

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF**Tape Subject Log***(rev. 10/06)*

Part of a conversation between President Nixon and John G. Tower in the Oval Office between 12:28 pm and 12:43 pm on May 5, 1971.

Conversation No. 491-31

President: Uh, sit down. I was gonna say that we had to make some very tough decisions on this thing, Saturday night.

Tower: Um-hum.

President: I was in California and I talked to Mitchell and Ehrlichman. They, they made a recommendation, and I approved it. They said, "You oughta go in and bust these guys on Sunday morning." I said, "Hell, let's do it." You know I didn't, I wouldn't let 'em do it the week before with the veterans. I didn't wanna have this country, couldn't have, uh, ya know, the Bonus March deal, do ya recall? [Unintelligible] Hoover, I said, "Don't touch those veterans. Leave 'em alone." We deliberately play that line up, so people got, so, uh, but I felt that this bunch because they were, were going to engage in violence and so forth, the thing to do was to bust 'em --

Tower: Um-hum.

President: -- was to move in on that thing and bust it up. I said, "Move in on that and bust it." And, uh, and then yesterday the, uh, whole program of the mass arrests was the only thing to do. Now these people, they were given a chance to get the hell off the street. They were told, "Clear the area or you'll be arrested." Then when they didn't, they arrested 'em. Now, that sets an example for the colleges. It sets an example for the universities, and it sets examples for our police forces. Nobody was hurt. They didn't beat anybody up. Ya know what I mean? I guess

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one guy who, one automobile driver ran, ran over a guy who sat, laid down under his car, but he should have.

Tower: Yeah, I think so too.

President: Huh?

Tower: [Unintelligible].

President: But, uh, what's the feeling of your colleagues up there? I think even the doves, ya know, the whole, Muskie and Teddy and the rest of that crowd that screwed around with those demonstrators, don't look so good today, do they?

Tower: They were embarrassed by it actually. I've heard 'em disassociating themselves from 'em.

President: Don't let 'em get [unintelligible].

Tower: But we're not gonna let 'em. We're not gonna let 'em.

President: The thing to do is ju-, just keep [unintelligible] --

Tower: Right.

President: -- that they endorsed 'em.

Tower: Right.

President: And let them keep denying it. The more they deny it, the more they lose, ya see,

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they play it both ways --

Tower: Right.

President: -- [unintelligible] their friends. But, uh, don't you view it, uh, we, we, uh, we, we played the thing hard.

Tower: Perfectly. I can't --

President: Let these lib-liberals raise hell about it.

Tower: Right.

President: That's fine.

Tower: I, I couldn't fault anything that was done over the last three days.

President: Yeah, the country would not allow you to do it to the veterans.

Tower: Right. Now, you have some amputees and all that group and all that sort [unintelligible].

President: Now this bunch, Abbie Hoffman, they caught him down there, ya know.

Tower: Um-hum.

President: They caught him yesterday. Abbie Hoffman and, and, uh, Reggie --

Tower: Rennie Davis.

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President: -- Davis. Jesus Christ! Ya know, I mean, these are all lawbreakers --

Tower: Yeah.

President: -- and, uh, I think that may turn the worm a little on 'em.

Tower: I think it's going to.

President: Right.

Tower: I believe that.