

**NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF****Tape Subject Log**
(rev. 10/08)

Part of a conversation among President Nixon, George P. Shultz, Jerome M. Rosow, Harllee Branch, Jr., Edward W. Carter, James M. Roche, Walter B. Wriston, John O'Connell, J. Warren Shaver, W. L. Lohrentz, Robert Atkinson, Oscar A. Lundin, I[lorwith] W. Abel, Joseph A. Beirne, George Meany, Floyd E. ("Red") Smith, Leonard Woodcock, Nat Weinberg, Nathaniel Goldfinger, Reginald Newell, William T. Coleman, Jr., John T. Dunlop, Howard W. Johnson, Arjay Miller, Wilson Allen Wallis, John B. Connally, James D. Hodgson, Paul W. McCracken, Maurice H. Stans, Dr. Edward E. David, Jr., Leon Greenberg, Dr. Hubert Heffner, William H. Kolberg, Harold C. Passer, Harold Wool, Murray L. Weidenbaum, and Carl Savit in the Cabinet Room between 2:50 pm and 4:18 pm on June 29, 1971.

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Shultz: Perhaps we could hear from the other end of the table and hear from the automobile industry and, uh, uh, the worst side of the house.

[Laughter]

Shultz: [Unintelligible] Why don't you say something, and then Jim can say something about some of your thoughts on this, uh--

Woodcock: Well,--

Shultz: --overall subject.

Woodcock: --Mr. President, I'm delighted to hear the thoughts expressed, though you're not speaking now, directed to the automobile industry on the question of the use of, of government in areas where obviously private industry can't meet the problem. We've been talking in our own group about what we call NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] 2, a NASA-type agency which could do research and development in the whole area of pollution, as well as the, the atmosphere and water. The fact is we have a lot of very dedicated environmental

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people who are coming up with all sorts of solutions which add to our cost problems, when, in fact, we don't really know what the problem is. And I think if we had some collective basic research as to what is the scope of the problem, what is the degradation of our atmosphere, what is the point of no return, the same thing with our water base, [unintelligible] water base. The question of nuclear fusion is, the solution of that problem can be the next gigantic step on the, on the problem of, uh, e-energy utilization, and what I read in the technical--

President: That's one we're on.

Woodcock: --journals, journals, the Russians are, are well along in, [unintelligible] in that, uh, in that. So that, uh, encouraging [unintelligible], when a President speaks about these things in a, such a knowledgeable way. We, this charge you have given us on the question of productivity, the simple proposition seems quite elemental, something which no one can disagree. We go to the question of implementation, well then we get into all sorts of difficulty, the controversy, which the automobile industry, of course, is now plagued by a rising tide of imports coming primarily from two places -- Japan and Germany. Uh, the rest of the automobile-producing countries are of no great moment to us. From our side, we raise the question of mass productivity advances, which everyone wants. But that causes displacement of people, we have to be concerned about what happens to those people. Uh, Japan doesn't have that problem; Germany doesn't have that problem. You take the eleven years, 1959 through 1969, when we had an unemployment rate on the average of 4.8 percent, Germany had 7 tenths of one percent, Japan had 1 and four tenths percent. So that anyone displaced there, uh, readily can find other places. Except, of course, in Japan they also have a life tenure system; and in general their societal protections to the individual, uh, come out of a different tradition than ours, but they are more protective. And, uh, we have to be very

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much, uh, concerned about that. Obviously, it can't entirely be on the doorstep of the enterprise bringing on, on stream, the better way of doing something or that becomes an inhibiting cost. Has to be s-some degree, uh, a national, a socialized, and it's this kind of argument and discussion which is slowing down our work. We don't think it would serve the purpose you gave us just to rush out something which, uh, was a bland, uh, putting together at least what we can all agree to. We might better recognize the problems that we have. Uh, we wrestle, for example, with the phrase about the fact that these other countries have modernized their industries more quickly than do some, [unintelligible] taken to that, but the fact is that Germany and Japan, when they began to build their automobile industry, started from scratch, and of course, had an advantage of the latest technology.

President: And their steel industry, too.

Woodcock: And their steel industry, and--

President: [Unintelligible]

Woodcock: --[unintelligible] many other new plants. But that begins to come to a point of diminishing returns, because as we beget newer technologies, we have the advantage of, uh, closing that gap, and they're getting some of our own problems in even greater depth. Uh, I understand Tokyo makes New York City seem like a garden of paradise as far as smog is concerned. So that, uh, this is a very, very complex area. You can't look at one single industry and say this should be done. There is a great deal of, of pressure in, in our union. Looking towards quotas, looking towards tariffs, which we in the leadership are strongly resisting because

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we think that that in, in general [unintelligible] with the country, but we don't know all those answers. What, if that has done, does it do to agriculture, does it do here, does it do there? So that what seems like a simple task, is really very, very, uh, difficult and comprehensive, uh, job, and certainly you, uh--. If you want all the facets of opinion expressed you couldn't have brought together a better group to get differences of opinion than this one.

President: Let me raise one point to the, for the automobile people and, uh, I think it's relevant to the others. Secretary Connally and I were talking about it over the weekend. And, uh, here we're gonna bite into something that is, uh, politically, uh, not partisan political, but politically, uh, great difference of opinion on this. How clean, how safe can we really afford to be? I mean where does it, when do we come to a point, when as far as say, safety is concerned, uh, it, uh, perhaps is not worth the investment? Now let's take the automobile. Uh, they got a couple of really great ideas, I understand; uh, ideas which, uh, may come sometime [unintelligible]. One has got a airbag. Well, they put one of those airbags in a car I buy, I'm not gonna ride, I'll walk. Uh, because the thing ha-, of course, hasn't [unintelligible] But looking at it in terms of the competitive position of American automobile. You look at Japanese or the Swedish or the rest, because of our, our, our situation cost us little more. If we, every time we hang something new on a car required to hang on, they can hang it on too, and meet the same standard. But, because their costs are basically [unintelligible], uh, it, uh, the difference between the price, uh, there are very substantial changes. So you got the airbag, you got the, the, the, the be-, the seatbelt harness, and so forth, where the lights flash and the bomb grows up, and everything, unless you have your seatbelt on. It's a nice little gimmick too; it'll, it's, it's uh--. But, by the time you put that on, you put

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the airbag on, uh, all these things in the interest of safety, by the time you get on, uh, and uh, [unintelligible] costs, the, the, the, the, the, the, the relative competitive position of the American manufacturer, the American manufacturer, [unintelligible] and his European or Asian competitor is very substantially protected. Now that doesn't mean that, I understand it's a nice car [unintelligible]. I still think ours are the safest cars. I mean they're better built, right? I mean, uh, you talk about the bumpers, and so we should have bumpers that will take anything, that's, uh, five miles an hour. Well, that'll be great thing. Uh, but so on down the line, I'm prejudicing it by, perhaps, my own comments. Let's take the environment. Now on the environment, we all want clean air, we all like clean water. So I thought, well, one great thing would be that by the year 1976, you know, the two hundredth year of this republic, let's have this Potomac River out here be as clean as it was a hundred ninety years ago, or two hundred years ago when we began. So we looked at the cost: six billion dollars. Is it worth it? Now, there's some other things that we can do that won't clean it up that much, and those things we are gonna go ahead and do. But is six billion dollars what we ought to do with regard to the Potomac, or, and in other areas? Let's, let's apply it now to automobiles. You come, of course, to the whole business of here, the times, you know, uh, on the labor side, and on management's side. I'm sure, it's, uh, uh, the time has been applied to the Congress, uh, uh, and legislation, and, uh, it'll be seventy-five, or seventy-six there's the pollution uh, uh, a car which is pollution free, uh, to a factor of, say, ninety percent. Uh, the California legislation is much more realistic, as you know, because it provides to the extent that, you know, has a, has a [unintelligible] exception. Let's look at that one. First, no one can tell you today, and all the experts in this field can talk about it, uh, uh, talk about it, tell you today that it is possible to develop that, even

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by nineteen, by nineteen eighty. Now, of course, the argument on the other side: well, the industry isn't trying hard enough. Maybe it isn't; I don't know. But the point is, we still don't know what we'll be doing. Let's suppose, though, that we put [unintelligible] that kind of requirement. Then the question is, what is the dislocation that is caused by our moving so fast in that direction, again in terms of the competitive position of the American manufacturer, putting these pollution devices on, and his foreign competitor putting on a pollution device, meeting the standards, but one that's really costing perhaps half as much, or third as much. I, I'm just, just talking about something. Uh, I'm not arguing against safety, and I'm not arguing against the environment. It seems that we are. This is so easy to say: we ought to do everything we can to be sure that all of our cars are accident-free. Well, that kind of a world isn't gonna be around. You can even fall off horse, they tell me. I'll never get on it, to be sure. [Laughter] But, I'm only [unintelligible], there's always gonna be dangerous [unintelligible]. And, uh, we have to live [unintelligible] gonna be subject, and we have to remove those things that are, that are, obviously defective. In terms of the environment, I don't mean by that, that we have to resign ourselves to the conditions such as we have in New York, Los Angeles, and you couldn't be more right about Tokyo. Getting bad in some other cities in the world, of course, you all know. But, nevertheless, uh, we, we, we have to realize that, when you weigh this environment factor, uh, the safety factor, the health factor, against the cost factor, i-it's a very, very, it's a, uh, a close judgement. Uh, let me give you one other example which is not directly in line, but which relates to it. You know, the current fad is to, uh, get away with all, get a-, all the insectides [*sic*], and all the rest, all chemicals are very dangerous, bad. Uh, we should all eat everything in its natural state. You ever been to a peach orchard in its natural state, or a corn field?

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[Laughter]

President: Yeah. Dr. [Norman E.] Borlaug, you know, who won the, this magnificent man, an American, worked at the, from the University of Wisconsin, or Minnesota or something, Iowa actually. Went down to Mexico, been living there twenty-five years, developed new strains of miracle wheat and from that miracle rice that had [unintelligible] meant that, and I use the terms advisedly, that hundreds of millions of people in Latin America and Asia are eating today that otherwise would be starving. And I asked him about some of these things. He said, let's take DDT [dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane], let's take some of these insectins [sic]. He said, I, you can't, uh, can't t-, said I can't tell you too strongly. We, we must weigh these decisions that say, well maybe this is dangerous to life, in terms, because to weigh that against what it may do in producing, uh, the food, and so forth, that we need, and allowing us to do it. But what I'm trying, what, what I really think we have to get at here that here's a group, business and labor, industry and the rest. The easy thing, the faddiest thing, is to go on with that, that we can have a, that we can have sort of, instantly, or maybe within five years, a pollution-free, a safety, uh, one in which, uh, uh, we get at the uh, the, the, the problem, of course, of, uh, all these things that this, uh, monstrosity, the American industrial system, has produced to make life less, uh, uh, a mo-, you know, healthy and the rest. And, what we have to, we have to realize that all, I think we, you as business people, as labor people, as, as, and as leaders, have to bring a little sense into the dialogue, because there may come a point where it just doesn't make sense to do that. John, would you say a word on this score? We were talking about it, uh, about that: the, the environment and the safety thing, we're,

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we're going through.

Connally: Well, Mr. President [clears throat] as you recall, the whole, the whole thrust of it was, unfortunately, America gets carried away at times by emotionalism, and, and, uh, by dramatic instances that occur, uh, in our midst. And yet, we talk about safety, and automobiles; you talk about airbags, you talk about the additional costs; yet no of us really wants to talk about bumpers that mesh. All these things are desirable. Yet, no one really, really wants to face up to the fact that the greatest danger of automobiles is the driver himself. And the drunken driver is by far the greatest hazard on the road. Over fifty percent of your wrecks, your fatal wrecks, are one car accidents. Uh, yet you can't get the American people to work up about it. You got, you got, uh, uh, an emotional attitude in this nation that permeates this entire society over the death of men in Vietnam. And, and, well, people should be concerned about the deaths of young men in war. Truth of the matter is, we kill more people in automobile wrecks in America each year than have been killed in all of the years of fighting in Vietnam. But, so it's, it's just to always to maintain a relative objective viewpoint on what's good for this American society. And this is what, this is basically what you're trying to say that, that, uh, we have to maintain some kind of a perspective, in terms of what's good for people, not in terms of just the emotional bid of the moment, but in the long pull, whether you're talking about pesticides or, or whatever. And uh, [unintelligible] uh, uh, you can't let the environmentalists run away, uh, with this country. Now, we're on this kind of a binge. Uh, everybody knows you can stop it, you can stop, you clean up the Potomac River out here. Uh, you'll shut down all the city sewer plants. You'll shut down all the industry, and, and you'll stop all the farming, uh, so the silt won't, uh, won't flow down to the river. We got

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into this with the Houston Ship Channel in Houston, and it's a bad situation, no question about it. We can shut it down. And I, conf-, in effect, confronted the people of, of that area with the fact it could be shut down. We could clean up the ship channel, we could, uh, we could stop the pollution of it. But to do it, you stop all industry. Now, what, what is the value? What are the relative values? How much is going in today to, to relatively non-productive purposes? [Unintelligible], and somebody here's, with s-, US Steel I believe, uh, on this committee work here. Well, I was informed, uh, this week, they're putting, in addition to everything else, they're putting fifty million dollars a year over the next three years, the commitment's made: a hundred and fifty million dollars just for environmental purposes alone. Now, this is basically a non-productive use; it's productive in a sense that, sure, it helps clean up the environment. But, uh, the, the problem that we have is maintaining some, uh, a, a, a constant perspective in the minds of the American people what's worthwhile. What is truly worthwhile in the long run so that we don't lose our sense of values. Because, you're dealing in a world where, frankly, uh, other people don't place the same value on the things that we talk about. And we spend so much of our resources, whether it's manpower, materials, raw materials or otherwise, or time, whether we spend that much of our resources to try to reach a desired result that is not even considered in Japan, or Germany, or, or South America, or other parts, parts of the world, that we're putting ourselves even more in a non-competitive position vis-a-vis other countries, that, uh, that we're materially affecting, uh, our ability to create jobs for our people, to, to, uh, produce materials to be sold. So, uh, we, we, there's just so far that we can go in some, uh, to outstrip, frankly, the, uh, the demands and the necessities and the, and the commitments of other people around the world. We can't, we can't live in a pristine atmosphere. When other

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people around the world, uh, are not doing it, not even trying to do it. And so, and so, always there has to be some kind of a compromise, and, uh, I think part of our trouble is that, uh, that we're not, uh, always willing, industry's not, uh, labor's not, the educational institutions are not, and perhaps government's not willing to face up and make the tough decisions that, however desirable some of these things are, we can't have them all today. We can work toward em, but we just have to be realistic about what can be accomplished within a, within a time frame that makes sense.

Woodcock: Uh, let me just a coup-, couple of comments on, on this, if I may, that uh--. I'm not competent to determine whether or not the last increments on the emissions control are, are needed or not, as against the toxins. Uh, of course, one curious footnote is that all of these demands that are on the horizon may actually lessen the tide of imports because they'll have more trouble meeting those demands than, I think, the American or the American domestic industry. But I must confess, when I hear about the airbag, and I'm told all this will do is through passive restraint. Well, the, the harness and the, and the, uh, seatbelt will do. I can't understand why we can't have a, uh, traffic requirement, you can't drive a car unless you harness those belts. That will do what the, what the airbags will do. And, uh, uh, an airbag goes off with the noise, uh, equivalent of a twelve gauge shotgun, gun, in a closed room, I don't think I can, I don't think I can quite [unintelligible] that happen. And there has to be some, some place or that some value judgements made in this regard.

Connally: Leonard, your answer is that you can force people to put things on cars, but we're not willing to make people use them. You not willing to get it down to the lowest

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common denominator and make the fella responsible who really is responsible. That's why I say, you put all these things on cars, if you don't stop the drunk drivers, you're not gonna stop deaths on the highways. But we're not willing to come to that point. We're not willing to face up to it.

Shultz: You mean, John, it isn't so much what they don't use, the safety belt, it's what they do use, [unintelligible]

[Laughter]

Connally: That's exactly right.

Shultz: Jim, we didn't give you a chance, to uh, [unintelligible]

Roche: Well, thank you George. Mr. President, uh, uh, first I would like to say that, uh, I agree with ma-, with many of the comments which have been made particularly with respect for the safety and, the, the, environmental, uh, problems. I agree completely with Leonard, uh, Woodcock's initial statement that, uh, uh, the first order priority should be to identify the goals and objectives, and what, what is responsible for the problem and that, how can this be, uh, national problem be solved on a realistic approach. Secondly, there isn't anything for free, and, uh, everything that we do in these areas represents a compromise of some kind, uh, either in respect to the value of the product that, that may be involved, uh, the value of the environment, uh, versus the cost [unintelligible] or whatever, whatever it may be. And, uh, we have been dealing with this problem on an emotional basis rather than a practical basis, with the result, uh, uh, that

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emotionally we're, we, we tend to charge ahead. I think we make many of these decisions on the basis that we have such a, a, a terrifically affluent and rich society. And, and all these things somehow can just be added on top of, uh, everything else that we have, without any regard to the fact that, uh, paying for some of these, either through higher prices or taxes, or whatever the case may be, it's going to detract fr-, from something else. And, uh, I don't think that we, uh, as a nation, uh, in competition with the other nations around the world, uh, have been giving enough consideration to this particular phase of, of, of, of this problem. And this problem, uh, will have some effect on the basic reason for this group being together here, which is producti-, productivity of the United States vis-a-vis, uh, uh, the rest of the world. I think, Mr. President, that you made a very eloquent and convincing story this morning in your discussion of a kind of a world in which we may be living [unintelligible] You have a situation in respect to our principles and patterns. Uh, I have great [unintelligible] in what you, ha-, had to say, and, uh, uh, hopefully we [unintelligible] be living in a peaceful world. And if we are, we a-are already experiencing the competition from Japan and the European Economic Community. So we know what that is, and what may happen when the Russian, and, and China [unintelligible] w-with our e-, position [unintelligible] economically. Uh, I shudder to think, though, what might happen, because certainly we have, uh, we have, uh, ample, uh, experience, not only here in the United States but in other countries in the world in which we operate, by which we can evaluate, uh, this, uh, this kind of competition. Uh, our ability, uh, to compete, uh, as we all know, has, has become greatly eroded, ov-, over the last, uh, few years. Uh, that erosion has come about, uh, uh, uh, uh, in my opinion, for two reasons. One is that, uh, uh, [unintelligible] a lot more inflation uh, in our economy than anybody likes. And secondly, our productivity has not been

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advancing as, as fast as the productivity of our principal competitors, uh, Canada, uh, uh, uh, Japan, uh, and Germany. And uh, we all have differences of opinion on this [unintelligible] and we have for a long time, uh, on many different things. And, uh, in many respects, uh, we've all made our mistakes, uh, neither side is perfect. But, I think that, uh, we have come to a point where management and labor and government have got to sit down in this country and realistically appraise the problems that we face in this world, and try to work out, uh, equitable, uh, solutions for them. We are witnessing here in the United States a great influx of, uh, of, of, uh, imported uh, goods and material, that, that, uh, four or five years ago, if anybody, uh, mentioned that w-, we would be invaded, uh, to this extent I, I think we would have, uh, judged them insane. Uh, those of us who operate, uh, uh, international business in other parts of the world are witnessing the same kind of competition [unintelligible] against our products, uh, from these, uh, same, uh, sources. And, uh, it's quite obvious, that I think, that, uh, only through coming to grips, uh, with these problems, and trying to sit down and identify the reasons, uh, for, uh, the situation, that we're ever going to come up, uh, with a, with a, with the right solution. And, uh, in arriving at these solutions, uh, I think all of us are going to have to do things that maybe we wouldn't like. Uh, management's going to have to do it, individual companies are going to have to do it, and I think labor's going to, going to have to do some things that, uh, [unintelligible], that, that they are, are not, are not going to like. I think that we have to, uh, look at our collective position, and we're all in the same boat, we're all part of the United States, and we all have a great stake, uh, in, in, in this, uh, wo-, wonderful country of ours, and in the future success of its, uh, of its economy. And, unless we all do get together in some way and cooperate and find, uh, uh, so-, solutions to the problems that confront us as a result of the

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efforts of our economic, uh, uh, adversaries, uh, then, well, we are going to be relegated in this country to the position that we were talking about this morning. And certainly, uh, none of us, uh, uh, want that. Uh, we're s-, we're faced here, uh, with, uh, I've done some talking this morning about, uh, about, uh, the cost of government, how we're gonna improve the, uh, the productivity of government. Uh, what could our, our, uh, federal, state and local governments, cost of these services to us is thirty-five percent of our total gross national product. Uh, now that's a tremendous amount of money, and it's obvious that, uh, improvements are gonna have to be [unintelligible] and I, and I think they can be [unintelligible]. We talked about a few minor incidents here this morning, uh, about how, uh, uh, things could be improved, uh, a couple types of operation. But beyond that we have an overlap in the government, uh, responsibility; we have an overlap in the, uh, various, various agencies of government, trying to do the same, uh, same things, all of it [unintelligible]. Talking about a tremendous increase in the, uh, the, uh, uh, growth of services, and, uh, services apparently, uh, today are [unintelligible] to nineteen percent of our, uh, total GNP [Gross National Product]. In another ten years they're estimated to be up to twenty-six, twenty-seven percent. So there's another area obviously in this [unintelligible] has to be, uh, improved if we, have just [unintelligible] get at, at, at some of these basic problems. We live, uh, we, we, live in, uh, uh, uh, uh, an age and, uh, and, uh, we live in, in this, uh, economy of ours in the United States where we're doing things that we can't, we can't a-afford to continue. We can't afford in our industries, for example, the high rates of absenteeism which we have, and Leonard and I and, uh, some of our associates have been wo-, starting to work on this problem. This is a very serious problem, uh, in, in, in our businesses today. Uh, [unintelligible] our current absenteeism is running over five percent, some days it gets up to

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twelve, thirteen percent. And, uh, obviously, you can't run an efficient business on a regular basis with that kind of a performance. You can't indulge the luxury of some of the work stoppages that we have, uh, [unintelligible] in this country. Unless there is, th-, th-, this is a problem for management and labor to work out, uh, together. You can't indulge in things like where, uh, we just finished in the automobile industry, our strike. And now, we're looking forward to a, uh, uh, possibility of a steel strike. To protect our position against the steel strike, uh, we've had to stockpile steel, uh, which we're doing, uh, in a ninety day supply, uh, all of which represents a tremendous investment, it represents the handling costs, it represents storage costs, uh, all of which, the final analysis are charged [unintelligible] the productivity of our economy. I think, these are some of the things that we're going to have to do to come up with, uh, the answers that we need. And, hopefully, uh, [unintelligible] various [unintelligible] governments [unintelligible] in the past, facing the problems in this area as Americans, and then, then let's try to come up with some answers that's [unintelligible], give us badly needed solutions. Cause unless we do, the penalty is just some more, in my opinion, uh, of what we had in the last three or four years with respect to our competition from around the world.