

TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A MEETING
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND H.R. HALDEMAN IN
THE OVAL OFFICE, ON MARCH 20, 1973, FROM
6:00 TO 7:10 P.M.

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PRESIDENT: Well, I'm trying to figure out with Ehrlichman what the strategy should be on this, uh, Watergate (unintelligible) the real problem here.

HALDEMAN: I think John is pretty much out of touch as I am, now. We kind of stayed away from it.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible). He has a feeling which of course is mine, too, and, uh, I believe it. (Pause) Trouble is...

HALDEMAN: ...that's the key, if we could just-

PRESIDENT: Dean and Moore is but you can't find any way to have any kind of a statement made (unintelligible) that they think doesn't open up too many other problems. Of course, they're concerned about what will happen when the Judge sentences. (Unintelligible) well-

HALDEMAN: Sentencing is that this week?

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: That's the thing, there's just so goddamned many factors and (unintelligible) people.

PRESIDENT: And that's what Dean

HALDEMAN: Sure.

PRESIDENT: McCord didn't want to go to jail (unintelligible) jail sentence (unintelligible) decided to talk. I said, "What the hell's he doing?" (Pause)

HALDEMAN: McCord? (Pause) He would have a lot on Mitchell. (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: He worked for Mitchell? I guess Mitchell and (unintelligible) are trying mess with Grand Jury (unintelligible) (Pause) U.S. Attorney (unintelligible) (Pause)

PRESIDENT: Kleindienst always talks so very tough.
(Continued) (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: You sure of that?

PRESIDENT: He and Mitchell sure weren't very strong
(unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: That's kind of ironic when his own, his own U.S.
Attorney comes back to bug him.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. (Pause) I told John one thing which I am
convinced of, we've got to get somethings that
have got to be said (unintelligible) around there.
Something that has got to be said.
(Unintelligible) you can't sit in there thinking
everybody down here is shutting up.
(unintelligible) That's the precedent I'm afraid
(unintelligible). Don't you think that's true to
the circumstances?

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) terribly sensitive about the
goddamned thing.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: We should do something (unintelligible). The
question is what (unintelligible) tell your own
people.

HALDEMAN: You've got to answer to people.

PRESIDENT: Say that they don't want to...

HALDEMAN: Does Dean feel we can't do that even to our own
people? Well, yeah, you can't because then if
they go out and say that's all there is then one
more thing comes, then you're, you're even more
sunk.

PRESIDENT: Well, I'm not so sure.

HALDEMAN: At least that's what's worried John all along. How
do you get...

PRESIDENT: That's what worries me more. But, I'm not so sure
that what Dean could make an oral statement to the
Cabinet. An oral statement (unintelligible)
reported on the (unintelligible) lay a few things
to rest. I didn't do this, I didn't do that, da da
da da, da da da da, da da da.da, da da da da.
Haldeman didn't do this, Ehrlichman didn't do that.
Colson didn't do that. (Unintelligible) see?

PRESIDENT: That's what I really think needs to be --uh,
(Continued) they need to hear it from somebody that
basically that's what - they've got to know that
I have been told that, that's really what it
gets down to. Rather than let the feeling, the
uneasy feeling that somehow maybe the White
House staff is keeping things from me that I
don't know or something we're afraid to have the
people talk about. Well, isn't that really all
there is (unintelligible) we don't want to talk
about up there, but the god-damned Klieg lights.
It isn't that we are afraid of facts, we
certainly are afraid of publicity.

HALDEMAN: Well, I guess you've gone through that mess.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Well, you know go back to that...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: I guess we have and it would be pretty bad
because of the way (pause) everybody wants to
go. (Pause)

PRESIDENT: When that decision was made you know I raised
grave questions about it, I said I didn't want
it to be there (unintelligible) daily spectacle
with television cameras and press.
^Ziegler (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: But you're gonna have that daily spectacle

PRESIDENT: I think you are (unintelligible) I think you
are, maybe the point is that makes the papers
that we've got a big fish up there.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: They say that's what made the McCarthy hearings.

HALDEMAN: And you never know what any of the big fish will
do when they get up there and then we all said
we want to go up and all that, but if they.
lob one in you're not expecting you don't
know what how good a witness he'll be.

PRESIDENT: It's a tough goddamned thing (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: ...when you get...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) goddamned thing. That's right.

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HALDEMAN: And then when you get (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: You don't there's a thing that I'm frankly concerned about more than I am about what they might reveal in this version. I don't want (unintelligible) get up there in front of that goddamned committee and gear their question on the log out of somewhere they know something.

HALDEMAN: Well, see the thing is...

PRESIDENT: the perjury bit.

HALDEMAN: I know, yeah, but see, they re protecting the wrong people.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: ...'cause think people who are gonna go for perjury already have and will do it again and are going to be up there anyway.

PRESIDENT: You mean like Magruder?

HALDEMAN: Well, I guess Magruder comes under your, your new current executive privilege rules. He was on the White House staff, too.

PRESIDENT: Magruder was?

HALDEMAN: Well, not at the time of the incident. That's right. So, so, that doesn't count you know. That's right.

PRESIDENT: That son-of-a-bitch.

HALDEMAN: No, he wasn't. He was, he was over the Committee and he was White House at one point, but obviously he can't exercise privilege on -

PRESIDENT: after he leaves,

PRESIDENT after he leaves while he was here

AND HALDEMAN: (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: So that would cover Chapin, who would not cover Magruder. Cover Colson, but would not cover Howard Hunt. (Pause) Cover Dean, but would not cover Liddy. (Unintelligible) (Pause)

PRESIDENT: our position... (Pause)

HALDEMAN: Well the other, uh, would cover Strachan. I know they're concerned about Strachan. (Unintelligible)

(20 second Pause)

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PRESIDENT: You see I wondered whether just as well
(unintelligible) beware (Pause).

HALDEMAN: You see, the problem with Strachan they're worried
about Strachan getting getting into the White
House. I don't think that's a problem because
Strachan has no, as I understand it, no criminal
thing. Because he wasn't directing it, he was
simply aware of what was going on. But if he
doesn't perjure himself and he has to answer on
awareness he can't take the 5th because he doesn't
have any incrimination. He, he does have a
problem, because I think he knows wh-what happened
over there. That's where he gets into trouble.

PRESIDENT: But hasn't he already been questioned?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, but but, don't think he answered he forgot,
and Strachan, from what Dean told me, Strachan said
he just didn't know that. He wasn't very well
questioned and he's only been questioned by the FBI
and they, they only questioned him on Segretti.

PRESIDENT: Wonder why they're question, questioning him at
all. I don't understand.

HALDEMAN: Well, it never occurred to him, I don't think and
I'm not sure it ever would, unless someone
accidentally asked him a question. I'm not sure
how much he knows about Watergate anyway, but from
what Dean tells me, I think he knew a fair amount.
'Cause I think he knew see, Strachan's job was
to know, was to keep on top of everything that was,
going on.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Then Magruder knows that's the point
(unintelligible) who would tell that Strachan knew
that's what I mean.

HALDEMAN: Magruder might tell what Strachan knew yeah, but
only that he knew...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: Not that he had no authority no, no - uh...

PRESIDENT: ...participation...

HALDEMAN: participation. He was an observer. (Pause) The
danger you got there is that he probably, and I
possibly, got reports on some of that stuff.

PRESIDENT: Sure. I'm aware of that.

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HALDEMAN: And if I did, I didn't know it. But Strachan did know because he gave me, you know, stuff that thick and I never looked at it. On all campaigns, budgets, personnel things and everything else.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) Dean say he's discovered for us, of course, he didn't know what the hell they were about. (Unintelligible) The main thing is don't get anybody up there on perjury where they can prove and sentence. (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Strachan? I don't think (unintelligible) what Strachan'll do is, he may go on contempt but not perjury. Contempt on refusal to remember.

PRESIDENT: I don't think, he doesn't go at all.

HALDEMAN: He goes on inability to remember.

PRESIDENT: Well, he doesn't perjury charge, perjury charge unless they charge him with a crime. Then he has to go down. Anybody who's charged with a crime has to go down. That's the Ad, Adams' question.

HALDEMAN: Well, if that's the case, why the hell didn't they charge everybody with a crime on, on complicity or something.

PRESIDENT: Can't do it. Won't stand up. (Pause) Just make a, just making a charge is not enough-What I meant is-

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: I think it has to be...

HALDEMAN: Be indicted (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: ...evidence, get some evidence that ah, er...
(Pause)

HALDEMAN: God it's ridiculous.

PRESIDENT: Oh! God! It really does. (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: The irony and the stupidity of that whole thing is...

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PRESIDENT: But also, the credibility of, uh, stuff in there of, uh, with a double standard.

HALDEMAN: I know.

PRESIDENT: It's hard to believe, uh I've just given up. I mean Colson was telling me that we've got all sorts of stuff on the Democratic (unintelligible) not a God damned thing not a thing (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: Really?

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: Well does Chuck's I guess Chuck's talked with Dean (unintelligible) John Dean Chuck thinks he has,

PRESIDENT: Well, you know what I mean, stuff like that.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) you would think that when they were doing all their stuff at the conventions and demonstrations. Christ even, Christ even the FBI should have investigated that. Ziegler says (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: They didn't-didn't did not. It was done on their behalf, but not at their direction and they can probably...

(20 second pause)

PRESIDENT: When you talk to Henry, let's put it in the negative. I will simply say that I had mentioned the fact that you and I that you would raise a point (unintelligible) significant risk we have to weigh (20 second unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: He'll probably feel that we can't talk.

PRESIDENT: Is that right? Horse-feathers. So he told you he should take a vacation.

HALDEMAN: Oh, yeah. Every goddamned word and the way that he did you know never even, uh, crossed my mind to raise any question with you because it was he did it in such a way that I you know if you had said if you had told him that you wanted to take time, said get a vacation (noise) wanted

HALDEMAN: to get away from the Democrats and I think he
(Continued) did mention the idea of going to Acapulco
(unintelligible) maybe at that point. I'll be
darned.

PRESIDENT: I know I didn't. I know I didn't. I thought he
was thinking of California. But I, he planned
that he was going to stay out there and I said,
"That's great. That's a good time to spend a
couple of weeks." Palm Springs.

HALDEMAN: Well, you're right, because that's what I
thought he was gonna do.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) I was so surprised when he went
back, I thought really if any paper had got
through this damn troop withdrawal
(unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: That is kind of surprising that...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, I think his,

HALDEMAN: I think that's his concern.

PRESIDENT: Well, that's nice. Ehrlichman's point is well
taken in one sense and he says really right now
we've got to really put a (unintelligible).
You're going to get you're going to get hung for
it any-way, you might as well get the Goddamned
hanging over with.

HALDEMAN: You've (unintelligible) ahead of time. That
means to say that does that?

PRESIDENT: This is going to be done.

HALDEMAN: Dean's theory is that you don't you aren't
necessarily going to get hung. It depends upon
what you defined by hang. There's no question
we're going to get smeared.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: There's no question that they're going to keep
building the innuendo that will lead into the
White House and will be able to come to some
proof.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: What they'll call proof consider proof on the
basis that, that uh oh, the line of reasoning
they're using now, that Dwight Chapin wouldn't
have done anything that I didn't know about it.

PRESIDENT: That's right. I understand.

HALDEMAN: Or it might -that wasn't in my orders and certainly Gordon Strachan did.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: Uh that's only partly true, but it's a, it's a, sustainable assumption but that part we can, live with it and I I see all four of them. Now, I'd like to go out and have us go out now and hit if you take that part of the case and hit mine and admit. Say, say it's absolutely true I knew that Chapin was recruiting an old college friend of his to go out and run around doing Dick Tuck stuff, which is absolutely true, I did know. I did not know the guy's name. I did not know the guy. I did not know what he was going to do. I did not know what we were going to pay him. I did know that Chapin was going to authorize some payment to him to cover his expenses and, uh, his basic income.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: That he was going to work full time on this and was going to try to recruit other college type guys to do this kind of stuff.

PRESIDENT: Intelligence work (unintelligible)?

HALDEMAN: Not really intelligence. 'Cause that wasn't what was talked about. See, he wasn't engaged in this at least I don't think he was engaged in espionage. He was engaged in, in...

PRESIDENT: ...tricks.

HALDEMAN: Yeah, I think some of em got a little -that's a euphemistic term for them -some of em cause he did get a little far on the tricks. But they talked about, when they talked about doing it, the kind of tricks that I said, for Christ's sake don't fool around with stuff like - they were gonna cut cars, cut tires on press buses, you know and take the keys out of cars in motorcades and that sort of stuff. I said that's ridiculous, it's childish and doesn't do us any good. So I...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: ...What does do us some good is to have a guy standing around with a sign saying "McGovern, what about your illegitimate daughter" or something. I hope we never used that one.

PRESIDENT: But, because we were ready to...

HALDEMAN: Yeah. (Unintelligible) but, uh, so I knew. They were getting a guy and Chapin did do it with, with my concurrence and Strachan was a friend of the guy's too. I knew that. That I have no problem with saying.

PRESIDENT: I understand (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: And, I don't think that hurts you.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Just say I did that. The problem is can't the truth stop at the truth. Which that does or does the innuendo go so come then so hard on top of it that you can't turn it off.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) it goes to the truth -

HALDEMAN: It goes to the Watergate or which it seems to me, we ought to be able to turn off, but the problem is the price of turning it off may hurt the people on Watergate side. At least, that's what they tell me. What bothers me is that I still think I'm being had in a sense for being tarred in order to protect some other people.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Yeah.

HALDEMAN: I think Chapin is being far worse tarred in order to protect other people

PRESIDENT: Yeah. The people on the Watergate side unfortunately are also our friends.

HALDEMAN: The people on the Watergate side are our friends and there is far more seriousness if there this thing you can say was bad judgment on my part to let Chapin do this or I can say it was bad judgment on Chapin's part to let the guy go as far as he did, or Chapin can say it was bad judgment on Segretti's part...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...to do some of the things he did.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: That's, that's probably right. All the way up to, to maybe bad judgment on my part, but on Watergate it isn't a question of bad judgment. On Watergate it's a question and there it goes and, ultimately, it seems to me that's what they have got to focus on. And this who was it that was telling me that, uh, what or convinced they're going to go after this this is Ziegler's, Ziegler's theories based on the press club status convinced that what they're after is Colson on criminal they think he's the highest guy they can get on criminal in the White House and Mitchell on the outside. Now, there ah the worst it isn't the worst you can get to is damn had out there.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Because if Mitchell was the authority.

PRESIDENT: He's the Attorney General of the U.S.

HALDEMAN: As Attorney General of the U.S. and...

PRESIDENT: The President's campaign manager. That's pretty goddamned bad. That's damn near as bad as it is out here. Do you agree with this?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...problems...

HALDEMAN: And their if you have...

PRESIDENT: protect them to protect them...

(Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: then you have to then you start working your way back down that chain again and, and maybe you can't

HALDEMAN: turn it off somewhere and that's what John Dean
(Continued) where he comes out every time we go around this
circle.

PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

HALDEMAN: Then you get to the thing with Segretti. Here
is a potential...

PRESIDENT: Segretti.?

HALDEMAN: ...a criminal violation on Segretti, too.

PRESIDENT: On what some mailing? Horse shit, that's so
inconsequential.

HALDEMAN: Okay. But then, then, he was Chapin's agent so
does that make Chapin criminally liable? Chapin
was my employee so does that made me criminally
liable?

PRESIDENT: Is that a felony?

HALDEMAN: No. It's a misdemeanor.

PRESIDENT: That's what I mean.

HALDEMAN: It's a misdemeanor committed without our
specific knowledge so I don't see how, how we're
liable.

PRESIDENT: Listen... campaigns, there's never a, that
didn't have a campaign mailing without a
disclaimer or, er...

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: ...mailing (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: We had, we had the same thing in '60, uh '62 in
California Democrats for Nixon

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: The Dem, no the Committee to preserve the, the
Committee to Preserve the Democratic Party in
California. The thing that crazy woman got us
into Naomi Baxter.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Yeah. You see the point is that it, it
isn't just Bob (unintelligible) it is a question
(unintelligible) of big fish, as we mentioned,
Colson I knew was going to be hard to prove. I
don't I don't see I think unless Colson's lying
to Steve-I mean Dean, was questioning him, Dean
does not believe that Colson that they
(unintelligible) Colson.

HALDEMAN: I don't either. And as I've told you I've been convinced all along Colson doesn't did not know.

PRESIDENT: About this?

HALDEMAN: About the Watergate

PRESIDENT: I don't think he did - except...

HALDEMAN: Yep I don't think he did, either

PRESIDENT: ...(Unintelligible) was saying that uh, of course, this is Magruder's argument, apparently he's made it too, Colson was insisting on getting the information but I don't know why I don't know what it was all a hoax, why he would be involved if they were going to have a -demonstration in San Diego or not was something I couldn't quite figure out. Know what I mean? But he was involved in, in too many things.

HALDEMAN: But Mitchell, as you know, was very much involved in the demonstration in San Diego remember Mitchell came in very concerned about changing the convention site because he was afraid of inability to control San Diego.

PRESIDENT: Oh, yeah. (Pause) Well, there's a lot of bad breaks they're in.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: We got a bad break with the Judge, for example..

HALDEMAN: Monumental bad breaks and a string of 'em one leading to another.

PRESIDENT: This judge, that..

HALDEMAN: Starting with the just incredible thing of one was "Time Magazine" this week started off a thing one lousy part-time night guard at the Watergate who happened to notice the tape on the, on the locks on the doors. If he hadn't seen them the thing probably would have never busted. If you hadn't had Watergate you wouldn't have had Segretti. You wouldn't have had any of that stuff.

(Pause)

Wouldn't have had all that stuff on the contributors.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) the people that are yelling about us about, about the old establishment, the Times, (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Well, let's see.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: The one, one niche that they, and I don't think they see here, where they're gonna get but they see there's still an opportunity and they, they're gonna grind away 'til they either exhaust it or or get to something.

(Pause)

PRESIDENT: In a sense Committee get the hearings over in a hurry, the theory that Baker had, which of course I rejected it, was incredible. Was to get, give us, get, get all of 'em and everybody and all then there (unintelligible) testify and he said choke the goddamned thing for a week and after that the people will be bored to death. Well that makes sense provided...

HALDEMAN: it doesn't go anywhere.

PRESIDENT: No -provided you can run the risk of having your people go out there and be asked a lot of tough questions by a smart goddamned lawyer. So, I knew that it's probably, we would be better advised to stick. The guy that most wants to stick to is Colson. Obviously, he's, I don't think he wants to be questioned and I can see why because of other involvements (unintelligible). So, therefore...

HALDEMAN: He's the only one who doesn't want to be?

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) fight for executive privilege. Obviously, no we're just not going to allow it' mainly because we just can't, can't allow that sort of thing to come out (unintelligible). But then what you have to do is to you gotta fight it through the goddamned courts (unintelligible) for a long time. You've got the story of cover-up, that's, that's what's involved.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: And that's bad. That that's really worse than the...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: It isn't really worse it isn't worse than John Mitchell going to jail for either perjury or complicity.

PRESIDENT: No, no, no, I've, no, I've balanced that up, too. But you see what they're really after he'll take cover-up 'til hell freezes over. You know what I mean? Because, uh,...

HALDEMAN: If that's really where it goes and I guess it is.

PRESIDENT: But John, but you can't figure Magruder did it by himself. That's what I, I just don't believe Magruder's done much as, -a competent operator. (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: I'm not sure if that's, I'm not sure.

PRESIDENT: Sounds to me like, oh see that's the only thing that I think they must really think. The investigator thinks, "Christ, Magruder would a, I mean, a decision like that would be made by Magruder?" Of course, he was managing manager in effect. Yeah, I think...

HALDEMAN: I think, I think it's now, I think Dean thinks it's possible that it was

PRESIDENT: ...that Magruder may have stumbled onto something, because, what do you say?

HALDEMAN: Well, done the specific.thing on his own within a broad authority that he misinterpreted -

PRESIDENT: In other words --

HALDEMAN: In other words Mitchell was clearly aware and fully aware of the Liddy intelligence operation. No question about that.

PRESIDENT: But maybe not of the specific...

HALDEMAN: But maybe not of the specific act and, and it would be perfectly...

PRESIDENT: Magruder was aware of the act.

HALDEMAN: Well, he says that he wasn't, in court. (Pause)
And, you can even go to that step and buy it.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Which is that Liddy was, was doing it and on, on,
un, under the broad authority but then, you get
down to will Liddy take the heat?

PRESIDENT: Well, let me say this but coming back to the
business about trying to get everybody up there and
all the rest we've got to remember that what, what
could be involved. Let's see. Let's see the whole
view going up. (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: It wasn't me and I don't think it has to be Dwight,
but Dwight, Dwight I think may have to recant some
of these (unintelligible) or explain them.

PRESIDENT: Yes, that's...

HALDEMAN: ...some of what I said earlier.

PRESIDENT: That's right. Well uh what I meant then might be an
advantage. Let's see. Oh, it's what, I mean, uh,
maybe my reasoning is fallacious, but our real
concern is Mitchell. (Noise) Maybe they're going
to get him anyway.

HALDEMAN: Well, John, at least the last I got into it in any
detail, John Dean didn't think so.

PRESIDENT: They going to get -that right?

HALDEMAN: See, John Dean's whole approach as I understand it-
-this is when we went through it out in California
for two full days (clears throat) what came out is
his whole premise his, his basic approach to this
is one of containment keep it in this box and he
thinks he can. And that box goes on the theory
that Liddy did it without authority from above and
Liddy's been convicted of doing it. Liddy was the
responsible guy at the campaign organization. He's
the highest guy that they've got. The other people
were employees of Liddy's.

PRESIDENT: Well, that's the way the case stands at the moment.
Then, of course: if the judge blasted the hell out
of that Friday I suppose (Unintelligible) didn't
get cooperation and so forth

HALDEMAN: Liddy apparently is a little bit nuts and a
masochist and apparently he wants to, looks to the
martyrdom

HALDEMAN: of doing this. He kind of likes it. And that's
(Continued) true. Maybe that's where it'll stay. That's
Dean's that's his hope. That's what he, he's
frantically trying to keep -not frantically)
persistently trying to keep...

PRESIDENT: Liddy'll appeal it...

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) strings in

PRESIDENT: Who are appealing it? McCord? Liddy should beat
it. Son-of-a-bitch, they're two of them
(unintelligible) Hunt's not it.

HALDEMAN: Hunt went and pleaded guilty they all plead
guilty and...

PRESIDENT: ...he's appealing.

HALDEMAN: Liddy and McCord didn't plead guilty.

PRESIDENT: Liddy's appealing that...

HALDEMAN: Liddy's appealing but Liddy's not appealing on
uh, merit, on the merits. He's appealing on
the, on the errors. Liddy's going for errors.
There you've got another problem Liddy's a
lawyer, who thinks he's smarter than the judge
and the court, and the court prosecutor, which
every lawyer seems to have to convince himself
of. Liddy's game is purely, as I understand it,
his. appeal game is purely on errors.

PRESIDENT: Oh, sure.

HALDEMAN: Then he's apparently got some...At least some
possibilities

PRESIDENT: ...Sirica?

HALDEMAN: Has areas of potential po-, challenge some
errors.

PRESIDENT: Well, coming back to this, I think that the uh,
is the, is the coming free of the White House
people.

HALDEMAN: That doesn't impair that other case at all.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) mention (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: Because the containment theory works and I don't see what danger is in our going out because we don't have anything to say. The people you're protecting by executive privilege -let's face it are oh Jesus, you got Ehrlichman I don't know about Ehrlichman. John knows a hell of a lot.

PRESIDENT: He does know a hell of a lot but not about this case.

HALDEMAN: Doesn't he? Okay.

PRESIDENT: not about Watergate. He doesn't know a gooddamned thing, unfortunately.

HALDEMAN: I don't think he -(unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: He ran the other thing. He ran, you know,...

HALDEMAN: Yeah. damn

PRESIDENT: you know the ^ stuff about...

HALDEMAN: Well, can they expand to that if they can't what does he do? Sure, he can, there's no rules of evidence up there by charter is to cover all the campaign activity.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible). Fine fine but I can't-no-no.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible). Ellsberg?

PRESIDENT: I can't think now -no, no --

HALDEMAN: Teddy Kennedy? (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Uh, I don't like it. That's gonna be awful hard to get to. Thank God it's in pretty good shape,
(Pause)

Now I don't think we could now however, I don't think we can shift our ground, and cave on that idea for privilege sake, but I think we have to find a way to make statements. They will not accept statements until they are free to (unintelligible), that's the theory I'm working on, I'm working on with them now and Dean and Moore are trying to see can they save (unintelligible) and, of course, everything they say would raise additional questions. But so be it.

HALDEMAN: Well...

PRESIDENT: It's better to have statements...

HALDEMAN: All right, all right. Look, we've agreed to answer written interrogation, huh?

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDLEMAN: I, for instance, I have to, have to do that, Chapin has to do that.

PRESIDENT: Everybody.

HALDEMAN: We've all agreed to do that.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Okay, but why the hell don't we do (unintelligible) instead, instead of, if they submit it, why don't we sit down and do our statement right now.

PRESIDENT: That's a nice suggestion.

HALDEMAN: Why doesn't Dean ask me the questions that, that the Committee will ask me? Why don't I write my answers down? Why doesn't Chapin write his? Why don't we give those to the "Washington Star" and let them print the goddamned things in total tomorrow morning.

PRESIDENT: (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: What's wrong with...

PRESIDENT: try to see why couldn't each of you make a sworn statement. (Unintelligible) open too many doors.

HALDEIMAN: Really?

PRESIDENT: Dean, Dean's the expert here. (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Well, why don't we make them and see. I mean without putting em out. Why don't we take the step we're doing. We're gonna have to apparently anyway and so he says we're gonna open too many doors. Aren't they gonna open? We've already agreed to do that anyway.

PRESIDENT: Except that they'll you see his point is well, anyway let's try it I don't mind, it's worth trying. His point is we've got that they will never take the statements so it's never going to happen. That's the other course that's the problem. They're never gonna take written statements.

HALDEMAN: You mean, they won't accept them at all.

PRESIDENT: No, no. But that's all right. You see my point is the way we end up is okay, we refuse to go up but they will have a they will say we will not accept that (unintelligible) try to get a subpoena, and we will move to quash and we'll have a court test. All right, that's where it'll stand so forth, fight that out in the courts and try to make a case with the other witnesses waiting for the court test. Of course (unintelligible) the other way to do it is to - so that, that, that, rules that out -and you, have got no statements at all. Now the problem with that, confronts me with me with is is, that it appears that I covered up... the White House people. I won't let that statement, so what that's what I told Dean and the rest, I said, "Why don't you make up or why don't you just put out a statement?" Any kind of a statement. Of course, I said make it as general as possible but just so somebody can say that the President that a statement has been made through the President, upon which he has based his statement to the effect that he has confidence in his staff. See I mean I mean it looks now that I am just doing that as a, as a thumb your nose, screw-off.

HALDEMAN: Except that everybody seems to accept the fact that there is a Dean report to the President on the basis of which the President said that.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Maybe.

HALDEMAN: And we've now established that as I understand it, that Dean no I guess we haven't, but we can, that it was an oral report, not a written report.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. (Unintelligible) investigation and so forth, but that needs you see by having a statement, statement prepared, statement or statements prepared which are delivered to the Committee, preferably I think delivery (unintelligible), that's what he's working on now delivery to Eastland perhaps and Eastland then puts it out, and the purpose of answering all the recent charges the most recent charges not everything

HALDEMAN: The Dean charges.

PRESIDENT: The Dean charges. And Ziegler said, but, "that raises too many questions new questions" so, ah, then John Ehrlichman says that those questions (Laughs) are gonna be raised anyway.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: That's my point of view that maybe they're gonna be raised anyway.

HALDEMAN: I don't understand what Ron means, but maybe he's right. I don't think...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: I've spent more time on this than, than anybody really and I don't know any questions that aren't already out.

PRESIDENT: But they I don't quite know either, that's my 'point. I don't know what the hell other questions...

HALDEMAN: Well, I think, I think if Ron says it'll raise new questions, the burden of proof is on him. What are they?

PRESIDENT: Yeah. I see.

HALDEMAN: I don't - I'm -not so sure...

PRESIDENT: He's already (unintelligible) pepole (unintelligible) something to do. Mostly has to do with Segretti and Chapin, that's the thing.

HALDEMAN: Well, I don't understand why we can't run that one out...

PRESIDENT: I, I personally think that you've gotta, you've got a bunch Segretti and Chapin. We just gotta let that one hang out...

HALDEMAN: Here's the first thing...

PRESIDENT: I really do.

HALDEMAN: ...I don't in the first place, the guy that knows the most about the Segretti thing is Segretti.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: The guy that knows the next well, the guy that knows the next most is Chapin, who is protected. The guy that knows the next most after that is Strachan, who's protected. The guy that knows the next most after that is Kalmbach, who's not protected. And the guy that knows the next most is me, who's protected and that's the end of the Segretti story I think.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. So put it out.

HALDEMAN: Okay. The point there is that the guy that knows the most is Segretti. He is not protected.

PRESIDENT: So, he's gonna get questioned?

HALDEMAN: So, he's gonna get questioned. Now, I've heard Segretti's Dean has a two hour tape where he interrogated Segretti and went through the whole damn thing and, maybe I'm stupid, but I listened to the whole tape and for my dough I'd just as soon play it out on the radio tonight on CBS and let the world hear it.

PRESIDENT: That's my feeling.

HALDEMAN: Because what it says to me is, is not nearly as bad as what I would venture 90% of the people in this country think happened.

PRESIDENT: Sure.

HALDEMAN: But it does confirm Dwight Chapin recruited him, and he gives him the details he had him to dinner at his house and he had -Gordon Strachan was there. But, what the hell, he went to school with Dwight Chapin.

PRESIDENT: Already, Bob, that's already put out anyway.,

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: That's already been put out.

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) recruited. What the hell (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Now Ron's worried because that, that make 'cause we denied we didn't deny Ron and Ron had covered that.

PRESIDENT: Who denied it? I thought...

HALDEMAN: The press, that Ron, that Ron, see we denied the Chapin story in the Post, but he denied it on the basis that it was based on hearsay...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...and was fundamentally incorrect.

PRESIDENT: Fundamentally...

HALDEMAN: And it was.

PRESIDENT: Yeah - fundamentally - yeah.

HALDEMAN: We didn't deny any specifics in it.

PRESIDENT: That of course, I think is what we should say. (Unintelligible) fundamentally incorrect fundamentally.

HALDEMAN: All we can - let's go back and make the case on that.

PRESIDENT: Say that the Post story said this, this, this, and this, and I think that's the way you want to handle, that. For example, the Post story said this, this and this this is incorrect. Why? Now what is correct is this, this, this and this. That's the way you ought to handle that so as to get us off the hook on that. So the Press Secretary, did not lie. Well, my feeling is that taking a - the, the, the, the, uh, we're not gonna, we're (unintelligible) That's all I'm after. My feeling is that if the facts are gonna come out in all this period of time, I would rather have us get them out to the extent we can, in a forthcoming way so that (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: I don't know, I don't know if Dean's filled you in on this stuff. I know another thing that worries him. This I'd forgotten about, that it leads to, cause he's afraid that Sloan...

PRESIDENT: Sloan?

HALDEMAN: He's afraid that, that you know, he gets Sloan up that, that he's.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...that, that he's got to say something because there's another fact that's never come out. They've never tracked down but they could. But and again it appears as terrible, but it isn't at all and the facts on it are, are worked out fine. But there was \$350,000 in cash transferred out of the campaign fund over to a separate holder and it was under Strachan's control. It was, in a sense, trans-, in essence, transferred to me. What that was supposed to have been, if you recall, was \$2,000,000, which we, way back, had told Stans we wanted it was that leftover cash that we wanted set aside.

PRESIDENT: Oh yeah.

HALDEMAN: Before reporting and all that just so it was there as a reserve fund.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Well, it got boiled down because of reporting problems and everything else to where we only moved 350,000. The 350,000 in cash was moved.

PRESIDENT: And that was used for polls?

HALDEMAN: That was the purpose of that was to be for polls and everything else. It was not used for polls or anything else. It wasn't used. And that has been transferred back to the re-election committee. It was transferred after the, after the election the cash was moved back over...

PRESIDENT: Uh, I see

HALDEMAN: ...to, uh, uh, Mardian, not Mardian uh, LaRue, Fred LaRue and his back up. So, the money was not spent.

PRESIDENT: What's the difference then?

HALDEMAN: Okay. The difference is that, that establishes, if hey want to call it that, you can, you look at the yellow journals and a secret fund that Haldeman controlled, you could say, which I guess I did. The question of who controlled it never arose because it was never used. Physically Strachan -actually Strachan did. That some other guy did. I don't even know who had it some, some guy I don't even know put the stuff in a box, in a safe out in Virginia somewhere, I understand. That's where it was held.

PRESIDENT: Well, (unintelligible) boxes in every campaign.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) Not that it worries me, not that it's ever worried me and I and maybe there's more to it, than I, there's something to it than I've found.

PRESIDENT: Sure (Unintelligible) (Laughs)

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) sir. (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: Can you sort of, I don't know. Of course, none of us really knows what to do here because of...

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) each, each of us filing a statement now that's as complete as we can make it...I need to, each of us filing a statement now as, as complete as we can make it -

PRESIDENT: That's right. That's the way.

HALDEMAN: ...but that it is not a statement under, uh...

PRESIDENT: ...duress...

HALDEMAN: ...under questioning that, that, uh, says there is nothing else to say. I wouldn't say it.

PRESIDENT: No.

HALDEMAN: I wouldn't say that this is the whole truth.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: I'd say in relation to the charges...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, uh very good.

HALDEMAN: ...that have been raised

PRESIDENT: charges that have been made and then I'll be glad to answer any other questions.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. I would say, is there any other? I think you've got to abandon the disclaimer at the end.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Now if other questions are raised I'll be glad to answer them. See what I mean? Sure. Now, that way I, I don't see how's it's, uh, and if they raise the other questions, then you answer them.

HALDEMAN: I would be concerned about putting out a statement that purported to be complete because I don't I'm not sure if...

PRESIDENT: Never, never, never. You never do that for another reason is that, then, from then on they'd say (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: No, you could say on the matters of a specifically raised (unintelligible) say this-Any further questions? (Unintelligible)
(Voices fade)