

TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE
PRESIDENT AND JOHN EHRLICHMAN , ON APRIL 15, 1973, FROM
10:35 TO 11:15 A.M.

(Phone rings)

EHRLICHMAN: (Unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: Poor guy. Who all have you seen this morning?

EHRLICHMAN: Well, I have Strachan up there right now.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. I had a call from Kleindienst.

EHRLICHMAN: Yeah. I heard you did and I thought you ought to take it. He-

PRESIDENT: Oh sure, sure, I didn't, I didn't refuse. He said "I should see you, and I'd like to see you alone this afternoon. Today." I said fine. He's coming to the church service.

EHRLICHMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: So I'm going to see him in the EOB. He said he had been up most of the night with Titus. Who is Titus?

EHRLICHMAN: U.S. Attorney in the District.

PRESIDENT: And, uh, what's the other fellow's name?

EHRLICHMAN: Silbert.

PRESIDENT: No, not Silbert.

EHRLICHMAN: Glanzer?

PRESIDENT: Petersen.

EHRLICHMAN: Oh, Petersen.

PRESIDENT: See if he wants (unintelligible) Dick together. So I would see what he has to say.

EHRlichman: Okay.

PRESIDENT: I assume it's the special prosecutor thing, among other things, among other things, but what else I don't know.

EHRlichman: I don't know either. Uh, he'd obviously-get Titus in to find out what the progress is in the Grand Jury; so he's now, he's now better posted than he has been, I'm sure, and he's probably a little bitter with Titus for not keeping him better posted, if in fact he wasn't.

PRESIDENT: With regard to this, this special prosecutor thing, what line do you want to take?

EHRlichman: Well, let's, let's think about it. Uh, he wants a special prosecutor so that...

PRESIDENT: ...he can stay on as Attorney General.

EHRlichman: ...he can stay on and so that he doesn't have any, so that he personally doesn't taint the process by reason of his closeness to Mitchell. And that, that makes sense. Sneed does not have that problem, and Sneed is controllable, within limits, and I think he's credible. I may be wrong about his credibility.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) this, I think he's credible. The reason I think he's credible is something else, is that the Grand Jury, I assume, is going to come through with some indictments. I mean, suppose they just indict Magruder and Mitchell until they're the least.

EHRlichman: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Well, Christ Almighty, that's the fish.

EHRlichman: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: The big fish.

EHRlichman: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: God damn it, what more do they want? ...

EHRlichman: The Spec...

PRESIDENT: Now what's the problem with the special prosecutor, as I see it, it just puts another loose cannon right there rolling around the deck.

EHRlichman: Well, the special prosecutor...

PRESIDENT: Reflects on-

EHRlichman: will second-guess Silbert. Uh, I assume will feel that his mandate is to--.

PRESIDENT: Tear the hell of the the place?

EHRlichman: Yeah. Yeah.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

EHRlichman: And, that's just a, that's just an additional risk which you wouldn't have with the Dean who's been part of the, part of the process. Uh, I just, I don't think-

PRESIDENT: I think we've had enough of the damn thing myself, now I'll have to hardline it. Dick has not been, let's face it, he hasn't been very helpful throughout this thing.

EHRlichman: That's right.

PRESIDENT: And as to Mitchell-

EHRlichman: He stood as far away from it as he could get.

PRESIDENT: And Mitchell, and Mitchell let it get away from him. A little bitter, don't you think? Is that what he said to you?

EHRlichman: Yeah. He expressed real bitterness.

PRESIDENT: Uh, you didn't get Colson yet?

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EHRlichman: Not yet. No. He's at church apparently. Ziegler will be here at church, then he's coming over. So, I'll see him while you're seeing Kleindienst.

PRESIDENT: I told Colson this is about, uh, well, I guess, uh, Hunt and Bittman, which, of course, could tie Colson in, right?

EHRlichman: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Up to his ass. There's not a God damn thing you can do about that, is there John?

EHRlichman: No, really not, not at this point. You have to depend on Hunt's natural secrecy and secretiveness.

PRESIDENT: John, there's nothing in it for Hunt. Let me ask you this, if you were to go back over everything he's done prior to that time-

EHRlichman: Well-

PRESIDENT: There might be something?

EHRlichman: Well, he's, he's, uh, up on, apparently, he has perjured himself a second time. See, he perjured himself at the trial, then he was granted immunity, came back into the Grand Jury, and perjured himself again. The U.S. Attorney is looking down his throat and could say to him, "Look, I can forget some of these counts if you're a good boy now."

PRESIDENT: Yeah, but the point that I make is this, is the, is really, of course, you know, it's the limits of his testimony.

EHRlichman: Uh huh. Uh huh.

PRESIDENT: If he testifies just on Watergate, that's fine. He isn't going to get a damn thing more than anybody else.

EHRlichman: I don't see any incentive for him to go broader, and I haven't heard a whiff of that. (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) other, it was the last he was involved in, will they give him immunity for that? I suppose, or would they?

EHRlichman: I don't know. I don't think they can give him immunity at this point.

(Pause)

PRESIDENT: How long did you talk with Strachan?

EHRlichman: Just, got started about ten minutes ago. And I've been doing all the talking so far.

PRESIDENT: Is he trying, trying to talk with, uh...

EHRlichman: What Magruder had said about him and so forth. So, uh-

PRESIDENT: A-, Any chance for (unintelligible)?

EHRlichman: Not yet. Not yet.

PRESIDENT: He's a good man, good man.

EHRlichman: I think he, I think he'll do fine. You see-

PRESIDENT: Do you expect anything better or worse (unintelligible) I was cogitating last night, and we've got the people that can, I mean on the obstruction of justice thing...

EHRlichman: That's right...

PRESIDENT: ...which I think is our main problem at this time, well of course it is the main problem because it involves the other people.

EHRlichman: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Otherwise it's just Chapin.

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EHRlichman: Yes, Chapin.
PRESIDENT: And Mitchell, Magruder.
EHRlichman: Yeah.
PRESIDENT: Possibly Dean, but if, uh-
EHRlichman: Mardian and LaRue.
PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) on arraignment of the case?
EHRlichman: LaRue.
PRESIDENT: They got him on that too?
EHRlichman: Yeah. Yeah.
PRESIDENT: You mean Magruder has?
EHRlichman: Yeah.
PRESIDENT: That's going to be God damned hard to, this fellow's lied twice too, lied once.
EHRlichman: That's right. That's true.
PRESIDENT: (Sighs) The people you've got with obstruction are Hunt and Goldblatt and Bittman, right?
EHRlichman: Oh, Rothblatt the lawyer.
PRESIDENT: Rothblatt?
EHRlichman: Yeah, right. Well, I don't think Bittman is going to testify. I would be very surprised if he did.
PRESIDENT: Why?

EHRlichman: Well...

PRESIDENT: Get him involved in obstruction of justice.

EHRlichman: Well, I just don't think, I think, I'm just guessing here, my guess is that he's worked himself out a haven in all of this.

PRESIDENT: Wouldn't serve his interests to get involved in the obstruction of justice. He's a, he's basically almost a bag man, uh, not a bag man, but a message carrier, isn't he?

EHRlichman: No. No. He was a, Bittman was an instigator of the, of the whole thing. He was concerned about his fee. And, uh-

PRESIDENT: Oh, really, John?

EHRlichman: Yeah. Yeah. So he was one of the active promoters of that as near as I can tell.

PRESIDENT: Spell out for me what, what you can best say on the obstruction thing. What, uh, what, uh, was involved? I mean, the, uh, just from our side, from our guys.

EHRlichman: Well, you had, you had defendants who were concerned about their families and that's understandable. You had lawyers who were concerned about their fees, and that's less understandable.

PRESIDENT: Oh yes. It's understandable.

EHRlichman: You have, you have, well, I mean in terms of the end result, you had a campaign organization that was concerned about the success of its campaign...

PRESIDENT: Yes.

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EHRlichman: and didn't want these fellows to say anything in public that would disrupt the campaign.

PRESIDENT: Is that, is that legitimate to want people not to say it out in public which (unintelligible)?

EHRlichman: I think so. I think so.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

EHRlichman: And then you had a-

PRESIDENT: No, but I mean, they'd say something in public that would disrupt the campaign or because it would embarrass people?

EHRlichman: Sure.

PRESIDENT: Cover up, you mean?

EHRlichman: Sure. Sure. It would, uh, it would, uh, impeach the campaign in effect.

PRESIDENT: Ah.

EHRlichman: All right, but at the same time, a lot of thos same people who had that legitimate motive... - Hello Mdnolo.

SANCHEZ Good morning, sir. (Door opens and closes)
(Noise)

EHRlichman: ...they had the same people who had that legitimate motive had an illegitimate motive because they were involved in protecting their own culpability and here we're talking about LaRue, Magruder, Mitchell possibly.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) they wanted the defendants to shut up in court?

EHRlichman: Certainly, certainly.

PRESIDENT: So you, you, you would say, you could say, uh, -

EHRlichman: You have here...

PRESIDENT: In other words, you have Dean, we'll say, now let's take Dean..

EHRlichman: All right.

PRESIDENT: ...as a case in point. This says something that Dean was not, we could get him out of it, he, he could weasel out of the, I say weasel out, he says he's not involved in the perjury.

EHRlichman: Well, see, Dean's problem is that he was in touch with these committee people who could to Dean express a benign motive and at the same time, had a corrupt motive. If I were Dean, I would develop a defense that I was being manipulated by people who had a corrupt motive for ostensibly a benign motive. And, uh, in point of fact-

PRESIDENT: Well, some did have a benign motive.

EHRrlichman: That's right. That's right. You take a fellow like Shumway over there for instance..

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

EHRlichman: ...uh, who has to think about the PR of the campaign.

PRESIDENT: Making statements. Well, for example, it's the, it's like in the very tangential, and it's only tangentially that it touches you and Bob, uh, you know what I mean, that somebody came to you.

EHRlichman: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Good God, I mean you said go talk to Kalmbach. If you were talking about keeping (unintelligible) if you knew the defendants were guilty, and if you didn't know who the hell else was.

EHRlichman: That's correct.

PRESIDENT: And you just thought that they were sure of Hunt.

EHRlichman: Well, you know, the thing that ran through my mind...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

EHRlichman: was Howard Hunt has written 40 books...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

EHRlichman: ...and Howard Hunt was worried about the support of his family. And I could see Howard Hunt writing an inside expose of how he broke into the Democratic National Headquarters at the request of the Committee to Re-elect the President.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

EHRlichman: Now, if I had a choice between getting contributions for the support of Howard Hunt's family...

PRESIDENT: Yeah. And that's -

EHRlichman: ...and that was pretty easy.

PRESIDENT: And I suppose they would say though, that, uh-

EHRlichman: Oh, I didn't care what Howard Hunt said to the Prosecutor. He could've said anything he wanted to the Prosecutor in a secret, in a secret session. That didn't hurt us.

PRESIDENT: It was all secret then.

EHRlichman: The Grand Jury was secret.

PRESIDENT: The Grand Jury was all operative at that time.

EHRlichman: Sure.

P RESIDENT: It hadn't come to trial?

EHRlichman: Sure, it didn't come to trial until after the election.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. That's what I see.

EHRlichman: So, uh.

PRESIDENT: I think John wasn't, it was, the, nobody was trying to keep him from telling the truth to the Grand Jury, to shut him up to the Grand Jury.

EHRlichman: I can, I can say in truth and candor that Dean never explained to me that there was any kind of a deal to get these guys to lie or to change their stories or to refuse to testify to the, to the, uh, trial of the action or anything of that kind. That was just never discussed. So, I don't feel too uncomfortable with this.

PRESIDENT: Another thing, if Kleindienst resigns.

EHRlichman: If Kleindienst resigns, that says there's something wrong with the Justice Department.

PRESIDENT: So you'd keep him?

EHRlichman: At this point.

PRESIDENT: Even if he disqualifies himself?

EHRlichman: That's right, which wouldn't be anything too new.

PRESIDENT: Sure.

EHRlichman: Now he may have some-

PRESIDENT: Other information?

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EHRlichman: Yeah, or technical reason or something of that kind.

PRESIDENT: Dean may have some information aside from the Grand Jury that I don't know if Dean would want to have.

EHRlichman: I have a call in for him and the operator's left it over here. The reason that I do is that he never did pin down for me what it is that he wants me to do. Now I've tendered to him as I think I had to.

PRESIDENT: Good.

EHRlichman: And he said, "Well, I'll check it and, uh, be in touch with you tomorrow." So fine, I left word over there that I am here. That's the only, the only reason for my call.

PRESIDENT: Good.

EHRlichman: And you might ask him if there is anything we ought to do here in the light of developments, but I do feel that--thank you (coffee dishes clattering)--I do feel that there is nothing new in what I have beyond what Magruder has already told me,...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

EHRlichman: so, uh, I think it's largely academic.

(Pause)

PRESIDENT: On another matter, well, did Sloan (unintelligible) Magruder?

EHRlichman: Yeah.

Titus would have told him last night what Magruder said, and so, uh, he will, this morning, have, I think, as much knowledge about this thing as we have. There may be one or two, one or two details left.

PRESIDENT: But Magruder said that they are hot after Colson-

EHRlichman: On the suspicion-

PRESIDENT: Magruder's attorneys say that. Magruder had nothing on Colson.

EHRlichman: No. The one phone call is the only incident that he has to relate.

PRESIDENT: His attorney says I think they're hot in going after Colson.

EHRlichman: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: The reason there, of course, is the, uh, is Hunt.

EHRlichman: Right, the association.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

EHRlichman: And that's natural. You've got a guy in the case that-

PRF.SIDENT: Well Hunt is in deep with Colson.

EHRlichman: Yeah. Hunt has to know it.

PRESIDENT: What do you do about Colson, John?

EHRlichman: I don't think there's much to do at this point. He's, uh, he's building his own defenses. I assume that he's doing whatever has to be done with Hunt, that only he could do.

PRESIDENT: So, but, but-

EHRlichman: Well, you know, he's, he's, I'm sure, has had surreptitious contact with Hunt.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. He says (unintelligible) take care of your kids.

EHRlichman: And I think Chuck's natural proclivities will, will...

PRESIDENT: Do everything.

EHRlichman: do anything we can possibly do. You see-

PRESIDENT: With regard to defendants, uh, there isn't a hell of a lot more they can tell us that, that Magruder hasn't told (unintelligible).

EHRlichman: That's right.

PRESIDENT: In other words, there isn't a hell of a lot they can gain by, what was the, what could Liddy (unintelligible) to corroborate Magruder?

EHRlichman: That's all he could do. At this point, Magruder gives them everything they could have hoped to get from Liddy.

PRESIDENT: And, let's see, how the hell do you get Liddy's sentence cut down under those circumstances.

EHRlichman: It may be too late for him.

PRESIDENT: I wonder if it is. Huh? Or is it?

EHRlichman: Yeah. He was only, uh-

PRESIDENT: Why the hell didn't he talk then, what do you think?

EHRlichman: I don't know. I really don't. I don't understand him at all and Magruder paints him as really weird, really weird.

PRESIDENT: The thing with the gun...

EHRlichman: And all kinds of things. And, uh, there all kinds of Liddy stories running around.

(Pause)

PRESIDENT: Well, I did feel when I called you down here? I want to see what, when Kleindienst told Unintelligible) and since he's asked, I will.

EHRlichman: I'll be here and if you want me for anything, why just holler.

PRESIDENT: Well, look, I'll just listen to him. He has come in so often. (18-second pause) I, on the sale of ITT, of course, we didn't, my basic responsibility (unintelligible) get that God damn McClaren to settle this case or something like that, and a-

EHRlichman: Yeah. Yeah.

PRESIDENT: But that's what he should do.

EHRlichman: No, that wasn't to settle the case.

PRESIDENT: No, not settle.

EHRlichman: That was a, not to file an action. You remember they were about to file a law suit and -

PRESIDENT: How did we know about it?

EHRlichman: Flanigan found out about it.

PRESIDENT: You came and told me?

EHRlichman: I came and told you about it.

PRESIDENT: Why,

EHRlichman: You may have forgotten the details.

PRESIDENT: why didn't we think they should file an action?

EHRlichman: Well-

PRESIDENT: I am sure it was a good reason.

EHRlichman: Yeah. We had a rune-, we had a runaway anti-trust division at that point.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, and I had been raising hell with McClaren

EHRlichman: That's right.

PRESIDENT: ...on all this, and I said, now this is a violation of the rules-

EHRlichman: On policy, not on-

PRESIDENT: Basically that's the point, it's a violation of rules that I had laid down with McClaren.

EHRlichman: And, and, uh, I will, I will testify to my dying day that our approach to anti-trust cases has virtually without variation been on policy rather than the merits of an individual case.

PRESIDENT: Wasn't that case (unintelligible)?

EHRlichman: There was one exception to that and that was that Granite City Steel case where we criticized an analysis the Council of Economic Advisers did.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

EHRlichman: And we, we went back on them on the specific case rather than just the, the, uh, general policy. That was on a, on a factual issue.

PRESIDENT: What the hell was it, John, that (unintelligible) Kleindienst ticked. I don't know. Here's this guy, you know, who is really good hearted and worked hard and all that sort of thing and went down to the, down to the wire and so forth. His advice has been just wrong as hell on it.

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EHRlichman: I think he felt, and I have not talked to him about this, but I think he felt that if he involved himself in this case at all, uh, in Mitchell's behalf, that eventually it would have tainted the whole proceeding and maybe redounded to Mitchell's disadvantage...

PRESIDENT: Right.

EHRlichman: and...

PRESIDENT: Oh, I suppose that's (unintelligible).

EHRlichman: and that Mitchell's best chance-

PRESIDENT: Not Dean, but Mitchell's behalf that I'm just thinking of, just so that we would be (unintelligible), God damn it, or try to know how to (unintelligible) and cover the son-of-a-bitch up.

EHRlichman: Well, that's true, that's true.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

EHRlichman: He-

PRESIDENT: All you were ever asked was the general question, "What's going on?"

EHRlichman: Yeah. He, well, this is kind of interesting. I may have told you about this, but the U.S. Attorney now feels that Dean overreached them by providing information out of the Grand Jury to the Committee for the Re-election. I think that may be legitimate criticism if he, in fact, did that. On the other hand, for him to provide us with information inside, in the, for the orderly operation of the government, is another matter. That's two quite different things. If, if you peddle information from a Grand Jury to the outside, or if you peddle it inside to people who are responsible.

P RE SIDENT: (Unintelligible)

EHRlichman: Oh, that was, uh, let me think.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) Grand Jury at that point.

EHRlichman: He had information on, uh, who was going to be called as witnesses so that apparently Mardian was able to get around and coach witnesses.

PRESIDENT: Did Mardian coach them?

EHRlichman: In some cases, Mardian, I guess, was very heavy-handed about it, and uh...

PRESIDENT: Well, is there anything wrong with that?

EHRlichman: Yeah, well there's something wrong with-

PRESIDENT: He was not their attorney is the problem?

EHRlichman: Well, no, the problem, the problem is he asked them to say things that weren't true.

PRESIDENT: Oh.

EHRlichman: When I say coach, I use the word loosely, and-

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

EHRlichman: Well, no, a fellow over there named Porter, Bart Porter, for one.

PRESIDENT: Where is he now, in jail?

EHRlichman: No, he's in business somewhere, and, uh, he, he'll probably be indicted.

PRESIDENT: They coached him to what, did he say?

EHRlichman: Say, uh...

PRESIDENT: Was he, he was one of the buggers over there?

EHRlichman: No. No. Oh no, he worked for the Committee.

PRESIDENT: Worked for the Committee, well...

EHRlichman: But they asked him about higher-ups and about whether there was any (unintelligible) and so on and so forth.

PRESIDENT: How was he in the deal? How would he know about it?

EHRlichman: He worked over there in the, uh, in Magruder's office, and uh, he apparently passed money to, uh, Liddy, uh, from Sloan, and was privy to quite a lot of the information.

PRESIDENT: I thought John wanted Liddy to take money for that (unintelligible).

EHRlichman: Apparently he did. Well, I don't mean after, I mean to pay for equipment and to-

PRESIDENT: Oh. (Unintelligible)

EHRlichman: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Why the hell didn't the Grand Jury indict him, then?

EHRlichman: Well, because they didn't have the, they didn't have the evidence. There was, there was a cover story which Mardian and others cooked up, and, uh, Porter, corroborated the cover story, is now indictable for perjury. He's a little fish who got caught in the net.

PRESIDENT: Poor son-of-a-bitch. It's wrong. It's wrong.

EHRlichman: The whole thing is just monumentally tragic.

PRESIDENT: It is. We're not going to let it get us down.

EHRlichman: Well, that's right, that's right, and it'll pass.

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PRESIDENT: Dean is concerned, and it concerns me.

EHRlichman: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: I don't think he could have been that active in the pre, in the post yes, in the pre things, Magruder, Magruder and he played it a little wildly in some of that stuff.

EHRlichman: Well, I've got to get him in, and I hope you can probably see him today.

PRESIDENT: He would not help Dean. That's your evaluation of Dean. According to Dean's story about those meetings, which he told me is about 180 degrees (unintelligible) Magruder' s.

EHRlichman: That's right. That's right.

PRESIDENT: He says, he says, "Look, we shouldn't be talking about such things,..."

EHRlichman: I know.

PRESIDENT: particularly not in the office of the Attorney General." Magruder says he approved the million dollars and that's about right.

EHRlichman: And that Mitchell was the one who disapproved it.

P RESIDENT: Well, this could be a move Magruder/Dean (unintelligible)?

EHRlichman: Could be 'cause Dean shows up very prominently in the whole Magruder thing.

PRESIDENT: And Dean was in Florida you said on some occasion? Remember the Florida trip you told me about?

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EHRlichman: No. The three people there, Mitchell was already down there, Magruder and LaRue went down.

PRESIDENT: For what purpose?

EHRlichman: Brought him the final Liddy proposal

PRESIDENT: The two fifty?

EHRlichman: With the Watergate and the Fontainbleau and the McGovern headquarters spelled out.

PRESIDENT: How did Dean find out? Dean find out that there was a three thing, three things on a list? He knew that, and went up and told Mitchell about that.

EHRlichman: Yeah, and I-

PRESIDENT: How did Dean know that?

EHRlichman: I don't know. I don't know how he knew that. I assume that at some point in time, Magruder told him that.

PRESIDENT: Oh, I see. Magruder talks pretty much, doesn't he?

EHRlichman: Uh huh.

PRESIDENT: Likes to talk.

EHRlichman: Yeah. And in a lot of these things, of course, he had a lot of different versions of everything, but, uh, I think it's reasonable to assume that he passed that along to Dean.

PRESIDENT: Sure.

EHRlichman: Mitchell phoned me this morning to say that Daniel Schorr had been on the shuttle when he rode back to New York.