



TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A MEETING
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND H. R. HALDEMAN
IN THE OVAL OFFICE, ON MARCH 20, 1973,
FROM 6:00 TO 7:10 P.M.

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PRESIDENT: Well, I'm trying to figure out with Ehrlichman what the strategy should be on this, uh, Watergate (unintelligible) the real problem here.

HALDEMAN: I think John is pretty much out of touch as I am, now. We kind of stayed away from it.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible). He has a feeling which of course is mine, too, and, uh, I believe it. (Pause) Trouble is...

HALDEMAN: ...that's the key, if we could just -

PRESIDENT: Dean and Haldeman, Moore is but you can't find any way to have any kind of a statement made (unintelligible) that they think doesn't open up too many other problems. Of course, they're concerned about what will happen when the Judge sentences. (Unintelligible) well -

HALDEMAN: Sentencing is that this week?

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: That's the thing, there's just so goddamned many factors and (unintelligible) people.

PRESIDENT: And that's what Dean -

HALDEMAN: Sure.

PRESIDENT: McCord didn't want to go to jail (unintelligible) jail sentence (unintelligible) decided to talk. I said, "What the hell's he doing? (Pause)

HALDEMAN: McCord? (Pause) He would have a lot on Mitchell. (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: He worked for Mitchell? I guess Mitchell and (unintelligible) are trying mess with Grand Jury (unintelligible) (Pause) U.S. Attorney - (unintelligible) (Pause)

PRESIDENT: Kleindienst always talks so very tough.

(Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: You sure of that?

PRESIDENT: He and Mitchell sure weren't very strong
(unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: That's kind of ironic when his own, his own
U.S. Attorney comes back to bug him.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. (Pause) I told John one thing which I
am convinced of, we've got to get somethings
that have got to be said (unintelligible)
around there. Something that has got to be
said. (Unintelligible) you can't sit in
there thinking everybody down here is
shutting up. (unintelligible) That's the
precedent I'm afraid (unintelligible).
Don't you think that's true to the
circumstances?

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) terribly sensitive about
the goddamned thing.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: We ought to do something (unintelligible).
The question is what - (unintelligible) tell
your own people.

HALDEMAN: You've got to answer to people

PRESIDENT: Say that they don't want to...

HALDEMAN: Does Dean feel we can't do that even to our
own people? Well, yeah, you can't because
then if they go out and say that's all there
is then one more thing comes, then you're,
you're even more sunk.

PRESIDENT: Well, I'm not so sure.

HALDEMAN: At least that's what's worried John all
along. How do you get...

PRESIDENT: That's what worries me more. But, I'm not so sure that wh
rest. I didn't do this, I didn't do that,
da da da da, da da da da, da da da da, da da
da da. Haldeman didn't do this, Ehrlichman
didn't do that. Colson didn't do that.
(Unintelligible) see? That's what I really
think needs to be --, uh, they need to hear
it from somebody that basically that's what

- they've got to know that I have been told that, that's really what it gets down to. Rather than let the feeling, the uneasy feeling that somehow maybe the White House staff is keeping things from me that I don't know or something we're afraid to have the people talk about. Well, isn't that really all there is (unintelligible) we don't want to talk about up there, but the god-damned Klieg lights. It isn't that we are afraid of facts, we certainly are afraid of publicity.

HALDEMAN: Well, I guess you've gone through that mess.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Well, you know - go back to that...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: I guess we have and it would be pretty bad because of the way - (pause) everybody wants to go.

(Pause)

PRESIDENT: When that decision was made you know (unintelligible) But I certainly didn't want to keep it all up there (unintelligible) daily spectacle with television cameras and press.

HALDEMAN: But you're gonna have that daily spectacle

PRESIDENT: I think you are (unintelligible) I think you are, maybe the point is that makes the papers that we've got a big fish up there.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: They say that's what made the McCarthy hearings.

HALDEMAN: And you never know what any of the big fish will do when they get up there and then we all said we want to go up and all that, but if they lob one in you're not expecting - you don't know what -how good a witness he'll be.

PRESIDENT: It's a tough goddamned thing - (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: ...when you get...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) goddamned thing. That's right.

HALDEMAN: And then when you get (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: You don't, there's a thing that I'm frankly concerned about more than I am about what they might reveal in this version. I don't want (unintelligible) get up there in front of that goddamned committee and gear their question on the log out of somewhere they know something.

HALDEMAN: Well, see the thing is...

PRESIDENT: the perjury hit.

HALDEMAN: I know, yeah, but see, they're protecting the wrong people.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: ...'cause think people who are gonna go for perjury already have and will do it again and are going to be up there anyway.

PRESIDENT: You mean like Magruder?

HALDEMAN: Well, I guess Magruder comes under your, your new current executive privilege rules. He was on the White House staff, too.

PRESIDENT: Magruder was?

HALDEMAN: Well, not at the time of the incident. That's right. So, so, that doesn't count - you know. That's right.

PRESIDENT: That son-of-a-bitch.

HALDEMAN: No, he wasn't. He was, he was over the Committee and he was White House at one point, but obviously he can't exercise privilege on --

PRESIDENT: ...after he leaves,

PRESIDENT after he leaves while he was here

AND HALDEMAN: (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: So that would cover Chapin, who would not cover Magruder. Cover Colson, who would not cover Howard Hunt. (Pause) Cover Dean, who would not cover Liddy. (Unintelligible) (Pause)

PRESIDENT: Our position... (Pause)

HALDEMAN: Well the other, uh, would cover Strachan.
I know they're concerned about Strachan.
(Unintelligible)
(20 second pause)

PRESIDENT: You see I wondered whether - just as well
(unintelligible) beware (Pause).

HALDEMAN: You see, the problem with Strachan - they're
worried about Strachan getting - getting
into the White House. I don't think that's
a problem because -Strachan has no, as I
understand it, no criminal thing. Because
he wasn't directing it, he was simply aware
of what was going on. But if he doesn't
perjure himself and he has to answer on
awareness -he can't take the 5th because he
doesn't have any incrimination. He, he does
have a problem, be-cause I think he knows
wh- what happened over there. That's where
he gets into trouble.

PRESIDENT: But hasn't he already been questioned?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, but but, I don't think he answered -
he forgot, and Strachan, from what Dean told
me, Strachan said he just didn't know that.
He wasn't very well questioned and he's only
been questioned by the FBI and they, they
only questioned him on Segretti.

PRESIDENT: Wonder why they're question, questioning him
at all. I don't understand.

HALDEMAN: Well, it never occurred to him, I don't
think and I'm not sure it ever would, unless
someone accidentally asked him a question.
I'm not sure how much he knows about
Watergate anyway, but from what Dean tells
me, I think he knew a fair amount. 'Cause I
think he knew - see, Strachan's job was to
know, was to keep on top of everything that
was going on.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Then Magruder knows that's the point
(unin-telligible) who would tell that
Strachan knew that's what I mean.

HALDEMAN: Magruder might tell what Strachan knew -
yeah, - but only that he knew...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: Not that he had no authority - no, no -
uh...

PRESIDENT: ...participation...

HALDEMAN: participation . - He was an observer.
(Pause) The danger you got there is that he
probably, and I possibly, got reports on
some of that stuff.

PRESIDENT: Sure. I'm aware of that.

HALDEMAN: And if I did, I didn't know it. But
Strachan did know because he gave me, - you
know, stuff that thick and I never looked at
it. On all campaigns, budgets, personnel
things and everything else.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) Dean say he's discovered
for us, of course, he didn't know what the
hell they were about. (Unintelligible) The
main thing is don't get anybody up there on
perjury where they can prove and sentence.
(unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Strachan? I don't think (unintelligible)
what Strachan'll do is, he may go on contempt
but not perjury. Contempt on refusal to
remember.

PRESIDENT: I don't think, he doesn't go at all.

HALDEMAN: He goes on inability to remember.

PRESIDENT: Well, he doesn't perjury charge, perjury
charge unless they charge him with a crime.
Then he has to go down. Anybody who's
charged with a crime has to go down. That's
the Ad, Adams' question.

HALDEMAN: Well, if that's the case, why the hell
didn't they charge everybody with a crime
on, on complicity or something.

PRESIDENT: Can't do it. Won't stand up. (Pause) Just
make a, just making a charge is not enough--
What I meant is -

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: I think it has to be...

HALDEMAN: Be indicted (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: ...evidence, get some evidence that ah,
er...

(Pause)

HALDEMAN: God it's ridiculous.

PRESIDENT: Oh! God! It really does. (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: The irony and the stupidity of that whole thing is...

PRESIDENT: But also, the credibility of, uh, stuff in the of, uh, with a double standard.

HALDEMAN: I know.

PRESIDENT: It's hard to believe, uh - I've just given up. I mean Colson was telling me that we've got all sorts of stuff on the Democratic - (unintelligible) not a God damned thing - not a thing (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: Really?

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: Well does Chuck's - I guess Chuck's talked with Dean (unintelligible) John Dean - Chuck thinks he has.

PRESIDENT: Well, you know what I mean, stuff like that.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Unintelligible) you would think that when they were doing all their stuff at the conventions and demonstrations. Christ even, Christ even the FBI shout have investigated that. Ziegler says (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: They didn't - didn't - did not. It was done on their behalf, but not at their direction and they can probably...

(20 second pause)

PRESIDENT: When you talk to Henry, let's put it in the negative. I will simply say that I had mentioned the fact that you and I - that you would raise a point (unintelligible) significant risk we have to weigh (20 second unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: He'll probably feel that we can't talk.

PRESIDENT: Is that right? Horse-feathers. So he told you he should take a vacation.

HALDEMAN: Oh, yeah. Every goddamned word end the way that he did - you know - never even, uh, crossed my mind to raise any question with you because it was - he did it in such a way that I - you know if you had said - if you had told him that you wanted to take time, said get a vacation - (noise) - wanted to get away from the Democrats and I think he did mention - the idea of going to Acapulco (unintelligible) maybe at that point. I'll be darned.

PRESIDENT: I know I didn't. I know I didn't. I thought he was thinking of California. But I, - he planned that he was going to stay out there and I said, "That's great. That's a good time to spend a couple of weeks." Palm Springs.

HALDEMAN: Well, you're right, because that's what I thought he was gonna do.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) I was so surprised when he went back, I thought really if any paper had got through this damn troop withdrawal (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: That is kind of surprising that...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, I think his, ...

HALDEMAN: I think that's his concern.

PRESIDENT: Well, that's nice. Ehrlichman's point is well taken in one sense - and he says really right now we've got to get (unintelligible). You're going to get - you're going to get hung for it anyway, you might as well get the Goddamned hanging over with.

HALDEMAN: You've (unintelligible) ahead of time. That means to say that does that?

PRESIDENT: This is going to be...

HALDEMAN: Dean's theory is that you don't - you aren't necessarily going to get hung. It depends upon what you defined by hang. There's no question we're going to get smeared.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: There's no question that they're going to keep building the innuendo that will lead

into the White House and will be able to come to some - proof.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: What they'll call proof - consider proof - on the basis that, that uh - oh, the line of reasoning they're using now, that Dwight Chapin wouldn't have done anything that I didn't know about it.

PRESIDENT: That's right. I understand.

HALDEMAN: Or it might -- that wasn't in my orders and certainly Gordon Strachan did.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: Uh - that's only partly true, but it's a, it's a, sustainable assumption - but that part - we can live with it and I - I see all four of them. Now, I'd like to go out and have us go out now and hit - if you take that part of the case and hit mine and admit. Say, say it's absolutely true - I knew that Chapin was recruiting an old college friend of his to go out and run around doing Dick Tuck stuff, which is absolutely true, I did know. I did not know the guy's name. I did not know the guy. I did not know what he was going to do. I did not know what we were going to pay him. I did know that Chapin was going to authorize some payment to him to cover his expenses and, uh, his basic income.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: That he was going to work full time on this and was going to try to recruit other college type guys to do this kind of stuff.

PRESIDENT: Intelligence work (unintelligible)?

HALDEMAN: Not really intelligence. 'Cause that wasn't what was talked about. See, he wasn't engaged in this - at least I don't think he was engaged in espionage. He was engaged in, in...

PRESIDENT: ... tricks.

HALDEMAN: Yeah, I think some of em got a little -- that's a euphemistic term for them -- some

of em cause he did get a little far on the tricks. But they talked about, when they talked about doing it, the kind of tricks that I said, for Christ's sake don't fool around with stuff like -- they were gonna cut cars, cut tires on press buses, you know and take the keys out of cars in motorcades and that sort of stuff. I said that's ridiculous, it's childish and doesn't do us any good. So I...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: ... What does do us some good is to have a guy standing around with a sign saying "McGovern, what about your illegitimate daughter" or something. I hope we never used that one.

PRESIDENT: But, because we were ready to...

HALDEMAN: Yeah. (Unintelligible) but, uh, so I knew. They were getting a guy and Chapin did do it with, with my concurrence and Strachan was a friend of the guy's too. I knew that. That I have no problem with saying.

PRESIDENT: I understand (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: And, I don't think that hurts you.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Just say I did that. The problem is - can't the truth stop at the truth. Which that does or does the innuendo - go so - come then so hard on top of it that you can't turn it off.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) it goes to the truth

HALDEMAN: It goes to the Watergate or which - it seems to me, we ought to be able to turn off, but the problem is the price of turning it off may hurt the people on Watergate side. At least, that's what they tell me. What bothers me is that I still think I'm being had in a sense for being tarred in order to protect some other people.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Yeah.

HALDEMAN: I think Chapin is being far worse tarred in order to protect other people

PRESIDENT: Yeah. The people on the Watergate side unfortunately are also our friends.

HALDEMAN: The people on the Watergate side are our friends and there is far more seriousness if there - this thing you can say was bad judgment on my part to let Chapin do this or - I can say it was bad judgment on Chapin's part to let the guy go as far as he did, or Chapin can say it was bad judgment on Segretti's part...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...to do some of the things he did.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: That's, that's probably right. All the way up to, to maybe bad judgment on my part, but on Watergate it isn't a question of bad judgment. On Watergate it's a question and there it goes and, ultimately, it seems to me that's what they have got to focus on. And this - who was it that was teeing me that, uh, what - or convinced they're going to go after this - this is Ziegler's, Ziegler's theories based on the press club status - convinced that what they're after is Colson - on criminal - they think he's the highest guy they can get on criminal in the White House and Mitchell on the outside. Now, there ah the worst - it isn't the worst you can get to is damn had out there.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Because if Mitchell was the authority.

PRESIDENT: He's the Attorney General of the U.S.

HALDEMAN: As Attorney General of the U.S. and...

PRESIDENT: The President's campaign manager. That's pretty goddamned bad. That's damn near as bad as it is out here. Do you agree with this?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...problems

HALDEMAN: And their - if you have .

PRESIDENT: protect them to protect them .

Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: then you have to - then you start working your way back down that chain again and, and maybe you can't turn it off somewhere and that's what John Dean where he comes out every time we go around this circle.

PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

HALDEMAN: Then you get to the thing with Segretti. Here is a potential...

PRESIDENT: Segretti?

HALDEMAN: ...a criminal violation on Segretti, too.

PRESIDENT: On what - some mailing? Horse shit, that's so inconsequential.

HALDEMAN: Okay. But then, then, he was Chapin's agent so does that make Chapin criminally liable? Chapin was my employee so does that made me criminally liable?

PRESIDENT: Is that a felony?

HALDEMAN: No. It's a misdemeanor.

PRESIDENT: That's what I mean.

HALDEMAN: It's a misdemeanor committed without our specific knowledge so I don't see how, how we're liable.

PRESIDENT: Listen... campaigns, there's never a, that didn't have a campaign mailing without a disclaimer or, er

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: ...mailing (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: We had, we had the same thing in '460, uh '62 in California - Democrats for Nixon -

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: The Dem. no - the Committee to preserve the, the Committed to Preserve the Democratic Party in California. The thing that crazy woman got us into - Naomi Baxter.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Yeah. You see the point is that it, it isn't just Bob (unintelligible) it is a question - (unintelligible) of - big fish, as we mentioned, Colson I knew was going to

be hard to prove. I don't - I don't see - I think unless Colson's lying to Steve I mean Dean, was questioning him, Dean does not believe that Colson - that they (unintelligible) Colson.

HALDEMAN: I don't either. And as I've told you I've been convinced all along Colson doesn't - did not know.

PRESIDENT: About this?

HALDEMAN: About the Watergate

PRESIDENT: I don't think he did - except...

HALDEMAN: Yep - I don't think he did, either

PRESIDENT: ...(Unintelligible) was saying that uh, of course, this is Magruder's argument, apparently he's made it too, Colson was insisting on getting the information but I don't know why - I don't know what it was all a hoax, why he would be involved if they were going to have a -demonstration in San Diego or - not was something I couldn't quite figure out. Know what I mean? But he was involved in, in too many things. -

HALDEMAN: But Mitchell as you know, was very much involved in the demonstration in San Diego - remember Mitchell came in - very concerned about changing the convention site because he was afraid of in-ability to control San Diego.

PRESIDENT: Oh, yeah. (Pause) Well, there a lot of bad breaks they're in.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: We got a bad break with the Judge, for example...

HALDEMAN: Monumental bad breaks and a string of 'em - one leading to another.

PRESIDENT: This judge, that

HALDEMAN: Starting with the just incredible thing of one was "Time Magazine" this week started off a -thing - one lousy part-time night guard at the Watergate who happened to notice the tape on the, on the locks on the

doors. If he hadn't seen them - the thing probably would have never busted. If you hadn't had Watergate - you wouldn't have had Segretti. You wouldn't have had any of that stuff.

(Pause)

Wouldn't have had all that stuff on the contributors.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) the people that are yelling about us about, about the old establishment, the Times, (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: Well, let's see.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: The one, one niche that they, and I don't think they see here, where they're gonna get but they see there's still an opportunity and they, they're gonna grind away 'til they either ex-haust it or - or get to something.

(Pause)

PRESIDENT: In a sense - Committee get the hearings over in a hurry - the theory that Baker had, which of course I rejected it, was incredible, Was to get, give us, get, get all of 'em and everybody and all then there (unintelligible) testify and he said choke the goddamned thing for a week and after that the people will be bored to death. Well that makes sense provided...

HALDEMAN: it doesn't go anywhere.

PRESIDENT: No -- Provided YOU can rim the risk of having your people go out there and be asked a lot of tough questions by a smart goddamned lawyer. So, I knew that it's probably, we would be better advised to stick. The guy that most wants to stick to is Colson. Obviously, he's, I don't think he wants to be questioned and I can see why be-cause of other involvements (unintelligible). So, therefore .

HALDEMAN: He's the only one who doesn't want to be?

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) fight for executive

privilege. Obviously, no we're just not going to allow it mainly because we just can't, can't allow that sort of thing to come out (unintelligible). But then what you have to do is to - you gotta fight it through the goddamned courts (unintelligible) for a long time. You've got the story of cover- up, that's, that's what's involved.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: And that's bad. That - that's really worse than the...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: It isn't really worse - it isn't worse than John Mitchell going to jail - for either perjury or complicity.

PRESIDENT: No, no, no, I've, no, I've balanced that up, too. But you see what they're really after he'll take cover-up 'til hell freezes over. You know what I mean? Because, uh,...

HALDEMAN: If that's really where it goes and I guess it is.

PRESIDENT: But John, but you can't figure Magruder did it by himself. That's what I, I just don't believe Magruder's done much as, -- a competent operator. (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: I'm not sure if that's, I'm not sure.

PRESIDENT: Sounds to me like oh - see that's the only thing that I think they must really think. The in-vestigator thinks, Christ, Magruder would - a, I mean, a decision like that wouldn't be made by Magruder. Of course, he was managing manager. Yeah, I think...

HALDEMAN: I think, I think it's - now, I think Dean thinks it's possible that it was...

PRESIDENT: ...that Magruder may have stumbled onto some-thing, because what do you say?

HALDEMAN: Well, done the specific thing on his own within a broad authority that he misinterpreted -

PRESIDENT: In other words --

HALDEMAN: In other words Mitchell was clearly aware and fully aware of the Liddy intelligence operation. No question about that.

PRESIDENT: But maybe not of the specific...

HALDEMAN: But maybe not of the specific act and, and it would be perfectly...

PRESIDENT: Magruder was aware of the act.

HALDEMAN: Well, he says that he wasn't, in court. pause) And, you can even go to that step and buy it.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Which is that Liddy was, was doing it and on, on, unr under the broad authority but then, you get down to will Liddy take the heath

PRESIDENT: Well, let me say this - but coming back to the business about trying to get everybody up there and all the rest - we've got to remember that what, what could be involved. Let' s see. Let' s see the whole view going up. (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: It wasn't me and I don't think it has to be Dwight, but Dwight Dwight I think may have to recant some of these (unintelligible) or explain them.

PRESIDENT: Yes-, that's...

HALDEMAN: ...some of what I said earlier.

PRESIDENT: That' s right. Well - uh - what I meant then --might be an advantage. Let' s see. Oh, it' s what, I mean, uh, maybe my reasoning is fallacious, but our real concern is Mitchell . (Noise) Maybe they're going to get him anyway .

HALDEMAN: Well, John, at least the last I got into it in any detail, John Dean didn' t think so.

PRESIDENT: They going to get -- that right?

HALDEMAN: See, John Dean' s whole approach as I understand it this is when we went through it out in California for two full days - (clears throat) what came out is his whole

premise - his, his basic approach to this is one of containment - keep it in this box and he thinks he can. And that box - goes on the theory that Liddy did it without authority from above and Liddy's been convicted of doing it. Liddy was the responsible guy at the campaign organization. He ' s the highest guy that they've got. The other people were employees of Liddy's.

PRESIDENT: Well, that' s the way the case stands at the moment. Course the judge blasted the hell out of that Friday. (Unintelligible) didn ' t get cooperation and so forth.

HALDEMAN: Liddy apparently is a little bit nuts and a masochist and apparently he wants to, looks to the martyrdom of doing this. He kind of likes it. And that's-true. Maybe that's where it'll stay. That's Dean's - that's his hope. That's what he, he's frantically trying to keep -- not frantically, persistently trying to keep...

PRESIDENT: Liddy'll appeal it

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) strings in

PRESIDENT: Liddy'll appeal it in court. Liddy should beat it. Son-of-a-bitch, they're two of them (unintelligible) Hunt's not it.

HALDEMAN: Hunt went and pleaded guilty - they all Eibad guilty and

PRESIDENT: ...he's appealing.

HALDEMAN: Liddy and McCord didn't plead guilty.

PRESIDENT: Liddy's appealing that

HALDEMAN: Liddy's appealing but Liddy's not appealing on uh, merit, on the merits. He's appealing on the, on the errors. Liddy's going for errors. There you've got anoth- another problem - Liddy's a lawyer, who thinks he's smarter than the judge and the court, and the court prosecutor, which every lawyer seems to have to convince himself of. Liddy's game is purely, as I understand it, his appeal game is purely on errors.

PRESIDENT: Oh, sure.

HALDEMAN: Then he's apparently got some...At least some possibilities

PRESIDENT: ...Sirica?

HALDEMAN: Has areas of potential pot challenge some errors.

PRESIDENT: Well, coming back to this, I think Mat the uh, is the, is the coming free of the White House people.

HALDEMAN: That doesn't impair that other case at all.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) mention (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: Because the containment theory works and I don't see what danger is in our going out-- because we don't have anything to say. The people you're protecting by executive privilege -- let's face it are - oh Jesus, you got Ehrlichman - I don't know about Ehrlichman. John knows a hell of a lot.

PRESIDENT: He does know a hell of a lot but not about this case.

HALDEMAN: Doesn't he? Okay.

PRESIDENT: not about Watergate. He doesn't know a goddamned thing, unfortunately.

HALDEMAN: I don't think he -- (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: He ran the other thing. He ran, you know,...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: you know the stuff about...

HALDEMAN: Well, can they expand to that - if they can't what does he do? Sure, he can, there's no rules of evidence up there by charter is to cover all the campaign activity.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible). Fine - fine - but I can't - no - no.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible). Ellsberg?

PRESIDENT: I can't think now -- no, no --

HALDEMAN: Teddy Kennedy? (Unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Uh, I don't like it. That's gonna be awful hard to get to. Thank God - it's in pretty

good shape,

Pause)

ow I don't think we could now however, I don't think we can shift our ground, and cave on that idea for privilege sake, but I think we have to find a way to make statements. They will not accept statements until they are free to (unintelligible), that's the theory I'm working on, I'm working on with them now and Dean and Moore are trying to see -can they save (unintelligible) and, of course, every-thing they say would raise additional questions. But so be it.

HALDEMAN: Well,...

PRESIDENT: It's better to have statements...

HALDEMAN: All right, all right. Look, we've agreed to answer written interrogation, right, huh?

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: I, for instance, I have to, have to do that, Chapin has to do that.

PRESIDENT: Everybody.

HALDEMAN: We've all agreed to do that.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Okay, but why the hell don't we do (unintelligible)- instead, instead of, if they submit it, why don't we sit down and do our statement right now.

PRESIDENT: That's a nice suggestion.

HALDEMAN: Why doesn't Dean ask me the questions that, that the Committee will ask me? Why don't I write my answers down? Why doesn't Chapin write his? Why don't we give those to the "Washington Star" and let them print the goddamned things in total tomorrow morning.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: What's wrong with...

PRESIDENT: try to-see why couldn't each of you make a sworn statement. (Unintelligible) open too many doors.

HALDEMAN: Really?

PRESIDENT: Dean, Dean's the expert here.
(Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Well, why don't we make them and see. I mean with-out putting em out. Why don't we take the step we're doing. We're gonna have to apparently anyway and so he says we're gonna open too many doors. Aren't they gonna open? We've already agreed to do that anyway.

PRESIDENT: Except that they'll - you see his point is - well, anyway let's try it - I don't mind, it's worth trying. His point is we've got - that they will never take the statements so it's never going to happen. That's the other course -that's the problem. They're never gonna take written statements.

HALDEMAN: You mean, they won't accept them at all.

PRESIDENT: No, no. But that's all right. You see my point is the way we end up is - okay, we refuse to go up but they will have a - they will say we will not accept that (unintelligible) try to get a sub-poena, and we will move to quash - and we'll have a court test. All right, that's where it'll stand -so forth, fight that out in the courts and try to make a case with the other witnesses - waiting for the court test. Of course (unintelligible) the other way to do it is to -- so that, that, that, rules that out -- and you, have got no statements at all. Now the problem with that confronts me with me with is - is, that it appears that I covered up... the White House people. I won't let that statement, so - what that's what I told Dean and the rest, I said, "Why don't you make up or why don't you just put out a statement?" Any kind of a statement. Of course, I said make it as general as possible but just so somebody can say that the President - that a state-ment has been made through the President, upon which he has based his statement to the effect that he has confidence in his staff. See I mean - I mean it looks now that I am just doing

that as a, as a thumb your nose, screw-off.

HALDEMAN: Except that everybody seems to accept the fact that there is a Dean report to the President on the basis of which the President said that.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Maybe.

HALDEMAN: And we've now established that - as I understand it, that Dean - no I guess we haven't, but we can, that it was an oral report, not a written report.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. (unintelligible) investigation and so forth, but that needs - you see by having a statement, statement prepared, statement or statements prepared which are delivered to the Committee, preferably I think delivery (unintelligible), that's what he's working on now - delivery to Eastland perhaps and Eastland then puts it out, and the purpose of answering all the recent charges - the most recent charges not everything -

HALDEMAN: The Dean charges.

PRESIDENT: The Dean charges. And Ziegler said, but, "that raises too many questions - new questions" so, ah, then John Ehrlichman says that those questions (Laughs) are gonna be raised anyway.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: That's my point of view that maybe they're gonna be raised anyway.

HALDEMAN: I don't understand what Ron means, but maybe he's right. I don't think...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: I've spent more time on this than, than anybody really and I don't know any questions that aren't already out.

PRESIDENT: But they - I don't quite know either, that's my point. I don't know what the hell other questions...

HALDEMAN: Well, I think, I think if Ron says it'll raise new questions, the burden of proof is on him. What are they?

PRESIDENT: Yeah. I see.

HALDEMAN: I don't - I'm not so sure...

PRESIDENT: He's already (unintelligible) pepole (unintelligible) something to do. Mostly has to do with Segretti and Chapin, that's the thing.

HALDEMAN: Well, I don't understand why we can't run that one out...

PRESIDENT: I, I personally think that you've gotta, you've got a bunch - Segretti and Chapin. We just gotta let that one hang out...

HALDEMAN: Here's the first thing ...

PRESIDENT: ... I really do.

HALDEMAN: ... I don't - in the first place, the guy that knows the most about the Segretti thing is Segretti.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: The guy that knows the next - well, the guy that knows the next most is Chapin, who is protected. The guy that knows the next most after that is Strachan, who's protected. The guy that knows the next most after that is Kalmbach, who's not protected. And the guy that knows the next most is me, who's protected and that's the end of the Segretti story I think.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. So put it out.

HALDEMAN: Okay. The point there is that the guy that knows the most is Segretti. He is not protected.

PRESIDENT: So, he's gonna get questioned?

HALDEMAN: So, he's gonna get questioned. Now, I've heard Segretti's - Dean has a two hour tape where he interrogated Segretti and went through the whole damn thing and, maybe I'm stupid, but I listened to the whole tape and for my dough I'd just as soon play it out on the radio tonight on CBS and let the world hear it.

PRESIDENT: That's my feeling.

HALDEMAN: Because what it says to me is, is not nearly

as bad as what I would venture 90% of the people in this country think happened.

PRESIDENT: Sure.

HALDEMAN: But it does confirm Dwight Chapin recruited him and he gives him the details - he had him to dinner at his house and he had - Gordon Strachan was there. But, what the hell, he went to school with Dwight Chapin.

PRESIDENT: Already, Bob, that's already put out anyway.

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: That's already been put out-

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) recruited. What the hell (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Now Ron's worried because that, that make - 'cause we denied - we didn't deny - Ron and Ron had covered that.

PRESIDENT: Who denied it? I thought

HALDEMAN: The press, that Ron, that Ron, see we denied the Chapin story in the Post, but he denied it on the basis that it was based on hearsay...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ... and was fundamentally incorrect.

PRESIDENT: Fundamentally...

HALDEMAN: And it was.

PRESIDENT: Yeah - fundamentally - yeah.

HALDEMAN: We didn't deny any specifics in it.

PRESIDENT: That of course, I think is what we should say. (Unintelligible) fundamentally incorrect - fundamentally.

HALDEMAN: All we can - let's go back and make the case on that.

PRESIDENT: Say that the Post story said this, this, this, and this, and I think that's the way you want to handle that. For example, the Post story said this, this and this - this is incorrect. Why? Now what is correct is

this, this, this and this. That's the way you ought to handle that so as to get us off the hook on that. So the Press Secretary did not lie. Well, my feeling is that - taking a - the, the, the, the, uh, we're not gonna, we're (unintelligible) That's all I'm after. My feeling is that if the facts are gonna come out in all this period of time, I would rather have us get them out to the extent we can, in a forthcoming way so that (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: I don't know, I don't know if Dean's filled you in on this stuff. I know another thing that worries him. This - I'd forgotten about, that it leads to, cause he's afraid that Sloan...

PRESIDENT: Sloan?

HALDEMAN: He's afraid that, that you know, he gets Sloan up that, that he's...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...that, that he's got to say something because there's another fact that's never come out. They've never tracked down but they could. But and again it appears as terrible, but it isn't at all and the facts on it are, are worked out fine. But there was \$350,000 in cash transferred out of the campaign fund over to a separate holder and it was under Strachan's control. It was, in a sense, trans-, in essence, transferred to me. What that was supposed to have been, if you recall, was \$2,000,000, which we, way back, had told Stans we wanted -it was that leftover cash that we wanted set aside.

PRESIDENT: Oh yeah.

HALDEMAN: Before reporting and all that - just so it was there as a reserve fund.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Well, it got boiled down because of reporting problems and everything else to where we only moved 350,000. The 350,000 in cash was moved.

PRESIDENT: And that was used for polls?

HALDEMAN: That was - the purpose of that was to be for polls and everything else. It was not used for polls or anything else. It wasn't used. And that has been transferred back to the re-election committee. It was transferred after the, after the election the cc was moved back over...

PRESIDENT: Uh, I see

HALDEMAN: ...to, uh, uh, Mardian, not Mardian - uh, LaRue, Fred LaRue and his back up. So, the money was not spent.

PRESIDENT: What's the difference then?

HALDEMAN: Okay. The difference is that, that establishes, if they want to call it that, you can, you look at the yellow journals and a secret fund that Haldeman controlled, you could say, which I guess I did. The question of who controlled it never arose because it was never used. Physically Strachan -- actually Strachan did. That some other guy did. I don't even know who had it - some, some guy I don't even know put the stuff in a box, in a safe out in Virginia somewhere, I understand. That's where it was held.

PRESIDENT: Well, (unintelligible) boxes in every campaign.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) Not that it worries me, not that it's ever worried me and I - and maybe there's more to it, than I, there's something to it than I've found.

PRESIDENT: Sure (Unintelligible) (Laughs)

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) sir. (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: Can you sort of, I don't know. Of course, none of us really knows what to do here because of...

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) each, each of us filing a state-ment now that's as complete as we can make it... I need to, each of us filing a statement now - as complete as we can make it -

PRESIDENT: That's right. That's the way.

HALDEMAN: ...but that it is not a statement under, uh
- ...

PRESIDENT: ...duress...

HALDEMAN: ...under questioning that, that, uh, says
there is nothing else to say. I wouldn't
say it.

PRESIDENT: No.

HALDEMAN: I wouldn't say that this is the whole truth.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: I'd say in relation to the charges...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, uh - very good.

HALDEMAN: ...that have been raised

PRESIDENT: charges that have been made and then I'll be
glad to answer any other questions.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. I would say, is there any other? I
think you've got to abandon the disclaimer
at the end.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Now if other questions are raised I'll be
glad to answer them. See what I mean? Sure.
Now, that way I, I don't see how's it's, uh,
and if they raise the other questions, then
you answer them.

HALDEMAN: I would be concerned about putting out a
statement that purported to be complete
because I don't -I'm not sure if -...

PRESIDENT: Never, never, never. You never do that for
another reason is that, then, from then on
they'd say (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: No, you could say on the matters of a
specifically raised (unintelligible) say
this -- Any further questions?
(Unintelligible)
(Voices fade)