

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF

**Tape Subject Log**
(rev. 9/08)

Part of a conversation between President Nixon, John D. Ehrlichman, and George P. Shultz in the Oval Office at an unknown time between 4:52 pm and 5:30 pm on March 16, 1971

Conversation No. 468-17

Ehrlichman: We have a major political problem with our friend Gordon [L.] Allott over the Under Secretary of the Interior. Allott is mad because we've cut off helium buying in this budget, and so he's gonna get his pound of flesh, uh, by mobilizing the Republicans on the Senate Interior Committee against [Dr. James R.] Schlesinger.

President: Yeah.

Ehrlichman: Uh, he's got [Rogers C. B.] Morton pretty well buffaloed. Morton is now thinking that, uh, he'd rather switch than fight. And, uh --.

President: It's very easy to get into [unintelligible].

Ehrlichman: Yeah. And, uh, so, uh, uh, I think the, the general consensus around the White House is that we would rather roll out on this, if at all possible, and we think it is possible.

President: Good.

Ehrlichman: Uh, Clark MacGregor thinks it's possible, and he's been countin' noses pretty carefully.

President: I see.

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Conv. No. 468-17 (cont.)

- Ehrlichman: Uh, but it will make Allott, of course, a bigger crybaby than he is now, and, uh, that's pretty good. Uh, subsequent whatever has to be done w-will have to be done rather quickly because Allott is, as, as, as time permits, getting around and weaving his web up there. And, uh, there, there're a couple of approaches: one would be just to, just to charge ahead, roll right over 'im; the other would be to have him down here and have you work on him.
- President: [Unintelligible] not on this kind of thing. The-there are too many important things. [Unintelligible] this is not quite that important. I might have to come back down for a hell of a big vote. [Unintelligible].
- Ehrlichman: But, uh, we can do one of several things. We can back off Schlesinger and back somebody else; uh, we've got several other names. We've got that fella [Charles J.] DiBona; we've got, uh, [William T.] Pecora, who's over there in the Department. There are two or three others who are around. Pecora would be acceptable to Allott allegedly although I don't, I don't know [unintelligible].
- President: Why is it, do you suppose that [unintelligible]?
- Ehrlichman: Well, just that, uh, uh, I, you, you, uh, for one thing it's, his complaint is not legitimate. He was in Europe and could not be consulted on account of his being in Europe. His staff was informed. He's contending that his Senatorial prerogatives were abused. Secondly, it's pure pique on account of the helium thing. Uh, and it, it just, the-there's nothing to it on the merits at all.
- President: Why don't you try using [Bryce N.] Harlow on him, OK? Uh, [unintelligible] I never even thought of it. I'm not gonna waste any equity. I will not waste any equity in order to get Schlesinger, if you know what I mean.

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Conv. No. 468-17 (cont.)

Ehrlichman: Sure.

President: That's the point. I don't, because Allott is a crybaby, and, uh, if I do it with this, he'll be down on everything. I'll have to fight about this, uh, particular thing. "You're a great fella," and all that. See if ya can't give him something else.

Ehrlichman: All right [unintelligible].

President: I know this fellow [unintelligible]. He is terrible.

Ehrlichman: Yeah, and he, and he's a scorpion. He'll get ya around behind if he doesn't get ya straight on.

President: Why? [Unintelligible] on occasions it can be very good to, y' know. That's why I'd just as soon, ya know, he just stands right up there at times, fights like a tiger. I don't wanna argue with him about an appointment of an under secretary.

Ehrlichman: [Unintelligible].

President: If it was a Cabinet officer I would, but not that.