

Transcript of a Recording of a Conversation
of February 16, 1973 between President
Nixon, John Ehrlichman and L. Patrick Gray
from approximately 9:08 to 9:39 a.m. in the
Oval Office



Transcript of a Recording of a Conversation
of February 16, 1973 between President
Nixon, John Ehrlichman and L. Patrick Gray
from approximately 9:09 to 9:39 a.m. in the
Oval Office

Unintelligible.

President: Hi. How are you.

Gray: Mr. President. How are you sir?

President: How are you? Nice to see you.

Gray: You look great.

President: Fine. How're you feeling?

Gray: Good.

President: Fine.

Gray: Mean, nasty.

(Laughs)

(Unintelligible)...a bit happy...

Ehrlichman: That's cause I got you up early this morning?

Gray: A little bit early.

President:

Gray:

President:

Gray:

RESTRICTED-"D"

President:

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

2

President:(cont.)

Gray:

RESTRICTED-"D"

President: Let me ask a couple of other things, uh, having to do with, uh, whether we decide here, uh -- as you probably are aware, uh, what this, if you were to be nominated, and uh, I think, of course, I've talked to John Mitchell, about this, (unintelligible). Uh, you, obviously open up, before a different committee than the Ervin Committee, the whole Watergate thing. Now the question is, uh, whether you feel that that, uh, that, that you can handle it, whether that's a good thing, bad thing and so forth -- what I mean is, the Watergate committee, even though it has these, (unintelligible) and three wonderful jack-asses on it and so forth. It will be bad enough there, your committee would have Kennedy, and Tunney on it.

Gray: Right.

President: They'd like to make, uh, uh, make quite a deal about the thing. What I'm getting at is this, uh, I'm not concerned about the substance, about the facts coming out. I am, all I'm, all, I'm thinking is, -uh, whether it's to the interest of everybody concerned to have, uh, the uh, man who is to be nominated for Director of the Bureau be badgered and so forth on whether it's good for us to have that story told twice before two committees, uh, et cetera. So, uh, why don't you give me your judgment on that. You must have thought about it.

Gray: Oh, yes.

President: You must have thought also of the kind of a story you'd have to tell when you'd be examined on it. Without being limited to Watergate, they would probably ask you about such things as, do you know about any other

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

3

President: things that the Bureau's done, have you
(cont.) got into this domestic wiretapping,
where incidentally, parenth--,
parenthetically, whatever you're hearing, it's
time to start getting out the truth there
which is, is, heighten the evidence that is on
hand. It's the Robert Kennedy Administration,
Justice Department, when there were over a
hundred a year. It's been cut down to a very
small amount. Then, I would be not that
defensive about it. I'd say, yes, we have to
do it because, uh, this involves the
possibility of, uh, violent groups that we've
got this what happened to Wallace,
(unintelligible) judicial judgment.

Ehrlichman &

President: (Unintelligible)...

Ehrlichman: He can tell a strong story.

President: Yeah, say, look, what do you want us to do
about this? Do you want to let people get
shot?

RESTRICTED-"B"

Ehrlichman: I think the Bureau's been very stupid, I must
say, and also...

Gray: We, uh...

President: All this domestic wiretapping, it isn't just,
uh, it's anything to do with the United States
and so forth and of course you can
(unintelligible).

RESTRICTED-"B"

it has to do with national: security uh, the,
there're a hell of a lot of people, these
violent groups, who would threaten these uh,
the Jews and all the others around, the Arabs.

Gray: Um - hum.

President: Either one, either side, you know, there's
this violent Jewish Committee that wants to
kill the Arabs and the Arabs want to kill the
Jews and Christ, they're--

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

4

Ehrlichman: Terrorism is, a tragic problem.

President: Terrorism, hijacking is another thing. 7~nd you've got to get Into that. Right. Some of that requires wiretapping. Higher and your authority, your, your responsibility in hijacking, your responsibility for, uh, this. I think that you've got to get, and I want, John and me for next time. (unintelligible) I'm already hitting. I don't believe we should be defensive. First of all, we're doin' less. Second, it's uh, it's, uh, it's extremely necessary. We must not be denied the right to use the weapon. The idea that we're wiretapping a lot of political groups is bullshit.

Gray: That's right and that, simply not --

President: Let's, let's get back to the fundamental part of it.

Gray: It's, it's the other

President: You know the, you know the, you know the mood of the Congress, as you know they're, they're panicked, depressed, by Watergate and so forth. What should we do, would it hurt or help for you to go up there and be mashed about that?

Gray: Uh, I think probably, Mr. President, I'm the man that's in the best position to handle that thing.

President: Why?

Gray: Because I've consistently handled it from the outset, before Judge Sirica's order came to play, when we were talking only procedure not substance, and I handled all kinds of questions from all kinds of press people and then when Sirica shut the valve, why I had to shut up, even on, uh, things procedural. I've been intimately connected with it. I've been responsible for quite a bit of the uh, decision-making insofar as the Federal Bureau of Investigation is concerned. I feel that I would have taken a greater beating had not the Ervin Committee been established

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

5

Gray: and this is always a possibility there
(cont.) that you're not going to get too much flack before Judiciary. I think you'd, I think I'm going to take the, uh, expected heat from, uh, Kennedy, Bayh, Hart, Tunney, that group, uh, but I don't think it's going to be nearly as severe as it would have been had not the Ervin Committee been established. I think that's where it's all gonna, uh, hang out and I'm not ashamed for it to hang out because I think the Administration has done a hell of a fine job in going after this thing and I think we're prepared to present it in just that light. Now if you bring somebody else in, uh, you can be attacked, uh, as, uh, ducking the issue, trying to put a new boy in so he can go up there and say, "I didn't have anything to do with this. This happened on Gray's watch. Get him back here and let him talk about it." I think it's a thing we ought to meet head on, on every front.

President: (Unintelligible) Let, let me say, what, what, what kind of story could you tell when they say you, that you didn't go into, that we had a very intensive investigation, we ran down all leads, who'd you talk to, yes we, we questioned at very great length, took sworn statements.

Ehrlichman: Did you swear in statements?

Gray: Yes, yes, we did.

President: And that members of the White House staff-why didn't you question Haldeman? What do you say to that?

Gray: Perfectly good reason we didn't question Mr. Haldeman. Because no agent, even the case agent right at the lowest level, felt that any trail led to Mr. Haldeman. He did not recommend that a lead be set out to interview Mr. Haldeman. The field supervisor did not. The circulation charts did not. The Bureau supervisor did not...

President: It did, leads did lead to others?

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

6

Gray: it did lead to others.

President: (Unintelligible) and so forth.

Gray: And we went after them.
(unintelligible)

Ehrlichman: This is one I had...

President: You questioned Mitchell.

Gray: Sir? Yes, sir.

President: Yeah, Mitchell was questioned.

Gray: Oh, thank you.

President: You questioned Stans and so forth.

Gray: Yes, we, Stans, three times, Mitchell once. Bob Haldeman not at all. I'm not really afraid of that thing because I called those agents in at the end of that first week and Just gave them unshirted hell and told them to go and go with all the vim and vigor possible. I furthermore called Larry O'Brien that Saturday morning and I said, "Mr. O'Brien, I hear there're some rumors around this town that the FBI is not, uh, pursuing this with vigor." And, he said, "No, oh no," he said, "Let me assure you we're very happy with what you're doing." So, I'm gonna lay that on their backs and other things like that. I, I don't, fear that investigation at all, Mr. President.

President: What else do you think, they will raise? Morale in the Bureau, and so forth and so on?

Gray: Well, I think they'll do that but I think we can shoot that down easily because I've got all kinds of, uh, letters from the field that I wouldn't let come to you. I stopped them. They tried to, uh, respond to this criticism that morale is bad. It's actually higher than it's ever been in the Bureau.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

7

President: What other situation, for example, uh, you see, you haven't been able to do anything or have you, up to this point, about the leaks, (noise) you know are all coming from the Bureau, that the whole story, we've found is coming 'from the Bureau.

Gray: Well, I'm not completely ready to buy that, Mr. President. We have done something. I've been wiping people out of there, you know, like the Assyrian on the foe. I wiped out a whole division.

President: (Unintelligible) Do we have, do we have any question about that leaks, those leaks coming from the Bureau?

Gray: No.

Ehrlichman: Yeah, Pat and I talked about that, (unintelligible)

President: That isn't what our, that isn't what our, our, our Time magazine guy says, he's got a direct channel to the Bureau.

Ehrlichman: That's right.

Gray: Well, he probably has. Sandy Smith used to talk to a lot of guys in the Bureau and I won't talk to the S.O.B. anymore because if he lays the cards down.

President: This is very high.

Gray: No. We laid the cards on the table and that's low-- three times, right. Laid 'em right out there. Gave the same cards to Newsweek and each one wrote, wrote differently and I just said no more to this clown and I won't, I won't deal with him.

President: Well.

Ehrlichman &

President: (Unintelligible)

Ehrlichman: There is no two ways about it...

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

8

President: Smith has written stuff that is true, right out of the Bureau...

Ehrlichman: There, there is no...

Gray: ...right out of the Bureau.

Ehrlichman: ...question, about their getting...

President: Yeah...

Ehrlichman: the uh, uh, the, the information...

President: Yeah.

Ehrlichman: ...off the 703's or whatever those forms are,...

President: Yeah.

Ehrlichman: ...the investigation summary forms.

President: So they--

Gray: 302's?

President: Yeah.

Ehrlichman: And, uh...

President: Because, I would say if they were false, then I would just say it was time to...

Gray: There're some things...

President: ...bring those things to an end. But this is a case where they have true information and I say well damn it, somebody from the Bureau. Do you think Petersen's office puts it out?

Gray: Uh, Mr. President, You have to realize that other people than, than we get the 302's and I have put some pretty strong controls on our dissemination and our accounting. And, I don't say that it's not possible it can come from the Bureau, it is possible.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

9

President: Well, let me ask you this, for example, did you follow through on the, uh, directive which I understand was given that everybody in the Bureau was to take a lie detector test as to whether, uh, what part they played in the wiretapping of my plane in 1968, has that been done?

Gray: No, no that directive was not given out.

President: Well, it's given now.

Gray: Yes sir.

President: Yeah. Now, uh, what, what happened there, who dropped the ball on that?

Ehrlichman: I don't know, of it, Mr. President.

Gray: Do...

President: Yeah. There, that charge has been around, whether it's true or not, I don't know but, uh, that is to be, uh, that has to be, that has to be, uh, the Washington Star has the straight story, uh, uh, Johnson killed it in the Star, uh, but it has to be checked out, just for the, for the, -for the integrity of the Bureau.

Gray: I checked out some of the allegations that John Dean gave me on I guess the book's name is and what they were doing on Anna Chennault and how they tried to uh, uh--

President: But there was a wiretap, there was a phone wiretap for sure and there was an allegation that...

Gray: On your plane, sir?

President: Hoover told me...

Gray: Mm.

President: ...that the Bureau tapped my plane...

Gray: Um hum.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

10

President: ...in 1968 and he told Mitchell the same thing.

Gray Um hum.

President: Now I want everybody in the Bureau who has anything to do with wiretapping at that time questioned and given a lie detector test.

Gray: Um hum.

President: ...not because I'm telling you this but because the allegation's been made and the Star's been running the story...

Gray: Right.

President: ...and we wanta knock it down. Don't you believe you should?

Gray: Oh, sure. But I haven't

President: (Unintelligible)

Gray: I didn't have any directive like that, I had some questions from, uh, from John Dean about Anna Chennault and company.

President: I understand. I'm not making charges, but I do know that that has come up. All we do is to play it very...

Gray: I wouldn't put it past them to do it.

President: I wouldn't put it Past Johnson.

Gray: No.

President: It's not trying to do him in but it is very important that it be known in the Star and I think the Star is working with one magazine, I don't know which one, that it be known, that that's being investigated, so that we just don't say, oh no, the Bureau didn't do it. I know the, uh, I know the Bureau's sensitivity on that, but, uh, are the same people that do wiretapping for the Bureau now, are they the same ones you had in '68?

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

11

Gray: We think, uh, we think, Mr. President, that if such an order came, it came to Deke De Loach from Lyndon Johnson and that it...

President: Well, then, De Loach must be brought in and put on a...

Gray: Yeah, if Deke got it, he gave it.

President: All right, he used to have it, he's gonna lie detector also.

Gray: Um hum.

President: He's out, I know, but he's still gotta take one. I mean, this has gotten -- I want this -- don't you agree, John? We've got to get to the bottom of the damned thing.

Gray: Well, I wanta, you know...

President: I'm not gonna be in here denying it from here unless the Director of the FBI tells me that it's been checked.

Gray: Right.

President: The FBI cannot be above, uh, the law on this thing.

Gray: Oh, I know it, no, if this was done we've gotta look into it and if, even if the allegation is there we've gotta look into it.

Ehrlichman: Was Felt there in those days?

Gray: No. He was not at, uh, -- he may have been in the Bureau, I shouldn't answer that too quickly.

President: Who, would you put, uh, who, who do you think would be a fault of either the second man over there. Uh...

Gray: I think, I think, Mr. President, that, uh, my, my recommendation to you now would be to continue Felt but-I think what I've got

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

12

Gray: to do is, and which I'm in the process of
(cont.) doing, is come up with an overall plan to
submit to you and you and I should discuss
that plan.

President: The only problem you have on Felt is that
the lines lead very directly to him, and I
can't believe it, but they lead right there
and, uh, and, uh --

Ehrlichman: Well, you know we've tried to trap him

Gray: (Unintelligible)

Ehrlichman: ...the trap is, the trap is, set traps
around to see if we, to see if we can turn
something up and, uh, and uh -

President: Well, why don't you get in the fellow that's
made the charge, then.

Ehrlichman: Well, maybe that's (unintelligible)

President: Of course he's, of course he's, he's not a
newsman, on the other hand.

Ehrlichman: No.

President: He's a lawyer...

Ehrlichman: That's right.

President: ...for Time.

Gray: I know who he is, Mr. President.

President: ...and, uh, well.

Gray: I knew the reason, I knew the allegations
existed and I think, I think one thing Mr.
President, I would like to say to you,
because I believe I must say it to you,
those, those people over there are like
little old ladies in tennis shoes and
they've got some of the most vicious
vendettas going on and their gossip mill
is...

President: In the (unintelligible)

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

13

Gray: In the FBI.

President: In the FBI.

Gray: Sure, it's a, it's the damnedest...

President: It's eaves by eaves, hating everybody else.

Gray: That's right.

President: I have been hearing -- what about this fellow Sullivan, good, bad or indifferent? Would you bring him back? Would that (unintelligible)

Gray: I wouldn't bring him back, at all, I wouldn't touch him at all.

President: Why not?

Gray: His first words when he came back to Washington, in response to questions from some of the people in the Domestic Intelligence Division as to why he was here, in two words, "For revenge." Bill Sullivan was a very disappointed man when Hoover, uh, put Deke De Loach in the position as Assistant to the-Director.

President: He fired, I mean, yeah.

Ehrlichman: ...Hoover didn't like him.

Gray: Didn't like him and he began attacking Hoover. Uh, the guy, the guy is too nervous, he's, he's not articulate at all...

President: Coming back to, coming back though to Felt, uh, it would be very, very difficult to, uh, have a Felt in that position without having that charge cleared up.

Gray: I...

President: And, incidentally, let me say this, this is, this is also a directive, you should take a lie detector test on him.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

14

Gray: You want him...

Ehrlichman: (Unintelligible) accounts.

Gray: You want him...

President: You're willing for him, to take a lie detector test, aren't you?

Gray: Sure.

President: Why shouldn't he?

Gray: I've taken, uh, hell, I've...

Ehrlichman: Has he ever taken one?

Gray: I don't know.

President: Have him take one. Now, that charge has been made, John you prepare the questions, you know, that have been made. Has he talked to Time magazine? Uh, this and that and the other thing and he's to do it or he isn't going to get the job. That's the way it has to be. You see, the thing is that there's a lack of discipline over there at the present time. And we've, -- that's part of the problem, the morale, that's part of the problem with leaks.

Gray: In the FBI, Mr. President?

President: Sure, this stuff didn't leak when Hoover was there. I've never known of a leak when Hoover was there. I could talk to him in this office about everything. And the reason is that, it wasn't because they loved him, but they feared him. And they've got to fear the man at the top and that's why I'd get it again -- And Hoover'd lie detect those guys, I know that he, he even did it to Lou Nichols once, because of charges made he leaked. You've got to Play it exactly that way, you've got to be brutal, uh, tough and respected, uh, because, uh, the, uh, -- we can't have any kind of a relationship with the Bureau, which is

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

15

President: necessary, you know, here, we can't have
(cont.) any kind of a relationship unless we can
trust it and I've, uh,...

Ehrlichman: That's right.

President: ...I used to have, and I, and I would expect
with the, the Director in the future to have
a relationship -- with Hoover, he'd come in
about every month, he'd be there at
breakfast or he'd come in here. He'd come
in alone not with the Attorney General. I'd
talk about things. I used to have him --my
contact with him, it wasn't, you know he'd
always said tht he didn't want me to
designate one person he called, he called on
things and, uh, raising hell about Helms and
the Agency, CIA, and the State Department,
and so forth. Much of it was extremely
valuable but -- and it never leaked out of
here, you know that he was giving me the
stuff that he had. And he talked -- uh,
Ehrlichman was my contact. Ehrlichman will
be in the future, you've gotta have one
man...

Gray: Um hum.

President: ...that will not talk...

Gray: Um hum.

President: I wouldn't think of having it to go, uh,
but, uh, anybody else.

Ehrlichman: I could use Dean but he's too busy on other
things so I...

President: John, the point is...

Ehrlichman: ...(unintelligible) rest.

President: ...The reason, Pat that the relationship of
the Director, to the Director and President
is like the relationship of the President
and the Commander, uh, uh, and the Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs.

Gray: Right, I understand.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

16

President: I, uh, as you know, uh, Mel Laird, uh, is, uh, very tough on that, but, uh, he didn't -- he always wanted to be in with the Chiefs, and uh, -- and, uh, just yesterday, two days ago, I brought Moorer over, didn't let anybody from the NSC staff come in. (unintelligible) Wasn't a hell of a lot we wanted to talk about that they couldn't have heard, but I didn't tell 'em. The reason was that I found this summer, for example, at a time when right after we had the May bombing, that I had put out several directives to continue to step up the bombing because I knew that this, that was about the time to do it, to put the pressure on to bring about the negotiation. And Moorer told me that he sent over at least twelve recommendations that never reached my desk because Laird didn't want to go forward on it. Now, goddamn it, this is not going to happen. Now, with the Bureau, it's the President that's the Director, not that you have the Attorney General as the Director. Now having said that, though, we can't do it, we cannot do it, unless there's total communication and total discipline in that Bureau. And, hell, I think if we pick up Time magazine and see that something's leaked out, either out of the Bureau I understand leaking out of the CIA, those goddamned cookie-pushers -- but if it leaks out of the Bureau, then the whole damn place ought to be fired. Really, it should, until, just move them all out to the field. I, I think you've got to do it like they did in the war, you say whenever you know, uh, you remember in World War II, uh, the Germans, uh, if they went through these towns and then one of their soldiers, a sniper hit one of them, they'd line up the whole goddamned town and say until you talk you're all getting shot. I really think that's what has to be done. I mean I don't think you can be Mr. Nice Guy over there.

Gray: I haven't been. I think Mr. President --

President: The leaks are, leaks- are occurring. There's from some place.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

17

Gray: That's right, from some place, but as to discipline, I have done things with regard to discipline that Mr. Hoover didn't dare to do. I took on Grap, and I met him face to face, and I threw him right out of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

President: Sure.

Gray: These guys know they can't lie...

President: (Unintelligible)...

Gray: ...to me like they used to lie to Hoover.

President: ...(unintelligible). I m I'm not really referring to that kind of stuff.

Gray: Mm hm.

President: Frankly, I am referring to discipline of the highest sensitivity involving what may be political matters.

Gray: Oh, I know.

President: ...partisan political matters. But I've got to know, for example, what's going on, uh, that, uh, even, uh, now on occasion, uh, let's suppose something on the Pentagon Papers leaks out, uh, let us suppose there's a leak to a certain member of the press. I gotta have a relationship here where you go out and do something and deny on a stack of Bibles.

Gray: Right.

President: Okay.

Gray: Right. And I understand.

President: You gotta get that 'cause I don't have anybody else. I can't hire some asshole from the outside.

Gray: No. No.

Ehrlichman: The, the relationship is a self-serving one in a sense...

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

18

Gray: Uh huh.

Ehrlichman: ...and Hoover used to call...

President: Assert.

Ehrlichman: And say, uh, we've picked up something here
and, uh, **RESTRICTED-"B"**

President: We knew, for example, let me tell you that
RESTRICTED-"B"
and so Hoover got us the
information.

Ehrlichman: Very helpful to us to know.

Gray: Mm hmm.

President: See what I mean?

Gray: Mm hmm.

President: **RESTRICTED-"B"**

Gray: Mm hmm.

President: See? That's the kind of thing that we've
just gotta know.

Ehrlichman: And, and...

President: We live in a dangerous world.

Gray: Oh, I know that.

President: And, uh...

Ehrlichman: That's the enormously valuable part of this
relationship...

President: Yeah.

Ehrlichman: ...for us.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

19

President: That's the kind of thing where you don't want to have that done by Felt or whoever is down the line. I mean you just, if you have to identify it, by, you say

RESTRICTED-"B"

Gray: Well, just like I was telling Chief (unintelligible)...

President: **RESTRICTED-"B"**

Gray: Yes sir.

President: ...may be -- you it's that sort of, -. thing that --Hoover, of course, was a great cops and armed robbers guy in through the whole era. He was overly suspicious, actually. But that helped a bit, because as a result, he ha, -- he got us information, which is extremely helpful, because you see, these past four years have not been an easy -- we've had almost the entire bureaucracy, including many in Defense who were opposed to what we were doing in Vietnam, opposed to Cambodia, opposed to Laos, opposed to May 8th, it worked, and of course when the whole time for the December bombing, uh, we, uh, -- and incidentally, most of the White House staff was against it. Uh, they didn't go out and yap about it but they were against it. I understand that. My point is that with the media's against you, with the bureaucracy against you, uh, with the professors, uh, with the church people and the rest, let alone the Congress, it's a hard damn fight. Now at the present time, we've, uh, we've come through with that big issue, uh, come through rather well, and we have some allies from dif -- unexpected sources driving the goddamned media right up the wall. This POW (unintelligible) (unintelligible) well--

Gray: Um hmm.

President: Let me tell you, there were times an-an-and (stuttering) and, and, Lyndon Johnson told

me this same thing, when I felt that the
only

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

20

President: person in this goddamned government who
(cont.) was standing with me was Edgar Hoover. He
was the only one.

Gray: Well, I was sure standing there with you all
the way through it.

President: I'm sure of that, I'm sure of that. Now
what did I mean (unintelligible). Now I
don't mean Just coming in and saying "Now
look Mr. President you're doin' great."

Gray: No, no.

President: He would often do that. But the point was
that he would break his ass if lie saw
something that was wrong, being done, if
somebody was pissing on us, I mean, leaks,

Gray: Mm hmm.

President: ...uh, that sort of thing. Not, not
interfering with the rights of the press,
not interfering with the, you know, the, you
know all that crap.

Gray: Right, right.

President: The thing is, the thing is that, that in
your case -- you see, the difficulty with,
having someone, who's a, who is basically,
as you are, a Nixon loyalist, and a friend,
first of all they're gonna raise all kinds
of (unintelligible) about that.

Gray: Sure, oh I know it.

President: Second, a Nixon loyalist and a friend feels
generally, and I've found this to be true of
half the Cabinet --he's gotta go, or bend
over backwards to prove that he's neutral.

Gray: Hm.

President: We can't have that. Publicly you must do
that. Publicly. But, privately what you've
got to do is to do like Hoover. Now, the

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

21

President: reason Hoover's relation with me- was so
(cont.) close, even closer than with Johnson, even though he saw Johnson more often, was that we started work in the Hiss case. He knew, that, uh, he could trust me, I knew I could trust him and as a result, he told me things that, uh, like this wiretap he told me about. (Unintelligible) Understand. My purpose in checking this wiretap business is not to put it out. I don't intend to put it out. But I damn well want to know who did it. See what I mean? I want to know who the Bureau to use and, and I want it know, should we it, see then you may find that whoever's the guilty one will put out the story...

Gray: Um hmm.

President ...and, that, uh, that, uh, he did and that, uh, will be useful. We'd like to know such things, that's the whole point. Not to just... Of course, Johnson should not have have done that.

Gray: No question about it.

President: Absolutely should not have wiretapped or, either the plane or the phones. The phones were done for sure, we, even De Loach has admitted that. But the planes, he denies now, Hoover told the plane, the cabin on my plane for the last two weeks of the campaign, they put it on the basis of Madame Chennault or some goddamn thing were tapped. What the hell do you think happened then? Every damn thing we had we didn't have any discussions about, political discussion, went to Johnson and you know what the hell he did with them, gave 'em to Humphrey.

Gray: Humphrey. Sure.

President: That kind of a game is a hell of a game.

Gray: We could get, we could get positive evidence of that, we could nail Deke on that because I'm sure, from what checking I've done on this other thing that it came through Deke.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

22

President: We just want to be sure. We want to know who did it, you know. Well let me say this, the, the the main thing, the main point is that, uh, as I said, the uh, the, I think it's gonna be a bloody confirmation...

Gray: Oh, I do, too.

President: I think, all right, I think, uh, we just wanted you to know that if, if you do go through it, you've got to be prepared to take the heat and get bloodied up. But if you do go through a bloody one, you do go through a bloody confirmation let's remember that you're probably going to be in probably for just four years.

Gray: That's right.

President: And they're gonna throw you out and then let's do some good for the country. As you know, I would never ask the Director of the Bureau to do anything that was wrong, I mean, but I am certainly going to have to ask the Director of the Bureau at times to do things that are going to protect the security of this country...

Gray: No problem.

President: ...this country, this, this bureaucracy, Pat, you know this, you know this Radford one, too, it's crawling with, Pat, at best, at best unloyal people and at worst treasonable people.

Gray: Treasonable people.

President: We have got to get them, break them.

Gray: Right, I know that. I agree.

President: The way to get them is through you. See?

Gray: I agree. I have no problems with that.

President: We have to pick up people, some people That's the price of--

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

23

Gray: I would like to. I wish the one on Witten would have stuck -- the informant.

President: Witten -- Oh, Christ, that, I'm not concerned.

Gray: Small potatoes.

President: It isn't the press that bothers me, it's the people within the bureaucracy that bother me. Those are the ones that there's no excuse for leaks, right? So, we, I think, I think, under the circumstances., that, uh, it seems to me just, I've asked these questions only to be the devil's advocate, this morning, uh, I think that. uh, if you, you gotta make the decision, if you've got the health, if you've got the uh, the, the, uh, desire, uh, and also if you can, if you feel that you can have a, the kind of a relationship that we had with Hoover, which, of course, we can't, we shouldn't have had up to this point.

Gray: No.

President: And you can't have it (unintelligible) Well, except, from the moment you're nominated, I think you've gotta start crackin' the whip, having in mind the fact, having in mind the fact that, uh, always, that you don't want crack any whips that are gonna force some bastard to go out and testify against your nomination.

Gray: That's right. That's the thing.

President: So you've gotta be careful. But the moment you're confirmed then I think we've got to have the kind of relationship we had with Hoover. We had, I, on the other hand, we had, we knew everything because I knew everybody and they were supporting me. But then I think we've got to do that you've got to watch everything around the world, in your own shop, watch the papers and see (unintelligible) and when you think something's not right oh, for example, for Christ's sake, you can tail people, you know, from time to time.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

24

Gray: Sure. Sure.

President: Suppose we've got some jackass, in the State Department some assistant to the Secretary as we know is a little off, so you tail him.

Gray: Sure, we can launch an --

President: Right. You tail him because you're looking for the **RESTRICTED-"B"** right? Because you're doing it for his protection.

Gray: That's right.

President: That's the way Hoover did it.

Gray: Sure, and those things can be done, can be done easily and, uh, can be done perfectly on the record, just like this thing was done here on...

President: Well, we think of, uh, I think uh, think uh, I've talked, uh, I've, we've had the Court keep this very closely held, a major investment in it, John, uh, we know that the bloody uh, I one of the reasons, I'd say, as far as the Watergate, I'd rather throw it all out there and not be defensive. The other side of the coin is, we don't quite do this thing (unintelligible) they're gonna call you in on it.

Gray: That's right. Sure.

President: If, personal, hotter and hotter temper--The Ervin Committee will call you in.

Gray: Sure.

President: uh, so, uh, so that's the feeling we have. Now the question is, is to I guess you and John'll work that out, if, as to how and, when the announcement should be made.

Ehrlichman: Yeah.

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

25

President: How're your relations with Eastland?

Gray: Very good. And was--

President: Is he for you?

Gray: Very good, yes, I'm positive of that.

President: Yeah. That's very important. Should--who else should be informed? Hruska, at least, Hruska?

Ehrlichman: Well we've haven't told the Attorney General yet.

(Laughter)

President: Well hell the Attorney General, the Attorney General will support that.

Ehrlichman: There's no question about that. Yes.

President: Well, well, let us talk to him.

Ehrlichman: We, I think we can get most of the clearances uh, uh, I don't know where Eastland is at the moment.

President: Do you want me to tell him, er Pat, do you want me to tell the Attorney General?

Ehrlichman: I think that'd be good.

President: I'll tell him today.

Gray: All right.

President: So then what, when will we announce though, I want to get it done -- what do you mean clearances?

Ehrlichman: Well, just this idea of contacting Eastland., and uh, uh Hruska...and uh, uh, I don't know who else gets well (unintelligible) I imagine they'd be the only two.

Gray: That'd be (unintelligible)

February 16, 1973
from 9:08 - 9:39 a.m.

26

Ehrlichman: (unintelligible) the Appropriations Subcommittee, uh.

Gray: Probably John Rooney's people and the Senate side, too.

President: Well, why don't you -- Kleindienst will be coming to the Cabinet meeting, could you, and uh, could you and Pat meet now and work out that thing?

Ehrlichman: Sure.

President: Because I want, time is of the essence. I'd like to get this done like by today.

Ehrlichman: All right. Yeah.

President: We've got to move (unintelligible) this motion's gonna leak. This damn Gray's a leaker. (Laughs)

Gray: Yes I am, Mr. President.

President: (Laughs) (Unintelligible)

Gray: Nixon loyalist. (unintelligible) You're goddamn right I am.

President: Congratulations.