

TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A TELEPHONE
CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE .PRESIDENT AND H.R.
HALDEMAN, APRIL 25, 1973, FROM 6:57 p.m.
TO.7:14 p.m.

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BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND H.R. HALDEMAN ON APRIL 25, 1973,
FROM 6:57 p.m. TO 7:14 p.m.

PRESIDENT: Hello.

HALDEMAN: Yes sir.

PRESIDENT: Oh, Bob, you got home?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Oh fine. Ya rushing off?

HALDEMAN: No, no, not at all.

PRESIDENT: No, I'll just take a second. Ah, were you able to hear any of the rest of that?

HALDEMAN: No. I, I didn't, I'm gonna, I'm trying to get a different machine that I can...

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: ...hear better on. Go back to it.

PRESIDENT: Ah, just a second. I had a good, uh, talk with Petersen and, uh, told him that, 'uh, you know, about the need to expedite the Grand Jury second. Uh, the, I, uh, told him I wanted it, a paper from him with regard to you and John. He said held have it by Friday afternoon.

HALDEMAN: Hmm.

PRESIDENT: And I, I...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...(unintelligible). He said I'd, I'd like to pull my thoughts together and so forth and he said we just don't have it yet. I said, I said, I said that I wanted to be sure that you and, and John had an opportunity at the earliest time to meet with the prosecuting team. You know?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: And, uh, he said, uh, he said have your counsel--and I haven't (unintelligible) John, you can pass it on to him

HALDEMAN: O.K.

PRESIDENT: ...(unintelligible) counsel--and request it and that'll be done. I said the other thing I wanted you up here to appear before the Grand Jury, I mean so that there'd be no question of, you know...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...of waiting. He said well we might have to have them twice then. I said that's all right. I said the main thing is I want them-I mean I really think your getting up there is, is important.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Soon.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: You agree?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Also it's a positive move we can, we can make.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: And, uh, it's at our initiative, you see.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: And, uh--that's that.

HALDEMAN: Okay. Good.

APRIL 25, 1973, FROM 6:57 p.m. TO 7:14 p.m.

3

PRESIDENT: And uh, the, uh--Now with regard to the piece of paper I gave you on Ehrlichman, they have sent that you know out to the...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...prosecutor. They had to do that for this reason that, uh, that Dean basically, was--that was basically a little blackmail by him, on them, you see.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Uh, which they said if we didn't put it out--I mean if they didn't--they'd say why did you withhold it from the Ellsberg case, you see.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: So uh--but that is likely--it could come out I mean, Byrne may, Byrne may ask for, divulge the source, it will be Dean and Dean will have to testify if he does, then that, uh, piece of thing, that Watergate buggers involved in the Ellsberg thing--it will not blow the Ellsberg case, in, you know, in, in his opinion, due to the fact that it wasn't used. On the other hand, the fact of it will come out. But I think that that was gonna come out anyway, don't you feel so?

HALDEMAN: Probably, probably. Yeah, and I think we gotta assume any of that stuff is.

PRESIDENT: But the point is

HALDEMAN: I'm not sure that's bad if it does.

PRESIDENT: Well, Watergate...

HALDEMAN: In among other things.

PRESIDENT: Huh?

APRIL 25, 1973, FROM 6:57 p.m. TO 7:14 p.m.

4

HALDEMAN: Well, it adds confusion to the whole thing.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. The, uh, Watergate buggers, uh, try to knock over Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...Right. Well in any event, that was about it. So, uh, if you could uh, uh--call in to John. He wasn't home. If you tell the White House operator that you,...

HALDEMAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: ...you call John, you talk to him and fill him in. You sent him the piece of paper, did you, did you get it to him?

HALDEMAN: I covered it with him, yeah.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: I'll give it to him in the morning.

PRESIDENT: Um hmm. Um hmm. He understood the significance of it, of course.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Uh, did he see any other option?

HALDEMAN: No. He, he--no. His only concern was that it was getting fairly broad distribution.

PRESIDENT: Well, I know.

HALDEMAN: But, but...

PRESIDENT: It's gonna get more broad distribution because they're gonna--they,...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

APRIL 25, 1973, FROM 6:57 p.m. TO 7:14 p.m.

5

PRESIDENT: ...they, they uh, uh--you see, what, what else could I tell Kleindienst, forget it? Get my point?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: I just couldn't do that.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: And, uh you know, I could say look this is National Security, and you cannot turn it over to 'em because Dean, another (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible) obstruction of justice.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Exactly.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...Uh, the other point that it, uh, I went--I levelled with Petersen on the, uh, on all the conversation that we had and I said now I want you to know this and I said we'll not be blackmailed on it, we didn't do anything about it but, uh, that's when I started my investigation. And that's, that's our line there, I think. The more I...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...the more I think of that, you know, I'm--I know that I'm in no illusions on it and incidentally I think that should just be between you and me.

HALDEMAN: Okay.

PRESIDENT: Or, uh, I think, I, I I don't, at this point I don't think we oughta (unintelligible) that to John and have him worry about it and the rest.

HALDEMAN: Okay.

APRIL 25, 1973, FROM 6:57 p.m. TO 7:14 p.m.

6

PRESIDENT: Unless you want to.

HALDEMAN: You mean the contents?

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: No. I didn't intend to.

PRESIDENT: I think, ah, let's just ah, so that we can know that, ah, in other words, ah, as far as the conversation it's one that I had and that you had and...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...and ah, and ah, that ah, we'll just see what ah, if Dean wants to play that then we'll play it--for whatever its worth, ah, Pet--

HALDEMAN: Did it bother Petersen?

PRESIDENT: Oh well everything bothers him.

HALDEMAN: (Laugh)

PRESIDENT: But he said, he said that Dean, he says, has always indicated he says he'll never, he says he'll do, deal, he won't lie for that God-damn Ehrlichman but he will of course defend the President da da da da and I said well, we'll see. But I said...

HALDEMAN: Out to get John apparently, huh?

PRESIDENT: Well, I think he's out to save himself if he'll, he's gonna play every card that he can, and, ah, a desperate man he may wanna bring the President down too, but in this case then Bob, there's no, no other choice it's to, to fight like hell. Ah this is ah, this is an evil man, you know. He knows that this was a legitimate thing to be doing, he was deeply in it, and incidentally he's likely to be called as a witness in the Ellsberg case, too. I mean in the ah Bis, Vesco case because...

APRIL 25, 1973, FROM 6:57 p.m. TO 7:14 p.m.

7

HALDEMAN: Dean is?

PRESIDENT: Yeah, because apparently he made a telephone call, it is alleged, in order to quash an indictment on the, allegedly against Vesco, so...

HALDEMAN: Good Lord.

PRESIDENT: Ah, is, that, is that the name Vesco, yeah.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, so ah, (unintelligible) me on that damn thing, too.

HALDEMAN: My God! Does Petersen still feel you can't make any move on Dean?

PRESIDENT: Not at this point.

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: Well, because he's, they're still trying to ah, he's gonna try to make Dean's lawyers come to him. You know? And ah, and ah...

HALDEMAN: ...and he's right.

PRESIDENT: He's right. In other words, but let me say, there can't be any m-, move made on you and, you and/or Bob, uh or John, until the Dean thing's resolved and I, I, I made that damn clear to Petersen. I said I wasn't gonna, that I can't ah, I said I can't, I said you, you realize that if you, if I have these fellows resign I'm in effect saying "I judge them guilty," and I said no, any other way of (unintelligible). I said if I do that, I said I have to do it, the right to do it with them and Dean and so forth and so on, you know I went through the whole drill and told him that--I, sort of, sort of, uh, gave him the impression that I wasn't gonna do a damn thing, that I wanted to look over his papers...

HALDEMAN: Yep.

PRESIDENT: Ya see what I mean?

HALDEMAN: Yep.

PRESIDENT: My own belief at this point is that, ah, for yours and John's information, that we just gotta stand God-damn firm today, tomorrow, Friday, the weekend, you know what I mean?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: And, ah, the Ellsberg thing blows, 114 I just as soon, you know, just as...

HALDEMAN: get it all out now.

PRESIDENT: I wouldn't just as soon but I think it's gonna come anyway. Whatever John Dean knows is gonna come out, Bob.

HALDEMAN: That's right. That's right.

PRESIDENT: But ah, incidentally, I, you know, I always wondered about that taping equipment but I'm damn glad we have it, aren't you?

HALDEMAN: Yes sir, I think it's, it's, just one thing I went through today it was very helpful.

PRESIDENT: Yes. It's helpful because while it has some things in there that, ah,...

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: we prefer we wouldn't have said but, on the other hand, we also have some things in there that we know we've, that I've said that weren't, that were pretty good, I mean.

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: "This is wrong" and, ah, "blackmail" and "how much is this gonna cost!" and so forth and so on. Then, on the other hand, I said well "let's ah, we could get that, but how would you handle it." -But that, of course, those are all leading questions. I don't know how you analyze it but I don't know...

HALDEMAN: I, I, I really don't think it, it would be, if it all gets, if that comes out, it's, it's another hard thing to explain but I think it's explainable.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: And if, that I've, that I just think gains well, I can't imagine that he'll do that, do that.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Except as he sees it...

HALDEMAN: Petersen know what Dean's big bomb thing was?

PRESIDENT: No, he didn't.

HALDEMAN: Was, wasn't he supposed to get some big threat from Dean or something?

PRESIDENT: Well, he, he won't get that, Bob, until he, he meets with Dean and ah...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...and it hasn't occurred, I said, he doesn't know when that'll occur.

HALDEMAN: I see.

PRESIDENT: I said, "well,"--so, he doesn't know. I said, "well, I just wanted to be sure. Maybe it's this--" I said, he thinks maybe it's some conversations he had with Dean, that may be but I, I think it's this, don't you?

HALDEMAN: I would, ah I don't know. I don't really.

PRESIDENT: Maybe oh, what the hell else could it be then, Bob? I mean, that if he's got a big bomb, if he's gonna throw with his, ah, yeah, I think it's this, I would say that he's gonna say, well, the President was, he told the President about, ah, the, you know, that they're gonna pay these people off and so forth, and that John Mitchell and, I think he, the other thing is that John Mitchell is, ah, in the presence of, ah, Haldeman and Ehrlichman, said that it had been taken care of, or words to that effect.

HALDEMAN: Mhmm.

PRESIDENT: Is that right, is that, is I suppose he could say that, right?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: And then it's his word against the rest of you right?

HALDEMAN: Yeah. That's why you just you, I don't see how, how we, (tape noise), the--there's no way you really can, can sta(tape noise) with Dean on this, I don't...

PRESIDENT: No way. No, no, no, no way, no way. You wanta, you wanta try to ah, ah, you see the only problem is that to handle it in such a way that he doesn't become, uh, totally implacable enemy.

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Totally implacable and I think for that reason handling the way I have, at least may, may...

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: ...may help in that respect. I, at least, have treated him decently. Ah, in fact, more decently than he deserves.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: On the other hand, ah, he ah, he may become totally intractable, if he does, you're gonna have one hell of a pissing contest

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: And, ah, on the other hand, ah...

HALDEMAN: If you do, I, that's, you just, ya gotta win it.

PRESIDENT: What else can you do, you know, really. What else can you do. And you know when you think of this, all this kind of thing, you know, the, ah, when, when John ah, when ah John talks about, I was just thinking a little bit more about the impeachment thing, that I don't see the Senate or any Senators starting an impeachment of the President based on the word of John Dean.

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: That's all it is, you know, and, ah, I mean, John Dean says that this and that and the other thing happened.

HALDEMAN: And there's no way he can support it. I mean there's no way to make a case.

PRESIDENT: Well, except he could be, recorded his conversation, you know, back, made a memorandum, told his lawyers immediately thereafter and so forth and so on.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: But, ah, even there, I mean, here is...

HALDEMAN: Still his word, unless he's got a tape recording. Still his word unless he has a tape recording.

PRESIDENT: Mhmm.

HALDEMAN: And even with the tape recording I think you could make the case the other way.

PRESIDENT: Mhmm.
(Pause)

PRESIDENT: I don't know, ah, a tape recording is, ah, I can't believe that he could have walked in there with a tape recorder that day, because that day, I mean I'm not trying to be wishful thinking, that particular day, he wasn't really out to get the President, I don't think

HALDEMAN: That's right, no sir, he wasn't. He was the exact, going just the other way.

PRESIDENT: Tryin' to help?

HALDEMAN: That's right, and I just can't conceive that he would have, would have done that., 'Cause I was gonna (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: Ah, unless he tape records every, does he, does he, does he tape record everything that he comes in?

HALDEMAN: No. No.

PRESIDENT: Does he, you're sure of that?

HALDEMAN: No, I'm not sure of it, but I am convi never had any reason to believe that he did.

PRESIDENT: Mhmm, mhmm.

HALDEMAN: And the way you know he dresses, uh just casual enough in his clothing and all, that I can't imagine you'd (tape noise) held have tape recorder, ya, it's bulky and you gotta get it in your...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: ...pocket somewhere and all that. It isn't all that easy to do..

PRESIDENT: Right, right, right. In any event that's that, that's that. And ah, he, ah, so we don't wanta borrow trouble. I mean we got enough without borrowing any, don't we?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, yeah.

PRESIDENT: And oh, ah let me say that, ah, this is April 25th. We can figure that ah this is the day we start up. Seriously,...

HALDEMAN: I think, that's right, I think...

PRESIDENT: Ah, I don't mean, I don't think I'm being Pollyannish about it, I think that if, if Kleindienst with that damn thing, all right, my God, there it is. Put it out. And I, wouldn't hear your lawyers, we'd be sayin', I mean we, we can't go on this damn business of, ah, resignation, now it isn't gonna work. That's right, it just isn't gonna work right now. Uh, the, the, the leave of absence thing, ah, I don't know, you, with regard to you, do you really think that that really buys us anything?

HALDEMAN: I don't know. It ah,...

PRESIDENT: Well, we'll consider it. You'll have to, we'll have to think about it, in terms of ah, one other thing Steve told me today that he thought there was a chance that I would not, maybe we could, I could get out of doing that damned finance dinner on May the 9th. Ah, he said that the tick--that they hadn't had the, program wasn't going as well as they expected and so forth and so on, is there a chance, ur...

HALDEMAN: I don't know. I, I--

PRESIDENT: The new majority dinner so called...

HALDEMAN: Yeah, it's probably...

PRESIDENT: ...and so forth. That's the thing I should avoid like the plague if I could but ah...

HALDEMAN: Except that appearance, I would think, if you don't do it, they'll make a big thing out of they couldn't sell because of the Watergate and the President...

PRESIDENT: I see

HALDEMAN: ...wouldn't come.

PRESIDENT: I see.

HALDEMAN: Ah, that's my view now, I've, ah, I'm not so sure, I'm not sure of what the situation...

PRESIDENT: They say they're not selling too many tickets someday or other but, I've heard that at least, but you know we heard other things from Bush that they'd sold 'em well.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: But ah, if it's there I could do it. Another thing I could do, is ah, rather than, that is really just give a reception at the White House and shake hands for a couple hours.

HALDEMAN: Mhmm.

PRESIDENT: You know what I mean? As a, you know a, a, rather than going out and have to make speech...

HALDEMAN: Hah, yeah, the problem is the people that go to that dinner, the, your lobbyists and all that stuff

PRESIDENT: Right, that's right" that's all right but I'd hell of a lot rather be shaking their hands, Bob, than, than to, ah...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: ...th-than to go out be making a political speech that day, you know. What's a political speech without mentioning Watergate.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: I think that's an option at least.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Mhmm. I plan to go to Mississippi Friday, you still for that, are you?

HALDEMAN: Yes sir, absolutely.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: By all means.

PRESIDENT: And, ah...

HALDEMAN: That's, that's all, all good, that one...

PRESIDENT: Right.

(Pause) (Pause)

PRESIDENT: You know when you really stop to think of it, in terms of this whole tings the, ah, the line basically of everybody, you know, Connally, Rogers, et al, which, of course, varies ah, I mean Harlow, the (tape noise) resignation line and so forth is a, is one that is, is so terribly attractive in terms, in, in, for a couple of days...(laughs)

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: I mean, you know what I mean, this well now the President's finally started off with a new team but then for Christ sake's. ah, somethin' else blows, hah?

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: On the other hand, ah, ah, the other line is to say, all right the grand jury's gonna hear it and they're gonna see it through. I mean to that point. That's a tenable line also, isn't it?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Of course the problem with that I suppose is that...

HALDEMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: The problem with that is that, ah, what you could say is that rather than the President cleaning his house, the grand jury did. But in the sense, in the sense, if you wanta argue that we can say no, the President said that's the way to do it. You see my point?

HALDEMAN: Yeah. And that, that is the point. That you're the confidence in our institutions and...

PRESIDENT: Mhmm

HALDEMAN: You know, the way things are supposed to be done.

PRESIDENT: That's right. We're presenting all the things that's why the, that's why the appearance before the grand jury, the...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

APRIL 25, 1973, FROM 6:57 p.m. TO 7:14 p.m.

17

PRESIDENT: ...the going down there, and at my suggestion and so forth and so on, that's, that line you and John might work out in the morning.

HALDEMAN: All right.

PRESIDENT: All right, you tell him not to have John return the call, you fill him in. Okay. Right, bye.

HALDEMAN: Okay.