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**Tom Charles Huston Interview Transcription**

30 April 2008

Hi, I'm Tim Naftali. I'm director of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California. It's April 30th, 2008. We're in Indianapolis, Indiana, and I have the honor and privilege to be interviewing Tom Charles Huston. Mr. Huston, thank you for doing this.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Happy to do it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's start with -- 1966, you helped then Vice President Nixon. Tell us about your first meeting with Richard Nixon and how you got involved in his campaign or his work.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, at the time I was national chairman of Young Americans for Freedom, which was the -- a national conservative youth organization. We had about some 30,000 members. And "Esquire" did an article, and I think it came out in January or February of '67 but anyway, it was 100 top Republicans' pick for president in '68. Now, I wasn't really top 100 Republicans, but nevertheless I was one of the people that they asked to express an opinion. And in that response I basically said that I thought that Nixon would be the preferable nominee for the party in 1968. After the article came out, he obviously took advantage of, you know, making contact and expressing appreciation to those people who had indicated their support. And in the course of some exchange of correspondence after that he asked me to come to New York and talk to him, which I did in June. It was delayed to June because he had an oral argument he made for the Supreme Court in the spring. And so we went to New York. I met with him; we had a long talk. I mean, it was typical, interesting, you know, Nixon. You know, "Why do you think I should be the candidate and not George Romney? Well, what about, you know?" But anyway, as a consequence of that, he asked me, would I come to New York and join his staff, which at that time Pat Buchanan was really the only full-time political staff guy he had with Rose, and John Sears was there, but John was an associate with a law firm. And while I was flattered, I said, A, as a native Hoosier, had absolutely no interest in moving to New York, and B, I just graduated from law school and I had been deferred. I was an ROTC commissioned officer, and I was scheduled to go on active duty in February of '67. I said it makes no sense for me to come here for that short a period of time, but I will, you know, do what I can to help you. Because he did not have the best relations with conservatives in the party, and I knew most all of the then leading conservatives, particularly the intellectual movement and along the columnists and that sort of thing. And so what I agreed to do was try to establish opportunities for him to communicate with these people and let them get to know him.

Now he had hurt himself badly among conservatives in '62 in the gubernatorial race. But he had come back a long way in '64 because of his energetic campaign for Senator Goldwater, whereas Rockefeller and Scranton and Romney and all those folks sat on their hands, and Nixon got out and worked for it. So conservatives appreciated that. But still there was a lot of skepticism, and so I set up a series of functions that gave Nixon the opportunity to talk to these various people in small groups and that's where he was the most effective. I remember we had a conference at the Shoreham Hotel when he got back from his trip -- he had a trip around the world in the fall -- and I had a group of fairly good cross-

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section of young conservatives, columnists, you know, Jim Kilpatrick was, I remember, was there and people from the various conservative lobbying groups and whatever. And Nixon spoke for about an hour and a half, and he just went from country to country. He went around the world explaining who he talked to, what the problems were, how they were related. And it was just an absolute tour de force and, you know, when he got done, even the most skeptical people were saying, "this guy is something," which is really what I wanted. And so that's really how I got first contact, and then, as it turned out, after I went on active duty I ended up being stationed at the Pentagon so I was in Washington, so, I don't know -- I probably violated the Hatch Act, but nevertheless, however, I continued to do work through Pat and did a lot of writing and some research. And I set up the Youth for Nixon group for the '68 campaign, hired a guy, Mort Allin, who was executive director to run it. That's when Dr. Parkinson was chairman and Bob Ellsworth was running the campaign before John Mitchell came in. And so by January '69 I had had fairly long period of contact and experience. So I didn't arrive at the White House as just somebody who'd just come off the campaign trail.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let me ask you --

**Male Speaker**

Sorry, Tim, can I just stop just a second? [Unintelligible].

**Timothy Naftali**

Why did you choose Richard Nixon over Ronald Reagan?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, I had been -- you know, I mean, I was a conservative hard-liner. You didn't work your way up to be national chairman of this group by being often moderate. I mean, I was a hard-core conservative, and I traveled while I was in law school, I mean, in the fall of '64, about thirty-some thousand miles around the country speaking to college groups and student groups and stuff for Goldwater. But after the election, you know, it struck me that we had basically undertaken a kamikaze mission. And while I was -- I guess some people could say I was a conservative ideologist, I mean, I believed -- I never agreed with -- it was fine to say that it's better to be right than president. My notion was you ought to strive to be right and president. And so what I was looking for in '68 was somebody who could head the ticket and do credibly well, and be a unifying force, because I understood that the one good thing to come out of the '64 election process is that the conservatives had finally taken control of the Republican Party away from the Northeastern Republican establishment. And so the greater number of the candidates down ballot were going to be conservatives, and we had gotten wiped out in '64 in the House and the Senate, the governors, the state legislature. And remember this was before the '66 mid-term elections, and so I was not under any illusions that Nixon was some sort of a, you know, a closet conservative in the way in which I was a conservative, or that Goldwater or Reagan was a conservative, but I was convinced that he was a person who was open to conservative thought. And secondly that in foreign policy that he was unquestionably the most qualified person in the country to be president. And my view was that we lived in a very dangerous world. People don't realize -- you look back 30, 40 years back -- I mean, we were living in the world in which aggression by the Soviets and expansion of the Soviets and threat of war and nuclear war were real, and I didn't think it was time for amateur hour.

Now, I didn't know Governor Reagan well. I'd shared platforms with him. I'd introduced him at conservative functions. I had nothing but the greatest admiration for him, and I thought he was -- I mean, particularly compared to Goldwater, who I greatly admire, but was not as articulate a guy and Reagan was incredibly effective. But, you know, my thought was even if Reagan won in the gubernatorial race, by the time the campaign got underway for '68 he would have been governor for, you know, less than a year, and to me it didn't make any sense. Now, I was clearly in the minority among conservatives, really young conservatives, but I felt like it was -- and more important that we have a strong, unifying figure at the top of the ticket. Now in June of 1966, or actually earlier than that, when I made my decision in the fall of '65, but at that time everyone assumed Lyndon Johnson was going to run for re-election. I assumed that, and I assumed he was going to win. And so I didn't enter into this thing on the notion that somehow I thought that Nixon was going to win, and I could latch onto Nixon and, you know, advance my own career. I mean, I didn't think Nixon would win. But what I thought he would do was run strong enough that he would allow the party to rebuild and to me that was the issue. And then in the fall when he did his campaign across the country with Pat and they went around and, you know, Nixon worked really hard, and the Republicans picked up a huge number of seats in the fall of '66. And so that simply confirmed what I had believed, that this was the opportunity to rebuild the party and that to me was the most important thing.

**Timothy Naftali**

Who were your chief lieutenants at the Young Americans for Freedom at that time?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, you know, there were a number of people who are now -- Frank Donatelli, who was in the Reagan White House who is now one of Senator McCain's -- I think he was McCain's designee to the national committee. David Keene, who is now the national chairman of the American Conservative Union. Ron Robinson, who was -- is the president of the Young America's Foundation that owns the Reagan ranch. Congressman Rohrabacher was a little bit younger than I was, but, I mean, he was active at that time -- Chris Cox, Phil Crane, who was the longtime Reagan Republican on the Ways and Means Committee. Actually at IU, I founded the IU Conservative League in 1962, and Phil Crane, was then a graduate student, succeeded me as president. Phil had the highest academic record achievement of any Ph.D. candidate in the history of the Indiana University up to that time. And so we had a, you know, I think a fairly good group of people that were very active, you know, politically.

**Timothy Naftali**

What was your responsibility at the Pentagon?

**Tom Charles Huston**

I was with the Defense Intelligence Agency. I was an Army intelligence officer, and I was assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency.

**Timothy Naftali**

Were you involved at all in the -- at that point the DIA, I think, still had its domestic intelligence --

**Tom Charles Huston**

No, no -- well actually, my responsibilities were in strategic intelligence, and the only things that I knew anything about or learned anything about while I was there are all related to Soviet missiles and things that had no relationship to the domestic scene. But actually, DIA never had any domestic intelligence operation; it was the Army intelligence that did that.

**Timothy Naftali**

When do you leave the Pentagon and go to the White House?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, it was kind of interesting. My tour was technically up February 23rd, or like the third week of February or something like that, and Pat Buchanan was really, I think, responsible for asking Haldeman to, you know, bring me on. And so one day I was at the Pentagon; I get a call from Colonel Hughes, who was the president's military aide, and saying, "I just talked to a Captain Huston and told him I was going to spring him from out of the service so he could come on." He said, "Hell with it." Well, the guy said, "Well don't do that. I'm a career officer. I got the wrong guy," and he said, "Are you the right guy?" I said, "Yeah, I'm the right guy." He said, "Well, what do you want me to do?" And I said, "Well, you can spring me." And so I got sprung on January the 18th, a little less than a month before my two-year tour would've technically been up, so that I showed up to work on the 21st, the first day.

**Timothy Naftali**

And what were you asked to do?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, you know, it was really -- mainly -- initially what I did was I worked with Pat; we put together the presidential news summary. And I recruited Mort Allin, who I'd earlier recruited in Youth for Nixon, and Mort came in and over time actually became what I called a managing editor. And then I got Pat to hire Carol Bauman, whose husband Bob was in Congress, and Bob had been my predecessor as national chairman of the Americans for Freedom. And Bob had opposed me every step of the way with respect to the Nixon versus Reagan thing. But Carol had always been -- she'd had been active in the Youth for Nixon in 1968, and Carol had always been a Nixon supporter and so -- but she had to carry the burden of her husband. But she was one of the sharpest women that I knew in the whole movement and so we were delighted to have her there, and then when Bob, who then was working on the Hill for the Republican minority in the House, and then he went back to Maryland was elected to state Senate before he went to Congress, and when that happened, we lost her. But anyway, so I spent a lot of time in the first weeks working on the presidential news summary. We split up the evening news because all three of the networks came on at the same time, so you really had to cover all three of the networks. You had to have three people, so we split that up, so I always watched one of the networks and then it was like being back at the Pentagon. I mean, every so often I got weekend duty so I'd have to come in on Saturday or Sunday morning and, you know, do the presidential news summary. And then, you know, I was assigned to the Jim Keogh staff of speechwriters, and so I participated in their meetings, and Jim would give me assignments to do, and messages, and proclamations and the

usual run-of-the-mill things. But, you know, fairly early on it seemed like I would get kind of special assignments, and the first one fairly early was to Haldeman or the president or somebody wanted to know what perks Lyndon Johnson had set up for himself before he left office. So that was my first undertaking, and I spent a fair amount of time that first summer, the early part of the summer, digging into that. Of course, the more you dug into it, the more maddening it was, but --

**Timothy Naftali**

What was the goal of that?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, you know, I think -- I asked myself that -- but I think the goal of it was, is that from the day they walked in, the president walked in there, he was thinking about the day he was going to walk out. And so, you know, they wanted to know what kinds of things that they should be thinking about and expecting, you know, as to the transition from the White House to private life. Well, I mean, you know, Johnson was a man of incredible appetite. I mean, he never did anything in just normal basis. He had -- Colonel Cross had been his pilot at the White House. Well, fine, he gets ready to leave the White House, he gets Cross promoted and transfers to head the Air Force base down at Travis airport. He gets one of his secretaries commissioned, I forget, I think it was the Air Force or something, gets her detailed down there. The biggest thing was there was a plane that had disappeared off the Air Force inventory. No one could figure out where the hell that thing was. There happened to be a plane sitting down at the tarmac down there that seemed to be fairly similar. But, you know, just little things, like he arranged through the, I guess it would've been the Government Printing Office, you know, to get complete sets of all of the papers of the presidents going back as far back as they were published. I think the first set that the Government Printing Office did actually was Truman. But I mean, he thought of every little detail, and -- television sets. I talked to the White House Communications Agency. I mean, he'd go down to the ranch, and he'd go travel 150 mile radius around, and everywhere he'd go he'd insist that they put a phone in there and a TV, you know, wherever he might show up. So they had these things scattered all around. And he had an office building in Johnson City and a building he owned that he leased to the government, and he had another office in Austin and then, of course, they were building the library and stuff. So anyway, my job was just to chronicle all this stuff, and I didn't get to the half of it because -- typical of the Nixon White House, here I was chasing out. Every time I'd try to follow this, like at the Pentagon, Laird would cut me off. I mean, Laird was very protective of Johnson, and GSA, I couldn't have that problem because the director was fastidious about that. But the ironic thing is that the guy who really knew everything was sitting over in the East Wing, Bill Gulley. It was the White House -- I guess -- I'm not sure what they called him -- he was a civilian at that time, but he was a military citizen. He was the guy that ran the black budget, all the money that was hidden away ended up in the defense budget just for the benefit of the president, the money he used to put the pool in up at Camp David and all the things, and Johnson had learned how to do that. Well, you know, no one told -- I didn't even know this guy existed. You know, I mean, if Haldeman or somebody said, "Go talk to Bill," I don't know how much he would've told me, but he probably wouldn't have told me all of the things he tells in his book, but I mean, I would have saved a lot of time and effort. But anyway, I mean, so my job was to go find out, you know, "Huston, find out," I went out to find out as much as I could. I reported it and moved on.

**Timothy Naftali**

And who would task you with these?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, it came through Keogh, Jim. I would say it came to him from -- it was not the typical assignment that you would have thought would've gone to the speechwriting staff, so I have an impression that either the president or Haldeman intended that I do it, but it didn't come to me directly; it came through Keogh.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did this result in a paper?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Oh yes, there in your files somewhere, there's a report, yes.

**Timothy Naftali**

When were you approached to do the bomb halt study?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, that was in September of '69, about the time I got through all this stuff. And that goes back to in January, when the president first came in, of course, Kissinger started a comprehensive review of the entire Vietnam situation. And in connection with that, the president had asked Kissinger to give him a report on what they could deduce about what had actually happened in Paris, in the peace talks in Paris that had gone on in '68 and the results of which had very nearly cost Nixon the presidency. And so Nixon looked at that in a way that, you know, differently than a historian would look at it. I mean, to him it was a very personal thing. He believed, incorrectly in my judgment, but nevertheless, he believed that the whole bombing halt thing had been a Johnson ploy to elect Humphrey. But in any event he turned this thing over to the National Security Council staff and they did this God-awful boring memo. I know that because I read it, and he wasn't happy with it. And it took them a long time to get it done. But anyway, in September he tells Kissinger, he sends a memo to Kissinger and he says, "I want to do this." He doesn't say I don't like what -- he didn't say, "I think you did a crappy job." He says, "I'd like to do another study." "I want to know everything there is to know about the bomb halt discussions and about what we knew in the campaign, what we had heard, what we learned." And then he went on saying, of course, "I also want to know about the Cuban Missile Crisis and the murder of President Diem, but I don't want to cause a lot of publicity in connection with that." And he suggested that either Clark Mollenhoff, who was a prominent national reporter, investigative reporter, or Huston, do this.

Well, for whatever reason Haldeman recommended to Kissinger that Huston do it and Kissinger concurred, and so in September or October I met with Al Haig, who was then Kissinger's deputy, to get a copy of what their initial report was and to explain to Al what I understood my job was, and, you know, make sure that he understood and his people understood, this was something the president wanted done and to do my job I needed to have their cooperation and the cooperation of the

departments that would have -- State and Defense and CIA and anybody else that would have any information. So I started out, you know, basically the first thing I did was go over to talk to David McManus, who was manager of the situation room, and told Dave, "I want all the cables, all the cable traffic that relates to the Paris negotiations." And you have to remember that when they moved in the situation room all the cabinets were empty. Johnson packed up everything that he had and took it to Texas. So everything that they had was what they were able to get the departments to send them after they took over. So anyway, Dave gathers all this stuff up. He wasn't happy about it; he wanted to keep it. He was a good bureaucrat. He wanted to keep it in his safe, and I said, "My safe is just as good as your safe." "I'm going to be working in my office; I'm not coming over here." So I have this stuff all hauled over to my office and so I start reading it. Well, you understand better than most how God-awful boring the typical diplomatic cable traffic is. But, you know, I started working my way through it and my intention was to structure my report as basically a narrative on a day-by-day basis and then, as appropriate, set out my thoughts about what was interesting about it, how it looked in retrospect, what we didn't know, what was missing. And so as I would go through these cables, I'd read a cable and there'd be a reference to another cable or another document and so I'd go looking into the stuff that I got from Kissinger, and it wouldn't be there. So I'd go back to McManus and I'd say, "Dave, I thought you said I had everything." "Well, you have everything; we thought you did." "Well, ask State for this." And I'd give him the specific reference and so he'd ask for it, and it would come over so then I would follow that up.

And this went on for -- well, actually, I wasn't done when I left, because I kept getting interrupted by other things that I was asked to do, but in the course of this, I mean, two things happened. One was that I undertook a special, separate -- and I treated it separately, it was reported separately -- an inquiry into the Chennault affair. Because that, when the president was saying, you know, what did we know and what we heard, and that was code word for Chennault. And so I met with Bill Sullivan who was assistant director of the FBI for the Intelligence Division and told Bill, "This is what I need to know." "The president wants to know." Well, that actually worked to Bill's bureaucratic interest because he and Chuck DeLoach, who was the number three guy in the FBI, were bitter rivals, and DeLoach was Johnson's man and he did -- he was literally Johnson's bagman. Whatever Lyndon Johnson wanted, DeLoach would see he got. And so whereas probably in the normal course I would have run into the same protective effort at the FBI that I kept running into when I would talk to CIA or NSA or anybody else, "Well, we don't know anything about this," I mean, Bill was perfectly happy to let me see the whole thing because DeLoach's fingerprints were all over the damn thing. So anyway, I did a separate report to the president on what had happened, with the surveillance, the Agnew incident, and, you know, the -- so he knew and I don't know that he read it, but it was the kind of thing that he would have -- I mean, Haldeman I can't help but -- Haldeman would have given it to him as the kind of thing he would have wanted to know. What did they know, you know, as to how extensive the campaign's involvement had been in trying to influence President Diem's decision to not attend --

**Timothy Naftali**

Thieu.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Or I mean President Thieu's decision not to go to the Paris talks, and basically what I was able to tell him was that based on what I had seen, Johnson was never able to establish with any certainty that Nixon had personally any role whatsoever in that. And in fact there had been a lot of internal debate in

the White House with Rostow and Rusk and others as to what extent Nixon personally, you know, might have been involved in and whether it made any difference, you know, that it's entirely plausible that Thieu was acting in the interest, as he perceived it, of his own government. He didn't have to be interested in what happened in the U.S. election. But the bottom line was that, based on my report, he had every reason to believe that there was no smoking gun out there that would implicate him, which was contrary to the argument that was made by that God-awful British guy that wrote that terrible biography of him from the British sensationalist. So anyway that was separate, but the other interesting thing of note in connection with this project was that -- I mean, finally, I got so frustrated with it because I knew I wasn't getting all of the information that would allow me to really understand what had happened in Paris. And so I decided to go out and start bird-dogging on my own. Well, that was always dangerous because the proper protocol was that if you wanted something from the Defense Department, you went to Dr. Kissinger's office and you asked them to request it from Secretary Laird and then Secretary Laird would decide whether or not he was going to give it to you. Well, I found out early on when I'd undertaken the [unintelligible] investigation on the Johnson-perk thing that Laird wasn't going to cooperate with anything that anybody at the White House wanted to do, and so I wasn't going to waste my time asking Laird for anything.

But since I'd been at the Pentagon I had the occasion to know a lot of the officers who served as military assistants to the various assistant secretaries and secretaries and, you know, some of the civilian people. So, hell, I just get on the phone and I call the Navy captain who had been the executive officer for Secretary Warneke who had been the assistant secretary for international security affairs during the Johnson administration and said, "Yeah, I want to come over and talk to you." ISA at that time was basically the point of contact between DOD and the State Department and the other departments on diplomatic matters and stuff so to an extent there was anything DOD involvement in the talks and stuff it would have all gone through that channel. And that was in the Johnson administration that was a high-powered operation, I mean, Halperin was there, Les Gelb was there. So, you know, and I knew who these guys were when I was at the Pentagon, so I just figured, you know, let's just see what the hell they got. So I met with him and I explained to him what I was doing and I said, "Do you have anything in your files that you might think would be useful to me with respect to the Paris peace talks or to the bombing halt?" And he said, "Well, yes, there was a study that Secretary Warneke had authorized at the time before the end of Johnson's administration, kind of a summary history of the bombing halt talks. And I said, "Do you have a copy of it?" And he said, "Well, I can't find it." And I said, "Well, was it classified?" And he said, "Well, yes." I said, "Well, how in the hell do you not find a classified document?" He said, "Well, maybe it's down in the secretary's office," Secretary Laird's office. And he said -- and then there was a study that McNamara commissioned, had authorized, that was undertaken in the summer of 1967. And then that triggered a memory because I'd recalled that summer that there was a whole group of people working up in McNamara's suite on some sort of historic history program because one of the officers who was working on it had been a fraternity brother of mine at IU and was on active duty and was teaching at West Point, and he was on T&D assigned down at the Pentagon to work on this thing. Well, obviously, I didn't know exactly what it was, but, I mean, I remembered it. I said, "Well, what were the results?" I think he said that there were six volumes or eight volumes. I said, "Well, do you have that?" He said, "No." He said, "Secretary Laird may have it. They may have a copy down there," and he said there are copies, that Clifford has a copy, and Gelb has a copy, and Brookings has a copy. Well, I could tell you virtually any Nixon loyalist in that timeframe, when you mention Brookings, the lights went on and the siren sounded. And I said, "Brookings?" He said, "Yes, Brookings has a copy of it." And so I said, "Well that's the damndest thing I ever heard." So I went back to the White House.



**Timothy Naftali**

Explain on camera why Brookings would be the damndest thing.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, I mean Brookings was perceived by, at least by the political people in the White House -- now, you know, there's a big difference between people like me and Buchanan and Dent and people like Safire and Ray Price. We saw a lot of these things through essentially a political prism. And Brookings had become -- we jokingly referred to it as the chancellery of the government in exile. All that when Bobby Kennedy was assassinated and all of the people who were on his staff, the Ford Foundation made a grant to Brookings, and Brookings hired all these people. And so, you know -- and of course they were busy opposing everything that the Nixon administration was supposed to do, which was fine. It's their job. I mean, that's why we have a two-party system. I didn't object to it, it's not like there's anything disloyal or wrong about it, but it was not our job to make it easy for these people to oppose what we were trying to do. That was my bottom line. So I went back, you know, as soon as I got back to the White House I send Haldeman a memo and I said, basically, "You're not going to believe this." Here I've spent all these months, I've been chasing all over the God-dang'd government try to get everybody to give me bits and pieces and trying to do this job that you told me to do, and the God-dang'd Brookings Institution is sitting over here with a God-dang'd multi-volume report that I don't have. And if Brookings can get the damn thing, I don't see any reason why I can't get it. Well, I mean, Bob wasn't any more excited about that situation than I was, so we set up a meeting with Al Haig and so Bob and Haig and I meet in his office -- [phone rings] You want to stop?

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you hear the -- okay, we'll --

**Timothy Naftali**

-- meeting in Al Haig's office?

**Tom Charles Huston**

The meeting I had with the secretary and Nutter's assistant would have been early March, and I think my memorandum to Haldeman was dated on the 12th of March.

**Timothy Naftali**

1970.

**Tom Charles Huston**

1970, and then I think we met, I can't be sure, I think we met on the 23rd of March because that's the date of a memorandum that I sent to Al confirming what we'd talked about and what it was I wanted. But anyway, we meet in Haldeman's office and my position was very simple, I mean, A, I had a job to do. I needed all the information I could get to do it. This information was out there. It had been prepared on government time, at government expense, and I ought to have it. And number two, there

was no damn reason why the Brookings Institute should have it. And my recommendation was, A, that Al Haig call Colonel Pursley, who I knew; I could have called him but that wasn't the proper procedure, but that he call Colonel Pursley, who was Laird's military assistant, and tell him to get those damn reports loaded up and sent over to me at the White House, number one. And number two, that he tell Laird to send somebody over to the Brookings Institute and get the damn report back. They didn't need it. They had no business having it. Well, that was not Al's notion of a prudent thing to do. First of all, he didn't want to deal with Pursley, and I couldn't understand that. He said, "Well, I want to deal through" -- I forget his name now, but it was the secretary's civilian executive assistant, and I said, "Wow, he didn't know anything about this." "Well, that's what I prefer to do." I said, "Well, that's your call; I don't care. I just need to have this information." Then he was concerned about ruffling a lot of feathers if we did anything about Brookings, and of course this is one of the things that frustrated the president, you know, was that Henry had all of these buddies of his over there, and he was worried about upsetting anybody. And to me it was very simple. You have this as the largesse of the government; the government has just changed its mind and wants it back. I didn't see it as a big deal, and what were they going to do, get mad at us? I mean, they were already mad at us. But no, he didn't want to do that so then there was a bunch of discussion, about, well, maybe we could have some sort of a DOD inspection of their secure facilities for secure -- I mean, these were classified documents. These were top-secret documents. I mean, they weren't supposed to be sitting in some guy's desk, whatever secured facilities they have and in the course of doing that somebody just lift that up and haul it out the door, which I thought was the dumbest thing, but I said, "Look, that's" -- whatever.

#### Timothy Naftali

Who's involved in this discussion?

#### Tom Charles Huston

This is Haldeman, me, and Al Haig, and this is in the March of 1970, approximately March 23rd, 1970. So I left that meeting and then I prepared a memo dated that date to Al Haig saying, here's what I know, here's what I know about the documents -- I was wrong. I think the Pentagon Papers turned out to be like 18 volumes, and I thought there were only five or six of them and -- but nevertheless, here's what I need, and here's the situation, and from my understanding of our meeting is you'll undertake to get DOD to see that I get this stuff. Well, I mean, that was it. I mean, absolutely no further communication on that subject at all until June of 1971 when just before I'm ready to leave the White House I show up at my office, I open the front page of "The New York Times" and here's the God-danged Pentagon Papers spread all over the front page. So -- I should've known better, but I couldn't resist. I sent Haldeman a memo and said, "I told you so." In fairness, the copy that Ellsberg had access to was not the Brookings thing. It was another set that was at the RAND Corporation, which, interestingly, Les Gelb directed that he keep outside the official records of the -- official accounting records for classified documents because Gelb was afraid that Johnson -- he said, Johnson, I don't know maybe he thought us -- but that Johnson particularly would try to force that stuff to be returned, and he wanted to be sure that they had access to it. So that was a good example of Nixon's alleged paranoia.

True, in fact was there were people that were trying to keep this stuff from being surfaced, or his access to it. But in any event, that was the end of it for me, but to me the important part of it is that, unknown to me at the time, of course, the president's talking to Haldeman and Kissinger about this subject, and it's when the papers come out, and the first question is, "Who the hell's got all this stuff?"

He said, "Do we have it?" He asked Haldeman, "Do we have it?" "No, we don't have anything." That wasn't right, they had the report that Kissinger's staff did in January or spring of '69, and he knew that because I'd already told him. I mean, the next day I was going to deliver him my report so he could have said, "Well, we don't have it but Huston's going give us his report based on his review of all this stuff." Then what he says is, "Huston says that we don't have any of these documents, but that the only copy is at Brookings." Well, that sets the president off. The very notion that he doesn't have this information and the people who he perceives -- you know, legitimately, he perceives among his fiercest critics do have it. And then Henry just throws oil on the fire by saying, "Well, that's right, Brookings has no reason to have it. They had no right to have it in the first place." And so based on that the president's reaction is, "Well, go get it. Ehrlichman, I'm putting you to action. I want you to go get it. However you've got to do it, blow the safe."

But the point is that this whole Brookings thing wasn't something that just popped up suddenly in June of 1971. I mean, this is something that he knew going back to 1970, because Haldeman would've told the president. This was not something that he would not have passed my memorandum onto the president about something of this importance. But instead of doing what he should've done, what you or I would've done, which is picked up the phone and got Laird on the line and said, "What in the hell is going on? Get that stuff over here, A and B, go get that thing at Brookings and get it back," he says to Ehrlichman, "Blow the safe," because he was unwilling to confront Laird, his own appointee, to say face to face, this is what I want. But anyway, that was really the most significant thing that I don't know after I delivered my report, I was a couple of days short of the actual bombing cessation, and I came back in October and finished it over a weekend, and my guess is that at that point it got sent to central files and nobody cared.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you find evidence that the Nixon campaign had tried to communicate with Thieu?

**Tom Charles Huston**

No, I mean, there was obviously circumstantial evidence -- I didn't have -- the problem -- I mean, I had everything that the FBI, or at least it was represented to me that I had everything that the FBI had. What the FBI had was basically the results of a tap on the South Vietnamese embassy and chancellery and then -- at least based on what I saw and what Bill Sullivan told me was that they did not have a tap at the Watergate on Mrs. Chennault. But they did have physical surveillance on Mrs. Chennault and, of course, they had physical surveillance on the South Vietnamese embassy. But there were plenty of telephone conversations between Mrs. Chennault and the South Vietnamese ambassador, none of which any fair-minded person could conclude that she was acting directly under anyone else's orders. But what I didn't have -- obviously there are two sides of this story. First of all,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In fact, the best evidence is that that made, or at least Powers, who did the book "The Man Who Kept the Secrets," insists that that's how the Johnson White House found out about Chennault, initially. But the other thing I didn't have, and I certainly was in no position to ask for, was the Nixon side. Because I wasn't in New York; I didn't know what they were doing.

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per sec 1.4 (c) and 3.5 (c)  
per sec. 1.4 (c)(d)

But over the years as I've studied it, I've concluded that there was no doubt that Nixon was -- would have been directly involved, that it's not something that anybody would've undertaken on their own. To what extent was he urging directly or indirectly to Thieu to not participate? Nixon insists in his memoir, and I think with some credence, that he didn't have to do that. Thieu had his own reasons not to participate, but Nixon was not one to leave things to chance, and so my best judgment is that Chennault was and Ambassador Hill, who was linked to this, who was really Nixon's, one of the leading foreign policy people and who he sent to Paris to be the observer, you know, was -- But I think the thing that came out of it that struck me more than anything else was the Agnew incident because, A, it was obvious that the Bureau was monitoring what the candidate for vice president of the United States -- which -- okay, that's one thing, but what's interesting was that after the election, this guy's the vice president-elect of the United States, and Johnson orders the FBI to undertake this investigation of Agnew and his communications and who he talked to and what. And he calls DeLoach and gets them on a Sunday and then they get initial information comes back on the timing of the calls that came out of his plane, which was on the ground in Albuquerque. And he starts scurrying around and then all of the sudden somebody realizes that the people at the Bureau forgot to account for the difference in time between Washington and Albuquerque. So they had to change that, and that changes the whole thing. At the end of the day, based on what -- I saw what they had, I mean, they had no evidence whatsoever that Agnew had anything to do with it.

Because they had a phone call from Mrs. Chennault to the ambassador saying that "I just talked to my boss" and so the question was, "Who the hell is 'my boss'?" And, of course, the thing that strikes me about it -- I mean, there's all sorts of hypothesis, first of all the assumption is she was talking about Nixon. Well, no one could put any link there, and so well maybe her boss was Agnew, but they really couldn't make the times match. The calls -- he called Secretary Rusk, he made two or three calls we can account for all of them. One was to the Nixon-Agnew headquarters and there was one person there who was close to Chennault and that theoretically -- because, you know, when she said, "I talked to my boss" or whatever, did it mean she talked to him on the phone. They could have had a conversation, I mean, who knows what. And she later said, "My boss in New Mexico." Somehow New Mexico got in there. That's how they got so focused on Agnew. But and she later says, "I misspoke. I really meant New Hampshire" or something. Of course that was where Ambassador Hill was from. At the end of the day, any fair-minded observer has to say that you really can't tell with certainty now. There are references in some of the Johnson memo from Walt Rostow that talks about "the lady" and suggests that they had intercepted some kind that they thought clearly linked her to some high-ranking person in the campaign.

That was not in anything that I saw and I've never seen any documented transcript or something that would be that memo, so maybe it's buried in the Johnson Library somewhere, I don't know. But if there is such a document, that's really kind of a missing link that needs to be followed. But, in any event, I think the results were, if you read my report, basically what I said was I thought this whole thing was problematical, that on the one hand my own personal view is that Johnson had a legitimate reason to be concerned about any efforts that were being made to interfere with his diplomatic efforts. He was the president of the United States. He was trying to negotiate an end to a war, and to effectively do it he needed to know whether somebody was trying to thwart what he was trying to do. And Safire obviously disagrees with that view, but that was my view. I thought that the initial premise was legitimate. But where, to me, the line -- but I also recognize that it became very problematical when you started probing into the internal campaign of a candidate for president, because Mrs. Chennault was at least not an insider but she was at least part of the Nixon campaign. But where -- the thing that really bothered me was the Agnew thing because it occurred after the election. There wasn't

anything that Johnson could do with that information that would have a legitimate national security purpose. And yet he had the Bureau out chasing around, investigating all this stuff and, you know, that I thought was abusive, and I said that. I thought that while the first part was questionable and good people could come down either side on that issue, that to me there was no question about what side any rational person would have to come down on as it related to the post-election activity.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did Haldeman talk to you about this report? Do you remember interacting with him? Did you interact with the president?

**Tom Charles Huston**

No.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you ever write a report on the Diem coup?

**Tom Charles Huston**

No, this was part of my problem with the White House. I mean, I -- it's a point that Colson makes to the president to why he didn't really -- shouldn't really want me back there. And I had this terrible habit of making up my own judgments as to whether I thought it was legitimate or not and I couldn't see any -- I mean, I could understand why the president wanted to know what happened in Paris, because these negotiations were ongoing and he ought to know what deals were made or whatever. But I couldn't imagine any legitimate reason why he needed to know anything about what happened in the Diem coup or, more importantly, anything that had happened in the Bay of Pigs. Plus, there simply was no way that anybody could undertake to get any information that would've been at all useful and not call attention to it, because the only way I could've done that would've been to go particularly to the CIA and say, "I want to come over and start going through your files with respect to these two matters." And there was no way that was going to happen.

**Timothy Naftali**

What was Nixon trying to find out?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, this is an ongoing theme. I mean, if you follow the narrative closely, remember that the original discussion in June of '71 with Haldeman about getting Helms over here, it basically was, you know, mention to him --

**Timothy Naftali**

Helms or Hunt?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Mel Helms, for the so-called "smoking gun" tape.

**Timothy Naftali**

'72.

**Tom Charles Huston**

I'm sorry, '72, the year '72. But basically he says there, you know, when you're talking to Helms, mention this thing about the Bay of Pigs. He had in his mind, for some reason I don't know, that there was something nefarious, untoward had gone on in that connection. Clearly, he was resentful of CIA, because he blamed CIA for leaking to Kennedy that something was about to go on in Cuba and Kennedy in the debates took a very hard line against Cuba, and Nixon, because he had access to this information and it was classified, had to downplay it and say, "Oh no, that's not a prudent thing to do." And so Nixon had a long memory. I mean, eight years later he was still thinking about that. And it was never clear to me. To me, I had had an interest in this Diem thing. I'd been to Vietnam three times. I had met the Vietnamese lieutenant general who had actually led the coup and arrested Diem, and I sat across the table and asked him, "Did you intend to murder the president?" And the interpreter looked at me, "Do you really want me to ask that?" I said, "Yes, I want you to ask that." So it was a subject that was of interest to me, but to me it was clear that as clear as it needed to be for any legitimate purpose that the United States had made a -- [break in audio]

**Timothy Naftali**

Well before the Pentagon incident in 1971, the president was interested in these historical questions.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Right and, you know, I mean to me, as I say, I mean, my feeling was that it was clear that the U.S. was involved in encouraging the coup, that it had been a mistake. We had paid a terrible price for it, and I didn't need to be rooting around at CIA and stirring up a big fuss with the hope that somehow I was going to learn something that was ultimately anymore bottom line than that. And as far as the Bay of Pigs, I mean I couldn't imagine what that had to do with anything. I mean, although, you know, both Eisenhower and Nixon thought Kennedy had made a terrible mistake and it was amateur hour, but there was no reason for him to, in my mind at least, to need to know anything for me to be scurrying around ruffling feathers. I mean, even I recognized there were only so many feathers that could be ruffled at one time within the bureaucracy, but you know, he didn't let these things die. I mean if you look at, finally it ends up two years later I mean, they get Howard Hunt over there, and Hunt starts forging these cables relating to the Diem murder because he couldn't obviously come up with any information that would've been any more definitive linking Kennedy to the actual decision to have Diem overthrown. So, you know, he and Colson concoct this fake cable message deal. And then, you know, the Bay of Pigs thing surfaces, as I say, in June of '72 when Haldeman's supposed to hold this out to some sort of a threat to Helms as if there was something involved in that that Helms was involved in that if it came out would reflect adversely on Helms. And Ehrlichman talks about in his memoir, you know, that the president was on him to find out, you know, I want this information about the Bay of Pigs and how Ehrlichman tried to go and met with Helms and insisted that he get the runaround he got and whatever. So, you know, these were recurring themes. But you know, it may be

self-serving, but the point I'd like to make for the record is that when I was asked to do that I said, "No, it doesn't make any sense." And when other people were asked to do it they took a different view, and the results were not favorable to the president.

**Timothy Naftali**

And you were asked to do this in September of 1969?

**Tom Charles Huston**

In September of 1969.

**Timothy Naftali**

And did the president -- was the mission to find dirt on Kennedy? I mean was that what --

**Tom Charles Huston**

No, I can't say that. I mean all I was -- you know, the instructions were, "I want to know everything that we can find out about, you know, the Bay of Pigs and about the Diem thing." Now, I mean, clearly I think, you know, he believed that Kennedy made a big mistake in both and I agreed with that. I mean, it wasn't that I had a different opinion on the subject. The difference was I didn't see what the hell difference it made at this point and, secondly, I had been, you know, at least had the advantage of having had spent two years in the bureaucracy at the Pentagon. I mean I understood, you know, what was involved with this kind of stuff, of you know you start rooting around. And it was clear to me, you know, I could huff and puff and do -- I mean, hell I was a lowly, you know, a nobody on the White House staff. How was I going to chase that stuff down, you know, and get anything? So, you know, I had the researchers on the speechwriting staff get a bunch of crap together in the public domain. And, actually, when I went over to see the Navy captain, to Nutter's office, I did ask him about the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Bay of Pigs, and he gave me some information about some of the insider stuff between the Navy and Robert Kennedy, which was interesting, but you know, so what? I might have never even bothered to report it. But you know, I just didn't do it and I felt -- so I felt like the Chennault matter, I felt like the peace talks, were legitimate and we had a right to know. We needed to know, and I didn't care whose feathers I ruffled, but I wasn't going to do it on the other matters.

**Timothy Naftali**

In the tapes President Nixon complains that -- I think it was Bill Sullivan -- someone at the FBI told him -- maybe it was Hoover -- that he had been bugged by LBJ.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, actually, yeah, that goes back to the meeting that Nixon had with Hoover at the Pierre Hotel in New York after the election, at which Nixon made it clear to Hoover that he was going to reappoint him, which is what Hoover wanted. But, you know, Hoover was a piece of work. I mean, at the same time that pursuant to instructions from Lyndon Johnson he's got his agents scurrying all over the damn Southwest, you know, trying to dig up dirt on the vice president-elect, he's sitting with the president-elect and telling him that Johnson had bugged his airplane during the '68 campaign. Well, now, I mean

everything that I know about it and everybody that I've talked to about it says that's nonsense and that it never happened, but you know Haldeman later insists that they didn't believe it happened, but that's not true; Nixon did believe it happened because that conversation you refer to is, you know, "Not only did they bug my plane they bugged my compartment. They knew everything we were saying about them." Well, if so, I mean that information is buried deep in the Johnson Library somewhere. I mean, I never saw anything about it. But the interesting thing to me was the way in which Hoover chose to ingratiate himself with the incoming president at the same time he was maintaining his ingratiating policy with the sitting president. And Nixon, in my judgment, never really understood his old friend Hoover as well as he should have in that respect.

### Timothy Naftali

Let's talk a little bit more about Hoover. At about the time that you send the memo -- a little after the time you send the memo regarding the Brookings Institution you were asked to look at the coordination of domestic intelligence. It's April. Tell us how that comes onto your plate, please.

### Tom Charles Huston

Well, actually, it came on my plate again at the same time I was working on the bombing halt, because Nixon wanted to know -- this was back in June of '69 and the anti-war protests are going and there's a lot of disruption in the country -- and Nixon wants to know, you know, who are these people, who's behind them, what's the story? So he asks Ehrlichman in the counsel's office to prepare a report. Ehrlichman, I don't know if he prepared it, or probably Bud Krogh did it. But anyway, a report was prepared for the president. Well, I, you know -- the president wasn't satisfied. It's just a repeat of the Kissinger deal on the bombing halt. When he gets a report from somebody he doesn't like it for whatever reason, either, A, he didn't think it was complete. It didn't tell him what he wanted to hear. I mean, I have no idea. But anyway, he says, you know, "Get Huston on this." And, you know, so I'm told, you know, "I want you to go find out about all these questions about where's the financing coming from and this sort of thing."

So I meet with Krogh and I never saw the report that they prepared, but talked to him and explained to him because, you know, through the counsel. I'm not on the counsel staff; I'm on the speechwriting staff. So anyway, I explained to Krogh what I was going to do and so I send a memo out to the directors of the FBI, CIA, DIA, and NSA saying, you know, the president's asked for a report on this information and I'd like to have you tell us about what you know about these various matters. And then I went -- I needed to, you know, talk to the people in the departments. So, you know, to do that appropriately you had to go through the right channels. So I went to Colonel Hughes, and now I think it's General Hughes, and he's the military assistant and I said, "I need to talk to General Cushman," who's the deputy director of the CIA, and Cushman had been on Nixon's staff when he was vice president. So I knew that Cushman was not unfriendly. And so -- and that decision subsequently was decided by some as being, you know, evidence that somehow there was something inappropriate about my inquiries because otherwise I would have gone to Dick Helms. Well, I mean that's silly. I mean, first of all, I didn't need to take the director's time and I learned at the Pentagon what was the appropriate level that you needed to pursue to get what you need to know. I mean, I needed to be at the deputy director level. And secondly, I knew that if I asked, Cushman would not question my bona fides. And so General Hughes, you know, set up a meeting and I went out and talked to Cushman and I said, "Here's what the president would like to know. Here is a list of questions, and I'd appreciate it if you



give us a written response by a certain date," and I can't remember what that date was. I think it was the first of June or something like that. And then I had Krogh, who was liaison with the Justice Department, arrange for me to see Walter Yeagley, who was the assistant secretary in charge of the Internal Security Division in the Justice Department.

So I went over to see Yeagley. Well, I mean, Yeagley had been there since the Eisenhower administration. I mean, his office had gotten -- I mean, as a result of the decisions of the Warren Court, I mean, it basically stripped him of, you know, any serious responsibilities. I mean, he presented a case occasionally to the Subversive Activities Control Board, and he registered foreign lobbyists, but I mean he didn't have a lot to do, and he struck me as a guy who knew he didn't have a lot to do, and he enjoyed it. But in any event we had a nice conversation and he said, "Look, I'd be happy to give you what I have," and he says, "but all I've got is just what came from the Bureau. It makes a lot more sense, you know, for you to just go talk directly to the Bureau." And I said, "Well, fine, would you contact Bill Sullivan?" I didn't know him at that time. "Would you contact them and make an appointment for me to come over and receive a briefing on these matters?"

And he did and so I went over the first time -- the first time I met Sullivan -- and, you know, they provided me a briefing, and I met the head of the -- basically there were two section chiefs that were his two top guys. One had responsibility for the new left -- what was called "the new left desk," and the other had the responsibility for the black radical desk. And basically they gave me a very, you know, reasoned, intelligent overview of how they saw the problem, how they were dealing with it, what their problems were. And, you know, at the end of it I said, "Well, you know, I appreciate that very much, and I'd really like to have, you know, a written response to these things as well." Bill said, "Well, you'll have to ask the director." I said, "Okay." I said, "I thought asking you" -- "No," he said, "You have to ask the director." So I sent a memo to the director saying we'd appreciate it if you would authorize the division to give us a response, and Hoover authorized it. So after about 30 days or so I get these responses from the four agencies. And so I take those and put together my own report. And, you know, the bottom lines of which are, A, that based on the evidence that the agencies have right now, I mean, what we're talking about is almost certainly and almost exclusively an indigenous problem. In other words, that there's not any evidence of any serious linkage to foreign intelligence services. Secondly, on the funding issue, that there's not any evidence that any of the agencies have any clear foreign funding and that, in fact, a large part of that element of the SDS and stuff were, you know, largely self-funding. And so I send this report on.

Well, I don't think that's what the president wanted to hear. I mean, he was a lot like Johnson in that I mean they look out their window and they saw all of this stuff going on out there and, you know, they couldn't imagine why, you know, with a policy that was so much in the national interest as they perceived it could be opposed by all of this rabble-rousing group out here without some foreign or subversive outfit having her finger in the pot. And, you know, so I don't hear anything more about it, and this is in the summer. In the fall, when the first anti-war protest comes in October, the moratorium, and I'm asked by Haldeman or Ehrlichman, I don't remember which, but anyway, to coordinate with the Bureau on intelligence as to what we might expect or what we need to be concerned about. And, you know, the October protest was large, larger than certainly we anticipated it would be, and it was largely peaceful. Although there was, you know -- there were some people trying to climb over the fence there on 16th Street, which was not something that excited the Secret Service. But overall, I mean, it was a, you know, pretty peaceful thing. But then in November we had a second demonstration. This was the New Mobilization Committee, which was much larger and was much more violent. And there was a lot of violence and the police had to break up -- the Weathermen had

tried to assault the South Vietnamese embassy, and the police had to use tear gas to break that up. And there was a big mob at the Justice Department and a lot of tear gas there. And the attorney general was up on his balcony looking out and got, you know -- eyes started watering from the tear gas and, you know, he was not impressed. And so as a consequence of that, I mean, there was a lot of criticism to the Bureau on the alleged basis that the intelligence that they had on what to anticipate hadn't been adequate.

Well, I disagreed. I thought that given the uncertainty of what you could reasonably expect any intelligence organization to be able to get together that they did quite a good job. And it was a fact because they knew about the anticipated assault on the embassy that the police were there ready for them and kept it to a minimum. But there were leaks to the press from the Justice Department that was critical of the Bureau, and of course that sent Hoover right through the roof. And so in November I asked Ehrlichman to send a letter to Hoover thanking him for the good job he did. And I drafted the letter and sent it over to Ehrlichman, and Ehrlichman signed it and we sent it over to Hoover and calmed him down. So that's really kind of how I got into it. And then in the early part of the year, 1970, the president got off again on this funding issue. Now, he's gotten two reports and, you know, I suspect -- I know what mine said. I suspect the first one said pretty much the same thing. But he still is convinced that there's something going on here and somebody's funding all this stuff. And so Haldeman tasks Krogh to start this thing all over again. So Krogh goes back to the Bureau and agencies and starts trying to get all of this financial information and data, and he sends it to Haldeman and Haldeman's not satisfied with it. He doesn't think it's accurate enough, that there must be more to be found, tell them to go find it.

Well, in the meantime, I mean, Krogh and I are talking and saying this is nonsense. I mean, we've got different people falling over each other talking to these agencies and clearly creating the impression that we don't know what the hell we're doing over here. We need somehow to get this thing, you know, coordinated. And so, you know, I recommended to Haldeman, I said, you know, this isn't working. I mean, come on, how many times do we tread over this same path and, you know, how many people do we have juggling these balls with things falling in the cracks? And he agreed. So he calls a meeting in March in his office with me and Krogh and Butterfield. Now Krogh's got a liaison with the Justice Department and Butterfield, Alex, has liaison with the Secret Service. And so we discussed it and as a consequence of those discussions, it's agreed that I'll be designated as the one White House staff person who is responsible for liaison with all of the departments as it relates to internal security, or domestic security, issues. And secondly, it's agreed that the president will meet with the directors of the four principal intelligence agencies to tell them that, you know, he's concerned about these issues and he's concerned about the lack of coordination.

I'm leaving out a lot of history here as to -- because during this interval from the summer of '69 until March of '70 I'm, you know, having close contact with Bill Sullivan, and Bill's, you know, telling me all of these, from his point of view, horror stories about, you know, what's going on, what he can't get done, the dispute between Hoover and CIA, et cetera, et cetera. And I'm telling Haldeman, you know, this is a real mess out here. I mean, we've got these agencies that won't talk to each other, and there's nobody pulling anything together, so there's no way we can have any reasonable basis to know on a rational basis what the facts really are and what the implications are. And so that's why I said that I felt it was necessary that the only hope we had was to get the president to call the directors together and say this is important to me, and I want to create a sub-committee, you know, a working group, and I want to put together an analysis of, you know, what do we know, what are our tools that we presently have in the toolkit for finding out what we know and what don't we know, and what additional tools

are potentially available to help us find out what we don't know? And so that was intended to be -- that meeting was intended to be in April. But, of course, in April the president authorized the Cambodian incursion and from the first of May to the 15th of May, I mean, the country, you know, basically came apart at the seams. And we had, you know, 60 percent of the campuses had, you know, massive demonstrations. Over 300 campuses there was serious violence. During that 15-day period there was an average of -- there were four ROTC facilities per day that were either firebombed or, I mean, bombed or torched. And then, of course, then we had Kent State, where four students were killed and nine were wounded. We had Jackson State, where two students were killed with confrontations with either the National Guard and local police. So, I mean, that was a time of tremendous uncertainty, division within the White House and, you know -- so nothing happened until that finally worked itself out. And then finally in June, on the sixth of June, is when the president actually had met with the directors.

### Timothy Naftali

To what extent was this effort a product of the amount of violence that occurred earlier in the spring of 1970?

### Tom Charles Huston

Well, I mean, obviously -- I mean, that's what -- the more I got into it, and as I say, because of my background with Young Americans for Freedom and as somebody who had been active in student government and through that had been involved in the meetings with the National Student Association and stuff, I mean, I knew a lot of -- Hayden and a lot of these, Barney Frank -- I mean, a lot of these guys who ultimately were prominent in the left, and even some like Hayden at SDS and Carl Oglesby -- I mean, I debated Carl Oglesby on ABC, you know, in December 1965. I mean so -- I mean, I knew, you know, these people back when this thing started as largely a protest among the student left against what they perceived to be the liberal hegemony on campus that they thought had been preempted by all of the bad influences. I mean, it was totally non-violent. I mean, it was purely a legitimate, you know, political protest. I mean, Huston and [unintelligible], our people were all over here and the SDS guys and over here and we were going at it. But we were talking to each other and arguing with one another, and it was civil and, you know, a perfectly logical, reasonable, and, in my view, historically inevitable confrontation at that point in history. So that's my mindset, you know, when I left and went to the service, and then by the time I get to the White House, I mean, it's all changed. I mean, you can't go speak. I mean, I spoke at Berkeley on the steps of Sproul Hall, you know, in support of the war in 1966. I mean, I got harassed but no one chased me off, you know, off the campus.

But here we are now in 1969, and you can't, you know, go speak on a campus without fear of serious physical threat. And, I mean, the day President Nixon -- on Inauguration Day, when he came in the car down from the Capitol to the White House -- I mean he hadn't even stepped in the front door yet as president -- there were 5,000 SDS, Weathermen, radical people that were throwing rocks and, you know, serious things at his car and screaming and carrying on. So, I mean, this thing started on day one. And as you looked at the problem across the country, I mean, you had a series of bombings. Like there were six bombings in Colorado at a public service Colorado power transmission lines. There was a shootout on the campus of UCLA between the Black Panthers and the U.S. Org black group. We had 300 campuses in '69 that had violence that had created injury. I mean, you know, there were 200 and almost 300 police officers who were injured. The thing that was of particular concern to me was

the urban violence. We had, you know, nine police officers who had been shot by snipers. I mean, there were violent confrontations between the Panthers and the police in all our major urban areas. So the problem, as I looked at it, was, you know, that all of the attention was largely focused in the West Wing on this anti-war protest thing. But the real problem, in my mind and certainly in Bill Sullivan's mind and in Jim Angleton's mind, was down here with the Weathermen, who in February of 1970 went underground, and then in March of 1970 we had the explosion at the Wilkerson townhouse in Greenwich Village, which was a bomb factory that blew up and killed two or three people and several people, you know, escaped. But it was clear that these were people who were in the process of making bombs. At the same time, there was a raid in Detroit of another cache of bomb-making equipment, and there was a third incident in Chicago, all occurring within the same time in March of 1970. So the real internal security issue, in my mind and to the intelligence community's mind, was at that level. It was the threat of the black radical violence, the Black Panthers and the urban environment, and it was the bombing threat posed by the Weathermen, because they put out this communiqué saying, you know, this is what we're going to remember. We're going underground, and we're going to do this. So my feeling was and the focus -- when the president met with the directors, his focus really wasn't on the anti-war movement because at least I viewed that as a political problem not an internal security problem. I think the president recognized it as a political problem. It was a political problem, but at that time it -- [break in audio]

#### Timothy Naftali

If the meeting had happened in April -- do you think the nature of the meeting is different because it happens in June and not in April?

#### Tom Charles Huston

Well, yeah, I think -- I mean, clearly I think that the extent of the violence and the consequences of the activities that occurred in the first 15 days in May clearly focused everybody's attention on the fact that, you know, that this is a traumatic problem. But even so, I mean it was a distinguishable problem from the problem that was really at the heart of what I felt, and the intelligence community felt, really needed to be addressed, which was how do we deal with the threat of what had every earmark of tending towards a systematic program of domestic terrorism? And while these people were taking advantage, in my view -- were taking advantage of a legitimate anti-war movement as a context within which to preach their message that it really wasn't opposition to the war. It wasn't that they felt once the war -- if they could get the war ended that they could all disband and go home. I mean, these people, you know, were -- the Black Panthers were, you know, according to the rhetoric, I mean, they were committed to driving whitey out of their areas and maintaining, you know, creating a quasi black domination and breaking the back of the police departments in these areas. And the Weathermen, you know, their assault was, you know, not just the war but the whole capitalist structure of American society and the oppression of the blacks domestically and internationally. So, to me, if you analyze the thing carefully, I mean, you know, these were two separate activities and one was going to end up being addressed largely at the political level. And, in fact, as the president implemented his Vietnamization policy at that level the activity diminished. And certainly by the last really gasp, the big gasp, of the anti-war movement was in the spring of 1971 when they did, you know, succeed in basically closing Washington down and they -- but after that, I mean, clearly by 1972 that was gone. But these other two elements weren't gone. I mean, it was back in, you know, 1972 that the Weathermen bombing and, you know, the police headquarters in New York, the Pentagon, and the Capitol occurred. So that was a problem. And in the discussions that the president had in the Oval Office with the directors, he never

really talked at all about the anti-war movement's protests. He really addressed these things and he also had mentioned he had just met with the president of Venezuela earlier that day and he complained about Stokely Carmichael and many people exporting, you know, revolutions into the Caribbean. And he asked Dick Allen, he said, "Dick, do you know anything about it?" "Well, no, I don't know anything about it." And so, you know, subsequently I asked Helms to give his report, which he did, and I sent it on to the president. But there was nothing in that conversation that really dealt with either the funding issue or the anti-war movement, which is not to say that it was not on his mind, but it wasn't part of the agenda that I suggested to him.

**Timothy Naftali**

In that discussion with the heads of the intelligence services, did they talk about the restraints on their ability to acquire information?

**Tom Charles Huston**

No, the president, as I had asked, asked both Hoover and Helms, "Do you fellows have any problems" -- "Oh no, Mr. President, we're doing just fine." And so I mean he knew better, but he just moved on.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did they talk about the new authorities they wanted to collect additional information?

**Tom Charles Huston**

No, no. And you know basically it was more of a monologue of the president outlining, you know, his concerns about this. He talked about recently the Justice Department had sent up to the Hill a new anti-bombing legislation, and he indicated that, you know, there are people saying that we're trying to be repressive. He says, "I'm not trying to repress anyone, but absolutely we're not going to tolerate this kind of violence in this country." And then basically then he said, "I want you to get together -- I want to have a sub-committee. Edgar, I want you guys to form a committee. Edgar, I want you to be chairman. I understand you've got a good fellow over there, that Sullivan. I think he'd be a good choice to head up the working group. And I want you to get together and I want you to give me a report. I want you to tell me just what I said, you know, what do we know and where are we?" And basically those were the marching orders, and everybody left and went to work from there.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about the working group. How often did it meet?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, we were -- you know, Hoover -- the first meeting, I think, was on a Friday, and Hoover called a meeting of the principals in his office on Monday. And so, you know, I went over there and I show up -- I was over there and Dick Helms was there; Admiral Gayler, the director of NSA; General Bennett, the director of DIA; Bill Sullivan, and a couple of staff people from NSA. And so Hoover undertakes to summarize what he understood the president to have said. And, according to Hoover's summary,

the president said, "I want you boys to get together and give me a history of, you know, what we've done over the last, you know, what's happened over the last few years and what we've done," and give him this history report. And then he says, "Is that your understanding?" And, you know, the thing starts around the table, you know, Helms nods and then he comes to me and I said, "Well, Mr. Director, I'm sorry, but that's not my understanding of what he said." I said, "He's not interested in a history lesson. He's interested in understanding the problem that exists today and our best understanding of what the problem is likely to be into the future."

Well, I look over and I see Sullivan, you know, kind of going like this, and that wasn't appropriate protocol for talking to the director and actually was a damn fool thing for me to have done because, by doing that, I instantly made an enemy out of one of the most powerful people in the entire government. But I felt like, you know, my job was to represent the president. My job was to get the president what he asked for, and clearly Hoover was determined not to do that. And then once I said that then the other directors said, "Yes, that's our understanding, too." But no one, you know, was willing to say that first. And so he basically at that point undertook to cut the meeting short and told Sullivan that he wanted him to get the working group together, and they were to complete the report by the 30th of June. So we only had three weeks. Now, I should have also objected to that, but I didn't. So then the working group met later in the week, I think maybe on Thursday, at CIA and basically, as I recall, I think there were three meetings of the working group. We put together the report, but at the very last minute Hoover objects, calls Sullivan into his office and says, you know, "I want you to get rid of all of these options that this report's giving the president." And Bill says, "Well, you can't do that. The other directors have already approved the report." He said, "What we can do is we can footnote our objection." And so Hoover goes through, and they add a footnote to each of the option lines, whether it dealt to informant coverage or whatever, and says, "The FBI objects," and, "We think everything's fine." Well, then Bill and I got to go back to the working group and give them, you know, the final draft report that's got these footnotes in there. Well, obviously, everybody's -- you know, Bill and I are both embarrassed to hell, I mean, you know, because I had told the people in the course of the conversation that this wasn't an option for the departments to press their favorite thing. The point was to give the president the information, what his options were, and let him make a decision. Give him the pros, give him the cons, and be as fair and objective about it as you can be, but you're not letting, you know -- because I had a real knock-down, drag-out fight with Colonel Downey, who represented the Army, about whether the military intelligence services should reinstitute, which we would have had to do at that point because they had closed down their domestic intelligence, reinstitute it. And he said, "There's no way and it shouldn't even be considered." And I said, you know, "I'm sorry, it's got to be considered."

Well, I didn't tell him, but the only information I got at all from the president or Haldeman about what they were thinking was that Haldeman told me that the president thought we needed to beef up domestic intelligence by making use of the Army. Well, I thought that was a stupid idea, but it wasn't my job to tell these people that I thought it was a stupid idea. So, I mean, Downey really thought I was a bad apple and, you know, basically I agreed with him, but it wasn't my job to go over there and ingratiate myself with him. And actually, when I then made my recommendations to the president I said flat out that I thought it would be a mistake to reinstate, to use the military for domestic intelligence purposes. And so anyway, the working group says, "Well, we'll have to go back to our directors because of this change." I said, "Fine, but Hoover set the signing ceremony for either the next day or the day after, so you're going to have to get them signed on quickly." Well, by the time I get back from CIA to my office, Admiral Gayler is on the phone just raising holy hell. "You told us we couldn't put our views, separate departmental views, in here and now Hoover's doing this." And I said,

"Well, let me tell you," I said, "There's not a damn thing you or I can do about it." I said, "All I can tell you is that when I submit the report to the president I will make clear to him the facts and circumstances under which these comments were made and that your concerns are going to be presented fairly, just as you thought they were in the initial draft of the report you approved."

And I get off the phone with him and I got, you know, shortly thereafter General Bennett is calling me with the same complaint. And his complaint basically was, "Well, Hoover's put us in a position by footnoting his objections to imply that if we don't object then somehow we're approving it." And I said, "Well, you know, I can understand your concern, but that's not the rules by which we established this. And the fact that you don't have your own individual expression doesn't imply you are for or against anything because there's a whole range of options from doing nothing to doing all sorts of things." So he seemed to be reasonably satisfied. So we get set up for the signing ceremony. And so I, you know, get in my car and the driver takes me over there. And just as I'm pulling in the courtyard of the Justice Department, Dick Helms is pulling in. And Dick gets out of his car about just the same time I do, and we're starting to walk towards the Justice Department, and Sullivan comes walking out of the building to us and says, "Well, I need to talk to you guys." He said, "Hoover at the last minute has made me change some of the language in this report that you're going to be asked to sign." And I said, "Well, is it significant?" And he said, "Well, I don't really think so," and he showed us a couple of examples. And I said to Helms, "I don't think it makes a damn bit of difference," and he said, "No, I don't care." And so I said, "Okay, just let's don't worry about it, and we'll go in."

So we went in to the ceremony. And Hoover had this practice, which the agents referred to in these kinds of meetings as "Hoover's Reading Society," because Hoover would go through each page, you know, and he would read the page and then he would stop and say, "Now, does everyone agree with that?" And then he'd turn the page and he'd go through that and then, "Now, does everyone agree with that?" And, of course, under the well-scripted procedure, everybody did agree because everybody had signed off on it before they walked in to the office. Well, I'm sitting there -- I mean admiral and I -- Gayler, got there late, and Hoover made some disparaging comment that Gayler didn't take well. But we're going through this, and this is a 43-page report, and we're grinding through this thing. And I can see Gayler over there, you know, and he just cannot control himself. So finally he says, "No, I don't agree." And he starts in about some particular language and the footnotes and the whole damn thing. Well, I mean, Hoover is beside himself and I look over at Helms and Helms winks at me and, you know, I think, oh lord, how am I going to do this? But Dick helpfully comes in, and he recommends some modest changing in the language and Hoover, "Okay, I can do that," and I get him calmed down. And finally we get through the -- he finally then just quit reading and just skipped through and, you know, the directors signed the report and he said thank you, and we all left, and then Bill Sullivan then sent the official report over to me the next day. So, I mean, that's basically how it went.

### **Timothy Naftali**

Now, the report had a series of recommendations and later you would say, or testify, that Hoover describes some of these recommendations as illegal, illegal actions.

### **Tom Charles Huston**

Well, actually the report didn't have any recommendations. I mean, the report itself simply had options.

**Timothy Naftali**

I should've said options --

**Tom Charles Huston**

And the memorandum that I prepared, which I guess to the extent anything is legitimately the so-called "Huston Plan" is not the special report that was signed by the directors. It would be the memorandum and the attachment that I sent to the president. And in that I went through and discussed each of the options and indicated which of those options that I believed were the appropriate choice and the reasons why I thought so, which largely were because these were what I understood to be the preferred options, clearly, by the Bureau and, to the extent that I correctly understood where Angleton was coming from, of the CIA. And I clearly know that on those matters that the only matter that really interested NSA related to a single option, and clearly I knew what their preference was, which is what I recommended. And DIA, the only thing they really cared about was to not let the military get back into the intelligence business, the domestic intelligence business, which is exactly what I recommended. But yes, we had -- actually, in the committee I had said to the committee, you know, "Make these options stark." In other words, I don't want -- a lot of times you draft things so that they're weighted so that it basically demands that you choose something, but I said that's not what I want; I want to make it stark. And so clearly when we talked about mail cover -- I mean mail opening, which is a program that I didn't know was still going on in the CIA, but was on international mail, a program that the FBI had undertaken up until 1965, had since been terminated. I mean, it was clear to say that our understanding was, as a technical matter, it was illegal under the mail statutes.

Now, the fact of the matter was that, you know, the attorney general in the Eisenhower administration had basically blessed this operation with the postmaster general and each succeeding postmaster general had signed off on this thing. But clearly, if you looked at the statute and if some outside person, you know, this is what they were going to say, so that's what we had to say. The same thing with respect to surreptitious entry, there were basically two categories of surreptitious entry, or what was then known as black bag jobs and are now known as sneak and peek, but basically, A, to place a microphone and, B, to go in and photograph documents. And this was something the Bureau had done for a long time, but the microphone entry for microphone purposes had been approved by Attorney General Brownell in 1954. But there was no evidence subsequently turned up by Church or anybody else that any attorney general or anybody else had ever officially signed off on entry for purposes of photographing or for obtaining cryptographic information. But it was for the purpose of obtaining cryptographic information that the NSA was most interested in, and it was really that issue as it related to NSA that drove the conversation contrary to the perception somehow it was driven by, you know, concern about the anti-war people or whatever. But the real drive was because at that time, at the time that we started this thing, Hoover and the NSA was at a loggerhead on that issue and CIA had weighed in on behalf of NSA with Hoover to no effect. And they had their own issues there that would have required some penetration. Of course Hoover's attitude was, "Fine, they want to do it, they can do it themselves." But their response was, A, we're not trained to do it ourselves and, B, it's not within our charter and, C, you are trained and it is, we believe, within your charter and you acknowledged that it's been within your charter up until you changed your mind in 1965. And so that's what really drove the conversation.



But in making that recommendation I thought it was a reasonable thing to do under the circumstances with the threat assessment that this report set forth. And that's the other thing is that it seems to me you have to consider, you know, these options in light of this 43-page report that outlines the threat assessment, what we saw as the threat and where we saw the lack of information and our inability to be able to deal with it. But on that issue, I mean clearly any lawyer is going to tell you that this is a trespass. I mean, you know, I don't care whether you wander into the South Vietnamese embassy or you wonder into the offices of the Socialist Workers' Party, I don't care if you're legally, under local law, you're engaged in a trespass. And if somebody gets apprehended, the local constabulary is going to haul them off, and so you're going to have to deal with that problem. And so there was risk associated with it, and it would seem to me appropriate that the president understand there was risk. Hoover understood that, and Hoover was more sensitive to the, I think, clearly to the degree of the risk than any of the other people were, including certainly me. But I recognized, you know, there was a risk. I believed there was a perfectly rational argument to mitigate the risk, you know, there was a reason why it would be a legitimate exercise. I mean, to me I couldn't understand any distinction whatsoever between making an entry for the purpose of planting a microphone to listen to conversations and an entry for the purpose to photograph papers. I mean, if the attorney general said one was okay, then why the hell would the other one not be okay? But thinking logically -- I remember one of the Bureau guys used to tell me, you know, when I'd express amazement about Hoover they'd say, "That's the problem; you're thinking logically. He doesn't think logically." But he has an instinct. So anyway, that was the thing. So, you know, it was not any effort to slip anything by. And so when Haldeman told me that the president approved my recommendations, I assumed on that basis that he had read the paper, he had analyzed the discussion and had concluded that this was what he wanted to do. Now Haldeman later says that when Huston says this stuff he's reflecting what Nixon was thinking, and I think to a large extent I was reflecting what -- and certainly it was my perception of my job was to, A, give the president what he asked for and, B, to give him an honest opinion of what the people who were the professionals who were being paid to deal with this problem thought was required. But he could decide, you know, whatever he wanted, so that's where we came out.

**Timothy Naftali**

When did you find out that Hoover opposed?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, I mean, I always assumed that Hoover was going to oppose it. I mean, it was clear that if the president decided to override Hoover's objections that he was not going to be a happy camper. And that's why in my memo, you know, I strongly recommended if the president does decide to do this, it's imperative that he call Hoover over and talk to Hoover and explain to Hoover why he was doing this. Now, I was [unintelligible] maybe in my discussion when I referred to a "stroking session," you know, which was a phrase that was kind of a common parlance in our White House. It was, you know, like the Johnson years when they talked about "the treatment." But the fact was the president was very good at bringing somebody over and talking to them and getting them to do what he wanted to do. But Haldeman said, "No, the president doesn't want to do that. He just wants to implement the thing." Well, I mean, I thought, my god, you know, how are we going to do this? But I wasn't in any position to say, "Bob, hey, if you want to implement the damn thing, you should prepare a memo and you sign the damn memo." Bob says, "Implement it, send it out on your signature, and get going."

**Timothy Naftali**

Then when did you find out that opposition was very strong?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, yeah, I mean basically it was very shortly thereafter once the memo goes out and the memo I sent out says, "The president's made these decisions, and he has decided to constitute this permanent interagency committee on domestic intelligence, and J. Edgar Hoover will be chairman." And 24 hours or 48 hours later, I get a call from Bill Sullivan saying, you know, Hoover's on a warpath. He's going to talk to the attorney general. I mean, we were really, you know, into it. I said, "Well, we can't do anything about that." And about that time the president left and they went to San Clemente and the attorney general talks to the president and says, you know, "You can't do this. I mean, Hoover's got all of the cards. I mean, all he has to do is leak this stuff and you're in a totally untenable position, and he's fully prepared to do it. So you're going to have to call it off and regroup and figure out some other way to get done what you want to do." And so Haldeman calls me and says, "Well, we've got to call the thing off." I said, "How the hell are we supposed to do that?" I walked over to the Situation Room to Dave McManus and I said, you know, he had distributed the memo, it was classified, top-secret, and I said, "Contact the departments and ask them to send these back." Well, he did, but of course all of them came back with the staples removed. Every one of them kept a copy of it. And then at that point I started my 30-day crusade with Haldeman to try to get the president to not back down, and in the course of that used some pretty intemperate language. But I felt very strongly that the president had given all of the facts, had been told all of the risks, and I presumed he made an informed judgment, and that judgment ought to not be subject to being overridden by a particular director. Now, that was a naive point of view, but that was the view I had. But ultimately, I mean, clearly the decision was made: this isn't going to happen. And when they came back from San Clemente it was clear, even to me, I mean, this thing was done, kaput. And that's when Dean came in and his counsel and Haldeman basically gave him the portfolio to try to work out with the attorney general, you know, whatever they could salvage to somehow get the same result but in a way that they could live with.

**Timothy Naftali**

Now, did you have a meeting with Hoover?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, I had several meetings with him, at least three that I can recall. The first one was when I was designated as the White House contact for all of the agencies for the internal security bill. Sullivan said, you know, "It's really appropriate for you to, in essence, present your credentials to the director." It was a lot like an envoy to a foreign potentate, you know, going and presenting his credentials. So Bill set up the meeting, and I went over to Hoover and went into his office and his desk was kind of on a platform, you know, up high and you sat down here, so you looked up at him in this big cavernous office. And basically, you know, he had a monologue. He would start it off, and you heard about Purvis and you heard about Dillinger and you heard about Ma Barker and I mean, you know, the whole litany. You didn't say a word. It wasn't just me. I mean, Dick Helms talks about the first time after he became director of the agency and he went down to meet with Hoover and he had the same damn experience. So finally, when he gets done with this monologue, he goes kind of like this and Sullivan stands up and says, "Well, it's time to leave," and you kind of back out and, you know, you leave his office. Well, I mean that was kind of an eye-opening experience for me. But then the second time was,

of course, when we met right after the meeting with the president and that's when, you know, I got crosswise with him. And then the third time was when we signed the final report, and that was the occasion on which as he went through every time he would refer to me by a different name, you know, Howston, Houston, and Huston, you know, I mean -- I'd look and Dick would wink at me, and so those were basically the --

**Timothy Naftali**

So you didn't have a meeting where he told you, "We just can't do these things"?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Oh no, no, no, he wasn't going to talk to me. I mean, he really lit into Bill and I think what -- in the meantime what had happened that really affected the dynamics of this thing, because Sullivan really, in order to save his position with Hoover, I mean, in essence as far as dealing with Hoover, completely flipped and agreed with Hoover, or said he agreed with Hoover, on all of the basis of objections and the only disagreement was how to express it, which clearly was not -- [break in audio]

**Timothy Naftali**

[2:02:48]

So you think that -- oh, go ahead, no, no, go ahead first -- I'll pet the dog. You think Sullivan, as an act of self-preservation, flipped?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, yeah, one of the -- you know, what happened was -- an event happened in the midst of all of this in this narrow timeframe that was totally unanticipated, I think certainly by me and I think by Bill, and that is that Deke DeLoach suddenly announced that he was going to retire as the number three guy in the Bureau and take a position with Pepsi-Co. And Hoover then designated Bill to succeed him as the number three guy. Well, I mean obviously this is something Bill had hoped for, but it was something that clearly within the upper echelon of the Bureau was not thought as either likely or a good result because, you know, the Intelligence Division was always kind of a, like in every organization, was kind of a stepchild compared to the Inspection Division or the Criminal Division. So Bill had new reasons to make sure he didn't get crosswise with Hoover. And I think -- and I didn't fault Bill. I mean, Bill never gave me any reason to believe that he had changed his position. I mean, he would relate, "This is what Hoover said," but he certainly led me to believe that he never gave any aid or comfort to Hoover thinking these things, which in fact he did. But even after I learned that, I mean, I could not fault Bill for doing what the director told him to do. I mean, that was his job. If he was going to be there, his job is to do what the hell he's told. What I quarreled with him was that he didn't have to be an aider and abettor and let Hoover think that somehow the decisions he was making were good for the Bureau or good for the country, and that's what I had perceived he had done.

**Timothy Naftali**

Now, in the working group meetings, had these representatives made the point that these restrictions on their ability to collect information had made it less likely they could get the kinds of answers the president wanted?

### Tom Charles Huston

Oh, yeah, I mean, there was -- there really wasn't -- I mean, each agency, of course, had their own particular, you know, concerns. I mean, NSA desperately needed two things. One, they needed a presidential blessing of their longstanding practice of interception of foreign communications under what was called as the "foreign terminal rule," that is, that as long as one party to the conversation was outside the United States then it was an international communication and legitimately could be intercepted by the NSA and disseminated. And pursuant to the National Security Directive, that's the basis on which they had operated since the Eisenhower administration. But there had never been any clear presidential decision that said yes, that's spelled out and this is actually right. And so they wanted that. And the second thing they wanted was that they needed help to obtain cryptographic data that was, you know, available in facilities to which they otherwise didn't have legitimate access, which Hoover refused to do. The CIA, what they basically, I think, at the end of the day, what they wanted, was to get Hoover to do some of the things that they needed done in this country in connection with their strategic intelligence responsibilities -- not domestic intelligence, strategic intelligence -- which he refused to do. I think, although I didn't know it at the time -- I mean, clearly it was obvious that he wanted the president's blessing on to "reinstitute" the mail interception program, of course, which they never discontinued but which I was led to believe had been discontinued. They wanted that. DIA didn't really want anything, except to make sure, you know, just don't get us back in this briar patch that they had just got out of after Senator Ervin had conducted hearings and stuff, and which I agreed with. And the Bureau, basically Sullivan's position was, "I can't do my job subject to the restraints that Hoover has imposed on me." It was just that simple. That's what he believed, and that's what his principal deputies believed and that's what they said. They said it to me privately; they said it publicly in the meetings. And there was close coordination between Sullivan and Torello, who was the chief civilian guy at NSA, you know, to -- I mean they thought I was some sort of a gift from Heaven that had been dropped in their laps to be able to try to force this issue to settlement in terms of the things that NSA felt that they needed.

### Timothy Naftali

And your sense that the president could do these things came from your understanding of the Fourth Amendment?

### Tom Charles Huston

Well, I mean, first of all, I guess you had two premises. One was that there was nothing that we were discussing that hadn't been done before and hadn't been done for a long time under a number of different administrations. In other words, from the time that FDR authorized the Attorney General Clark in 1939 to initiate warrantless wire-tapping through each subsequent administration, I mean, you know, the different things were added and steps were taken to go along. And so to me this wasn't some question of, you know, introducing some radical new thing that would shock the conscience of any informed person that was sincerely concerned about domestic security. And, you know -- but on the Fourth Amendment there were two assumptions. One was does the president have the inherent power to be able to undertake measures that otherwise would be impermissible in defense of the country,

national defense, broadly construed to include domestic terrorists? Well, clearly the broad consensus from 1947 to 1970, at least in the executive branch, was yes. Secondly, he was -- as I said, I felt like that there was no difference from a Fourth Amendment analysis between entry for purposes of planting a microphone and entry for other purposes. And that longstanding practice, not only in the internal security area but in the organized crime area against the Mafia, had been, you know, the Bureau without authorization from the Justice Department on their own initiative had done that. Now it's interesting that the policy that evolved after 1965 or 1966 when Johnson issued an executive order relating to electronic surveillance was that the Bureau couldn't conduct electronic surveillance, warrantless electronic surveillance, without written approval from the attorney general. But no such written approval was required in connection with microphone surveillance. And my thinking was that if, you know, that there's no logical difference -- now on the mail question, you know, I mean, I talked to people and I looked into it, and I said the attorney general -- Brownell was an intelligent guy -- I mean, the attorney general says this is something that needs to be done. I mean, you know, JFK's postmaster general, Lyndon Johnson's postmaster general, I mean all -- Eisenhower's postmaster general -- every one of these people are in the loop on this. And so, yeah, is it risky? Yes, it's risky and I said it was risky. I mean, is there a reasonable argument to argue that it was either, A, illegal as a matter of statutory law or, B, is it unconstitutional? The answer to that is yes. But is there any compelling authority that says that, and the answer was no. I mean, but after all, we're talking about two years before the Kent decision, in which the court finally held that warrantless electronic surveillance in a purely internal security matter was unconstitutional, but reserved judgment on whether the same result would apply in connection to a matter that affected foreign intelligence. So we were, you know -- that was two years later when that decision -- and, of course, now everyone says, well, it was obvious to everybody. Well, if it had been obvious to everybody there wouldn't have been any need for the court to finally address that issue and issue an opinion.

#### Timothy Naftali

In your piece as "Cato," it's clear that you're concerned about civil liberties and -- what were the protections so that these powers wouldn't be used for political purposes instead of national security?

#### Tom Charles Huston

Well, I, you know, again I think it's fair to say I should have known better, but I never had -- every discussion that I ever had, for example, with Bill Sullivan about a lot of these issues that involve the previous administration was his constant expression of concern that DeLoach had politicized the Bureau and had let Johnson use the Bureau for non-legitimate purposes, which was obvious to me because I'd seen, you know, the documents. But there was never any discussion that I was ever aware of, of any effort to use any instrumentality of the government for any political, improper political, purpose. I was 29 years old, and these guys were people who had devoted their lives to serving the country, you know, had come out of the Second World War, had fought the Cold War. These weren't people -- I mean, I couldn't any more imagine that Dick Helms or Angleton or any one of these people would undertake to compromise the integrity of their agency for a partisan political purpose. Now what was the protection as, you know, even with respect to dissent? Well, I mean what we were focusing on, and this is what gets lost, I mean when we were talking about this, at that time the FBI had authorization from Hoover to maintain 38 domestic intelligence wiretaps, 38 in the entire country. I mean, here's a country that's blowing up and people are being killed, 38.

There's no statutory provision anywhere for undertaking any, you know, investigation that's purely an intelligence investigation, as opposed to a criminal investigation, that requires a concrete act that you can demonstrate there's probable cause as a violation of law. So we're talking about 38, you know. Well, in my mind I wasn't talking about going from 38 to 30,000. I mean, the question was should it be 46 or 48 or, you know, and who should make that decision? I wasn't asking, you know, that I make that decision or the White House make that decision. And one of the reasons that I argued so strongly in favor of the inter-agency committee with analytical ability was to vest that kind of decision-making in a joint decision by all of the directors, which would be even less likely, in my judgment, to create a problem. So yes, it's true, that if you happen to be on the receiving end of one of those 38 wiretaps, you were going to figure your civil liberties were being infringed. But my view is that the people that I knew were on the receiving end, you know, I wasn't worried about it. I mean, these were people that were involved in acts of violence and against the people of this country, and so I didn't have any problem with that. But all of my thinking was driven by my respect for the people who were involved in this process, and they weren't politicians. They weren't other people in the White House. They weren't political appointees. Every one of those people was a professional. There wasn't a single political appointee involved in any one of those people who were involved in this discussion.

### Timothy Naftali

Let's talk a bit about an example of a political appointee who did something that did worry you. What was the source of your tension with Chuck Colson?

### Tom Charles Huston

Well, we had -- Colson really was the only person on the White House staff that actually that I got really seriously crosswise with, and I think there were a number of reasons for that. But the immediate thing was that if somebody needed to make contact with the Bureau or request information from the Bureau it had to come to me and I would then in fact decide whether I thought it was appropriate or not. And then, if so, I would ask the Bureau, the Bureau would give the information to me. I would look at the information, decide whether I thought it was appropriate to release to somebody else, and if so, I would give it to them. And after Colson came in as special counsel in the early days of his arrival, I mean, from time to time I would get a request from him for an FBI name check on an individual. And basically a name check simply means you ask the Bureau just tell me what you have in your records that are readily available with respect to Tom Huston. And so they pull up every news clipping or whatever the heck they might have that's in their record. They just list that basically on a sheet of paper, and they send it to you. So it's simply raw, unevaluated information. It may be derogatory; it may be favorable. There's nothing that's conclusory about it.

But on the other hand, it's subject to risk in the hands of the wrong people, because sometimes they do disclose things that are private, and no one has any legitimate reason to know. But there are legitimate reasons why you know that. I mean, if you're going to invite somebody to meet the president, it's a good idea to check him out first to make sure they don't have any known skeletons in their closet. Or if you're going to appoint them to a subcommittee or invite them to do things -- so there are legitimate reasons to do that. And the first few times I approved it, I looked at it, it seemed reasonable to me, and I did it. But then as we got into the fall and the campaign I got more and more of these requests, and the justification became more and more, in my view, untenable. And finally, I just told Chuck I'm not, you know, no more. Unless you can tell me exactly why you need this information and I find it, you know, appropriate and convincing, I'm simply not going to get this information for you. Well, I mean,

Chuck didn't like the idea of somebody telling him he couldn't do something. And my guess is, knowing Chuck, he'd probably found some other way to get what it was I wasn't going to give him. That was number one. Number two is that we had substantive policy differences. At this time we had two competing groups within the White House that were addressing this broader political question of the middle American and how do you politically reach what we call "the forgotten American"? And on one side you had people, you know, like Harry Dent and Buchanan and Huston and a half dozen other guys who were -- Bill Timmons -- you know, who were basically approaching this problem on the basis that it was a great opportunity but that in the long run to be successful had to be rooted in policy. And if you really wanted to move these people from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party, as opposed to simply getting them to shift for the next presidential election, you really had to address not just -- you had to address cultural issues but you also had to address substantive economic and other issues. Colson, on the other hand, was pushing an agenda that basically focused on the ethnics as a swing political group and the unions that he thought he could get on the foreign policy issue. And so, you know, that was a fundamentally different approach and, you know, we had words about it and differences and in the end he prevailed, but --

#### Timothy Naftali

What did President Nixon ask you to do in the fall campaign of 1970?

#### Tom Charles Huston

Well, I mean he had this -- he developed this whole notion that the campaign in 1970 was going to be about the Dayton housewife and, you know, the cultural issues. The problem was that we were into what had every earmark of a recession and interest rates were going up, unemployment rate was going up, inflation was going up, and so the economic conditions were not favorable. But he wanted to wrap the radical-liberal label around the Democrats who were running for re-election for the Senate, except for that handful that supported him. I mean, there were some that he wanted to let alone. So he came up with this idea that we were to go through everything that Hubert Humphrey had ever said and cull out statements and stuff that would portray this guy as a radical liberal who was out of touch with the traditional conservative values of the American working man, et cetera. And so I mean we had -- so I was given the responsibility to get this all put together. And so I coordinated with the National Committee, and I said, you know, "Go dig through all of this stuff." And it would come to me, and I would go through and try to, you know, see if there was anything there that I thought was useful, and then edit it, and then figure out a format, whether it was going to be used for information that could be incorporated into speeches, that could be put in brochures or flyers or whatever. Well, the problem from the president's perspective was that some of these guys, you know, I mean they were standard liberal and Democratic rhetoric. I mean, there wasn't anything that any rational person was going to perceive to be radical about at all. I mean, there were some -- you could pull some of these guys, you know, some pretty far-out statements that I'm sure upon reflection they would've preferred not to have been reminded of. But, I mean, I wasn't going to sit there and, you know, create something. I wasn't going to put words in Hubert Humphrey's mouth because of Nixon. It was like the financing thing, you know. I mean, if Huston can't find it it's not because it doesn't exist; it's because Huston isn't working hard enough at it.

#### Timothy Naftali

What did he want you to do with some YAFers?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, I'd got one memo -- I mean, it technically came from Haldeman, but I mean it was clearly dictated by Nixon. But I mean basically one of his great ideas was that if Huston would round up some, you know, young Republicans and get them to dress up like SDSers in signs and stuff and then create some ruckus in a protest that they could then photograph and just, you know, discredit the Democrat candidates in these individual Senate races. Well, I mean that was the dumbest damn thing I ever heard of. So, I mean, I just set it aside and I figured, well, you know, a lot of dumb things came across my desk like everybody else and some of them you could hold off for a while, but at the end of the day, I mean -- but here I had the advantage because there was a date certain. I mean, it wouldn't make any sense, if I didn't get it done by Election Day, then it was no longer -- but, I mean, staff secretary would be going, "How are you coming on that?" "Well, you know, I'm going to get to it," but I mean I just didn't do it. But I didn't really worry about it because I felt like if push came to shove, if the president, you know, if somebody said to the president, you know, "Mr. President, this is the dumbest damn thing in the world," he'd have kind of look sheepishly and say, "Yeah, you're right, forget it. That was a dumb thing." But I think there was too much tendency on the part of some people to say, you know, "My God, if that's what the president wants, let's do it."

**Timothy Naftali**

You made a point when we were talking that those people who had been around the president a long time understood that there were troubled waters and how to deal with troubled waters.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, I think that's right. I mean, I think that, you know, the people who had been with Nixon a long time -- I mean, Ehrlichman and Nixon and Dwight Chapin and, obviously, Rose Mary had been with him the longest. But even, you know, Pat Buchanan, who'd been with Nixon up close, you know, was his aide during the early pre-campaign days. And you know I hadn't met with Nixon personally more than that one occasion, but on the other hand I had a vast exchange of communications that were, in essence -- even though if you look at the memoranda it would be DC to PJB or DC to TCH, you know, DC purporting to be Dwight Chapin, but it was actually and clearly, you know, dictated by Nixon. And in that intervening two and a half years, I mean, I had a lot of discussions with Pat and other people around him and, you know, so I mean, I didn't come in -- I understood that, you know, I could tell he had certain hot buttons and if you inadvertently trip that wire, it was going to set off an explosive reaction, and so therefore you needed to be sensitive to -- You know, there was a minefield out there and you'd better try damn well to figure out how to maneuver within it without triggering something. And secondly, that he had a dark side and that, you know, what your job was, and in some ways I thought what he really expected from the people around him was to recognize this, and, you know, when he came out with one of these goofy ideas to basically let it fester for a while until he got through it and would re-think it and on re-thinking he'd say, yeah, you know, and go on and go on about his business. Now, I obviously -- there were things that were more profound that I didn't know that become obvious in listening to the tapes, but there was enough out there that the people who had been around Nixon and had dealt with him, whether personally or on paper or whatever, before they came to the White House had one way of dealing with this, as opposed to people like John Dean and others who had never had any dealings with him whatsoever until, you know, he arrived at the White House. And so those people tended to think that their career interest was best served by in fact doing



these things. If that's what the president wanted, that's how I ingratiate myself with the president, is doing those things and doing them right now. And, you know, the result of course would not serve his interest at all.

**Timothy Naftali**

Your name pops up when, after the Pentagon Papers, the president wants to get back to that history project again, get back to studying Diem, the Diem Coup, and he wants to investigate a conspiracy, he thinks, of leakers. And your name pops up. He mentions your name. Did Haldeman come to you? Did anybody come to you?

**Tom Charles Huston**

No, I didn't know anything about it, because I had just left. I mean, I had just left that week, you know, the first week in June, and I think these conversations are towards the middle of the month. And, you know, I mean, hell, I hadn't even got all of my boxes unpacked here. So, no, I didn't know anything about it and I mean if anyone had asked me I'd have said no way. I mean, you know, I had determined I was going to come back one way or the other anyway. I mean, I was five years out of law school. If I wanted to have a credible career as a good attorney, or at least perceived in the community as being a good attorney, I mean, I had to get at it. And, you know, there was no way that I would have turned around and gone back to Washington.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let me ask you, what was it like being a conservative in the Nixon administration? Tell us a bit about the Burns versus Moynihan debate.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, you know, I mean, there really were three groups, in broad terms, three groups within the White House. I mean, there were the people who were to the liberal wing of the Republican Party, Northeastern primarily, Rockefeller-type people, Riponers, most of whom were clustered around Pat Moynihan, of course, who was a Democrat, but nevertheless, you know, was there. And then there were the people who were, I guess most generously referred to as Nixon loyalists, people like Ray Price and Safire. It was not to say the rest of us weren't loyal, but I mean people who really were there to do whatever the president thought was in the best interest. And while they had their agenda, and in my view most of them always came down in support -- you know, if there was a dispute between the other two they came down one way -- [break in audio]

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**Timothy Naftali**

So we had the second group, or the loyalist group --

**Tom Charles Huston**

Okay, and then the third group were people who identified themselves as being ideological conservatives, or came out of the Goldwater wing of the party: Bill Timmons, who was the congressional liaison, you know, Pat Buchanan, Harry Dent, and Marty Anderson, who was on Arthur Burns' staff. And so there was a small cadre of conservatives, and I think the president sometimes joked that we were kind of a token group. But we were there and, you know, we wanted the president to move to basically start dismantling the Great Society. I mean, our premise was that, you know, 60-some percent of the American public voted against the continuation of "the Great Society" and that was a mandate to start doing something and not act like, you know, Hubert Humphrey had won. And the discussion really was focused in the initial year of the administration between Arthur Burns, who was counselor to the president and had Cabinet rank, and was, therefore, theoretically, the senior domestic policy guy who Nixon liked. I mean, Nixon felt indebted to him because in 1960 when he ran Burns was the director of the budget and had recognized the implications of the recessionary environment that was coming and had pushed, you know, to have the Fed inflate, and Ike didn't, and Nixon thought was a contributing factor as well. So he liked Arthur, but Arthur was -- Dr. Burns was a big, imposing guy. I really liked him, but he was slow and, you know, I mean, he was Teutonic and just -- I mean, I know he just bored Nixon. He bored the president to death. And he put together a staff, you know, he had Marty Anderson, who had been around early in the campaign on the domestic policy side. He was at Stanford and Marty was a bright, young guy. Unfortunately, Marty was a loner. I mean, he just simply never was willing to associate himself with any of the rest of us to try to advance any agenda. He had Roger Freeman, Dr. Freeman, who was from Stanford who was an education guy. He was a really able guy. But you know, I mean, these were substantive people. Then on the other hand over here he had Pat Moynihan, who was bright and sparkly and exciting and interesting and entertaining and who whispered into your ear that you can be the new Disraeli. And, you know, he had put together, for what I perceived as being person for person probably the best group of people any staff or organization we had in the White House. I mean, Chester Finn and Neil Price and, you know, a number of -- the guy who headed up the American Enterprise Institute until just recently, DeMuth --

**Timothy Naftali**

Chris --

**Tom Charles Huston**

Chris DeMuth. I mean, these were really good people. I mean, I didn't agree with a damn thing they had proposed, but they were good, able people. And so, I mean, Pat and I, we would just hang our head and how in the hell are we -- there's no way we can win this debate, you know, when this captain of ours is, you know, unwilling to get down into the trenches and wage trench warfare for the things that we think ought to be done. And as I recall, one day a discussion was underway on the Family Assistance Program, and it was being highly contested, you know, between these two groups before the president, and a constant cascade of leaks, all of which were very favorable to Moynihan and very unfavorable to Burns. And Dr. Burns stops me in the hall one day and he says, "You know, this is just terrible." He says, "How in the world can Moynihan be so disloyal to the president to do this sort of thing?" And I thought, you know, my god, I mean, this is a guy that had been in Washington a long time, but he never -- he either didn't understand the rules of the reality of the way you fought policy debates or, knowing him, he simply so thoroughly disapproved of them that he, you know, wouldn't do it. So basically it worked out as, you know, Burns then -- you know, the president had promised Burns the appointment to the Fed chairmanship, and when that came, he appointed Burns and he moved on happily to the Fed. But the one consequence, I think, of that debate was, you know, in some respects, I

guess, if you wanted to be cynical about it was that the resistance that we put up and the contentiousness of it was sufficient that at the end of the day, to the people in the West Wing who didn't like messy things -- they didn't -- you know, this idea of having people going at each other and arguing about, you know, what's the best policy and why philosophically this is the wrong approach and stuff. That wasn't their idea of how you went about doing business.

And so in the end Moynihan, I think, was undone by this same dynamic, and so he gets removed from his position with the Urban Affairs Council and gets promoted up and now he's counselor to the president, you know, but no longer with any staff. And, of course, the one thing that I learned there very quickly was that if you didn't have an aligned responsibility with a staff, you were not going to prevail in the long run. And so basically all Moynihan's good people were transferred over to Ehrlichman's staff where they joined with these people who were not policy people, whose experience had been largely advance work and stuff. Good people, but they weren't the same intellectual level, in my judgment, and policy orientation and depth. And so these people all, including Marty Anderson, so they kind of merged what was left of Arthur's staff and Moynihan's and they all end up meshed in with people who the day before had been associate or assistant counsels to the president, and suddenly now they're the new, you know, Domestic Policy Council on staff. Well, I think over the ensuing 12-month period you see these people just drop off. And by pretty much the commencement of, you know, after I left, but by certainly by the early part of 1972, I mean, the people who are really calling the shots and doing the staff work on the Domestic Council are a different breed of people.

#### Timothy Naftali

Where's the president on domestic policy?

#### Tom Charles Huston

Well, my perception -- you know, this is just my own view. I mean, I'm not -- my view always was that the real problem was that he didn't care very much about domestic policy, that he had some basic, traditional 1950s Republican, you know, mainstream views about economic policy that he had come up out of the Progressive tradition in the California Republican Party. He served, you know, carrying water loyally for Eisenhower, the idea of the moderate Republican Party, but at the same time being one of the few political leaders that was able to keep a foot in both camps. Because at the same time that he was identifying with this kind of broad centrist Republican message in its spokesman, you know, his real claim to fame came from the fact that he is the guy that nailed Alger Hiss, and he's the guy who the conservatives think is, you know, the top dog. I mean, he's the -- he's no wild man like McCarthy that we've got to apologize for, who's a kook. I mean, this is the guy that knows how to do it right. And so he has his foot, you know, in both camps and he's able to manage it; that's why during his entire career -- that's why he's got, you know, a Burns and a Moynihan and then kind of an Ehrlichman to referee, or Haldeman to referee, and to try to keep all of these pieces together. I mean if you read carefully and if you listen or read carefully a lot of the tape transcripts, if you read a lot of the stuff, many, many times Nixon's initial instinct is against doing what they're suggesting, on whether it's environmental policy, you know, the ERISA or labor things, I mean, a lot of times. But he allows, you know, people to convince him and, you know, he wants to keep these people happy. He wants to keep them on board. And on a broader issue what he really wants to do is to just keep people focused over here so that he's free to do what he wants to do, which is really important, which is to remake the international scene. And I could understand that. The main reason I had supported him in the very beginning was because I felt that he was the guy that could, you know, do this grand conceptual notion

of how to deal in a new way in the world and that my expectations on the domestic side were never real high. But I will have to say, I mean, it ended up that these people were much more successful in getting him to sign on to a lot of so-called progressive initiatives that were much further -- much more liberal than I would have anticipated.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about the meeting that you and Arthur Burns had with, I guess it was with Thrower, at the IRS?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Yeah, yeah, well, you know, Randolph Thrower was a well-respected tax attorney from Atlanta who had been appointed to be commissioner of the Internal Revenue without the president ever talking to him and without any senior White House person ever interviewing him. I mean, just kind of, you know, out of the blue. And he was the perfect example of my quarrel with Malek and these people, you know. They thought the ideal world was purely technocratic, and you went out and "found the best person," and it didn't matter, you know, whether they liked the president or whether they agreed with the president. You know, it didn't matter. Well, I had been concerned for some time about the IRS and its treatment of tax-exempt entities, which I felt were unequal, and I won't get into that, but there's a long history of that. And very early in the administration, congressional hearings were being held in the Ways and Means Committee about the whole issue of tax-exempt groups, and there were proposals to impose surtaxes, excise taxes, basically pose all sorts of increased regulation on not-for-profit entities. And in connection with that Pat and I and the conservative group I talked about, we had what was called a committee of six, I mean we prepared a memo for the president after one of our meetings where in these memos you outline five or six issues that we thought were politically -- if it was a political thing, politically important. And one of them was that we needed to get our arms around this issue of the tax-exempt status and that, you know, the IRS was going to appoint some sort of an advisory committee in response to what Congress was doing. I mean, first of all, I didn't think Congress ought to -- we needed to oppose what Congress was trying to do, because they were going to change the things in ways which I thought were not desirable. But secondly, we needed to get IRS to enforce the rules uniformly. And so they were going to have an advisory committee. And so Dr. Burns was designated to talk to Thrower and explained to Thrower, well, A, we wanted him to make sure that his people in the tax-exempt section looked at these organizations and made sure they applied the rules uniformly.

**Timothy Naftali**

You were worried that some of them were involved in political --

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, they were involved in political activity and basically they were being tax-supported. Now I came, you know, from an agenda that -- I mean, no organization that I had sponsored, I mean, that I grew up with, with Young Americans for Freedom, I mean, you know we weren't tax-exempt. I mean we had to go out and operate and raise our money and, you know, play by those rules. And yet I looked at, you know, you look at some of these other outfits that were doing that. But the main impetus was the report that came out as a consequence of these hearings in the Ways and Means Committee about the

Ford Foundation having made this big grant to Brookings so that they could hire all of Bobby Kennedy's people. So anyway, we met in Dr. Burns' office with Thrower, and Burns explained to Thrower, you know, that the president's concerned about this. And he's not asking you to harass anybody, but he's saying he wants the rules to be fair, wants a level playing field. Well, Thrower said, "Well, one, there's no substance to that. That's true, I mean that's what we're doing now." And of course I then cited a couple of reasons why I thought that wasn't the case. And then the second issue that came up was this committee, and Dr. Burns had some notions as to who he thought would be a good chairman of this committee. And the preferred person was one of the most respected tax attorneys in the country with a large Wall Street New York law firm who had written extensively in the non-profit tax area but who was identified as being a conservative Republican and a long-time supporter of the president. And Thrower was absolutely adamant that there's no way. This guy is too close to be identified with the president, and we need somebody to run this thing that, you know, will be acceptable to the foundations and to the universities. Well, Dr. Burns was very courteous and said, "Well, you know, we're not going to tell you what you have to do. This is what we prefer." Well, I was absolutely outraged, because what I heard this guy saying was that there was nobody in this country who was known to be a friend of the president, loyal to the president, who was worthy and qualified to head a federal advisory committee in Richard Nixon's administration, and that was just absolutely an outrage as far as I was concerned. So from that day on he was on my hit list. I mean, I was -- it was no secret, I mean, I was a strong advocate of cleaning house over there, because I felt like that after, you know, eight years of the Democratic administration using every opportunity they could to advance their agenda at every level that we at least had to give the president an opportunity through the bureaucracy to get his program, whatever that program might be. The fact that I didn't agree with all of it didn't make any difference. The fact was it was his program he ought to be able to get it implemented without obstruction. And if you had a person in a top presidential job that thought it was a disqualification to be known as a loyal supporter of the president, then there was something wrong. And so, I mean, that was my approach. And as I say, the --

**Timothy Naftali**

Is that how Roger Barth got into the IRS?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, yeah, Roger got into it because after that meeting I had asked Thrower specifically about a couple of instances of cases which had been brought to my attention, one involving the Sierra Club had lost its tax-exempt status and then another group of regulated not-for-profit utilities in Arizona who were alleged to be competing with a for-profit utility had maintained their tax status. And, you know, so I asked him, I said, "I'm concerned about this. These are the issues that have come up, and I'd like to know what the facts are." And I said, "We'd also like to know what you're doing in response to the testimony on the Hill about the appropriateness of the bankrolling of the Kennedy government in exile by the Ford Foundation." And so he went back, had Roger Barth prepare a memorandum answering my questions, and it had turned out the answers that he gave on the questions that I had raised were all plausible and reasonable, but they didn't address the broader issue of whether measuring -- it was appropriate to take measures to assure that exists what we perceived to be the kind of abuse reflected in this deal with Brookings was going to be remedied. And, of course, it obviously didn't address my other issue as to who was an appropriate person to serve in Nixon's administration.

**Timothy Naftali**

How did the Publius-Cato debate happen?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, the president had given an address, I think, at Williamsburg, the New Federalism Address, that was, you know -- it was okay. I mean, it didn't get me real excited but it was at least evidence of a willingness on the part of the federal government for the first time since Calvin Coolidge to reopen the discussion of the relationship between the states and the federal government. And as a result of that, apparently I didn't know this at the time, but Bill Safire recommended to Haldeman as part of what the president referred to as the PR group to put together some sort of a broader justification for this new federalism that they had sketched in this presidential address. And so Bill undertook to prepare a draft of his essay, which he was going to circulate under the name of Publius, who of course was the author of the original Federalist Papers. And this was circulated to Ehrlichman and Moynihan, and they made comments and [unintelligible] to the president, and the president signed off and then Bill distributed it. Well, the initial distribution was fairly limited, but one of the copies went to Buchanan. And so one afternoon I'm sitting in my office, and Pat sticks his head in the door and I could just tell, you know, with the twinkle in his eye, I mean, he's got something. He said, "You're not going to believe this." So, you know, he gives me a copy of this Publius paper, and I read it, and I mean there was virtually nothing in it that I could agree with. And I came out of the "Hoosier Political" tradition, which was very much for both Republicans and Democrats. I mean, up until 1960, mid-1960s, it didn't make a difference in this state whether you were a Republican or a Democrat. Everybody was a states' rights advocate. And it had nothing to do with race. It just simply had to do with the Hoosier tradition of thinking we ought to make due for ourselves. I mean, you know, for years Indiana refused to accept any federal aid, you know, because they didn't want the hurdles. But anyway, that's the tradition I came out from. That was what I believed, and in school I had studied under Charlie Heineman [phonetic sp], who was a respected political scientist and really had focused on this whole issue of federal-state relations. And so it was something I felt I knew something about, and certainly something I felt strongly about. And so I thought this was simply some gambit by Safire, you know, to pedal his own views. I didn't know it reflected anything beyond that. And I thought, you know, what the hell -- you know, what's gotten into him? He set himself up as some sort of political philosopher on this broad issue. So I said, hell, if he can do it, I can do it. So I sat down and drafted my own essay and then, you know, circulated it. And there was a third response, I think, from Steve Hess that came a little later --

**Timothy Naftali**

And then Nathan.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Or Nathan. Yeah, maybe it was Nathan, not Hess, yeah. But I thought at the end -- of course, and then it wasn't until after I left the White House that I found out that when I took -- when I thought I was taking on Safire and in fact I was taking on, you know, the top dogs on domestic policy. So it was an imprudent thing to do, but on the other hand I think that it reflects well on the president. I mean, no one came to me and said, you know, "Who do you think you are doing this?" You're off the reservation. You can't do that." And the one thing I felt reasonably comfortable about was that I knew that the president was a person who enjoyed ideas. He was a -- that's one of the reasons he attracted -- and people don't realize this because everyone said Nixon was cold. But one of the reasons Nixon

attracted a lot of bright, younger people was because he was a very bright guy. He liked ideas; he understood ideas. And so I was never, foolishly or not, but I never really thought that the president was going to say, "Well, Huston's been a loyal trooper for me all of this time, but now he's off the reservation." And I think the fact that you had people there that were arguing about these issues at a philosophical level certainly spoke well for the administration. It was not the usual dialogue that one expects, you know, in the context of a White House discussion or argument.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, Richard Nathan's response is very interesting. But there was a fourth paper. What was President Nixon's response to your -- when you pulled together in the Rad-Lib Project all of these quotes that weren't strong enough? What was --

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, I mean the reaction I got was from Haldeman was that, you know, just unacceptable. You know, just dumped all over me. I mean it was awful. I mean it was rude. It was unfair. And basically what they did is they turned to Colson, and they said, you know, "Colson, you take charge. Huston doesn't know what the hell he's doing. He can't give us what we want. You do it." And so Colson -- and that was further contributed to our relations, but I mean, basically -- so Colson went out and Colson would've given them whatever the hell they wanted.

**Timothy Naftali**

You said one of the reasons Haldeman was not popular in the office was he was held responsible for moving Rose Mary Woods?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, yes, when that happened, I mean, the perception, at least among the people on the staff that I associated with and I knew, was that -- I mean, everyone was outraged by it because she was, you know, the person who'd been with the president the longest, the most loyal, the keeper of all of the real secrets. And when she was moved out of what was traditionally the secretary to the president's office and Chapin moved in there, or Alexander Butterfield, I don't remember which side it was on, and they moved her down the hall. And people were just outraged at Haldeman, you know, for doing that. And my view was, well, that's ridiculous. I mean, say what you want about Bob, but he's not powerful enough that he can move the president's secretary, not Rose Mary Woods. I mean the president would know. I mean, he's not oblivious. I mean the president would know whether Rose Mary was next door. And so I said you're blaming the wrong person. I mean, if you want to blame somebody, it's the president. It was his decision. Well, no, they didn't want to accept that, but I said that's the reality. It was the president's decision. He wanted her to move.

**Timothy Naftali**

What did you think -- I mean, you were out of -- you left Washington by then -- when you heard about, and then of course you were investigated because of the Huston Plan, when you heard about Plumbers and Watergate. What did you think had happened?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, I mean, when I heard about the Plumbers it was incomprehensible to me. I mean, it made no sense, and particularly since I knew -- I didn't know Hunt or --

**Timothy Naftali**

Liddy.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Liddy, but I knew Krogh, and Krogh was a cautious, intelligent -- not a guy who I would have ever anticipated would take, you know, needless risks. But I mean, so it made no sense to me. But then secondly, you know, it may be just self-justification, but it confirmed to me one more reason why if we'd have had what I thought was the appropriate structure for the intelligence community, the president wouldn't have had to felt a need to do that because they would've undertaken a legitimate investigation into the release of classified documents. But the problem was that the perception was that Hoover was dragging his feet and that he had a relationship with -- Ginsberg's father-in-law and so --

**Timothy Naftali**

Ellsberg's father-in-law?

**Tom Charles Huston**

Ellsberg, I mean, Ellsberg's father-in-law. And so I mean there was this feeling that somehow they had to undertake it themselves because, again, Hoover simply decided he wasn't going to do it, at least that was our perception. Now some people argue on Hoover's behalf that he did and it was misunderstood, but clearly people were disciplined for having in fact undertaken to pursue leads, contrary to what Hoover wanted done. So, to me, it was a matter of surely by now somebody would've, you know, would've figured out what their problem was with Hoover. But instead of dealing with Hoover, they decided we'll just go around Hoover and create this freelance. And all of the constraints that I talked about that I thought would've been in place in the original scenario that I described, none of them were there. I mean, these are all political people, inexperienced people, and no institutional constraints or whatever to limit what kind of thing they would do. Why would Ehrlichman have approved it? I think that, in his defense, I think he was either told or he believed he had the authority for the president to go ahead and do it, and it's not inconceivable to me that he did have it.

**Timothy Naftali**

And the same is true for the intelligence operation against the Democratic Party the next year.

**Tom Charles Huston**

Well, you know, that surprised me less. I mean, it surprised me for the stupidity of the break-in and the elaborateness of Liddy's crazy plan and stuff, but the whole idea of some sort of intelligence thing, I mean, that didn't surprise me because Jack Caulfield was pushing that argument and thing before I left. And, you know, Jack saw himself doing that and -- plus, it was generally the perception within the



people who had been involved in the campaign that this was some sort of an intelligence gathering operation or -- what do they call it -- adversarial research or whatever. I mean it was pretty routine, but not at the level of the kind of goofiness that Liddy proposed. And I don't know how -- I mean, I could've -- I cannot imagine him sitting in front of John Mitchell and going through that stuff. I mean, I knew John Mitchell. I knew Mitchell before he was attorney general. And I didn't have frequent dealings with him, but you couldn't have paid me to sit in front of John Mitchell, I don't care if the president was holding a gun to my head, and suggest to him in his office that these were things that ought to happen. It just blows my mind.

**Timothy Naftali**

Is there a story you'd like to add before we --

**Tom Charles Huston**

No, I think we've told all of the war stories that there are to tell.