

Conversation Number 343-37
June 26, 1972, 12:35-1:25 P.M.
Oval Office
President and Haldeman

PRESIDENT: Ron has spoken to you about the Martha problem.

HALDEMAN: [I don't know.]

PRESIDENT: The question I have is whether I really ought to speak about it.

HALDEMAN: [I wouldn't worry.]

PRESIDENT: Well, I naturally worry not so much because of the effect on me but the effect on him. And on her too. I don't want to see hurt.

HALDEMAN: Did you, you did talk to him about it, I remember you did talk up, yeah, you did after the election about coming down here. Remember he made the point it would be good for her to come down here and get in the limelight and all that. And it was. You were absolutely right. Because during her basic years here she's been damn well, until we got back into the campaign.

PRESIDENT: What the hell caused the problem? Campaigns should be her meat.

HALDEMAN: I think the main problem is it takes more of John, that, that he spends time—

PRESIDENT: Oh.

HALDEMAN: —With the campaign. And she—

PRESIDENT: She wants him home.

HALDEMAN: She wants him home, and he has to do traveling, and he won't take her with him. Where he did as attorney general, because he could, you know, do it on a slower pace. Part of it was, on the ceremonial stuff, she was a star, and there's a lot of fancy stuff going on, and he's not on the lists, I'm sure—

PRESIDENT: Our list?

HALDEMAN: No, but I mean [cross talking] in Washington, doesn't go to all the embassy balls anymore, probably, even if their invited he probably doesn't go, a waste of his time, and he knows it. As attorney general he probably should go. He doesn't have any alternative unless he can lock her up. There's no way, unless he can put a keeper on her, and keep her that way. But I don't see how he can do that because people get out.

PRESIDENT: Well, the way this is blowing now, it's getting pretty big, the story. Don't you

agree?

HALDEMAN: Well, yeah, if they run this stuff about throwing her on the bed and sticking a needle in her behind and that kind of stuff. After all [pause], someone raised the point this morning that he was concerned about, that the potential is nowhere near, but we could get to it, the potential problems on the other thing, Watergate.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: You could use this as a basis for Mitchell pulling out. That means we're going to have to fix nearly everything all over and at the same time start trying to put a new structure together. It isn't going to turn the other off. So Mitchell pulls out, so he's still the former attorney general, your former campaign manager, and they're not going to let up on him just because—

PRESIDENT: This is after.

HALDEMAN: Because he's the manager now. And then the only way you can do that is to hang him on it, say, well, yeah, he did it, and that's why we have to get rid of him.

PRESIDENT: I can't do that. I won't do that to him. I'd rather, shit, lose the election. I really would.

HALDEMAN: You can't do that. He won't let you do that.

PRESIDENT: No.

HALDEMAN: He'll pull the plug himself [before you could] do that.

PRESIDENT: No, no. [Unclear.] He was supposed to do everything he could to find out what was going on, you know what I mean. [I must say,] we know that.

HALDEMAN: Apparently, with our limited resources in that area, used the same people for a wide range of things. So you've got them all, you've got cross-ties interweaving and all that. And that's, if these guys were only on this thing, you could cut them loose and sink them without a trace.

PRESIDENT: You mean they've been on ITT?

HALDEMAN: And other stuff.

PRESIDENT: Black holes?

HALDEMAN: Apparently a lot of stuff. There's stuff I don't know anything about.

PRESIDENT: Stuff we know nothing about.

HALDEMAN: But I've been told that the lines run in various directions.

PRESIDENT: Any other candidates?

HALDEMAN: Yeah. Apparently, this is part of the apparatus that's been used for some of these surveillance projects, and, ah, checking on various things, you know. The trouble is they're tied into, in some remote way, the people that have been doing some of, the, ah, the anti activity and the other, you know on other campaign things during the primaries. Apparently there's, there's various lines of inter-linkage in the whole damn business.

PRESIDENT: Well, we'll have to decide and so forth [it was done.]

HALDEMAN: Doing those is no problem, but tying these people to doing those, and this then is a problem. It would show that they were political operatives for the campaign.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, you're right. [Unclear.][What we can do, not to borrow trouble.] [Unclear.]

HALDEMAN: I don't know.

PRESIDENT: [Unclear.]

HALDEMAN: Nothing, there are no specifics. [Unclear.] This civil suit [complicates things.] [Unclear regarding McGovern.] In a way, he's overplaying his hand on this, scared to death about where it goes. Even the magazines reporting on it talk about the Democrats [unclear] although it's tied, not tied to the Republicans.

PRESIDENT: The way to handle it is say it was tied to the Republicans without, you know [unclear.]

HALDEMAN: It was tied, in a sense, because of these people.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. They're all for us, unauthorized—

HALDEMAN: They got carried away. They're emotional people who were afraid of what McGovern's going to do. Why the hell anybody would care what was happening at the Democratic Committee? There is one glimmer of hope, apparently. One of the, and a game to play; we've got to be careful, though. It might be a possibility, depending on whether it's true, is apparently in their photographs, the stuff that they were taking, they have some documents, photographs of documents that were at the Democratic Committee that were classified Defense Department documents. Now, if in fact that's true, then you've got another case for Dole, that these people knew that something, that CIA agents or something, that something was going on. You know how it buzzed up, the Pentagon Papers and Jack Anderson and a lot of things.

PRESIDENT: Draw a damaging analogy to the Pentagon Papers. They praised all that and gave prizes for it.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: And this, when it's the other, the reverse part, now it's a horrible thing. I haven't seen anybody expressing any horror.

HALDEMAN: Yeah. One of the magazines makes that point, and there was a column.

PRESIDENT: Was there?

HALDEMAN: Saying exactly that. They didn't use, you know, the Pulitzer Prize kind of thing. We're trying to get someone to pick it up.

PRESIDENT: It's a double standard. Colson told me about the ads that were running. Where the hell, where the hell is the stuff, taking off on the horrible stuff they were running against me, you know? [I haven't seen anything on that.]

HALDEMAN: I did put them on most of that stuff, except the Anderson [unclear.]

[The conversation about Watergate ended with the president's concern about the unfair press treatment he felt they were receiving. Haldeman noted that the national magazines had largely ignored the story, which Ehrlichman had been concerned about. The president, however, did not believe the magazines, even when they ran a cover story, made much difference with the general public, only the Washington folks. As the president put it, "The God damn magazines don't have the impact they used to have." But both men were very unhappy having to enter the campaign with Watergate, since all else had gone so well. After reviewing the president's schedule for the first week in July in California, Haldeman departed at 1:25 P.M. After a quick nap, the president called Colson and requested he come to the EOB Office.]