

Conversation Number 346-8  
June 28, 1972, 11:16 A.M.-1:55 P.M.  
Executive Office Building  
President, Colson and Haldeman

[The conversation transcribed below originally began at 0:10:44.0 on tape 346a.]

PRESIDENT: [Any] further word from Mitchell?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, he's, ah, had his talk with Fred LaRue, and he's coming back down, this afternoon.

PRESIDENT: I'm surprised. Huh?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: [In Arkansas,] I'm surprised at McGovern's bad taste.

HALDEMAN: That hurts him [referring to McGovern]. You've got a lot of Martha fans in this country, nutty though she is.

PRESIDENT: I think so.

HALDEMAN: And I hope that [unclear] a plus, there are still a hell of a lot of people that—

PRESIDENT: People that what?

HALDEMAN: People that have a positive view of her. She's, ah, a character, and whatever.

[Colson entered at 11:18 A.M.]

PRESIDENT: Well, I just say, just a second, that Bob and I are rather surprised that McGovern had the bad taste to take on Martha, or did you think that smart crack, smart-ass crack?

COLSON: I think it was a wise crack that will hurt him. It was a dumb thing to do, for a political person.

PRESIDENT: She's a sick woman, as you know.

COLSON: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: I happen to think that's a crock. , I noticed the way the press is—

HALDEMAN: When she said she is political prisoner, they picked that up.

PRESIDENT: I know that. You understand, everybody knows that. What I intended was I can't believe the way the rest of the press is letting off having a field day.

HALDEMAN: For sure.

PRESIDENT: You know, [unclear.] Well, that's what I mean.

HALDEMAN: They're also making, which is kind of interesting, that the way it's getting played, I don't think it's hurting us now, as much as Mitchell's concerned it is, in that there've been so many political divorces, or marital problems—

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: —Tunney's divorce, McCloskey's divorce, Dole's divorce, ah, there are a couple others, there's, there's a half a dozen that go right down the list, all, I mean within the last three months. As so they just say this is the latest in a string of political casualties.

PRESIDENT: See that is—

HALDEMAN: And then they go into a very sympathetic thing about the real problems.

PRESIDENT: That was the thing, ah, that Billy Graham was worried about. He really thought [Colson coughs] [problem was Martha's ego and all that shit]. Hard living with the God damn problems he does, he's living with a nut. I mean, I mean, John does.

COLSON: My thought going in this situation is that it can be very quickly turn around, what people are, they're sort of amused.

HALDEMAN: People will pick up—

PRESIDENT: People will pick up that, remember that was said in Arkansas, I think.

[The president continued noting that other people all have these problems in varying degrees, and said they will think, "Oh, shit." Haldeman noted some people may be on Martha's side against John. From Martha and John the conversation turned to the media establishment— the commentators, news anchors, and celebrity reporters. Kissinger's press relations, generally good, were examined. The president wanted someone to research Abraham Lincoln's amnesty policy. They explored foreign policy issues, and Colson departed at 12:50 P.M. Haldeman and the president continued the conversation, further discussing the president's forthcoming press conference. The president wondered if he would get some questions about Watergate, or as he described it, "crap on the bugging and Martha." And Haldeman reassured him, "Some shit's going to lob in the bugging thing." Ron Zeigler visited briefly, to further discuss a few editorial changes in the president's column on baseball greats, and when Zeigler departed at 1:05 P.M., the president had a rather blunt question for his chief of staff. The conversation originally ended at 1:49:46.0. Nixon returned to Mitchell at 1:58:07.0.]

PRESIDENT: What's your honest opinion on the Mitchell thing, you know, if you don't mind expressing that now.

HALDEMAN: Yep, I do.

PRESIDENT: You think he has to go? [A somber tone.]

HALDEMAN: Yes, sir. [Crisp, and with no hesitation.]

PRESIDENT: Okay. You [and Colson] talk about it.

HALDEMAN: I didn't want to raise it.

PRESIDENT: [Unclear.] Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Mitchell's come to the same conclusion. Because he feels that there's enough of a problem with his not being fully effective and he doesn't want to be, you know, be in any position to jeopardize the full effectiveness of the campaign.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. [President clears his throat, and spits, and goes to his bathroom. Haldeman raises his voice to continue as the president returns to the seating area by his desk.]

HALDEMAN: [Unclear] incidentally, the more I've thought about it—

PRESIDENT: [President gives instructions to another aide, and Haldeman continues.]

HALDEMAN: The more I think that maybe all a very good move.