...

PRESIDENT: What's the Kleindienst view of the whole thing now? Is he stayin' a mile away?

DEAN: I'll talk to, to Dick tonight. I don't know...

PRESIDENT: Um huh.

DEAN: ...what his reading is on (unintelligible) activity.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

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DEAN: It's uh, uh, it might be better to let it just die in...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: ...Committee and not get it out of there. Apparently, there's--it's tied up at seven-seven now. (Unintelligible) the votes.

PRESIDENT: Oh, it is seven to seven in the Committee?

DEAN: That's right. And, uh, McClellan and Eastland, uh, are hanging in, not knowing which way--not--McClellan and Mathias are hanging in the balance.

PRESIDENT: Umph.

DEAN: I suspect we could probably get McClellan's vote and lose Mathias'.

PRESIDENT: It will be eight to eight, huh?

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: (Laughs)

DEAN: That ties it up and that will not confirm it. (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Well, if ya got it out, yeah. McClellan surprises me. Good God, he knows better than this.

DEAN: He's, he's turned a little funny recently. He's generally you know, pretty much of a soldier on...

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PRESIDENT: What's his trouble, for Christ's sake. He's just got re-elected and I helped him.

DEAN: I know it.

PRESIDENT: One hell of a lot.

DEAN: I know it. I know it.

PRESIDENT: Well...

DEAN: Well, he's, you know...

PRESIDENT: getting old.

DEAN: That's right (laugh)

PRESIDENT: That's right. Yeah. Well on that score I don't consider this too bad a day. I think maybe that's the way the dreary thing's gonna roll itself out, isn't it?

DEAN: It's, uh, uh, I think, I think this will be a self-terminating situation. It will just be a, uh, no end and

PRESIDENT: But, they didn't bite the bullet with regard to subpoenaing you?

DEAN: No. I don't think there's any chance they're going to do that.

PRESIDENT: That's rather interesting, isn't it? Something ought to be made of that.

DEAN: Unless they, uh, get--they're taking more evidence on me, obviously, with, uh-- these other two witnesses. Uh, not (unintelligible) just be more.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: Same stuff. Uh, I. I had a conversation with, uh, John Ehrlichman this afternoon before he came down to

DEAN: visit you, and, I, I think that one
CONT: thing we have to continually do and
particularly right now, is examine the
broadest, broadest implications of this
whole thing, and I, you know, maybe 30
minutes, of just my recitation to you of...

PRESIDENT: Um hmm.

DEAN: ...the facts so that you operate from the
same facts that everybody else has.

PRESIDENT: Right.

DEAN: And I don't think--we've, we've never really
done that. It's been sort of bits and
pieces. Just paint the whole picture for
you, the soft spots, the, the, uh, potential
problem areas

PRESIDENT: Um hmm.

DEAN: a like. So that, uh, when you, when you,
make judgments you'll...

PRESIDENT: Yeah

DEAN: ...have all that (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Would you like to do that, uh--when?

DEAN: Uh, I would think, uh, uh, if its not
inconvenient for you, sir, I would I would
like to sort of draw all my thoughts
together and have a, you know, just make a
couple notes to myself so I didn't...

PRESIDENT: Well, could you do it, could you do it,
could you do it, tomorrow?

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DEAN: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT: Um hmm. then we could probably do it, say, around ten o'clock.

DEAN: That would be fine, sir.

PRESIDENT: How about--you just want to do it alone? Want anybody else there?

DEAN: I think, I think just uh,...

PRESIDENT: It is better with nobody else there, isn't it?

DEAN: Absolutely, I think that's a good way.

PRESIDENT: Anybody, anybody else you--they're all parties in interest, virtually.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Right. Fine. The other thing I was going to say is this, that, uh--just for your own thinking, uh, I still want to see, though, you know, you and Dick, I guess, have still worked on your letter and all that sort of thing?

DEAN: We are and (laughs) we're coming and-- the more we work on it the more questions we see that, uh,

PRESIDENT: You don't want to answer.

DEAN: ...uh, are creating problems by answering.

PRESIDENT: And so, so, you're coming up, then, with the idea of just a stonewall then? Is that...

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Is that what you, re come down with?

DEAN: A stonewall, with lots of noises that we are always willing to cooperate, but no one's asking us for anything to, uh...

PRESIDENT: And they never will, huh? But, you know, there's no way that you could make even a general statement, uh, that I could put--You, you, understand what I'm do...

DEAN: I think, I think we could, uh

PRESIDENT: See, for example, I was even thinking, if you could even--to, the Cabinet, the leaders, you know, just you--just orally say, "I have looked into this, and this is that" period, so that people get sorta a feeling that--you know, your own people gotta be reassured.

DEAN: Um hmm.

PRESIDENT: Could you do that?

DEAN: Well, I think I can, but I don't think you'd want to make that decision until we have about a...

PRESIDENT: No, I wanna know. I wanna know where all the bodies are first.

DEAN: Right, and then, uh, once you decide after that,...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: ...we can program it anyway you want it to (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Because I, I think, for example, you could do orally, for example, uh, even if you don't want to make the written statement, you could do orally with the (unintelligible) Cabinet, and, the leaders and the rest. You can lay it all out and say, "Look I"-- I, I would not be present. You just lay it all out and I just--see what I mean?

DEAN: Um hmm.

PRESIDENT: Now that is one thing. The other thing is that in -- I do think there is something to be said for this, not maybe this complete answer to this fellow, but maybe just a written statement to me. You know, saying (laughs) my conclusions are this: bing, bing, bing, bing.

DEAN: Um hmm.

PRESIDENT: Even that's a possibility. Sol what I mean is we need something to answer somebody, answer things with. You know they say that "What are you basing this on", you can say, "Well, I've exam-- my counsel has advised me that"--Is that possible or not? Or are you...

DEAN: Well I--you know that there, there's, there's that--and there's always the FBI report which, uh, we have probably not relied upon enough. But, there's not one scintilla of evidence.

PRESIDENT: I know. But I mean, can't you say that? Or do you want to put it out?

DEAN: Uh, yes it, it could be said, and it is something we haven't really emphasized. Pat Gray is the only person that has said it and it has really never gotten picked up.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. How would you do it then? What I meant, isn't that, isn't that something that you could say? (Unintelligible) want to publish the FBI report?

DEAN: Oh, no. Oh, no...

PRESIDENT: Then, then...

DEAN: ...because in our, our own...

PRESIDENT: Fine. Right.

DEAN: ...structures we're trying to place on it (unintelligible)...

PRESIDENT: But, what, but, but, but you could say, "I, I had this and and this is that." What I am getting at is that, if apart from a statement to the Committee or anything else, if you could just make a statement to me that, that we could use. You know, for internal purposes and to answer and so forth.

DEAN: As we did when you, back in August, made the statement that

PRESIDENT: That's right.

DEAN: ...(unintelligible) all the things.

PRESIDENT: You've got to have, you've got to have something where...

DEAN: (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: ...where it doesn't appear that I'm just doing this, uh, you know, just, in a, in a--saying to hell with the Congress and the hell with the people, we're not going to tell you anything because of Executive Privilege. That they don't understand. But if you say, "No, we are willing to cooperate, and he's made a complete"--you've made a complete statement, you see, but make it very incomplete. See, that's what I mean. I don't want a, quite too much in chapter and verse as you did, in your other--your letter, I just want, just a general...

DEAN: ...general (unintelligible). Lemme, uh...

PRESIDENT: Try just something general.

DEAN: (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: "I have checked into this matter; I can say categorically, based on my investigation, the following: Haldeman is not involved in this that and the other thing; Mr. Colson did not do this and Mr. so and so did not do this and Mr. Blank did not do this." and d--, d--, d--, right down the line. See, taking the most glaring things.

DEAN: Um, hmm.

PRESIDENT: "If there are any further questions, please let me know." See?

DEAN: Um hmm. I think we can do that.

PRESIDENT: That's one possibility, and then if you could say that such things--and then use the FBT report to the Cabinet and leaders,

PRESIDENT: it might be very salutary. Just,
CONT: see our own people have gotta have
confidence or they are not going to step up
and defend us. You see my problem--see our
problem there don't you?

DEAN: And I think, uh, at the same time it would
be good to brief these people on what
Executive Privilege means, so they can go
out and speak about it.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

DEAN: Some of them are floundering, uh,...

PRESIDENT: And why it's necessary.

DEAN: Uh, I started having somebody in my office
today prepare some material that can be put
out by the Congressional people so they can
understand, people (unintelligible) defend
us have a piece of paper

PRESIDENT: Sure.

DEAN: ...that they know they can talk from as to
what it all...

PRESIDENT: Pointing out that we're defending the
Constitution, it's the responsibility, the,
uh, uh, separation of powers, and that we
have to do it, distinguishing the Adam's
case and ignoring Flanigan (laughs).

DEAN: (Laughs)

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PRESIDENT: Which is one we shouldn't have never agreed to. But nevertheless--Anyway, uh, let's think a little about that, but we'll see you at ten o'clock tomorrow.

DEAN: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT: Fine.

DEAN: Alright, sir.

PRESIDENT: Alright, fine.

DEAN: Good night.

PRESIDENT: Take the evening off.

DEAN: (Laughs) Alright.