

**NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF****Tape Subject Log***(rev. 9/08)*

Part of a conversation among President Nixon, H. R. ("Bob") Haldeman, and Ronald L. Ziegler in the Oval Office between 11:09 am and 11:20 am on May 6, 1971

Conversation No. 493-9

Ziegler: On the, on the matter relating to the District o' Columbia, we've just completed a, a meeting with [John D.] Ehrlichman and [John W.] Dean [III], and everything --

President: Yeah.

Ziegler: -- 'n' gone through that thing.

President: You handled it very well.

Ziegler: Well, I dunno, yesterday, I think it came out all right, but the line I'm going to uh

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President: [Unintelligible] said it came out all right.

Ziegler: -- the line I'm going to focus on, I'm only gonna use --

President: Even --

Ziegler: -- one sentence --.

President: -- even Henry [A. Kissinger] said so. You must've been all right. He thought --.

Ziegler: Who? Kissinger?

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF**Tape Subject Log***(rev. 9/08)*

Conv. No. 493-9 (cont.)

President: Yeah, he said, "Ron made a wonderful statement." He's in, he's in California. You know, everything was carried and I'm glad he made that statement.

Ziegler: What'd he say?

President: Uh, let him know that we, we stood by our, our decision. Listen, their line is to bust 'em in the head, kick 'em in the ass; people are sick of them.

Ziegler: I agree.

President: You agree, Bob?

Haldeman: I sure as hell do, an' that --.

President: [Unintelligible] conciliatory. Does anybody have any argument then?

Ziegler: No, no.

President: [Unintelligible]?

Haldeman: No.

President: All right, quit --

Ziegler: The --

President: -- being conciliatory.

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF**Tape Subject Log***(rev. 9/08)*

Conv. No. 493-9 (cont.)

Ziegler: -- the only, the line I'm going to use today is just straight that --

President: You've gotten [unintelligible].

Ziegler: -- the President is satisfied. I'm gonna go through the little civil disturbance thing: people came in there with stated attempt, the President is satisfied that the District o' Columbia, Columbia Police Force conducted themselves with great restraint in a competent way and handled the situation appropriately.

President: That's right.

Ziegler: Have nothing more to say, period. Just stay right --.

President: That's right. The, were there no injuries, were there?

Ziegler: No.

President: They ran over one jerk who was, laid down in front of a car, that's too goddamn bad.

Haldeman: You know, that's one of the points somebody raised at the earlier meeting, that I, that it's, maybe you can't play to, but, God damn, we sure gotta get across is that you have a remarkable situation here. When you have the, a group of radicals, led by Rennie Davis --

President: Lookin' for trouble.

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF**Tape Subject Log***(rev. 9/08)*

Conv. No. 493-9 (cont.)

Haldeman: -- looking for trouble, going through this exercise day after day, in this, in the District of Columbia, star- --.

President: Well, I wanna commend --.

Haldeman: [Unintelligible].

President: Also, let me say, I wanna commend, I think it, that the President, uh, looking at a perspective, believes that the Police Department deserves commendation for its, its firm but, uh, restrained handling of a situation that could have been explosive. Working, uh, uh, particularly in view of the fact that some of those, a number of those in the groups were lookin' for confrontation, wanted trouble, so and so forth. [Unintelligible]. Second, he wants to commend the Government workers again for, for their not being intimidated. Third, uh, the military for their handling of the situation --.

Haldeman: [Unintelligible]

President: But fourth, I don't want you to sum it all --

Ziegler: Right.

President: -- and then fourth, said, he wants to commend the citizens of Washington who, who were, were inconvenienced, who had their tires slashed, who had trash thrown in their streets, who, uh, who were delayed, and so forth, for the remarkable restraint that they showed, that in this whole week, uh, of, of, of, of, uh, of illegal, illegal, uh, just put illegal conduct, uh, that, uh, that the, uh, that the law-abiding citizens of Washington and the law enforcement agencies of the

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF**Tape Subject Log***(rev. 9/08)*

Conv. No. 493-9 (cont.)

District of Columbia conducted themselves in a way that there were no serious injuries.

Haldeman: See, that's the remarkable thing, that illustrates -- .

Ziegler: No serious injuries --.

Haldeman: [Unintelligible] on the part of either the police or citizens.

President: [Unintelligible] of either policemen or, or, ya know, no-, note that there were no serious injuries, period, that no one suffered serious injuries, and that is the key. That, on the other hand, uh, either the President does take note of the fact that, that, uh, that there was a massive, uh, a very s-, a very significant problem, damage to property, and a very significant cost to the taxpayers of the District of Columbia to handle this, that, uh, that this, uh --

Haldeman: Throw in the taxpayers of the District o' Columbia and the national taxpayers.

President: -- yeah, the taxpayers --

Haldeman: [Unintelligible]

President: -- and the taxpayers o' the District a-and the Federal Government -- that the cost here -- I wish you could get that cost -- that the riot cost or the District's cost was, uh, two hundred --.

Haldeman: [Unintelligible]. May be able to, they had an estimate.

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF**Tape Subject Log***(rev. 9/08)*

Conv. No. 493-9 (cont.)

President: Well [unintelligible].

Ziegler: I think it's gonna be [unintelligible].

President: Well, several million dollars. Is that right? Was it?

Ziegler: It's at least that.

Haldeman: Millions of dollars.

Ziegler: Millions.

President: Several, well, several mill-, Bob, well, uh, if running--

Haldeman: [Unintelligible]

President: -- running into the million of dollars, running into millions of dollars, uh, for, for handling of this situation and that, uh, the, uh, that the, that, of course, it's, uh, that we, then he, the President repeats, the right of, the right of peaceful, peaceful, uh, peaceful protest is recognized, but that this handling indicates that, that, them, uh, uh, uh, indicates that everybody concerned that, as far the, when you say, as far as the President's concerned, that, that we will not tolerate, any place in this country where the Federal Government has a responsibility, breaking the peace in the name, breaking the peace at home i-in the name of seeking peace abroad. Not gonna tolerate it. And so, if any more happens that, that we'll be prepared for any other demonstrations, how to handle things, and handle them exactly the same way. Any others that come to Washington for the purpose of breaking the peace will be handled exactly the same way.

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF

Tape Subject Log
(rev. 9/08)

Conv. No. 493-9 (cont.)

Ziegler: Right. Okay.

President: That's a warning.

Ziegler: [Clears throat]

President: Don't you agree, Bob?

Haldeman: [Unintelligible].

President: Now, this time nobody can say I'm provoking the little bastards. That's what they all, why, they wouldn't let me say it last week, right? Now this week tell 'em, that's the way it is.

Ziegler: Okay.

President: And I'm, I'm so satisfied with it that I think that, that with this, uh, we have now found the way to handle this situation, we're gonna handle it this way in the future.

Haldeman: The results speak for themselves, that's, that's really the thing --.

Ziegler: [Unintelligible]

President: Nobody's in jail, I mean, and the whole point is this, this is Ehrlichman's point, nobody is a, has a right not to be arrested. He has a right only to a fair trial, to a --

Ziegler: That's right.

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF

Tape Subject Log
(rev. 9/08)

Conv. No. 493-9 (cont.)

President: -- speedy trial, and to a fair trial.

Haldeman: And that was accomplished in, un-, in the --

President: [Unintelligible]

Haldeman: -- largest arrests in history with --

President: And I --

Haldeman: -- great dispatch.

Ziegler: Hey, very good.

President: -- and I'd like to follow through on this right off and then I'll do that other [unintelligible]. And don't worry about the, I mean, DC expenses and financial and so forth. You [unintelligible] worry about what you say.

Haldeman: They're just, they're gonna keep boring in there --

President: Take a firm --

Haldeman: -- for days. They're trying to --

President: -- firm --

Haldeman: -- get us to say we're sorry we [unintelligible].

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF

Tape Subject Log
(rev. 9/08)

Conv. No. 493-9 (cont.)

Ziegler: [Unintelligible].

President: -- take a firm, hard line and, uh, and, and, the President says that we reg-, you say he is, he does not regret it, period. [Unintelligible].

Ziegler: [Unintelligible].

President: Oh God, "Listen, I'm tellin' you, mister, you talk to him. He does not regret it a-a- d-don't try to, and don't try to put words in my mouth or in his." Put it that way.

Ziegler: [Unintelligible].

President: The President says, "Don't try to put words in my mouth or in his." Those are your words. You'll regret it. But as far as he's concerned, this was handled right. We're gonna handle it that way in the future. We're not going to allow peaceful citizens and millions of law-abiding citizens in this country to have their peace destroyed by the violent few.

Haldeman: See, that's exactly what we got into on the issue on the campus of [unintelligible]

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President: That's right.

Haldeman: -- was that they've let the demonstrators chew up the campus for everybody else, 'n' that was the one place they had [unintelligible].

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF

Tape Subject Log

(rev. 9/08)

Conv. No. 493-9 (cont.)

Ziegler: I've got a question: will it be affected by all this as far as [unintelligible] is concerned?

President: He's answered that question: [unintelligible].

Haldeman: I think [unintelligible] academic freedom argument that they destruct the academic freedom on the campus, and the answer to that was: the academic freedom of those who come to pursue an education has got to be protected.