



WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

FIRING LINE

Guest: E. Howard Hunt

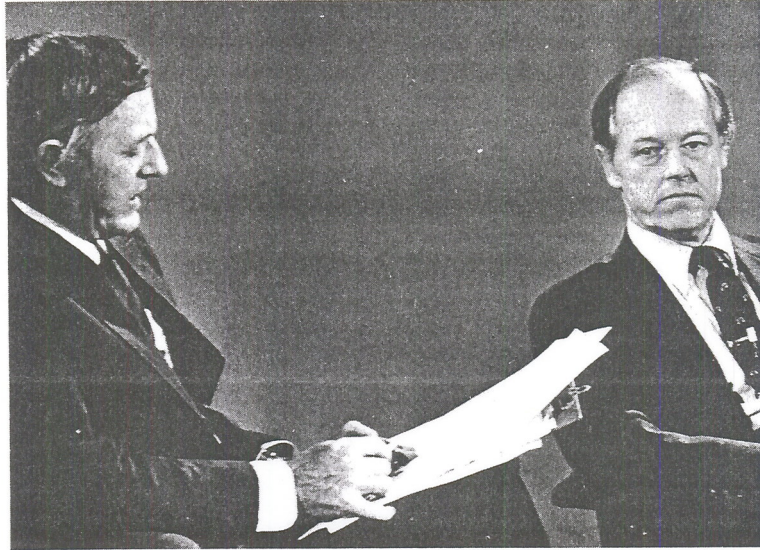
Subject: "THE BLACKMAILING OF THE PRESIDENT"

SOUTHERN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION

SECA PRESENTS



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HOST: WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR.

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Subject: "THE BLACKMAILING OF THE PRESIDENT"

Panelists: Ralph Adam Fine, attorney
Nina Bernstein, *Milwaukee Journal*
John W. Owen, public affairs director, Channel 10

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MR. BUCKLEY: In the last few weeks, the name of E. Howard Hunt, Jr., has played more prominently than that of anyone, I suppose, other than President Nixon, in respect to Watergate. Those who have analyzed all that went before and those who have analyzed the tapes appear to be agreed that the future of President Nixon hangs substantially on what happened in the Oval Office on March 21, 1973, when the President met there first with John Dean and later with John Dean and H. R. Haldeman.

Here is the account as given under oath by John Dean to the Watergate Committee: "I told the President that Hunt wanted \$72,000 for living expenses and \$50,000 for attorneys' fees and, if he did not get the money and get it quickly, he would have a lot of seamy things to say about what he had done for John Ehrlichman while he was at the White House. If he did not receive the money he would have to reconsider his options."

Since then, President Nixon has referred on television to "the blackmail of Howard Hunt" and the tapes, of course, as we all know, use the same word but there are two interpretations of Mr. Nixon's conduct when threatened with the alleged blackmail. We propose today to question Mr. Hunt about these critical events, both as they affect him and as they affect Mr. Nixon.

Howard Hunt was second in command of the Watergate break-in. He gave himself up shortly after the principals were apprehended. In January of 1973, he pleaded guilty; in March, he was sentenced to 35 years in jail for conspiring in a simple break-in, unarmed, without larcenous intent and with a clean record. He was jailed in March. Meanwhile his wife had been killed in an airplane accident. In August, he testified before the Ervin Committee; in November, Judge Sirica reduced the sentence to eight years; in December, the Court of Appeals ordered his release pending a review of alleged irregularities in the prosecution. Next June — next month — the Court of Appeals will hear arguments. After that he will return to jail or remain free.

Meanwhile he is at work on a book about his experiences tentatively entitled, *The Road to Watergate*. It will be his forty-third book.

I am constrained to say, full disclosure-wise, that I have known Mr. Hunt for 23 years and am the godfather of three of his children and executor of his wife's estate. I add, however, that this program,

like all other FIRING LINE programs, is entirely unrehearsed.

I should like to begin by asking about the tradition and the formalities of the Secret Service. What do they tell you will happen if you are caught?

MR. HUNT: In all clandestine intelligence services, not only that of the United States which is I suppose with the exception of the Israeli intelligence service the most junior service in the entire world, the tradition of course is that while one's government may disavow one — à la *Mission Impossible* — nevertheless, the social contract, if you will, that is made with agents, clandestine agents of a government, is that not only will every effort be made to repossess the caught or trapped agent, to bring him back home again but, in the meantime, to see to the total welfare of his wife, family, other dependents, to make sure that every effort is exerted in his own behalf if it comes to the payment of legal fees for an attorney in a foreign country, that sort of thing. In other words, one could call it almost a cradle-to-grave welfare program.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, now, in what sense is that explicit or in what sense is it implicit? Do they tell you in the CIA, "This is part of the contract" or is it simply a rumor or what?

MR. HUNT: Well, it's hard for me to say about today's CIA because I came into the CIA from the OSS where it was made very explicit and entered as an upper-middle level officer in the Central Intelligence Agency where we no longer discussed these openers, they already having been made totally explicit in our previous professional existence.

Today, my guess, and I would call it an informed guess, is that certainly men asked to perform hazardous missions are told — as in the case with Gary Powers, I think this is one that comes to mind rather readily — that the clandestine tradition will be followed.

MR. BUCKLEY: And the clandestine tradition, what I'm trying to discover, is explicit or implicit?

MR. HUNT: Explicit.

MR. BUCKLEY: All right. Now, how do they calculate how much money will follow surreptitiously to the wife and children of

Francis Powers, for instance? Is it based on the salary?

MR. HUNT: It's based on his salary, his living allowances, in addition any extraordinary expenses — if a child suffered psychological trauma, psychiatric bills would be taken care of. Anything of an extraordinary fashion that the father himself, were he in the home, would normally be looking to. Credit, for example. They have a credit union that would extend credit for normal things where a widowed or separated woman might not be able to obtain credit.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well now, is the sum of money that begins to flow to the wife and children — is the grand total known by the CIA agent when he is captured in Prague or Moscow or whatever, or does he simply assume that a judicious figure will be arrived at?

MR. HUNT: His assumption is that not only will his full salary continue to be paid, but all of the housing, living allowances, any moving expenses, insurance policies, that sort of thing. The CIA or, in fact, let's not limit ourselves to the American intelligence service but to any international service — a generous approach will be taken to that sort of thing.

MR. BUCKLEY: Now, in what form is it paid? On the assumption that you have a clandestine agent, obviously the wife can't get a check marked "CIA." Do they concoct a rich aunt who died or how do they handle that?

MR. HUNT: I dare say no two cases are the same. In some instances, if the man — in the case of Gary Powers — has a military background —

MR. BUCKLEY: Gary Powers was the man who was shot down in the U-2, right?

MR. HUNT: Yes, he was shot down and seized in the Soviet Union and imprisoned there. A government check would not be inconsistent with his background, his former means of earning a livelihood.

MR. BUCKLEY: Is that because the President of the United States acknowledged that he was on CIA duty?

MR. HUNT: No. No.

MR. BUCKLEY: Finally, after saying he

wasn't.

MR. HUNT: Finally, yes. No, it would be a determination made largely by the cover staff within the Central Intelligence Agency.

MR. BUCKLEY: I see. So they would decide how important it was to disguise the provenance of this money?

MR. HUNT: Precisely, yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: I see. And, therefore, they would simply custom-make a means of paying money to the extent that it was necessary to disguise where it came from?

MR. HUNT: Correct.

MR. BUCKLEY: Okay. Now, in your case, how did you arrive at a calculation of the money that you thought was owed to you after you were sent to prison?

MR. HUNT: I never did.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, when John Dean talked about a specific figure, it was a figure that did or did not reflect your precise requests?

MR. HUNT: I'm sorry. I was thinking about the earliest times, immediately after the five men were in jail. That was based upon my income at the time, my desire to have two years' income available to my family.

MR. BUCKLEY: Why was two years — I think it's very important for you to answer this in a way that I understand it — considered an appropriate advance payment? Why wouldn't you have settled on monthly checks? I'm trying to figure out why, in the Oval Office, ten times the word was used about Hunt's blackmail? I'm wondering what it is that caused them to use that term, considering that you were saying this was really a traditional arrangement.

MR. HUNT: Well, I certainly understood it traditionally, obviously others did not, who should have.

MR. BUCKLEY: Why did you ask for two years' advance payment instead of just simply monthly checks for your children?

MR. HUNT: I think because to the extent that I can reconstruct my frame of mind at

that time, and my wife had been dead only a short period of time, my thought was, given the difficulties that had manifested themselves beforehand, that is to say, the people who were supplying the funds to the defendants, and I have testified to this on many different occasions under oath, were always in arrears — always, from the very first effort that was made.

MR. BUCKLEY: I see. In other words, it was almost like a credit agency asking for advance payments to delinquent —

MR. HUNT: As it were, yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: What had been your history of asking for payments after the Watergate episode?

MR. HUNT: Well, I had had no direct part in that. The sponsors of the operation got in touch with my wife, indirectly, and asked her to make a calculation of the living costs and legal expenses for all seven men who were involved. And, again, I have testified to all this in both open and executive sessions. She did that and never confided the particular figure in me on the basis of compartmentation. I had no need to know what her negotiations were.

MR. BUCKLEY: This, again, is traditional? The need-to-know?

MR. HUNT: That, again, is traditional, yes, the need-to-know basis and compartmentation. Obviously, I was in the thick of the thing at that time and she was not and it would have simply added a further burden to me, one that she was willing to undertake of her own accord.

MR. BUCKLEY: But she did communicate to you that your part of the payment was in arrears?

MR. HUNT: Yes, that every one's was in arrears. In other words, she received a lump sum and was told to divide it on the basis of the original budgetary agreement that had been made by the man who initially called himself "Mr. Rivers." And later, during the Ervin televised hearings, he turned out to be the ex-New York cop named Tony Ulasewicz.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes. Now, the sponsors, as you put it, were in arrears in paying you the

cost of maintaining a family or also the cost of paying your lawyer?

MR. HUNT: Well, the cost of maintaining my family was the least of it really. The attorneys' fees were so fantastic.

MR. BUCKLEY: What were the attorneys' fees?

MR. HUNT: Well, the initial retainer for my first attorney was \$26,000. And within, I suppose, four or five weeks he indicated that had long been exhausted and another \$40,000 or \$50,000 would be very much in order. So it proceeded on that basis right up until the time I went to prison.

MR. BUCKLEY: And how much were you in arrears on your attorney's fees at the moment John Dean said you were blackmailing the President?

MR. HUNT: In excess of \$60,000.

MR. BUCKLEY: And what kind of pressure were you feeling from the lawyer at that point?

MR. HUNT: Very considerable.

MR. BUCKLEY: How did he express that pressure? Did he say, "Well look, the money is there, all you have to do is exert yourself to get it"?

MR. HUNT: Mr. Buckley, we're now getting into the attorney-client area which is a rather sensitive one as I'm sure you can appreciate. But let me say that he kept me apprised from time to time of the condition of my account. It was always a deficit account. I was told by his law firm, I suppose from January on through March when I was finally committed to jail, that if they could not receive, as they had in the past, fees from the sponsors, then they would have to look to me. And, of course, I felt that that was totally inappropriate. What money I then had, I felt was for the sole use and enjoyment and support of my four motherless children. I'd had to hire a housekeeper in the interim and my youngest child was in psychiatric consultation. Extraordinary expenses were being encountered by me — and that plus the attorney's indications that I was long in arrears and if money couldn't come from the external sources then he would have no recourse but to turn to me.

MR. BUCKLEY: All right now, how did you formulate, in March, your demand for payment since a great deal seems to hang on just how this was done? How did you formulate it and to whom? I mean did you pound somebody's desk and say: "Goddamn-it," the lawyer's \$60,000 behind and nothing has come in for the support of my children and what's happened to our old agreement?" Or how did you put it?

MR. HUNT: Well, there was really a long series of precedent negotiations carried out by my then-attorney, to whom I owed at that point more than \$60,000, with other attorneys who represented the Committee to Re-Elect the President — although I did not, at that time, construe them to be acting in —

MR. BUCKLEY: Did you consider that your sponsors?

MR. HUNT: No, I did not. And I was just going to try to clarify that. I did not, at that time, construe them to be acting in behalf of the Committee to Re-Elect the President, but simply to be acting —

MR. BUCKLEY: As a cover.

MR. HUNT: Well, as cover or as middlemen, if you will, but not necessarily middlemen between myself or my attorney and the Committee.

MR. BUCKLEY: Did you assume that the funds you would receive to protect you were taxpayers' funds or funds of people who had contributed to the Republican party?

MR. HUNT: There were a number of theories that my attorney and I evolved. At first I assumed that the funds had come from the Central Intelligence Agency, from their unvouchered accounts.

MR. BUCKLEY: And you made it a point, what, not to inquire on this point?

MR. HUNT: Never inquired. No.

MR. BUCKLEY: Is this a part of the tradition of ascetic noncuriosity?

MR. HUNT: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: So, therefore, you simply assumed, taking into account the sponsors and your missions, that you were being asked to operate covertly?

MR. HUNT: Entirely, yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: But you were aware that this was illegal because the CIA is not permitted to operate inside the United States?

MR. HUNT: I think we've got to draw a distinction between CIA-supposed sponsorship of the operation and the fact that, as has been pretty well substantiated in subsequent testimony, evidently one or more persons from the White House went to the Central Intelligence Agency and said, "Look, can you take care of funding these men?" And evidently the CIA said no, or avoided the point or said, "We would rather not." In any event, that became quite a hassle between the Administration —

MR. BUCKLEY: This was after the fact or before the fact?

MR. HUNT: After the fact I'm talking about now. And it was a mere service function which I felt they probably should have carried out.

MR. BUCKLEY: But you simply felt this was an administrative matter over which you ought not to concern yourself?

MR. HUNT: True.

MR. BUCKLEY: Whether they used money that belonged to CREP or whether they used money that belonged to the taxpayers —

MR. HUNT: Or came from a special White House fund.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

MR. HUNT: And I don't think that even today the source of all of that money has ever been clearly determined.

MR. BUCKLEY: Okay. So now you went to your lawyer and said, "I've got to have enough money to cover my outstanding account with you; plus, given the irregularity of the payments, I want, before I go to prison, two years of security for my children," right?

MR. HUNT: Exactly.

MR. BUCKLEY: Now what did you expect that he would do with that demand? To

whom would he communicate it?

MR. HUNT: He would, at that point, communicate the message to whomever he was having contact with, and at that point he was having contact with a man in the CREP office.

MR. BUCKLEY: In the what?

MR. HUNT: A man in the CREP office named O'Brien, which he did.

MR. BUCKLEY: Which he did. Now, is it O'Brien who then talked to John Dean?

MR. HUNT: Well, I don't know. I know that O'Brien next talked to me.

MR. BUCKLEY: Is this your assumption? You must be interested in what then happened because —

MR. HUNT: Well, I learned subsequently —

MR. BUCKLEY: — two or three stages later it was the preoccupation of President Nixon.

MR. HUNT: Yes. Evidently O'Brien then went to John Dean.

MR. BUCKLEY: Why did they have to go to John Dean to raise \$72,000?

MR. HUNT: Well, it was not \$72,000.

MR. BUCKLEY: Or \$122,000.

MR. HUNT: It was \$120,000.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, why?

MR. HUNT: I don't know.

MR. BUCKLEY: Surely it wouldn't have been the case if it had been Francis Gary Powers — \$120,000 is something they could have swung with their own resources. Or is it that they smelled something heterodox in the demands as stated at that point? In other words, it wasn't a routine transaction, was it?

MR. HUNT: Well, as far as I was concerned, it was perfectly routine although the tapes indicate that this was perceived in the White House and certainly by John Dean as a most unorthodox transaction — although Dean himself had been dealing with John Mitchell and other people in raising the funds to take care of the defendants.

MR. BUCKLEY: We all know that when it was presented to Nixon it had grown up to a million dollars, right?

MR. HUNT: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: The million dollars was your \$122,000, plus anything else you would then be owing to a lawyer plus the other guys'.

MR. HUNT: Plus six other men. And figuring that on the basis of four years.

MR. BUCKLEY: Was that part of what O'Brien was asked for by you or did you limit your demands to just your own concerns?

MR. HUNT: I limited my demands — not demands — I limited my statement to my personal financial situation.

MR. BUCKLEY: Now as you know, it was reported that in communicating those demands you used a sentence to wit: That you would reconsider your options and disclose some of the "seamy" activity for which you had been responsible. Is that correct?

MR. HUNT: I think that's an incorrect linkage.

MR. BUCKLEY: What is the correct thing?

MR. HUNT: Well, I did not threaten to disclose any "seamy" activities. What I said to the emissary was simply this: After I had said, "Look, as you know, you people have always been in arrears. I'll be going to jail in a couple of more days — in a few more days — I want to have the attorney's fees in hand. I want to have enough for two years' support money for my children in hand. And, if you didn't know it, I also took part in some seamy activities on the West Coast for the White House."

MR. BUCKLEY: Did you say seamy activities in the West Coast or just seamy activities period?

MR. HUNT: Well, I think I identified them as West Coast. But I didn't say Haldeman, as was later alleged.

MR. BUCKLEY: Was that conversation recorded?

MR. HUNT: No.

MR. BUCKLEY: All right, now, what did you intend to communicate to him by saying that you had undertaken seamy activities on the West Coast?

MR. HUNT: Simply that if there had been some thought on the part of the sponsors that the work that I had been involved in — as I have testified previously — concerning the Ellsberg entry, the Dr. Fielding entry on the West Coast, Watergate I, which was a successful though not terribly productive entry and the second one, at which time the entry team was apprehended — that there were other things I had gone into for the White House which I wanted him to be aware of. I felt that I wanted to be certainly as equal as anybody in terms of distribution of funds. In effect I felt I was briefing a man who was not familiar with the full picture.

MR. BUCKLEY: Did you, up through your conversation with Paul O'Brien, consider that it was manifest that the duties you had performed were in behalf of the national interest rather than in behalf of a factional Republican interest?

MR. HUNT: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: Why?

MR. HUNT: Because that was my understanding.

MR. BUCKLEY: Why?

MR. HUNT: Well, that goes back to some point in time when I was recruited, when Mr. Liddy who was then in the White House as of November, 1972, approached me and told me that the Attorney General, John Dean and Jeb Magruder —

MR. BUCKLEY: '71, you mean?

MR. HUNT: '71. I beg your pardon. He said he had been selected by John Mitchell to form and organize a massive intelligence collection organization with some political action aspects on the side. Gordon Liddy was then a White House employee. He had been a deputy to Bud Krogh who was deputy to John Ehrlichman. And the Attorney General, of course, was *sui generis*. And I felt that any instructions emanating from a level that lofty in the government certainly had to be legitimate.

MR. BUCKLEY: How do you account for the fact that when John Dean finally approached Mr. Nixon, they used the word "blackmail" about your requests without any apparent investigation of what the explicit or inexplicit obligations were? Why didn't Nixon say, "Well now, is this blackmail or is that what you guys, what you dumb bastards promised the guy" or however he would have put it? Why did they simply assume that it was blackmail? Did they assume that you were going to reveal the nature of your operations and, under the circumstances, embarrass the Administration? What is the construction that you put on their acceptance of this word? Does it have to do with the amount of money you asked for? Or does it have to do with the implied sanction in the event you didn't get it?

MR. HUNT: Well, I would strike out a third course on this, Mr. Buckley, and say that, having watched John Dean on television when he appeared before the Ervin Committee last year, I think that it was a total misperception on his part due principally to his own youth, inexperience, his total unfamiliarity with clandestine tradition — a fact we discussed earlier in our discussion — the fact also that he might have felt that it was totally beyond him somehow to meet these continuing requirements. And they would be continuing, as he said to himself in a subsequent conversation —

MR. BUCKLEY: You didn't disguise that? You didn't say for \$122,000 that's it? You said you wanted that plus any future lawyer fees and that kind of thing.

MR. HUNT: I didn't go into it at that time. But I thought that two years, who knows what could happen? I might be out of jail. But I prepared to stay in jail for two years and I thought that was a prudent assumption for me to make.

But again, I think that John Dean by virtue of youth, inexperience, the fact that he, for example, I learned later, had never taken the middle level government management course on crisis management which from GS-12 on you're given in the government.

MR. BUCKLEY: Apparently Nixon hadn't taken it either.

(laughter)

MR. HUNT: But he construed this according to his own likes and, very much like Chicken Little, he came running into the —

MR. BUCKLEY: You think the inflation was post-O'Brien at Dean's level.

MR. HUNT: At Dean's level, yes. Of course, I don't know what O'Brien reported to John Dean, we only have John Dean's word for that. I don't think that O'Brien's statements have been publicized.

MR. BUCKLEY: And what would —

MR. HUNT: Could I just interject at this point?

MR. BUCKLEY: Sure, go ahead, go ahead, go ahead.

MR. HUNT: I was asked this question at the Senate hearings last fall by none other than Chairman Sam as to how this misconception and this misperception might have developed, and I quoted Senator Ervin to himself. On a previous date during the hearings he had said, "Well, when two men communicate with each other by word of mouth, isn't there a two-fold hazard in that communication in that first the man who speaks may not express himself clearly, may not say what is exactly in his mind, and if he does, the man who hears it may put a different interpretation on the words than the man who spoke them?" And it seems to me that the misperception of John Dean is a perfect example of what Senator Ervin had in mind.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, it may be a perfect example, but it has to run the test of plausibility. That is to say, if you use the word "seamy" enterprises, a moderately cosmopolitan person would infer from that that you were going to reveal. Did you in fact consider revealing those activities if the money was not forthcoming?

MR. HUNT: No, because as early as the prior October, all of us who had been indicted and stood trial — actually, I did not stand trial, I pled guilty — knew that upon the conclusion of the trial we were going to be immunized and taken before the grand jury and required to make full disclosure, so that there was really nothing to sell and nothing to be kept secret at that point.

MR. BUCKLEY: In other words, O'Brien

should have communicated to Dean that everything you knew about Ellsberg, for instance, was going to come out anyway.

MR. HUNT: Well, except that I didn't mention Ellsberg specifically to him, but certainly the White House —

MR. BUCKLEY: You mentioned West Coast.

MR. HUNT: Yes, but I don't know how O'Brien perceived that, you see.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, what was it that Nixon was afraid of — apparently not the million dollars because he said that wasn't too much of a problem.

MR. HUNT: He said that could be acquired. Well, apparently he was concerned, with some reason, that the Ellsberg entry would be disclosed, as in due course it was. My point is that there seems to have been a slip between the cup and the lip. Between October and —

MR. BUCKLEY: But he didn't know about it on the 21st of March.

MR. HUNT: Then he was badly advised.

MR. BUCKLEY: About what?

MR. HUNT: About the fact that everybody was going to be required to talk. And everybody did talk except Gordon Liddy, so that there was nothing to be retained.

MR. BUCKLEY: Could it be that what he was afraid of was that it would be revealed that he personally instructed John Ehrlichman to organize a sort of a private, super-secret intelligence unit going around CIA and FBI? Is this what he might have been afraid of?

MR. HUNT: Well, I couldn't have testified to that point because I don't know what type of communications he had with John Ehrlichman. In fact, I think even Bud Krogh's subsequent revelations have been ambivalent on that point.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, does the fact that the President considered that you were using blackmail against him suggest that he thought you had things to say which, if they were made public, would embarrass him because of a link between you and him? In a

sense does this not buttress your case, that you proceeded on the assumption that there was a legitimate line of command on down to you as an intelligence agent?

MR. HUNT: Indeed it does. But it seems to me that somewhere along the line somebody had forgotten to tell the President that use was going to be made of, what is it, the *Jencks* or the *Kelly* rule and that everybody involved was going to be forced to talk before the grand jury. This inevitability seems —

MR. BUCKLEY: The "use immunity" rule.

MR. HUNT: The "use immunity" rule, yes. And when the prosecutors got around to asking the *Catch-22* question, "Are there any other affairs that you were involved in of a similar nature?" well then, somebody is going to say, "Well, yes, there was a prior entry operation." This was inevitable.

MR. BUCKLEY: Do you feel that Dean, Nixon and, since then, *The New York Times* and the Associated Press and the UP and Anthony Lewis, and so on, when they speak quite matter-of-factly of your "blackmail" are justified technically in using that word?

MR. HUNT: No, I don't, because I think this is a phrase that sprang full-blown from the lips of John Dean, uncorroborated. And it's been a source of constant mystification to me. If we think back over the past, oh, seven or eight months at the very least to John Dean's initial televised revelations and the effort made by the Administration and its partisans to discredit John Dean on every point except this one — this allegation they seem to accept without any difficulty at all. And in fact embrace it and propagate it.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, what would you, in fact, have done if all of a sudden all of the people in between said, "Who are you? We don't owe you anything." Would you simply have accepted that as the fortunes of war?

MR. HUNT: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: You would have. So that there was no point at which you said, "I will in fact reveal this."

MR. HUNT: No.

MR. BUCKLEY: Now, if you had said that, would that have been blackmail? I ask you

that not knowing the answer myself. It seems to me if A and B agree that A will do something for B in return for B's doing something for A, and B doesn't come through but A does, I should think that, normally, A is entitled to reveal what he did for B. Now, blackmail implies extortion; it implies, to me anyway, getting something that is not your due.

MR. HUNT: Right.

MR. BUCKLEY: Now, all kinds of people broke laws because you, in fact, were not authorized under the laws of the United States, as I understand them, to break into anybody's office. But this is a whole other question for which you are being separately prosecuted. What I don't understand is why, by asking for money that was completely consistent with what it was that you were in effect promised, the word blackmail should be used to describe your activities.

MR. HUNT: Or, having been used on one occasion, why it should have proliferated to the extent that it has.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, might there be an anxiety to make it generally understood that you were guilty of blackmail so as to make it generally understood that Nixon was guilty of submitting to blackmail? After all, if you were a blackmailer and he, in fact, authorized the payment of \$75,000 which, let's face it, we gather he did, then he submitted to blackmail and that is a misprision or felony or whatever fancy name the lawyers call it. But what he did is not all that grievous, is it, if you were simply asking him to pay you money due according to an arrangement to which you had subscribed?

MR. HUNT: Correct. Of course, the President's actions are under a good deal of scrutiny these days. It seems to me that he can make a case for himself and I think that this will emerge perhaps in the next few days or weeks, whereby he can say, "Well look, I wouldn't have been involved in this terrible thing; I wouldn't have been involved in these evasions, these withholdings of information and so forth, but for that terrible fellow Hunt. Because if Hunt hadn't blackmailed me or extorted me then I wouldn't have had to submit and none of this would have happened." In other words, it seems to me in a very strange way that historically things are turning about where suddenly I'm the scapegoat for the Administration. And it's

not a position that I particularly enjoy, particularly with my appeal being heard on the fourteenth of June.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, what about the issue of clemency? Mr. Dean said, "I'm not sure that you (meaning Nixon) will ever be able to deliver on the clemency. It may be just too hot." Now what did he mean "deliver on the clemency"? Was it implicit by your sponsors that they would secure Presidential clemency in case you were caught?

MR. HUNT: Well, certainly not to me, but let's get one thing in mind. For many, many, many months, I had only tunnel vision on what was happening. I did not know, for example, that John Dean had sent Jack Caulfield, an associate of his, to contact in a clandestine fashion James McCord and discuss the entire question of executive clemency. I gather payments to Mr. McCord and so forth —

MR. BUCKLEY: At the initiative of John Dean?

MR. HUNT: At the initiative of John Dean, yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: Apropos of nothing? Just spontaneous generosity or what?

MR. HUNT: Well, that is how it has emerged. I was not aware than anybody was in touch with McCord. And there certainly was nobody in touch with me.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, did anybody say to you before Watergate, "If you get caught and imprisoned, it will be seen to it that you get sprung"?

MR. HUNT: No. Not in those words. No.

MR. BUCKLEY: Did you assume it?

MR. HUNT: We assumed — certainly the entry team had every reason to assume — that they would spend no more than a couple of hours in jail until somebody high in the Department of Justice or even in the FBI, if you will, would call down to police headquarters and say, "Let those trespassers out."

MR. BUCKLEY: Suppose an FBI agent is instructed by his superiors to penetrate, let's say, a terrorist gang. And so he makes like one of them and a bunch of them are

caught. What are the mechanics by which he is sprung?

MR. HUNT: I don't know the mechanics, but he is sprung. I assume the Attorney General who is his eventual boss simply calls up the local police and says —

MR. BUCKLEY: He's one of ours.

MR. HUNT: "He's one of ours, let him out." By the way, no FBI man has ever been prosecuted for an illegal entry, surreptitious entry.

MR. BUCKLEY: Sure. When you were not sprung, did you begin to wonder whether your enterprise was factionalist rather than nationalist in inspiration?

MR. HUNT: I'd have to go back to the few days immediately following the entry, the aborted entry and the failure of the sponsors to do anything. I didn't know, for example, the Sunday morning, which was the eighteenth of June —

MR. BUCKLEY: You mean after the break-in.

MR. HUNT: Yes, after the break-in. — that Gordon Liddy had been dispatched by John Mitchell, in Liddy's own words, to seek out Attorney General Kleindienst and demand the release of the five imprisoned men. When I saw Liddy a couple of days later in California, Liddy did not reveal that confidence to me. But if he had told me at that time, "I saw Kleindienst Sunday morning and he absolutely refused to have anything to do with it," this to me would have changed the entire complexion of the thing.

MR. BUCKLEY: As of that moment on you would have thought you might have been gulled —

MR. HUNT: Exactly.

MR. BUCKLEY: — into a partisan enterprise that had nothing to do with the planned purposes.

MR. HUNT: Precisely.

MR. BUCKLEY: So that the clemency, then, was at the initiative of John Dean but when it was presented to Nixon it looked as though it was a package of your demands?

MR. HUNT: I don't know. I haven't read the transcripts thoroughly enough — simply a lack of time — but I do know there was one offer of clemency made and that was made to McCord. That's the only one that's on the record. Now the transcripts do reflect that there was a great deal of confusion in the White House regarding the so-called clemency, pardon, commutation — variations of these particular options. When we get into some of the conversations in here — Haldeman, Ehrlichman, the President, John Dean — they are asking each other among themselves: What happened? Did Colson say such and such a thing to Hunt? Well, I had never talked to Chuck Colson subsequent to the arrest and actually for several weeks prior to the entry. The most that ever came to me was a message from Mr. Colson — and it was relayed to me through my attorney — that as a private citizen he would be very happy to do what he could for me, even to taking my children into his home. I've testified on this point before, also.

MR. BUCKLEY: But you did not consider that this was in any sense a fulfillment of an organizational obligation?

MR. HUNT: By no means, no.

MR. BUCKLEY: Mr. Ralph Fine here in Milwaukee is an attorney and reporter on television. Mr. Fine.

MR. FINE: Mr. Hunt, one thing which puzzles me about the whole affair is that you have a history of being a vigorous anti-Communist going way back. In your recent book, *The Berlin Ending*, you portray a thinly-disguised Willy Brandt as being a Communist tool. You've called him publicly a puppy dog serving Communist masters. And yet you went to work for the re-election of a man, even at the risk of your own liberty, who has been the prime architect of accommodation with the Soviet Union and with Chinese Communists. Why?

MR. HUNT: Well, certainly to me the alternative between Nixon and McGovern was unthinkable.

MR. FINE: Well, of course, when you were hired the alternative was not that clear. McGovern had not yet been nominated.

MR. HUNT: Can we just be clear for a moment on the term "hire." I collaborated

with Mr. Liddy. He didn't hire me. I wasn't paid for my efforts in his behalf. I was paid as a consultant at the White House for about 50 percent less than I was receiving at my private industry job.

MR. FINE: I retract the word.

MR. HUNT: I guess I've lost you.

MR. FINE: At the time you came aboard —

MR. HUNT: At the time I came aboard, yes —

MR. FINE: — the choice was not yet between Nixon and McGovern.

MR. HUNT: No, nor at that time did I know that Nixon was going to effect detente with the Soviet Union. But of course I, at that time, had the highest respect for the President's maneuvering abilities. He certainly didn't consult me as to what he should do with regard to the Soviet Union. I had a few thoughts but they remained unsolicited. It was a disappointment to me that he did. I, of course, have had serious reservations about what we've done in terms of SALT. And then came the detente with China. Again, these were things one could have expected very easily from George McGovern or a host of other national figures, but certainly not from Richard Nixon. Again, there was the feeling in the White House that this is the man who stood up to Khrushchev in the kitchen.

MR. FINE: And that feeling pervaded all the way to 1971.

MR. HUNT: Yes. It did indeed. And that he's the one who can outmaneuver the Russians, can outmaneuver the Chinese. I might add, gratuitously, I don't think he has.

MR. BUCKLEY: Miss Nina Bernstein is with the Milwaukee *Journal*. Miss Bernstein.

MS. BERNSTEIN: Yes. Mr. Hunt, you've talked a great deal about clandestine tradition. Isn't it part of the tradition that the captured agent — Gary Powers, for instance — doesn't talk? And if that is part of the tradition, if you expected that they would fulfill part of that tradition by meeting your expenses and so forth, why should they not also expect that you would be silent?

MR. HUNT: Well, I would say that the tradition changed somewhat between World War I and World War II. You have an E. Phillips Oppenheim situation in World War I, where the agent remained silent until death. In World War II that was certainly not the case. In OSS, our assumption was that within a very few hours of capture an agent would spill everything that he knew. Certainly now that Fecteau and Downey are out of Red China, they have —

MR. BUCKLEY: That was under torture surely.

MS. BERNSTEIN: We're talking about a grand jury.

MR. HUNT: We're also speaking of the clandestine tradition, aren't we? Let me say this: Gary Powers told everything he knew within 24 hours. Fecteau and Downey did the same. So let me just say that there is —

MR. BUCKLEY: But weren't they disdained in the service for having done so?

MR. HUNT: No. No.

MR. BUCKLEY: What about the Pueblo people? It seems to me that they stood up under torture for quite a while before they talked. Was that considered normal or just heroic?

MR. HUNT: They weren't really members of a clandestine organization. They were sailors who were put on an electronic ship —

MR. BUCKLEY: Under the circumstances, all the less steeled for heroism.

MR. HUNT: Well, I think that what they were tortured to do —

MR. BUCKLEY: Gordon Liddy has, in fact, not talked.

MR. HUNT: Yes, I think, Bill, again, the Pueblo thing is not something fresh in my memory but it seems that what those men did was to try to keep from making statements that were antithetical to the United States. And they took their beatings so they wouldn't have to stand up and form a part of a mock trial and denounce the United States. That's, I think, a different thing. If we're talking about the mere delivery of information or intelligence, there isn't an intelligence service in the world that

can count on its agents for more than 24 hours, and that would be an outside maximum.

MR. BUCKLEY: On the grounds of their endurance of torture.

MR. HUNT: Yes.

MS. BERNSTEIN: Doesn't it bother you, Mr. Hunt, that you have the grand jury in the role of the torturers so to speak? Not the torturers, but the enemy power. What confuses me is that the whole clandestine tradition, all the examples you've used have been overseas. We're talking about the United States. We're not talking about infiltrating a terrorist gang; we're talking about breaking into the Democratic National Committee headquarters. Didn't that bother you before you found out that Mr. Kleindienst didn't want to have anything to do with springing you?

MR. HUNT: No, it didn't bother me because the word that was given us, of course, was that this particular organization — this office in the Watergate building happened to be the office of the Democratic National headquarters. And the word that I received from Mr. Liddy was that this organization had improperly been receiving funds, clandestine funds, from foreign sources and it made no difference, really, whether it was in the DNC headquarters or the Salvation Army, if we'd been involved in that type of an operation.

MR. BUCKLEY: But, in fact, people did go to jail for lying to grand juries in order to attempt to protect the covertness of the entire operation. Are these men to be admired or to be disdained as fools?

MR. HUNT: Well, I think that I'd want to take that on a person-to-person case. Give me an example and I'll tell you who I admire and who I disdain.

MR. BUCKLEY: Magruder.

MR. HUNT: Well, he hasn't been sent to jail yet.

MR. BUCKLEY: Sentenced the second of May. Pleaded guilty there.

MR. HUNT: Has he actually been sentenced?

MR. BUCKLEY: I say he will be sentenced.

The second of May is behind us, isn't it? Would it be the twelfth of May? I saw it in the paper this morning. Anyway he's about to be sentenced.

MR. HUNT: I'll comment on that after he has been sentenced.

MR. BUCKLEY: Mr. John Owen is the public affairs director of this channel. Mr. Owen.

MR. OWEN: Thank you. Mr. Hunt, you said earlier that you did not feel the White House source responsible for controlling the secret funds had yet been identified. Do you have any idea or notion who that might be?

MR. HUNT: No, I don't. I think that the sources — the funds came from a variety of sources apparently and I've been asked to speculate on this before the grand jury. All I can really do is speculate. I think apparently Kalmbach raised some money. Some money came from CREP. I think that the tapes here indicate that Bob Haldeman had a certain amount of money under his control. Where the rest of it came from — perhaps those are the three sources. What I do know is that CIA did not come forth with its unvouchered funds which was the initial desire of the Administration.

MR. OWEN: There is not an additional person who has not been named?

MR. HUNT: I don't know.

MR. OWEN: I have one other question. Your daughter was quoted in a *Rolling Stone* interview as describing you as a super-patriot, one who believed he was doing right and "he believes it to this day no matter what the law in the particular case said." Given the revelations in the transcripts now and given what has happened to you, do you still believe what she said to be the case? Do you believe in the rightness of what you were involved in?

MR. HUNT: That's an extremely difficult question and, unfortunately, I haven't addressed myself to it intellectually. I would say this, if I might, that reading the transcripts of these many tapes of the long discussions that took place in the White House, I find an almost impersonal interest on the part of the highest officers of the Administration in the fate of those men in jail. For example, the President refers to "those jackasses in jail." Or he speaks about

"those idiots in jail." Liddy is referred to as being "weird," and so forth. These are really unseemly terms. I don't think that the commanding officer whose soldiers had fallen into enemy hands would be referring to them as a bunch of jackasses and a bunch of idiots. This to me puts a rather tawdry cast on the Administration and the White House.

MR. FINE: Do you agree with Jonathan Swift's characterization of the law as a cobweb that catches small flies but lets the hornets and wasps through?

MR. HUNT: Well, I think the hornets and the wasps are going to have their day in court.

(laughter)

MS. BERNSTEIN: Mr. Hunt, was the Richard Nixon portrayed in the White House tape transcripts a surprise to you or is this the man whose Administration you were willing to burglarize for?

MR. HUNT: When you looked down I missed your —

MS. BERNSTEIN: What I mean is, the Nixon who comes out of the transcripts, of the tape transcripts, did he come as a surprise to you?

MR. HUNT: Totally. Totally.

MS. BERNSTEIN: Not only on this point of calling you jackasses and idiots but did you consider that he had — Well, do you feel he should be impeached or resign?

MR. BUCKLEY: I don't really think you should answer that.

MR. HUNT: I . . .

MR. BUCKLEY: He wasn't invited here to answer that. You can if you want to. But don't feel you're being impolite if you don't.

MR. HUNT: Well, I've been subject to the course of American justice and so have many others of my colleagues. I assume that the appropriate judicial process will take place within the framework of the Constitution.

MR. BUCKLEY: (chuckling) I assume it won't (laughter). By the way, isn't it

possible that when Mr. Nixon referred to the "jackasses," he was making a technical judgment? (laughter) I mean that on the grounds that, after all, seven experienced people ought to know how to break into an office without the scotch tape slipping or your phone numbers scattered around their wallets and all that kind of stuff. I'm quite serious.

MR. HUNT: It was a quality judgment.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes. In other words, he might not have been using the word jackasses to depreciate the fact that they volunteered for a hazardous mission but that they bungled it.

MR. HUNT: I can't presume, really, to divine what was going on in the President's mind. I'll accept it as a pejorative allusion.

MR. BUCKLEY: Don't you think that the Prime Minister of England might have referred to that "jackass Lord Clarendon" for urging the Charge of the 600?

MR. HUNT: Lord Clarendon wasn't in jail.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, he was dead.

(laughter)

MR. HUNT: Well, in some ways that's better than being in jail.

MR. BUCKLEY: I think it's important to rescue Nixon from the necessary conclusion that by using the word jackass he necessarily felt that these people were falsely motivated. They may have been falsely instructed at the technical level.

MR. HUNT: Then we really ought to reexamine — and I'm sure we don't have time to do it — the President's use of the words blackmail and hush money.

MR. BUCKLEY: I thought we agreed that he simply accepted from Dean that this was the correct formulation.

MR. HUNT: Then why can't we say that he accepted the formulation of idiots and jackasses from his subordinates, too, and therefore get him off?

MR. BUCKLEY: Because it doesn't follow as ineluctably as the other does. Does it?

MR. HUNT: To me it does, Bill.

MR. FINE: You said earlier that the men were sent in to uncover evidence of illicit foreign contributions to the Democratic party and Bernard Barker testified to that. Did you really expect, being an experienced man in this field, Larry O'Brien to have it all on his desk clearly labeled for these men to find?

MR. HUNT: No, of course not. In fact, I argued against the second entry for three days and I think this has been brought out in the transcripts, but Liddy finally said to me, "Look, this has got to be done." He explained later to Dean, "Magruder was pressing me unmercifully," and so forth.

Had this been a foreign embassy, let us say, or a foreign front organization, we would have photographed the files and then run the files — the list of contributors and the amounts of the funds — into a computer bank. We would have checked out the sources of the funds, made sure that each contributor was a viable, living, either corporation or individual. What I'm saying is that this was rather abstruse art. None of us could have made that judgment at that time. One had to get the entire list and then check and cross-check that through the facilities of the FBI and the IRS.

MR. FINE: But if there had been illicit contributions, why wouldn't those contributions have been laundered in cash, non-traceable? At least non-traceable through a list that you might have found in O'Brien's desk.

MR. HUNT: Well, there was a possibility, too. Cash contributions from Zurich, Switzerland.

MR. BUCKLEY: That's a matter of counter-intelligence anyway. They might have thought it laundered but it turned out that we had a guy who knew where the launderer was, right? And this operation could conceivably have discovered it.

MS. BERNSTEIN: Mr. Hunt, what do you think of legislation that has recently been introduced in Congress, bills that would outlaw any executive branch secret police force, so to speak, like the plumbers outfit and others that would make it necessary to get a Federal court order for any wire tap?

MR. HUNT: I think we already have a law

requiring a Federal court order for a wire tap. I don't think that needs to be restated. Of course, I've always resented the description of the plumbers as a secret police force. I don't think it was. It started out as a simple investigative unit and that's all. It had no powers of enforcement.

MS. BERNSTEIN: Just of breaking a law.

MR. HUNT: It was an investigative body.

MR. OWEN: Were there any other things, you touched on this earlier, you might have revealed that the President was concerned about other than the Fielding-Ellsberg break-ins and Watergate I and II, because in the transcripts he said plus some other things. Were there other things you might divulge at this time?

MR. HUNT: Well, there have been — for example, Dean in his testimony spoke about a break-in in the Chilean embassy. I never had any knowledge of this. I've so testified.

MR. OWEN: There were no other things you personally were involved in?

MR. HUNT: There was nothing else. But you were asking me, I thought, what the President might have been thinking about. I think Jack Caulfield has testified, and again this is just hearsay on my part, that some member of the White House staff suggested that the Brookings Institution be firebombed. Again, this was beyond my ken.

MR. BUCKLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Hunt. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen of the panel. Thank you all.

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