



NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF

Tape Subject Log

(rev. 9/08)

Part of a conversation among President Nixon, H. R. Haldeman, and Henry A. Kissinger in the Oval Office between 6:40 pm and 6:45 pm on April 26, 1971.

Conversation No. 489-23

President: He said, "I just wanna tell you that, by God, [unintelligible] I'm proud of you and a lot of us are proud of the way you're standin' up against these damn demonstrators." He says, "That's that bunch up there. We could smell 'em today." He said, "They were the most horrible bunch." I said, "Well," I said, "if they don't get to violence, Russell," I said, "I can't object to it." "Well," he, he said, "they threw," uh, then Walter Bennett said, "They threw red paint on Barry Goldwater's door." But he said, but, but his reaction was surprising to me. 'Course Russell's a hawk and he hates Kennedy and he's probably reactin' to Kennedy going down consorting with the veterans. But some way or other, something had ticked him off because he walked in and just said, "I'm just proud." Then wh-when he left, this is an interesting thing, he said, uh, I said, uh, I told him, I said, "Russell, I know the, these welfare bills, all the rest might pass if you support them. I know you can. [Unintelligible] support very much." I said, "I [unintelligible] wh-whatever you do on that." I said, "I just want you to know that I appreciate what you and your Southern D-, friends are doing, uh, on this war thing." I said, "You could easily desert and, uh, I would understand it, uh, understand it more than any of the Republicans." [Unintelligible]. "By God," he says, "we should support you," he said, "because," he said, "you're," he said, "you're carryin' a hell of a load, 'n' I don't know how you do it." Now that's very interesting, coming from Russell Long, who is not given to, well, he's given to wild statements, but he's not given to making politically --

Haldeman: Yeah.

President: -- naive statements.

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Conv. No. 489-23 (cont.)

Kissinger: Well, I --.

President: I [unintelligible] what happened on the [unintelligible] --.

Haldeman: Well, what happened is that they, they interrupted the Senate by shouting, "Stop the war," "There're people dying," and "God have mercy on your souls." The Senate doorkeepers hustled the demonstrators out of the galleries, and, uh --

President: Good.

Haldeman: -- one of them wearing dungarees and a red cloth depicting the Viet Cong flag draped around his body stood and yelled, "Stop the war." at the top of his lungs. Senator Humphrey, presiding at the moment, rapped for order. Senator Tower asked the gallery to be cleared. Humphrey instead ordered the doorkeepers to remove those causing the disturbance. "The Senate will not tolerate these disturbances," Humphrey said. The second demonstrator rose in an opposite gallery, also shouting, "Stop the war." "I ask again the galleries be cleared," Tower said. Again Humphrey refused, only ordering those creating the disturbance be removed. [Unintelligible] time the Senate was debating a bill to provide --

President: [Unintelligible].

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Conv. No. 489-23 (cont.)

Haldeman: -- [unintelligible] in emergency school aid. A few minutes after the first outburst, at one forty p.m., another demonstrator yelled, "Shit, you fools. How about the children in Vietnam?" From other galleries came repeated shouts to stop the war and "There're people dying." Senator Byrd demanded that the galleries be cleared.

President: Byrd, which one? Virginia or --.

Haldeman: Bob Byrd.

President: Well --.

Haldeman: Robert Byrd. Bob Byrd, the floor leader.

President: The hard liner. Yeah. Whip.

Haldeman: Whi[. Yeah. he demanded that the galleries be cleared. Senator Buckley, who had replaced Humphrey in the chair, ordered the galleries cleared.

President: Good.

Haldeman: [laughs] Humphrey, back on the floor, asked that the Byrd demand be rescinded and that those visitors in the gallery who were obeying the rules be permitted to stay. Byrd insisted the galleries be cleared first and then those who made no disturbance be readmitted.

President: Yeah.

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Conv. No. 489-23 (cont.)

Haldeman: The Capitol Police arrested the demonstrators as they were ejected from the galleries. They were escorted to the street where a paddy wagon waited. They've had a hell of a stir up there and this has got 'em shook. And it's, it's pretty big on television and they, and they are a real shitty bunch. And they gotta go, "One, two, three, four, we don't want your fuckin' war."

President: Shake who?

Haldeman: The Senators and the Congressmen.

Kissinger: But it's too early. I wish they didn't escalate it too quickly.

President: Oh, [unintelligible] the television.

Haldeman: That's what some of 'em are saying, that you're starting too soon, [unintelligible]. They staged a big thing in Hugh Scott's office about a killer squad dressed in army fatigues, mourners dressed in sackcloth, and they ran around sh-, yelling, "Kill the gooks! Kill the gooks!" Then they, the mourners, would come along crying and wailing for the dead gooks.

President: Well now, this, this will, this overplays their hand. I, I'll lay ya money that not a bit a' that's on television tonight.

Haldeman: Their faces, yeah, it's on. That's what I was --

President: It is?

Haldeman: -- I was just watching. That's why I [unintelligible].

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Conv. No. 489-23 (cont.)

President: They'll say these were nice pleasant little peaceful people --.

Haldeman: No, sir.

President: [Unintelligible].

Haldeman: [Unintelligible] was on an' they are horrible-looking people.

President: Well, I'll tell ya. Long was absolutely outraged. An', I mean, when ya [unintelligible].

Kissinger: I --

President: Don't [unintelligible] me.

Kissinger: -- I do, uh, I think, Mr. President, that really this is gonna turn again, uh --.

President: [Unintelligible] don't know if it's gonna turn again, but it may be --.

Haldeman: Just [unintelligible] well now. We've been talking but the, an' we've, we've got some decisions we gotta make about how we deal with this thing because, uh --.

President: That's their problem.

Haldeman: How they de-, uh, how Congress deals with it is their problem but how we deal with uh, they're going to the departments tomorrow.

President: Yeah.

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Conv. No. 489-23 (cont.)

Haldeman: What do we do in the departments? Do we let 'em run around or do we arrest 'em? I think we arrest 'em just like Congress did, if they impede the operation.

President: Oh, yes. Absolutely, absolutely.

Haldeman: Now the real problem you get --

President: They're not veterans.

Haldeman: -- is this plan, and we spent most of the day on this thing 'cause we've gotta decide pretty soon an' we've got a unified decision this time, uh, what we do, the, the plan starting Monday to stop the traffic into Washington will, by every estimate, work very effectively. An' it's gonna be very difficult to stop it if they have any, any numbers. Uh, Chief Wilson thinks that he can stop it if he can arrest them. That's what our plan is and obviously should be. But the tactic we're talking about now is the poss-, considering the possibility of going to Congress and requesting a, a, uh, new law that makes it a felony to obstruct traffic on, on, uh, the arteries coming in here. So that we've got a deterrent to keep the good kids out and a basis on arresting the others for holding them on a felony charge.

President: I wouldn't have us, though I'd have somebody in Congress do it.

Haldeman: Well, if you look at the public feeling, we might as well get credit for it.

President: I don't know whether public feeling's that high. Let 'em to stop it first and then pass the law.

Haldeman: Well, be too late then.

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Conv. No. 489-23 (cont.)

President: Well, then when it's too late --.

Haldeman: We won't arrest 'til we stop them.

Kissinger: What do we lose if they stop the traffic, as long as we arrest them.

President: I'm not so sure we [unintelligible] --

Haldeman: [Unintelligible].

President: -- want 'em to stop the Government. I'm not too sure we give a damn. Let 'em stop the Government. Let them, let them screw the things. Let them [unintelligible] --

Kissinger: But as long as we arrest them --

President: -- [unintelligible] the law.

Kissinger: -- I mean, we could ar- --.

President: I don't think we ought to jump in like Mitchell did in order to make a point --

Haldeman: Right.

President: -- legally --.

Haldeman: Right.

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Conv. No. 489-23 (cont.)

President: I rather think that we'd better - I've got to go. Well, anyway, I, I apparently, that's what TV's passing off. This [unintelligible] will really disrupt 'em 'n' --

Haldeman: Yup.

President: -- [unintelligible] 'em, and, uh, they're, uh, [sighs] I'll talk to you about it, uh, call you about it, uh --

Haldeman: Right.

President: -- but anyway, the uh, uh --

Haldeman: [Unintelligible] shook at the Capitol.

President: Senators, well, Senators don't see these people.

Haldeman: That's right.

President: They think they, you know, they read about a demonstration and the rest, but it shook 'em up, huh.

Haldeman: That's what, regardless of their [unintelligible].