

What Cox Told Court He Hoped to Find on Watergate Tapes

The alleged conversations on the nine White House tape recordings sought by former Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox—the issue that brought Watergate to its dramatic crisis this weekend—were described by Cox in a memorandum filed in federal court on Aug. 13. Following is the text of Cox's description, with the word "respondent" referring to President Nixon, and with parenthetical references that begin "S. Tr. referring to the transcript of the Senate Watergate committee hearings.

1. Meeting of June 20, 1972. Respondent met with John D. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman in his Old Executive Office Building (EOB) office on June 20, 1972, from 10:30 a.m. until approximately 12:45 p.m. There is every reason to infer that the meeting included discussion of the Watergate incident. The break-in has occurred on June 17—just three days earlier. Dean did not return to Washington until June 18 (S. Tr. 2166). Mitchell, Haldeman and LaRue had also been out of town and did not return until late on June 19 (S. Tr. 3305, 3307, 6195). Early on the morning of June 20, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, Dean and Attorney General Kleindienst met in the White House. This was their first opportunity for full discussion of how to handle the Watergate incident, and Ehrlichman has testified that Watergate was indeed the primary subject of the meeting (S. Tr. 5923-5924). From there, Ehrlichman and then Haldeman went to see the President. The inference that they reported on Watergate and may well have received instructions, is almost irresistible. The inference is confirmed by Ehrlichman's public testimony that the discussion with respondent included both Watergate and government wiretapping (S. Tr. 5924-25). The contemporary evidence of that meeting should show the extent of the knowledge of the illegal activity by the participants or any effort to

conceal the truth from the respondent.

2. Telephone call of June 20, 1972. Respondent and John Mitchell, the director of respondent's campaign for re-election, spoke by telephone from 6:08 to 6:12 p.m. on June 20, 1972. Mitchell has testified that the sole subject was the Watergate break-in and investigation (S. Tr. 3407-08). This apparently was the first direct contact after the break-in between respondent and Mitchell, so that what Mitchell reported may be highly material. Indeed, although Mitchell already may have been briefed at this time by Robert C. Mardian and LaRue about Liddy's involvement in the break-in (S. Tr. 3629-32, 4590, 4595), Mitchell maintains that he told the President that only the five arrested at Watergate—not including Liddy—were involved (S. Tr. 3407-08, 3632).

Evidence of this conversation with a man who had no public office at the time and was concerned solely with respondent's political interests will either tend to confirm Mitchell's version or show a more candid report to respondent.

3. Meeting of June 30, 1972. Respondent met with Mitchell and Haldeman for an hour and 15 minutes in his EOB office, apparently the first meeting between respondent and Mitchell since June 17, 1972. The topic of conversation, according to Mitchell, was his impending resignation as Chairman of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President (S. Tr. 3442-43), which in fact was announced the next day. This is a meeting most of which almost surely did not involve any official duties of the President. It also strains credulity to suppose that Watergate and how Watergate affected Mitchell and the campaign were not topics of conversation. The records of the meeting are clearly the most direct evidence of the knowledge and intentions of the participants as of a date shortly after the grand jury began its investigation.

4. Meeting of September 15, 1972. On September 15, 1972, the grand jury returned an indictment charging seven individuals with conspiracy and other offenses relating to the break-in. Respondent met the same day with Dean and Haldeman in his Oval Office from 5:27 to 6:17 p.m. Both Dean and Haldeman have given lengthy but contradictory accounts of what was said (S. Tr. 2229-33, 6090-93).

According to Dean, the purpose of the meeting was to brief respondent on the status of the investigation and related matters. Dean said that respondent then congratulated him on the "good job" he had done and was pleased that the case had "stopped with Liddy." Dean said that he then told respondent that all he had been able to do was "contain" the case and "assist in keeping it out of the White House." (S. Tr. 2230.) If this testimony is corroborated, it will tend to establish that a conspiracy to obstruct justice reached the highest level of government.

Haldeman, after reviewing a tape recording of the meeting, has agreed that there was discussion of the Watergate indictments, of the civil cases arising out of the break-in, of the possibility of a continuing grand jury investigation, of internal policies at the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, and of other matters. He denies, however, that respondent congratulated Dean on Dean's efforts to thwart the investigation. (S. Tr. 6090-93, 6456.)

If Haldeman's innocuous version of the meeting can be sustained, it is because the meeting only involved an innocent discussion of political interests. The question of Dean's perjury would then arise. Resolution of this conflict between two of the three persons present and an accurate knowledge of plans or admissions made on this occasion would be of obvious aid to the grand jury's investigation.

5. Meeting of March 13, 1973. Respondent again met with Dean and Haldeman on March 13, 1973, from 12:42 to 2:00 p.m. Dean testified at length about the meeting (S. Tr. 2323-2325.) Haldeman gave evidence that he has no independent recollection

of what was said (S. Tr. 6100).

The White House briefing for the Senate Committee suggests that the meeting related primarily to Watergate and that respondent asked Dean for a report on the involvement of Haldeman and others.** Dean, on the other hand, testified that respondent told Dean that respondent had approved executive clemency for defendant Hunt and that there would be no problem about raising \$1 million to buy all defendants' silence (S. Tr. 2324). Unquestionably confirmation of Dean's testimony would aid the grand jury in determining the existence, membership, and scope of a cover-up conspiracy. Conclusive disproof on the other hand, would raise a question of perjury by Dean before the Senate Committee, a matter directly within the grand jury's jurisdiction.

6, 7. Meetings of March 21, 1973. On March 21, 1973, respondent met with Dean and Haldeman from 10:12 to 11:55 a.m. and with Dean, Haldeman Ehrlichman and Ronald Ziegler from 5:20 to 6:01 p.m. (Not all parties were present all of the time.)

Both Dean and Haldeman (who reviewed the recording of the morning meeting) have testified extensively about that meeting (S. Tr. 2329-34, 6112-15, 6273-95, 6394-6400), and it is also discussed in the White House briefing for the Senate Committee. All accounts confirm that the sole subject was the Watergate break-in and wiretapping and the subsequent cover-up. All agree that Dean talked about a "cancer" affecting the Presidency and revealed a theory of the cover-up and the possible liability of White House and Committee officials, including Magruder, Mitchell, Strachan, Colson, Ehrlichman, Haldeman, and himself. (S. Tr. 2330-31, 6112-15, 686-94, 6640-41.) All agree that there was discussion of Hunt's threat to expose his "seamy" work for the White House unless he received a considerable sum of money. Haldeman testified that it was at this meet-

ing that respondent indicated that \$1 million easily could be raised; according to Haldeman, however, respondent went on to say that it would not be right to pay the money. This discrepancy which can be resolved by a contemporary recording, is manifestly significant.

Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Dean each have testified about the meeting as well, and the White House briefing gives a separate account. Again, the sole topic of conversation was Watergate. The participants discussed the possibility of present and former White House officials, as well as employees of the Committee, testifying before the grand jury. (S. Tr. 2334-35, 5650, 5710, 6118.) Dean has testified that it was clear to him after this meeting that

the cover-up would continue (S. Tr. 2335). Evidence of this meeting is pertinent to determining the existence of a cover-up, its thrust, and its membership.

8. Meeting of March 22, 1973. Respondent met with Dean, Ehrlichman, Haldeman and Mitchell from 2:00 p.m. to 3:43 p.m. on March 22, 1973. (Mitchell, of course, was a private citizen at this time.) Dean, Mitchell, Ehrlichman, and Haldeman each have testified that the meeting centered in general on Watergate and in particular on the problems that would be presented by the upcoming Senate Select Committee hearings (S. Tr. 2337-40, 3413-15, 5720, 5123, 6119-22). This meeting was apparently concerned, at least in major part, with political assessments and operations, not exclusively with establishing "government" policy, and is likely to reveal the

knowledge and motives of the participants.

9. Meeting of April 15, 1973. Respondent met with Dean from 9:17 to 10:12 p.m. on April 15, 1973. Dean has testified in detail about the substance of this hour-long conversation, allegedly telling respondent of his meetings with the United States Attorney's Office. Dean also testified that respondent said that he had been "joking" when respondent approved raising \$1 million for the Watergate defendants and acknowledged that he had been "foolish" to discuss executive clemency with Charles Colson. (S. Tr. 2371-75.) If true and accurate, this testimony would indicate an important dimension to the cover-up conspiracy. If false and misleading, a perjurious injustice has been done for which the grand jury can return an indictment.