

Haldeman: Tapes Will

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Confirm What I Say

Under questioning by chief counsel Sam Dash, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman told the Senate select Watergate committee how he ran the White House staff.

As administrative boss of the staff, Haldeman said, he decided what people and documents would be seen by the President. However, Haldeman stressed that his duties were entirely administrative, not policy-making.

Following are excerpts from Haldeman's testimony yesterday:

Dash: As chief of staff, Mr. Haldeman, could you tell us how tight a ship you ran in the White House?

Haldeman: Well, it has been amply reported here as being a tight ship, and I tried to run a tight ship, and I think successfully most of the time.

DASH: And would it be fair to say that you were a hard taskmaster and often cracked the whip?

Haldeman: I don't know. I didn't feel I was a hard taskmaster. I felt I was a just taskmaster but I guess some who didn't rise to the task felt that the whip was cracked sometimes. We operated of necessity on a basis of very extensive delegation of authority and of expecting people to get done what they were told to get done, to handle the responsibilities that they were understood to be handling and to do them without making any mistakes. We did throughout the White House operation operate on a what is known in some views as a zero defect system. We attempted to do everything right.

Dash: How close to zero did you get?

Haldeman: I am not sure.

That is hard to evaluate.

Dash: . . . Now, were you consulted with regard to major decisions that the (Nixon re-election) committee was making?

Haldeman: Some, but not on a consistent basis . . . rather than being consulted on major decisions we had a close working relationship with the committee that was implemented in the campaign period by the twice weekly meetings in Mr. (John D.) Ehrlichman's (former presidential adviser) office with the campaign committee people and senior White House people, and we—in order to maintain continuing coordination, the campaign director, (former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and later Mr. (Clark) MacGregor (Mitchell's successor as Nixon campaign manager), sat in the regular morning White House staff meetings, so that the campaign people, or the campaign director, at least, would know what the on going business at the White House was, issue positions, and that sort of thing, and vice versa, so that he could keep us posted at the White House as to what was developing in the campaign.

Dash: Did you receive quite a bit of memoranda from the committee?

Haldeman: Yes, sir. I think you are referring to (Haldeman aide Gordon) Strachan's political memoranda. I did not receive memoranda directly from the committee. Gordon Strachan, as my staff man with that area of responsibility, received all.

Dash: Just what was his area of responsibility? What was he supposed to do?

Haldeman: He was supposed to handle the liaison

between my office and the campaign committee. . . .

Dash: Now, were you consulted in any way at times on budgets or matters involving the financing of the committee?

Haldeman: Only on a very general basis. As I indicated in my statement, I did receive overall budgets, I believe, from time to time and I did receive information in more specific nature on advertising budgets because that was an area in which I was more directly concerned, and I reviewed the advertising budgets primarily for — with relation to the question of timing, of intensity of advertising, and to some degree regional concentration. I did not get into the details of the budgets and I do not believe that I had any responsibility for budget authority or approval.

Dash: I would like to show you, Mr. Haldeman, a memorandum of Feb. 3, 1972, from Mr. Bruce Kenrli (a Haldeman aide) to you concerning Committee for Re-Election support, which discusses general budget items . . .

Do you recall that this particular memorandum, which has "Administratively Confidential" on it, deals with the question of the Presidential and first family travel budget and then it has items for preconvention, convention, and postnomination budget, and then on the second page there is some reference to staff and also there is a reference to (former special presidential

counsel; Mr. (Charles) Colson and a statement \$900,000 for the Colson office consists of \$660,000 for mailing and information retrieval, \$150,000 to expend his mailing list, and about \$90,000 for "Black" projects, black in quotes.

Do you recall those items and why they were being presented to you in a memorandum?

Haldeman: This overall memorandum, as it indicates, is for financial support for the White House from the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

As I think I indicated, the committee provided financial support for activities that were not deemed to be governmental activities but that were conducted by the White House, the principals of these being, of course, the travel of the President when he was on a purely political trip. At any time during the campaign period that the President or any member of his family made a trip, they were required, of course, by security regulations to travel on government aircraft and with government security, but the committee reimbursed the government for the cost of all such trips at all times so that there would be no cost to the taxpayer for the purely political activity of the President.

This same would apply to other activities that were carried out by other staff members . . .

The Colson office question appears to be primarily for mailings and Mr. Colson's office was the point of contact with groups and organizations outside of government, labor organizations, business organizations, veterans' organizations, other particular interest groups . . .

Dash: Do you know what the reference to "black" projects means?

Haldeman: I am not sure . . .

Dash: When (deputy Nixon campaign manager Jeb Stuart) Magruder was playing a very active role in the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, certainly in the fall of 1971, were you aware in the communications that you were probably getting from Mr.

Strachan that there was a concern in the oncoming campaign of demonstrations and violence that might take place.

Haldeman: Yes, that was a matter that was discussed from time to time and I was very much aware of it.

Dash: Were you aware of the fact that there was a feeling that there was a need to develop an intelligence capacity to determine who might be involved in this kind of activity and how to prevent it/

Haldeman: I do not recall a discussion of intelligence capacity in that sense. There was definitely discussion of the problem and of needing to know what the nature of the problem was. It was most intensive in relation to the convention site, and the potential problem that was rumored to be building at San Diego and we did have intelligence on that. We had Secret Service intelligence.

Dash: That is right. But did not Mr. Magruder talk to you directly or by memorandum concerning the need for the committee to have its own in-house capabilities for intelligence with regard to the campaign?

Haldeman: He may have.

Dash: Did you become aware that Mr. Gordon Liddy was employed by the Committee for the Re-Election of the President?

Haldeman: At some point I did, yes . . .

Dash: Let me ask you this, were you aware prior to the June 17 break-in?

Haldeman: That Mr. Liddy was at the committee, yes.

Dash: Yes. Did you have anything to do when he was employed? You said when certain senior people would be employed they would have to have some clearance on your part. Now, he was employed as counsel for the committee. Did his name come by your desk for approval?

Haldeman: His name came by my desk at some point in connection with his salary. That was one of the cases where I think a salary was going to be paid that was higher than what he had been getting at the White House or was out of line with some other salary and there was some discussion of the salary question

in that connection . . .

Dash: That is the only recollection you have of Mr. Liddy's employment and your role in the employment?

Haldeman: Yes, I believe it is.

Dash: Did you learn at a point in time of a meeting in Mr. Mitchell's office, one on Jan. 27, 1972, and then another meeting on Feb. 4, 1972, attended not only by Mr. Mitchell but by (former White House counsel John)

Dean, Mr. Liddy and Mr. Magruder?

Haldeman: Yes, I did.

Dash: How did you learn of that meeting?

Haldeman: Well, I am not positive. I learned of it in recent months and probably also in the summer of 1972 by way of Mr. Dean . . . as I recall he told me that they (the meetings) had been in December and January of 1971-72, and that he had attended the two meetings, that he had come to me after the second meeting and had reported to me that at that meeting there had been presented an intelligence plan that was totally inconceivable and absurd, he characterized it in some colorful phrase, I think, of that kind, and said that he had turned the plan off, that Mitchell had concurred with him in turning this plan off, that he felt that there should be no further discussions of this kind of an intelligence program, and he intended to participate in no such discussions, and that he recommended the White House participate, if there were any such further discussions and that there should not be any and that I agreed with him.

Dash: Now, this discussion you are now testifying to that you had with Mr. Dean is in the summer of 1972, is that after the June 17 break-in that this took place?

Haldeman: Yes, yes, it is, and I am not positive—it is a general recollection that this took place in the summer. It is a clear recollection that it also took place in March of this year.

Dash: . . . You say . . . Mr. Dean told you that right after the Feb. 4 meeting in 1972 he came to you and I think you have already de-

scribed how he described this meeting and he said the White House or something should not be involved and be turned off and you agreed. Do you recall his doing that?

Haldeman: I do not recall it with any clear recollection but I was willing to accept Mr. Dean's very specific and very positive recounting to me of what had happened . . .

Dash: Would a political matters memorandum dealing with a sophisticated intelligence plan for the committee at a budget of \$300,000 strike your attention?

Haldeman: As Mr. Strachan has described it, a three-line item in a rather thick political matters memorandum dealing with among other things apparently 30 decisions that had been made by Mr. Mitchell at the Key Biscayne meeting, would not strike my attention, no . . .

Dash: Now, when you received a political matters memorandum and read the item, how did you indicate that you had noted the item or read it?

Haldeman: Varying ways. I sometimes made margin notes, I sometimes made checks by items, and I sometimes made no mark at all . . .

Dash: Are there a number of political matters memoranda you received — you say you received a number. Do you recall how many political matters, memoranda, Mr. Strachan sent you? . . . During the period, say, from January, 1972, through June 17, 1972.

Haldeman: I don't recall a number. I would have to guess . . . probably in that sort of period it would be 10 . . .

Dash: Now, Mr. Strachan has testified that he did present to you shortly after the break-in when you returned to Washington this particular political matters memorandum No. 18, which included the reference to the sophisticated intelligence plan at \$300,000 and some others—the talking paper and I think some other matters—and that you said, and this is his testimony, you said that the file should be clean after he had indicated that this particular file might link you by some way to the break-in or the activity of the break-in. Do you recall that conversation

with Mr. Strachan?

Haldeman: I don't recall the conversation. I don't recall the testimony as being quite as you have described it. And as I said in my statement, I don't recall . . . my giving Mr. Strachan such an instruction.

Dash: . . . Do you recall telling Mr. Strachan in April, sometime shortly after the meeting with Mr. Mitchell, that he should contact Mr. Liddy and tell Mr. Liddy to transfer his capabilities from Mr. Muskie to Mr. McGovern with special emphasis on the relationship to Senator Kennedy?

Haldeman: No, I don't.

Dash: Now, then Mr. Haldeman, how did you learn of the break-in on June 17, 1972?

Haldeman: That seems to be the crucial question and I have to give I guess the most incredible possible answer. I don't know, Mr. Dash. I simply don't remember how I learned

about it or precisely when or from whom. But let me explain that at that time, that weekend, I was in Key Biscayne. The President was out at Walkers Cay and I was at the Key Biscayne Hotel and I am sure that some time during that weekend somebody told me that the Democratic National Committee had been broken into. I am not sure who or when.

Dash: Now, what did you do when you learned that, when or whoever told you?

Haldeman: Nothing . . .

Dash: Did you learn while you were at Key Biscayne that somebody connected with the Committee to Re-Elect the President was involved?

Haldeman: I think I did and I think that came in a phone conversation with Jeb Magruder on the 18th, on Sunday, which it has always been my impression was placed by him to me but I understand he says it was placed by me to him and I am not sure which is which . . . the point of that phone conversation . . . was to review a statement that the committee was planning to release and it was releasing it in conjunction with the earlier publicized or assumed about to be publicized fact that Mr. (James) McCord (the committee's se-

curity coordinator) had been one of those arrested at the scene of the break-in.

Dash: . . . Did it occur to you that this might be an embarrassing matter for the campaign?

Haldeman: Yes . . .

Dash: . . . Now, were you aware, Mr. Haldeman, that during this period after the break-in during the latter part of June through July and in August there actually were daily meetings between Mr. Dean, Mr. Mitchell, (former campaign aide) Mr. (Robert C.) Mardian (former Mitchell aide), Mr. (Frederick) LaRue, and frequently Mr. Magruder and at such meetings the discussion of Mr. Magruder's involvement came up and a plan developed for Mr. Magruder to tell a false story before the grand jury did that ever come to your attention?

Haldeman: . . . No sir.

Dash: . . . Mr. Dean has testified he was serving merely as a liaison. The reason he was over at these meetings over at the committee was that he was there to report back to you and Mr. Ehrlichman what was going on, and that in fact did report back and inform you explicitly about Mr. Magruder's problem, that Mr. Magruder was involved and that it would be a serious question as to

whether he could get through the grand jury. Do you recall Mr. Dean making such reports to you?

Haldeman: He did not so inform me . . ."

Dash: Now, when did it come to your attention, Mr. Haldeman, that certain funds were being raised to pay for the legal fees of the defendants?

Haldeman: Sometime in the period shortly after the Watergate break-in and I am not sure again of any specific date or occasion on which I became aware of that, but I was told at some time in that period and I was told at other times subsequently I am sure by John Dean and I think possibly also by John Mitchell, that there was an effort by the committee to raise funds to pay for the legal fees and for family support of the de-

defendants who had been arrested in the Watergate burglary.

Dash: . . . Did you ask why Mr. Mitchell, who was heading up the campaign, and Mr. Dean, who was counsel to the President, would be involved in raising funds to pay for legal fees and families of burglars and wire tappers?

Haldeman: No. I did not . . . I did not pursue it in anyway.

Dash: Well, did you consider that if that became public that it might be a matter of embarrassment to the campaign?

Haldeman: No, I did not consider that.

Dash: Why not?

Haldeman: I am not sure that one is able to explain why he did not think something, but I did not. The reason—let me say that as a partial explanation, I have had a general awareness that there was a public effort to raise funds for the Watergate defendants and I do not know that I knew that these efforts were different than the public effort.

Dash: . . . Do you know whether it was an effort, a public effort to raise funds for Mr. Liddy, Mr. Hunt, Mr. McCord?

Haldeman: No, and I never heard any discussion of this in my contacts other than as a group, the defendants. There was no discussion of individuals by name.

Dash: And it is your view — you say you did not consider it — but I can ask at least the question, is it your view that persons who had high position in administering the President's re-election campaign and certainly the President's counsel had any business participating in raising funds for the paying of legal fees bur bur-

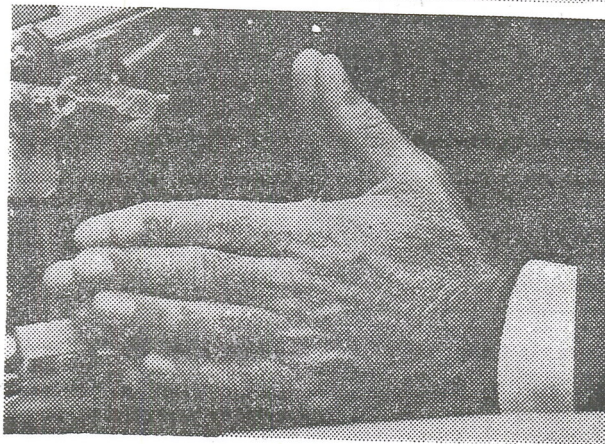
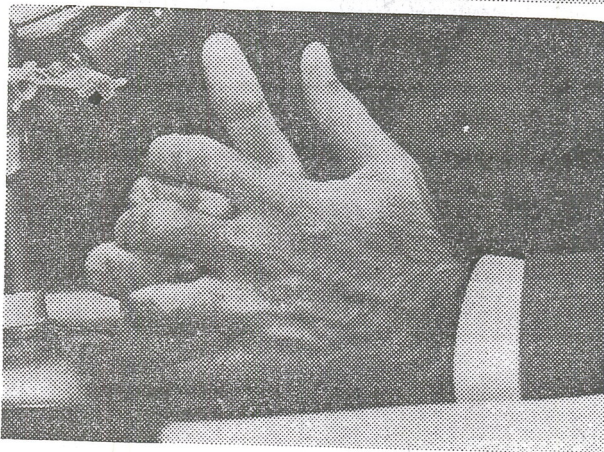
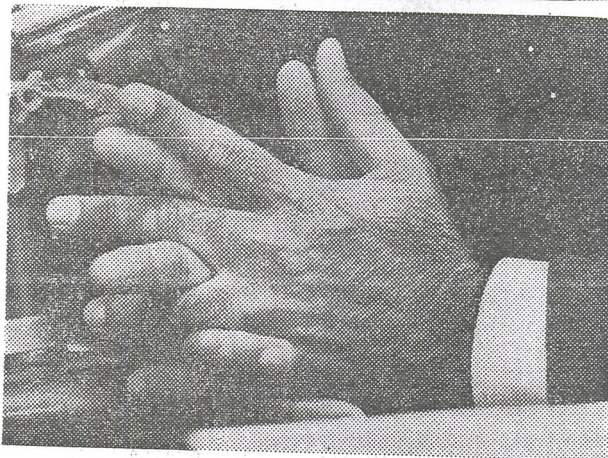
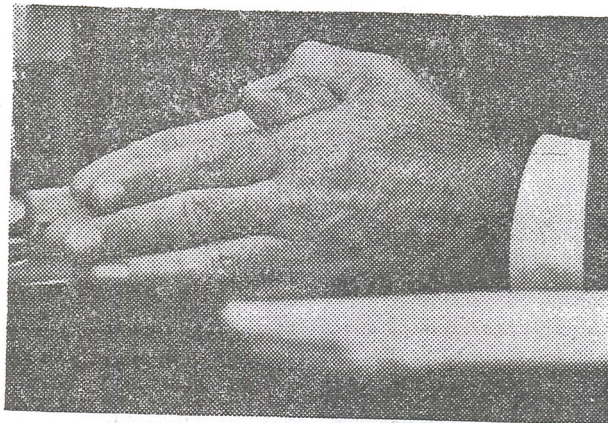
glars, wiretappers or conspirators?

Haldeman: This is not a question that occurred to me, Mr. Dash, and I did not ask it of myself or any of them.

Dash: You formed no moral judgment on it at all?

Haldeman: No, sir . . .

Minority counsel Fred Thompson then questioned Haldeman about a March 21, 1973, meeting between Dean and the President. Halde-



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

Hands of H. R. Haldeman reflect attitude at hearings.

man, who testified that he joined the meeting after it began, said he later listened to a tape recording of the complete meeting.

Thompson's interrogation was interrupted for a time by a discussion between committee members on Haldeman's testimony based upon the tapes:

Thompson: . . . Let's go on this March 21 conversation. The first hour of which, the conversation between Mr. Dean and the President, I believe for one hour and then you came in and the three of you met for 40 minutes, is that correct?

Haldeman: Yes.

Thompson: . . . You say, for example, that Dean reiterated or mentioned more than once something to the effect that this was, these were matters which were new to the President.

Could you elaborate on that? Did he state it flatly in that way or did he by some indication imply that?

Haldeman: Yes. As I recall he—

Sen. (Lowell) Weicker (R-Conn.): Mr. Chairman, I would like to raise a point of order here.

Ervin: Yes.

Weicker: As I understand it, minority counsel is now asking of the witness testimony based on these Presidential tapes, is that correct?

Thompson: His own recollection plus his refreshing of that recollection by listening to the tapes, that is correct.

Weicker: Well, the point of order that I raise, Mr. Chairman, is that as you well know the committee has not had access to these tapes but that is immaterial for the time being.

The fact is no other witness has had access to these tapes and very frankly, and I don't cite any great privilege theory and I am not a great constitutional lawyer, but I think I understand the concepts of fairness in the American way, and to me it is grossly unfair to any witness who is before this committee and testifies on the basis of something which has been given to him and to him alone and I raise this as a point of order that I intend to raise not only as on the March 21 meeting but also as to the Sept. 15 meeting, that this committee should not hear from this particular witness information which has been solely

accorded to him and which has been denied to anyone else . . .

Committee chairman Sam Ervin (D-N.C.): Well, I ruled yesterday that executive privilege didn't apply. Of course, this, I will have to say this, letter from Mr. (Fred) Buzhardt (Counsel to the President) reminds me of the lady in Shakespeare who said she would never consent but she did, she said that while she was consenting.

This is, I think, a little planned action in which the White House allows Mr. Haldeman to use the tape which the White House denies to this committee and sends down here—let Mr. Haldeman make the interpretation for this committee and then sends down through the counsel—a three-paragraph letter, the three paragraph protesting in a feeble way the coverage of executive privilege, at the same time having the fore-ordained as far as the White House counsel was concerned that the committee would overrule this claim, and I share the feeling about the senator from Connecticut about the President of the United States denying this committee the tape, the original tape, and if this was a court of law this would never have been admitted in evidence because the ruling is that only the best evidence can be received and this evidence really, with all due respect to it, is since the original tape is up in the White House in the exclusive possession of the President, and this is just some kind of a post facsimile of it, I think it is counterfeit evidence and I am going to admit it because it is the best we can get.

Weicker: Mr. Chairman, I abide by the ruling of the chair but I just want to point out my concern all along has not been as to a constitutional confrontation as between this committee and the President of the United States in regard to the tapes; it has been the fact that there was always the possibility that citizens of this country could be denied their rights under the Sixth Amendment to the

Constitution by the President of the United States, specifically the right to witnesses to prove their innocence or guilt, as the case may be . . .

Sen. (Howard) Baker (R-Tenn.): Mr. Chairman, might I say a word in this respect? Surely no one doubts that I feel strongly about the availability of the tapes . . . I must say that I share with Sen. Weicker his concern for fairness but, by the same token, I can't resist the temptation to find out all we can find out and I guess that is where we are right now.

Ervin: . . . since the President assures us that . . . the committee might interpret . . . the tapes in quite a different way from the way Mr. Haldeman has interpreted them, I am going to have to confess that I am going to be rather scrupulous in considering whether I should accept Mr. Haldeman's interpretation . . .

Thompson: . . . Some of these matters were discussed between the President and Mr. Dean before you arrived on the 21st, is that correct?

Haldeman: That is right.

Thompson: . . . You stated in your addendum Dean said that he was aware that he was presenting things to the President that the President had not previously known. How did this come up? In what manner did he state it? What was the President's reaction?

Haldeman: . . . The President was asking some questions that I don't think . . . were quite making sense to Dean and he said, well, Mr. President, I know that I am covering things with you here that you have known nothing about. It was a clear and flat statement to that effect . . .

Thompson: . . . What did he (Dean) say concerning who might have known about the break-in, who might have been involved in the planning of the break-in, and so forth?

Haldeman: He said that Liddy, of course, had been that he, I am almost sure that at this time he was not certain but his opinion was that Magruder had been involved in the planning and knowledge of the break-in, and he indicated that he was

not sure whether Mr. Mitchell had known about it or not . . .

And then he, I believe, said that his concern, as far as the White House was concerned, as far as the White House was involved in the pre-June 17 area, was in two possibilities. One, that there had been a phone call from Colson to Magruder, which could have been considered or could be construed as, pressure by Colson on Magruder to go ahead with this project. He, I do not think, went into any real specifics on that, and the other point was the question of whether Haldeman had seen the, as he called them, I think, the fruits of the bugging activity, because it was his understanding that the fruits had been sent to Strachan . . .

Thompson: What about post-June 17?

Haldeman: Post-June 17 he said that there were also two areas of concern. That one was clemency and the other was money, and in the clemency area where he felt there was a potential problem was this the fact that, as he put it, at that time, as best I can recall, Colson had talked with Hunt or Bittman about clemency . . .

He did . . . describe to the President some background in the sense of money for defendants, that there had been an effort, in fact, money had been obtained and provided to the defendants, and I am virtually certain that he said that this was for legal fees. In other words, let me put it the other way, I do not recall in that meeting either when I was there or at any time prior to when I came in, but what I heard from the tape, any reference to money being supplied for defendants' silence.

Thompson: . . . Did the President indicate he was familiar with any or all of these potential problems that Dean raised?

Haldeman: No, I don't believe he did. I think they were sort of—these were not, I don't recall any of these being gone into in any detail. They were raised as other potential problems . . .

Sen. Baker, vice chairman of the committee, then questioned Haldeman about how he ran the White House staff

and why he didn't "suspect
... something was going on."

BAKER: How in the world could you run such a tight ship and still on the morning of June 17, 1972 have the papers emblazoned with the charge that five defendants, later seven, had been caught in the Democratic National Committee Headquarters at the Watergate, followed on closely with the identification of one of them as the security officer of the Committee to Re-elect the President, soon involving the general counsel for the Committee to Re-elect the President, soon involving the transaction of funds, the number of other things that this record is burdened with now for many weeks, how could you run a tight ship and know all these things and not suspect that something was going on.

Haldeman: . . . there is no intimation on my part that I didn't suspect that something had gone on. I knew that something had gone on. I didn't know what. I still don't know what exactly in terms of who did what, when and how.

Baker: . . . You were closer to the President of the United States more often than probably any other person in the world outside his immediate family. I want to know what you can tell me in that respect, what did the President know and when did he know it?

Haldeman: I have tried to tell that in the recounting of my statement but what the President knew about the Watergate, again if we can divide to pre-June 17 and post-June 17, what he knew was basically what has been clearly established here. There doesn't seem to be much contention about what he knew and when on the pre-June 17 activities, as I see it.

He knew through the normal channels that the events had occurred, he knew, as on-going developments in the course of the investigation and prosecution took place that specific individuals were charged, tried and convicted. He was informed and acted on the basis of the information given him that the information that was made known

was the complete information . . .

Baker: . . . What did the President say to you when he found out that Liddy and McCord, two officials of the CRP, and important officials, were caught in the Watergate or in connection with the Watergate situation, can you tell us that?

Haldeman: No. He expressed at any time that you got — the discussion turned on the question of the break-in at the Democratic Committee, just utter incomprehension as to how such a thing could have happened and why such a thing would have happened.

Baker: Did he ever ask to talk to McCord or to Liddy?

Haldeman: No, I do not believe so.

Baker: Did you ever talk to McCord or Liddy?

Haldeman: No, sir.

Baker: . . . I want to test the accuracy of your recollection and the quality of your note-taking from those tapes, and I am referring to the last, next to the last, no, the third from the last sentence on page 2, "The President said there is no problem in raising a million dollars. We can do that but it would be wrong."

Now, if the period were to follow after "We can do that," it would be a most damning statement. If in fact, the tapes clearly show he said "but it would be wrong," it is an entirely different context. Now, how sure are you, Mr. Haldeman, that those tapes, in fact say that?

Haldeman: I am absolutely positive that the tapes

Baker: Did you hear it with your own voice?

Haldeman: With my own ears, yes.

Baker: I mean with your own ears. Was there any distortion in the quality of the tape in that respect?

Haldeman: No, I do not believe so.

Baker: . . . Would you be agreeable to bringing those tapes up here, those two tapes and playing them?

Haldeman: . . . Having been advised by counsel that in this opinion I am not creating a legal problem by the answer that I would give, and that I would want to give without even talking to counsel is that I would welcome that opportunity because they would confirm what I have told you.