

## Transcripts Don't Tell the Whole Story On Watergate as the White House Claims

By CAROL H. FALK

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
WASHINGTON — President Nixon's edited Watergate transcripts, massive as they are, don't tell the whole story of Watergate as the White House claims.

The 1,308 pages of material released by the White House last week don't deal at all with several key matters being investigated in the House impeachment proceedings, including allegations that political favors were sold to dairy co-operatives and to billionaire Howard Hughes. And they touch only peripherally on such matters as the International Telephone & Telegraph Corp. antitrust settlement.

Further, the deletions and "(unintelligibles)" in the White House-edited transcripts often appear to rob the reader of the essence of the conversations.

Thus even if, as the President and his aides contend, the transcripts don't prove the President guilty of any crimes, they fall far short of establishing his innocence of charges against him, despite the ballyhoo to the contrary from the White House public-relations operation.

Even in the areas that the transcripts focus on at length, the President's role is at least questionable and further enlightenment about his motives would be necessary to clear him. To cite just a few examples, the transcripts establish that Mr. Nixon did know about and failed to stop a payment of "hush money" on March 21, 1973, and that he learned as early as March 13, 1973, that some of his aides were perjuring themselves to perpetuate the Watergate cover-up. In addition, the transcripts portray a pattern of maneuvers designed to keep the lid on the cover-up and an emphasis on thinking up excuses for questionable activities, rather than eliminating them.

### President Gets More Time

Remarks from White House officials in recent days have held out little hope that any more material will be given to the House Judiciary Committee or to Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski. But yesterday, Federal Judge John Sirica provided some additional time for the President to think about the hard line he has taken against compliance with the currently outstanding subpoena from Mr. Jaworski.

Following a 30-minute private conference with White House and prosecution lawyers, Judge Sirica postponed, until next Monday, a hearing on the President's motion to quash the subpoena and gave Mr. Jaworski until Friday to file his response to that motion. The judge said he was ordering the delay "for the purpose of facilitating discussions leading to possible compliance with the subpoena."

Mr. Jaworski has subpoenaed tapes of 64 presidential conversations that, he says, are needed for the trial of Watergate cover-up defendants, due to begin Sept. 9. Transcripts of only 20 of those 64 were included in the conversations made public. Three of the 44 that the White House is refusing to release were also sought unsuccessfully by the Judiciary Committee.

Actually, the publication of the White House transcripts, prompted by a Judiciary Committee subpoena deadline of a week ago, constituted only partial compliance with that demand. The White House maintained that nine of the 42 conversations called for in the Judiciary Committee's subpoena were never recorded and two other tapes couldn't be found. And the subpoena called for production of the tapes, themselves, which the White House has said only the chairman and ranking majority member of the judiciary panel will be allowed to listen to.

Therefore, the public, the rest of the Judiciary Committee and the panel's staff members most familiar with the details of the charges would never know what was left out of the White House transcripts. Further, without any provision for verification of the tapes by technical experts, there wouldn't even be any way of knowing that the tapes are the original ones and haven't been doctored.

### Gap Is Being Investigated

A grand jury currently is investigating an 18-minute gap in a taped Watergate conversation that was subpoenaed last year, plus White House claims that two other crucial subpoenaed conversations were never recorded. Court-appointed technical experts selected jointly by the White House and the special prosecution force to study that first batch of subpoenaed tapes concluded that the 18-minute gap was caused by at least five separate, manual-erasing operations.

And of course, the value of even authentic tapes is limited to the extent that the President and such former top aides as H. R. Haldeman may have remembered the existence of the taping system and weighed their remarks accordingly. It's clear, from the unguarded statements that were recorded, that most of the time they never dreamed their words would be exposed to public scrutiny. However, there are times when President Nixon almost seems to be correcting the record with abrupt changes in his comments. For instance, on April 14 in referring to the cover-up, he first said "I knew it" and then added: "I must say though, I didn't know it but I must have assumed it though."

There's also the fact that some key conversations may have occurred in the presidential limousine, or aboard the President's yacht. In times of stress, Mr. Nixon frequently goes for hours-long drives with only a single aide for company.

The acknowledged gaps in the transcripts provided by the White House take two basic forms, if one doesn't count the "(expletives deleted)". The designations "(unintelligible)" or "(inaudible)" occur hundreds of times and presumably reflect brief snatches of conversation, although in many cases it's impossible to tell whether it's only a word or a whole paragraph that's lost. Other material was deliberately left out because the White House judged it irrelevant to the Watergate affair; such sections were marked "(material unrelated to Presidential actions deleted)".

The questions raised by such gaps are illustrated by the following examples:

From a March 21, 1973, discussion between the President and his former counsel, John Dean:

Dean: Bob (Haldeman) and I have talked about it, just as we are talking about it this morning. I told him I thought that you should have the facts and he agrees. Of course, we have some tough problems down the road if we — (inaudible) let me say (unintelligible) how do we handle all (unintelligible) who knew all about this in advance. Let me have some of your thoughts on that.

From an April 14, 1973, discussion between the President, White House Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman and Chief Domestic Adviser John Ehrlichman, as to whether Nixon campaign manager and former Attorney General John Mitchell was aware of the Watergate break-in at the time it occurred on June 17, 1972:

Ehrlichman: That may be. (Material unrelated to Presidential actions deleted.)

President: What did he say? What did he tell (special presidential counsel Richard) Moore?

Ehrlichman: Well, remember I asked Moore to find out what Mitchell had testified to.

President: Yeah. Moore heard the testimony and said well you're not —

Ehrlichman: He was never asked the right questions. Now, as far as he

Haldeman: He probably didn't to the grand jury, either.

Ehrlichman: That's right. As far as the quality of the evidence is concerned — (Material unrelated to Presidential actions deleted.)

Ehrlichman: Well, to go back to the

President: All right. I only mentioned (unintelligible) because, let me, — go ahead with your —

From an April 14 meeting between the President and Mr. Haldeman:

Haldeman: He tells me that he is sorry about this because it will probably hurt Dean and it may hurt Bart (former campaign official Herbert Porter). You see that is the kind of thing—you know—from his judgment—he is looking at things a little different now. (Material not related to presidential actions deleted)

President: Has anything come out yet—something implies that there are copies of a bill from the Watergate to the White House or not or has that not been said? He could have had—but I suppose not (unintelligible)

From an April 14, 1973, meeting between the President and Messrs. Haldeman and Ehrlichman:

President: Well, we'll see what this finally come down to here (unintelligible). I firmly think—frankly I should say I don't know, but based on what Ehrlichman tells me about (unintelligible) and that removes him from some other things he said. That's what makes (unintelligible) here. (unintelligible) is the important thing.

From an April 16, 1973, meeting between the President and Messrs. Haldeman and Ehrlichman:

President: The reason that I made the call while in Dean's presence last night was that he said (convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon) Liddy was saying how he knows Liddy had told (unintelligible) or something like that. I said he must (unintelligible). Well, he thought he ought to get a hold of his attorneys. Liddy said will not (unintelligible) higher authorities. (Unintelligible) not the President, (unintelligible) Mitchell. And I said, I called (Assistant Attorney General Henry) Peterson (unintelligible) where to go (unintelligible) Liddy's attorney. The President is not asking for any type of (unintelligible).

Ehrlichman: He can't hurt anything at this point and it certainly (unintelligible) way the thing he had to do with Mitchell and (former campaign official Jeb) Magruder.

President: (Unintelligible)

Added to the often confusing syntax, incomplete thoughts and frequent interruptions that characterize the conversation of the President and his men, such intriguing omissions result in highly cryptic accounts of what was really going on.

However, one thing the tapes may have

done is make it harder for President Nixon to use arguments of such principles as "confidentiality of presidential conversations" to resist turning over more material. Not only is his position weakened by the fact that he has already made a batch of conversations public, but the transcripts show that past White House reliance on such principle as "national security" and "executive privilege" were viewed with cynical expediency by the White House and could be adopted or given up when convenient.

For example, when discussing negotiations with the Senate Watergate Committee over whether White House staffers would be called as witnesses, Mr. Nixon, on April 14, 1973, suggested: "Frankly, let's get off of the damn executive privilege." Mr. Ehrlichman disagreed, saying: "Get a little ride on it, huh—while we can?"