



TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A MEETING
OF MARCH 1, 1973 BETWEEN PRESIDENT NIXON
AND JOHN DEAN FROM APPROXIMATELY 9:18 TO
9:45 A.M. IN THE OVAL OFFICE

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DEAN: Good morning Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Hi, how are you? Well, ah, I was going to ask you about, ah got along did you see Kleindienst yet?

DEAN: Ah, yes, I talked with him yesterday and he is going to be very clear in any conversations with Ervin and Baker that first of all, ah, he couldn't begin to speak for the White House. That his own position would be that the White House has a very important principle to protect and that he would assume that basically White House staff would be unavailable and it would have to be a very exceptional set of circumstances before the President would, or he could even counsel the President, to consider --

PRESIDENT: Un hum.

DEAN: And he's going to leave it hanging way out there. For any, early conversations which I think will put them on notice that, uh, no one is going to be marching right up.

PRESIDENT: Do you think he's (unintelligible) proper shape?

DEAN: I think, I think he is. He also - I don't know if you've noted what Gray's position was up there yesterday or not?

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: Giving the little store away, Dick, uh, --

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

DEAN: I don't know. I was very surprised by that.

PRESIDENT: Well what, you mean like saying --

DEAN: Saying that the FBI records, as far as he was concerned, were available to any Senator in the United States Senate.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

2

PRESIDENT: For Christ's sake, ah, he must be out of his mind

DEAN: Well, that was my reaction. He also said that, uh, uh, if they're not satisfied with any material that they're provided, he'll provide agents to come down and, and brief these people. So Dick, uh, Kleindienst last night -

PRESIDENT: Oh, we've got to get to Gray because--

DEAN: He called Gray last night

PRESIDENT: Why doesn't Kleindienst tell Gray about the Hiss case, for Christ's sakes, that's the standard thing. The FBI, good God, you'll, the Congress will ruin him, the Congress'll ruin him.

DEAN: I think, I think Dick ought to be aware of the Hiss case in some detail as to the position that the Government took on this.

PRESIDENT: Well, this isn't, this isn't detail it's as simple as hell. The Government -and Hoover always felt this - the Government never, it wouldn't allow Hoover even to talk to me. That was the Truman position -the truth -no agent of the Committee, ah, no, oh no no no counsel of the Committee strictly was not allowed to have any contact with the FBI. They gave no information, they were going to provide leads. They didn't cooperate with, in fact, they were working with Truman, to try to, ah, kill the case

DEAN: Un hum.

PRESIDENT: That's the way it worked. Now God damn it that's the line he's got to realize this is uh What was his point, too, about (unintelligible) the Republicans, it was rather, it was suggested, he with reluctance, ah, ah, acceded to a White House request to see the FBI files on Watergate. What the hell's he say? That he gives it to the congressmen for the White House?

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

3

DEAN: That's kind of a curious position he's put himself in yesterday.

PRESIDENT: Yeah but that's what, what I would think that he would say of course, I did. They were conducting their own investigation.

DEAN: And that was exactly the time -

PRESIDENT: Did he ever say that?

DEAN: He did, he ultimately came out with that. Ah, they were pursuing him on whether or not, ah, the White House had revealed the FBI reports to Segretti.

PRESIDENT: Segretti.

DEAN: That did not happen, I can assure you..

PRESIDENT: Oh, of course not.

DEAN: ...without hesitation, hesitation, it did not happen. Ah, no way.

PRESIDENT: Have you told Ziegler what he's to say today about it?

DEAN: I will -

PRESIDENT: I take it Ziegler should say, very simply, he should say, why of course, of course, the White House, the White House at the, the, uh, was conducting its own investigation. The FBI cooperated. A lot of information. Correct?

DEAN: That's correct.

PRESIDENT: But Jesus Christ if he gets down there and says that any Congressman

DEAN: Well.

PRESIDENT: Any Congressman he said?

DEAN: Well, he said any member of the Senate.

PRESIDENT: Of the Senate?

DEAN: Of the Senate.

PRESIDENT: Well then he goes for the House. He's, he's out of his God damned mind. The House will insist on the same rights.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

4

DEAN: That's exactly right.

PRESIDENT: You'll have, you'll have Bella, Bella Abzug asking for FBI stuff. What's he going to say? What in the hell is he going to say?

DEAN: He's, he's put himself in a defenseless position. There's no doubt about it. Kleindienst is going to pull him up short on it, say that you didn't clear this position with the Attorney General -this is not my position. As far as I'm willing to go is to give these people a summary of the investigation and if they contest the summary, they can send their counsel down to look at the 302 reports, which are the -

PRESIDENT: Why wasn't he prepared, John, in advance for this, like a guy over this, Kleindienst should have, like a guy over this

DEAN: Well, sir.

PRESIDENT: talked it over with Gray. Jesus Christ, he, he can't be so -is he a little dumb?

DEAN: Little bull-headed.

PRESIDENT: Yeah but -what's he trying to -is he trying to pander to these people too much, is that it?

DEAN: I think that's it. I think he's frightened and, ah, ah a little bit bull-headed on this. I think he knows now that he's made a, that this was a, a bad slip on his on his part. And, ah...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: he knows it this morning, and he's, if he goes back up today he's going to have to say, "I didn't have authority to say that."

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: Now that's what I -

PRESIDENT: That what I should have said, that I was really talking to the Committee.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

5

(Continued)

PRESIDENT: (moving noise) Well, anyway.

DEAN: I

PRESIDENT: Believe me, believe me the FBI cannot make its -- the, the, uh ask Kleindienst if he is aware of the fact the FBI can't even be available to a Committee. It really can't. In fact, this is, this is stretching the son-of-a-bitch far more than we should, to give FBI raw data to a committee of the Congress of the United States. It's not been done.

DEAN: The only situation that I can recall where there's been cooperation between the FBI and a committee with McClellan's investigative Committee, the FBI...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

DEAN: ...the FBI from time to time on organized crime has been of assistance but it's not been overt...

PRESIDENT: Sure.

DEAN: ...it's been more covert assistance...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, exactly.

DEAN: to preserve the principle.

PRESIDENT: But in the case of the Hiss case.

RESTRICTED-"D"

that was a major uh a major confrontation and the, Truman said, hell no. The Justice Department said hell no -that was Clark at that point. No sir. And, and, Hoover, who was a friend of ours, who was all for what the Committee was doing, said no and there was no cooperation whatever. None, absolutely none. And, uh, (knocking noise) anyone else says to me are you in this country?

DEAN: That's correct.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

6

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) against a party now I think that's a hell of a good column for somebody to write or something.

DEAN: I think that's --

PRESIDENT: Let me ask you to do this, ah, write me a memorandum, and only for my eyes only, with regard to everything you know about Johnson's use of the FBI for espionage and then go back - I was reading last night, you know, what Kennedy did on the FBI in this field as you may remember that as a really

DEAN: No I don't.

PRESIDENT: You remember when he busted, ah, when Roger Blount tried to raise prices...

DEAN: That's correct, I remember that

PRESIDENT: ...and Kennedy sent FBI agents and Bobby Kennedy did it at five o'clock in the morning

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Got newsmen out of bed, et cetera.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Has Ziegler anything, are they aware of that? I mean they talk about harassing newsmen. Have we ever done that? Have we ever had FBI agents go to a newsman to see what happened to their sources?

DEAN: No.

PRESIDENT: Where'd they get that story from?

DEAN: The only thing that ever got distorted in that regard was the Dan Schorr incident where he alleged that a full field investigation was put on him and the like.

PRESIDENT: Oh for Christ's sake.

DEAN: It's all explainable too, uh.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

7

PRESIDENT: Yeah, well as a matter of fact, that was only, our of course, as you know, our (unintelligible) what, what was happening there - we were trying to get some very, from the FBI on a colder basis, a very - just some background on Schorr. And particularly to see what his connections were with, ah Hanoi

DEAN: Um hum

PRESIDENT: It was again part, part of the, part of that part - don't you see what I mean. The guys don't know anything, they go on a full field investigation on the idea we're gonna hire him. That's ridiculous. Even though we hadn't said it, I mean, even though the boys said that was what we were doing. I guess that was their cover. But the idea that they didn't go, they didn't go back for Schorr, though.

DEAN: No.

PRESIDENT: Your FBI agents...

DEAN: Well, they

PRESIDENT: ...In the Kennedy case, they got the, the eight, they got three reporters the hell out of bed and said we want to know where, what is the source of your, ah, what is the source of your, uh, (brief pause) - it is you can get it in a little book called, ah Kennedy's Thirteen Mistakes by Malcolm Smith, Jr. and, uh the chapter on this, on this policy. It's a fascinating little story, don't you forget it. But I want, you see, everything, Johnson and everything else that you have to sit down some time and dictate what you were telling me the other day...

DEAN: I'll do that.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

8

PRESIDENT: in terms of what Johnson did, uh you know and who, how the reverse of the coin thing and how that came in but how Johnson used it and so forth and so on. I just want to know what the hell we did. Now, uh and let me see what we can do with it.

DEAN: Um hum.

PRESIDENT: I mean think now. I'll, I'll let you know.

DEAN: All right.

PRESIDENT: I think the ah, I think the ah, this FBI thing though it's, we have not used it, frankly at all. I mean that's the damnedest---

DEAN: I spoke to Kleindienst yesterday.

PRESIDENT: I hope Kleindienst is appalled, it's just unbelievable.

DEAN: It, it's true. It is, as opposed...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

DEAN: ...to what past administrations have done and we have been so kind and so good, uh, as far as asking the FBI, in fact in some instances I thought we should have asked them to do things that, uh,---

PRESIDENT: I know, I know

DEAN: Uh they are quite capable of doing. Uh, Kleindienst also mentioned to me on this '68 bugging of the---

PRESIDENT: Yeah, yeah.

DEAN: That he'd had lunch with DeLoach yesterday...

PRESIDENT: Who lied.

DEAN: and, DeLoach, ah, ah, said that, ah said to Dick, he said that there was no bugging of the President's plane per se, contrary to anything Hoover might have said and I said, "Well, Dick how do you read that." And he said, "well, one of two things. One, De Loach knows that, ah, he'd be in serious trouble for a potential felony himself if he confessed it. Uh, or two, it didn't happen."

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

9

PRESIDENT: Bull shit.

DEAN: Uh, so that's, ah and I said "Well, how do you read it," I said, ah, I said I would read it the man would be - very doubtful if he would confess himself into a felony, ah -
-

PRESIDENT: That's right.

DEAN: So it's gonna be tough to prove. Cause De Loach is the one who probably knows unless we can find through some of the other sources...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: ...some of the agents who were involved.

PRESIDENT: Well you know the point, I think, what you've got to do, John, is what I told Gray to do and he hasn't done. Is to get right down to the, uh, you've got to get at the little boys who did it.

DEAN: That's right. That's exactly right.

PRESIDENT: I told Gray, I said give 'em all lie detector tests. He hasn't done that yet. But, uh, I said I want, well, you know who does the bugging. Now just go back and see who the hell's done it and put 'em, and make 'em all take a lie detector test. That'll shake that Bureau right to its roots. That's what I'd do.

DEAN: Well, I think that the, the timing on that of course would be the --

PRESIDENT: Right after the hearings.

DEAN: Right after the hearings, right after he's sworn in, just go in and, and start breaking things wide open.

PRESIDENT: That's right. That's right. And I think it will shake loose

DEAN: Um hum.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

10

PRESIDENT: Just sort of, just bring him in and say alright Deke we're all taking one, how about you?

DEAN: Well, Don Kendall could be persuasive in that

PRESIDENT: Don Kendall can say if he doesn't take one, he gets canned.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Let's find out. (pause) I'd like you to tell, you might give, uh Deke, uh, Kendall, a call you better, you better have a heart-to-heart talk with De Loach, that, ah, that we now have other evidence to corroborate it. We don't want De Loach to be in a position of having, ah, perjured himself because it's going to be investigated. Just get that word out.

DEAN: Um hum. That'll bring him up, get him a little concerned.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) You could say I just don't like it when there's, ah, there's now evidence that, ah that he ah, he lied to the Attorney General. Just put it that way, and, ah, under those circumstances that, uh, that there's, uh, uh, there was a case, and uh, if a full field investigation is going to be made shortly, uh, uh, and that we, we just want him, just for - because we know he's a friend of De Locah's, tell De Loach he'd better tell the truth or we'll get a perjury rap on him. Fair enough?

DEAN: Um hum. It'll smoke him out if there's something there.

PRESIDENT: It may. It may or may not but at least let him worry.

DEAN: Let him worry.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

11

PRESIDENT: Let people worry a little, you know, that's the thing you know, Kendall's a blustery kind of a guy, I'd say now, it would just, as if we want you to know as a friend, don't want to hurt anybody but that, uh, tell him that the boys in the wood work are talkin'- the little boys down in the woodwork. Not going to tell you who but it's (unintelligible) but, uh right after Gray is confirmed that, uh, that, ah, there's a very, very very big story here - Newsweek with a couple of newspaper oh hot newspaper reporters on it and De Locah had better be told, he better not continue to lie, hurting himself about that bugging.

DEAN: And there is a hot newspaper reporter, Kevin Phillips is all over this and trying to get it out. I don't know how --

PRESIDENT: See De Loach told Mitchell that, well, he was ordered to do it and then didn't do it. That's what his story to Mitchell was. But that he did do some tapping of telephones, maybe Agnew's phone.

DEAN: Yeah he's already, he's said, what he told Kleindienst yesterday again, he said that he did trace telephone calls made from Agnew's airplane, we got the toll records of those..

PRESIDENT: Yeah, yeah.

DEAN: and tracked those down as to where they were going.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN:

RESTRICTED-"B"

PRESIDENT: Sure.

DEAN: No doubt about it.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

12

PRESIDENT: That's our problem, isn't it?

DEAN: Um hum.

PRESIDENT: Well, just say that there are people in the
woodwork...

DEAN: Well, that's --

PRESIDENT: ...calling, you know, he won't know whether
it's normal Bureau channels or not. That,
uh, that there's, ah they're hot on it. We
just want want to warn, ah just warn De
Loach that what he said to the Attorney
General was not true. That, that we have,
that there's - just say - I guess put it
bluntly that what he said to the Attorney
General was not true and that he better get
his story straight with the Attorney General
or, or, he'll have some problems. Why not,
what do you think?

DEAN: I think, I think it's an excellent idea to
let the man worry a little bit.

PRESIDENT: Good God yes, and he'll worry all those
little pipsqueaks'll start talking.

DEAN: Because he might also worry himself into
telling us a few more things that would be
helpful to us on the other side of the coin.

PRESIDENT: That's right, that's right. Now Kendall is
uh, our friend, he's not gonna go lurking
around, he's going to say that, look here,
this is only for your own information. This
call's never been made, (unintelligible)

DEAN: Um hum.

PRESIDENT: but I think it's important for you to know
that this thing's crackin around and he said
that he, ah, that if it was not done and he
said uh

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

13

(continued) that, uh the investigation's going forward,
 the

PRESIDENT: newspapers, they're hot on it. There's some
 boys down in the woodwork that are, that are,
 that are, that are cracking and that he'd
 better get back.

DEAN: I think it's best to let De Loach worry a
 little bit now, he's, he's friendly to
 Kleindienst, he and Kleindienst have become
 great friends.

PRESIDENT: Oh, sure.

DEAN: I, I wouldn't, uh...

PRESIDENT: -- trust him -

DEAN: ...I wouldn't trust him at all. I've always--

PRESIDENT: I never have trusted De Loach.

DEAN: No?

PRESIDENT: He's a politician.

DEAN: Absolutely. He's out for De Loach first. He
 was playing to whoever --

PRESIDENT: He was playing to Johnson for Christ's sakes,
 for years.

DEAN: Whoever occupies this office and he thought --

PRESIDENT: Yeah, he probably never thought I was gonna
 win.

DEAN: Um hum.

PRESIDENT: He just played the wrong horse.
 (Unintelligible) I know. He's basically more
 a Democrat than a Republican, too, because
 he's in the Legion. I have known him for
 years, not well, but I've never had any trust
 for him. No, the only man we could ever rely
 on in the FBI was Hoover. The only other guy
 that really may know was Tolson. What's the
 matter with Tolson? He's sick.

DEAN: That's right. I understand he is- isn't well
 and I've been trying to find out, uh, uh what

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

14

(continued) link we might have to Tolson. Of course, Tolson's

DEAN: brother is with the White House Historical Society. What his relationship with his brother is I don't know but I just, I've always --

PRESIDENT: I have only, I, I, I could talk to him directly but I shouldn't I may sometime but no, you never know about a Tolson, whether's he's bitter, this or that, he might go out yakking but --

DEAN: Well, at some point, a call on his general health...

PRESIDENT: that's easy

DEAN: ...might not hurt.

PRESIDENT: Me?

DEAN: Yes. If it's, you know, we could check that out first and say that, you know, the surgery --

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Why don't you get a check on him -- how he's feeling and so forth.

DEAN: Somebody's got to be seeing him.

PRESIDENT: Check also when his birthday is, that'd be another thing.

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: Knew he'd been under the weather, wanted wish him well, he's a spunky old bastard.

DEAN: He just might come forward with something, you never know.

PRESIDENT: He knows, you know, Hoover was so, in a, you know, that's the only man Hoover could talk to. They'd go home at night. They always had dinner together. I'm sure Hoover told Tolson every Goddamned thing he did 'cause Hoover, Hoover blabbed a lot. (pause) That's where

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

15

(continued) we got that Johnson thing, is that Bureau
 the way

PRESIDENT: Bobby, the way we have Gray, Jesus Christ,
 he's done a hell of a bad wicket thing.

DEAN: Tough wicket.

PRESIDENT: Well the Bureau cannot survive, John, it
 cannot survive. Christ, if Truman was
 right. That's right.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: You're not turning it over to the committee,
 God Almighty. Yet the Bureau, the Federal
 Bureau of Investigation, makes its files
 available to the members of Congress, what
 the hell some of those Congressmen are, are
 damn near under Communist discipline.
 That's the reason Hoover would never do it.

DEAN: Some of them are, are from the Mafia, no
 doubt they're backed by the Mafia.

PRESIDENT: Jesus Christ.

DEAN: Ah.

PRESIDENT: You could say only under the strictest
 regulations of a committee hearing, must be
 a committee authorized by the Congress of
 the United States, individual congressmen,
 of course, cannot get information I mean,
 that is not allowed, it must be authorized
 by the House and Senate investigating
 Committee for a, for a legitimate
 legislative purpose and all that bull shit.
 And, then under, and then we will furnish a
 summary and you know that sort of thing but,
 golly all this raw files are the most
 unbelievably crappy things I ever saw.

DEAN: Oh, I know they are. The, the most
 spectacular thing is his even saying I will
 make agents who

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

16

(continued) did the investigation, who were on top of this available.

DEAN: Now these people are full of impressions, innuendo, uh, uh, their own feelings about the case

PRESIDENT: Yeah, yeah.

DEAN: Ah, whether they were getting cooperation from a witness, whether they weren't

PRESIDENT: (Noise) Uh huh

DEAN: There was, there was a considerable amount of bitching, for example, that I sat in on everybody at the White House's interview. Now, I thought that there'd be no other course.

PRESIDENT: Why, of course. Counsel for them, aren't you?

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Well, if they want an outside counsel, Jesus, the White House better, they're entitled to counsel.

DEAN: They said that, uh, they said that the standard policy of the FBI was that no one was present when they interviewed somebody or they didn't interview 'em. I said well, if you want to interview these people, you're going to do it while I'm sitting here 'cause I think I'm entitled to know, for my own purposes, whether they're

PRESIDENT: You're conducting your investigation for the President.

DEAN: That's right. That's right.

PRESIDENT: Right?

DEAN: That's correct.

PRESIDENT: That's the line that that Gray should take you're conducting an investigation, you didn't, (pause) well anyway, it's one of those things that's gonna go on and on and on and on. I think, Gray has demonstrated in his first day's hearing, he's, he's got a, well, you've gotta admit it's a, it's a weakness of him and the reason I was very hesitant

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

18

PRESIDENT: No.

DEAN: ...being in that position and I think that, uh, he wants to be confirmed very badly, he wants to appear...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: ...that he has nothing to hide about the Watergate

PRESIDENT: Right. That's good too. It's good for him to not want to hide anything because I don't want him to be in a position.

DEAN: He's proud of his Watergate investigation. uh (laughs)

PRESIDENT: Hmm?

DEAN: I said he's proud of his investigation and, uh, despite the fact he caused us some kind of incredible grief.

PRESIDENT: Yup. (pause) I only talked to Gray once since he was confirmed, I mean since we sent his name down there. I called him up on a hijacking case -- to congratulate the FBI. As I used to call Hoover on such things. Then he raised the point on Watergate with me, I didn't want to have anything about it well the White House people were, this was right at the very beginning, were -- didn't recognize the seriousness of

DEAN: I remember the sequence then. I remember Gray tellin' me that (P & D talking at same time)

PRESIDENT: I got a hold of Ehrlichman I said what the hell is this all about? Ehrlichman though (unintelligible)

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: And I said well you talk to Gray.

DEAN: And, uh, well, what had happened is we had been, we had been leaning on Gray to stay on top of the investigation. And Pat was out making a lot of speeches and we kept telling him, Pat, you ought to sit on top of this investigation and keep an eye on it.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

19

PRESIDENT: Yup.

DEAN: But he was new in the chair over there and those were, you know, that was a strange office to him, we felt

PRESIDENT: Yeah, yeah. Interesting, interesting. Well, we should - nobody's perfect. You know Hoover was the guy, and, uh even at the later times, I mean, sure, there was senility and everything, the little stuff, say he did talk too much, he wasn't perfect, uh - Damn it, but he ran a tight ship Goddamn it, that's the way and the FBI did not leak and it cannot leak, I mean, frankly, I admire that it didn't leak on Johnson and Bobby Kennedy, they shouldn't.

DEAN: That's right. Well when he said, you know, he said jump, everybody jumped. They might not have liked jumping but they sure did jump.

PRESIDENT: Ah yes, that's good, you can

DEAN: I think Pat will, I think Pat will

PRESIDENT: I just want to be sure that Gray was aware of, uh, that that that those two things, that his testimony is, uh, cleared up, that that business about the --

DEAN: I'll get them both straightened out today and I'll get you a --

PRESIDENT: Well, you ah, let's see. You know, uh this stuff goes to the private staff. Go over to the bedroom and, ah, there's a book in the, ah, on that ah desk over there, a little book about so thick, you bring it over here to me and (unintelligible) find this in that book, I'll ah get that section over to you. Read the Hiss case, the first chapter of Six Crises. I think you'll find it very, very interesting.

DEAN: The Attorney General just tried to call you. I have no idea what the subject -- the subject's unknown. I'll get a hold of Dick and find out what it is.

March 1, 1973
9:18 - 9:45 a.m.

20

PRESIDENT: Oh, I've got it on the subject. Tell him
I'm in a meeting

DEAN: I Will.

PRESIDENT: with Golda Meir at the moment and ah I'd
have to step out if he'd just give us an
idea what the subject is, if it's urgent, I
can come out.

DEAN: Okay.

PRESIDENT: Put it that way, otherwise, I
(unintelligible)

DEAN: Alright.

PRESIDENT: Just that. But tell him if it is

DEAN: I would suspect it's on the Segretti thing,
if he's pulled him up short and wants you to
know it.

PRESIDENT: Alright. Just, just tell him that I will
call him, but if it's urgent, tell him I'll
have to step out of a meeting. But I will
call him.

DEAN: Good.

PRESIDENT: I will return the call.

DEAN: Good.

PRESIDENT: that I'm in a meeting with Mrs. Meir, just
say that.

DEAN: Shall be done.

PRESIDENT: And then let me know.
(Door shuts -voice in background)