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Transcripts Leave Doubt About What Was in Jest

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON — President Nixon's Watergate transcripts contain much that's ambiguous and confusing and at times it's impossible to tell which remarks are in jest and which are serious.

For instance, at the March 22, 1973, meeting of the President, H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, John Mitchell and John Dean, the issue of the break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist came up. The following exchange took place:

Haldeman: John (Ehrlichman) says he is sorry he sent those burglars in there—and that helps a lot.

President: That's right.

Ehrlichman: You are very welcome, sir.

At which point, according to the transcript, there was laughter followed by:

Haldeman: Just glad the others didn't get caught.

President: Yeah, the ones he sent to Muskie and all the rest; Jackson; and Hubert, etc.