

Excerpts From 3 White House Tapes

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—
Following are excerpts from the transcripts of three of the four tape recordings of President Nixon's conversations that were made public today after they were played for the jury at the Watergate cover-up trial. Asterisks indicate omitted passages.

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Transcript of Recording of a Meeting Between the President and Charles Colson on Jan. 8, 1973, from 4:05 to 5:34 P.M.

PRESIDENT: (unintelligible) incidentally, uh, Haldeman was telling, uh, told me that that, uh, apparently that Hunt is going to, uh, (unintelligible) now—very definitely. I think it's the right thing for him to do, Chuck.

COLSON: Uh, he's doing it on my urging.

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PRESIDENT: I know it's tough for, uh, for all of you, Bob, John and the rest. We're just not gonna let it get us down. This is a battle, it's a fight, it's war and we just fight with a little, uh, you know, uh remember, uh, we'll cut them down one of these days. Don't you agree?

COLSON: I do. I, the only thing I hope is that the trial—apparently Liddy is going to go to trial.

PRESIDENT: Mc Cord?

COLSON: No. Not now. That's probably a good thing because the only one who's in a, is a very desperate. . .

PRESIDENT: Sensitive position is Hunt.

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PRESIDENT: But you know, Chuck, it's something they all undertook knowing the risks. Right? Whatta they think?

COLSON: I (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Did they think they'd get caught?

COLSON: No, I don't think that at all. I think they thought that, uh—well, practically, uh —

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COLSON: . . . They all were taking orders from people like (unintelligible) acting on behalf of John Mitchell and others . . . (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Mitchell would take care of them. (Unintelligible). How could he?

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: No way.

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PRESIDENT: Well, I'm glad that you (unintelligible) them because basically I, uh, question of clemency. . . Hunt's is a simple case. I mean, uh, after all, the man's wife is dead, was killed; he's got one child that has —

COLSON: Brain damage from an automobile accident.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

COLSON: (unintelligible) One of his kids.

Buckley Column

PRESIDENT: We'll build, we'll build that son-of-a-bitch up like nobody's business. We'll have Buckley write a column and say, you know, that he, that he should have clemency, if you've given 18 years of service.

COLSON: (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: That's what we'll do.

COLSON: He served under Hunt in C.I.A., of course. (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: We'll (unintelligible) them after. That's, that's it. It's on the merits. I would have difficulty with some of the others.

COLSON: Well, the others aren't going to get the same . . . aren't. . . the vulnerabilities are different (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Are they?

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Why?

COLSON: Well because, uh, Hunt and Liddy did the work. The others didn't know any, direct information (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Uh, well, I think I agree.

COLSON: See, I didn't give a damn if they spend five years in jail (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: Oh, no.

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COLSON: They can't hurt us. Hunt and Liddy: direct (unintelligible) meetings, discussions are very incriminating to us. More important that those.

PRESIDENT: Liddy is pretty tough.

COLSON: Yeah, he is, he is, apparently one of these guys who's a masochist, he, uh, he enjoys punishing himself. That's O.K., as long as he remains stable. I mean, he's tough.

Transcript of a Recording of a Meeting Between the President and H. R. Haldeman in the Oval Office, March 20, 1973 from 6 to 7:10 P.M.

PRESIDENT: Hell, I'm trying to figure out with Ehrlichman what the strategy should be on this, uh, Watergate (unintelligible) the real problem here.

HALDEMAN: I think John is pretty much out of touch as I am, now. We kind of stayed away from it.

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HALDEMAN: Sentencing, is that this week?

PRESIDENT: Right.

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HALDEMAN: That's the thing, there's just so goddamned many factors and (unintelligible) people.

PRESIDENT: McCord didn't want to go to jail (unintelligible) jail sentence (unintelligible) decided to talk. I said, "What the hell's he doing?" (pause)

HALDEMAN: McCord? (pause) he would have a lot on Mitchell. (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: He worked for Mitchell? I guess Mitchell and (unintelligible) are trying to mess with grand jury (unintelligible) (pause) U.S. Attorney (unintelligible) (pause)

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PRESIDENT: I don't want (unintelligible) get up there in front of that goddamned committee and gear their question on the log out of somewhere they know something.

HALDEMAN: Well, see the thing is . . .

PRESIDENT: The perjury bit.

HALDEMAN: I know, yeah, but, see, they're protecting the wrong people.

PRESIDENT: (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: . . . 'cause think people who are gonna go for perjury already have and will do it again and are going to be up there anyway.

PRESIDENT: You mean like Magruder?

HALDEMAN: Well, I guess Magruder comes under your, your new current executive privilege rules. He was on the White House staff, too.

PRESIDENT: Magruder was?

HALDEMAN: Well, not at the time of the incident. That's right. So, so, that doesn't count — you know. That's right.

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HALDEMAN: So that would cover Chapin, but would not cover Magruder. Cover Colson, but would not cover Howard Hunt. (pause) Cover Dean, but would not cover Liddy. (unintelligible) (pause).

PRESIDENT: Our position . . . (pause)

HALDEMAN: Well the other, uh, would cover Strachan. I know they're concerned about Strachan. (unintelligible)

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HALDEMAN: He was an observer. (pause) The danger you got there is that he probably, and I possibly, got reports on some of that stuff.

PRESIDENT: Sure. I'm aware of that.

HALDEMAN: And if I did, I didn't know it. But Strachan did know because he gave me, you know, stuff that thick and I never looked at it. On all campaigns, budgets, personnel things and everything else.

PRESIDENT: (unintelligible) Dean says he's discovered for us, of course, he didn't know what the hell they were about. (unintelligible) The main thing is don't get anybody up there on perjury where they can prove and sentence. (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: Strachan? I don't think (unintelligible) what Strachan will do is, he may go on contempt but not perjury. Contempt on refusal to remember.

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PRESIDENT: Ehrlichman... says really right now we've got to really put a (unintelligible). You're going to get—you're going to get hung for it anyway, you might as well get the goddamned hanging over with.

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HALDEMAN: Dean's theory is that you don't—you aren't necessarily going to get hung. It depends upon what you defined by hang. There's no question we're going to get smeared.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: There's no question that they're going to keep building the innuendo that will lead into the White House and will be able to come to some—proof.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: What they'll call proof, consider proof—in the basis that, that, uh—

Played at Watergate Cover-Up Trial

oh, the line of reasoning they're using now, that Dwight Chapin wouldn't have done anything that I didn't know about it.

HALDEMAN: Yeah. (unintelligible) But, uh, so I knew. They were getting a guy and Chapin did do it with, with my concurrence, and Strachan was a friend of the guy's too. I knew that. That I have no problem with saying.

PRESIDENT: I understand (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: And, I don't think that hurts you.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Just say I did that. The problem is—can't the truth stop at the truth. Which that does or does the innuendo—go so—come then so hard on top of it that you can't turn it off.

PRESIDENT (unintelligible) It goes to the truth—

HALDEMAN: It goes to the Watergate or which—seems to me, we ought to be able to turn off, but the problem is the price of turning it off may hurt the people on Watergate side. At least, that's what they tell me. What bothers me is that I still think I'm being had in a sense for being tarred in order to protect some other people.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, yeah.

HALDEMAN: I think Chapin is being worse tarred in order to protect other people.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. The people on the Watergate side unfortunately are also our friends.

PRESIDENT: Oh, yeah. (pause) Well, there's a lot of bad breaks they're in.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: We got a bad break with the judge, for example . . .

HALDEMAN: Monumental bad breaks and a string of

PRESIDENT: This judge, 'em—one leading to another. that . . .

'One Lousy . . . Guard'

HALDEMAN: Starting with the just incredible thing of one was Time magazine this week started off a thing—one lousy part-time night guard at the Watergate who happened to notice the tape on the, on the locks on the doors. If he hadn't seen them, the thing probably would have never busted. If you hadn't had Watergate, you wouldn't have had Segretti. You wouldn't have had any of that stuff. (Pause) Wouldn't have had all that stuff on the contributors.

HALDEMAN: . . . the people you're protecting by executive privilege—let's face it are—oh, Jesus, you got Ehrlichman—I don't know about Ehrlichman. John knows a hell of a lot.

PRESIDENT: He does know a hell of a lot but not about this case.

HALDEMAN: Doesn't he? O.K.

PRESIDENT: Not about Watergate. He doesn't know a goddammed thing, unfortunately.

HALDEMAN: I don't think he—(unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: He ran the other thing. He ran, you know . . .

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: You know the damn stuff about . . .

HALDEMAN: Well, can they expand to that—if they can't, what does he do? Sure, he can, there's no rules of evidence up there by charter is to cover all the campaign activity.

PRESIDENT: (unintelligible) Fine, fine, but I can't—no—no.

HALDEMAN: (unintelligible) Ellsberg?

HALDEMAN: Why doesn't Dean ask me the questions that, that the committee will ask me? Why don't I write my answers down? Why doesn't Chapin write his? Why don't we give those to The Washington Star and let them print the goddammed things in total tomorrow morning.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: What's wrong with . . .

PRESIDENT: Try to see why couldn't each of you make a sworn statement. (Unintelligible) open too many doors.

HALDEMAN: Really?

PRESIDENT: Yeah. So put it out.

HALDEMAN: O.K. The point there is that the guy that knows the most is Segretti. He is not protected.

PRESIDENT: So, he's gonna get questioned?

Segretti Interrogated

HALDEMAN: So, he's gonna get questioned. Now, I've heard Segretti's—Dean has a two-hour tape where he interrogated Segretti and went through the whole damn thing and, maybe I'm stupid, but I listened to the whole tape and for my dough I just as soon play it out on the radio tonight on CBS and let the world hear it.

HALDEMAN: Now Ron's worried because that, that make—'cause we denied—we didn't deny—Ron and Ron had covered that.

PRESIDENT: Who denied it? I thought . . .

HALDEMAN: The press, that Ron, that Ron, see, we denied the Chapin story in The Post, but he denied it on the basis that it was based on hearsay . . .

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: . . . and was fundamentally incorrect.

PRESIDENT: Fundamentally . . .

HALDEMAN: And it was.

PRESIDENT: Yeah—fundamentally—yeah.

HALDEMAN: We didn't deny any specifics in it.

PRESIDENT: That of course, I thing is what we should say . . . say that The Post story said this, this, this, and this, and I think that's the way you want to handle that. For example, The Post story said this, this and this—this is incorrect. Why? Now what is correct is this, this, this and this. That's the way you ought to handle that so as to get us off the hook on that. So the press secretary did not lie. Well, my feeling . . . is that if the facts are gonna come out in all this period of time, I would rather have us get

them out to the extent we can, in a forthcoming way so that (unintelligible).

Transcript of a Recording of a Meeting Between the President and H. R. Haldeman on March 22, 1973, from 9:11 to 10:35 A.M.

PRESIDENT: One thing is very, as I told you, is extremely important. We've gotta, we have to (unintelligible) in the sense that (unintelligible) responsibility, a little more on Dean. He's got an office and—all that, uh, and apparently his responsibility on this—

HALDEMAN: . . . and, uh, I need counsel on an informal and totally confidential basis. Will you sit down and let me go through this with you? But it'd have, would have to be understood and it might—I recognize that you may be—can't do it because, as the head of the Criminal Division, it puts you on the other side. It can't be separated. Dean has the feeling that the more Petersen knows, the more helpful he can be, and that he will be.

PRESIDENT: I'm not sure that that's what you can count on.

HALDEMAN: I'm sure you can't count on it, because Petersen's another human being, too.

PRESIDENT: And he's a knowledgeable man. (unintelligible) You stuck somebody (unintelligible).

HALDEMAN: But you don't know what his ambitions are and, uh—

PRESIDENT: (unintelligible) And I just don't know.

HALDEMAN: Well, I know they're all possibilities, but apparently, all the way through this he's been a very solid rock.

HALDEMAN: I don't know, not, not being a lawyer, I (unintelligible) this kind of stuff, but, uh, Dean feels very strongly, and John Ehrlichman seems to concur, that it would, that we do need the advice of somebody who knows more about the criminal set-up than we do . . .

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: . . . and they

PRESIDENT: We can't go to Petersen—

HALDEMAN: Well, they don't know Peterson's the guy. They wonder if, you know, what we got into last night after we were in here, was the question of whether, I guess it was Dean, could call Peterson and just say we need advice. Can I talk to you on a, on a totally confidential basis, outside of school, and it will (unintelligible).

PRESIDENT: You wouldn't do that, uh, through Kleindienst?

HALDEMAN: No.

PRESIDENT: Kleindienst wouldn't (unintelligible) after you told him? I'm just, just asking.

HALDEMAN: I don't know. That, that, the way that we were talking, it's going . . .

PRESIDENT: Right.