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Location: Oval Office
Participants: Nixon, Haldeman, Bull

[*The President met with H.R. ("Bob") Haldeman*]

[*Unclear exchange*]

Nixon: Well, the thing I want done here today, rather than me to sit around and gas with [*unclear*] and Moore, and Kleindienst and all the rest about this—

Haldeman: Yep.

Nixon: I think what they ought to do is to really do some heavy thinking and then to come in with a recommendation. In other words, let them do [*unclear*] before I get into it, see what I mean? I may have ideas. Now, the one thing that I do have strong ideas is about this damn funeral, though. I want it to be big. I want it to be done that way, regardless of that. Can that be arranged?

Haldeman: Yep. I'm sure it can—

Nixon: Now I have to be—You see that has to be decided fairly soon.

Haldeman: Right, and now do we want to get all the law enforcement people from all over the country, all the—

Nixon: Police chiefs.

Haldeman: [*Unclear Exchange*]

Nixon: The outdoor thing I don't know, remembering that it's basically a [*unclear*] it's a television thing.

Haldeman: That may be a problem. That's a—

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: —that's a great setting.

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: And it'd look good on TV.

Nixon: Maybe it's just as well.

Haldeman: If you don't do it there you have to do it in a church, I think. And if you do it in a church, I don't—It sure as hell don't want to go to that Presbyterian church.

Nixon: It's one of those where it might be that I have to give the eulogy myself. And after all, I don't milk the goddamned thing. And after all, I'm the one who can do it right, rather than a—

Haldeman: Well, it's a logical one for you to do the eulogy on him. He's unique and his relationship with you goes so far back.

Nixon: Right. And he's basically the man of the President rather than the man of the Attorney General. [*Pause*] I wonder who the hell could write that. I don't think it's quite Buchanan's dish. Price is usually the best on eulogy-type of things.

Haldeman: What about the impact? Is that harder going than Price?

Nixon: [*Unclear*] Andrews.

Haldeman: Johnny Andrews. Yeah.

Nixon: That's right. Him working, you know, getting the material through Buchanan. Buchanan's style is overly, you know, there's too much stuff in it for me, but I really think I have to do the eulogy for Hoover, and maybe it ought to be [*unclear*].

Haldeman: The other thing is if—if you really want to do it at—if we could see what that family graveyard is—maybe do it there. He'd dominate that.

Nixon: It should be at Arlington.

Haldeman: At Arlington he's one of thousands.

Nixon: Well...

Haldeman: The thing that's wrong with Arlington [*unclear*] is the Kennedys. They so—like they do everything else in this place—they totally dominate the goddamned place.

Nixon: Well, they do, but on the other hand, Christ, other people are buried there.

McArthur, Dulles is buried at Arlington. [*Unclear*] service for their country.

Haldeman: Outside could be a problem, because you could get rain.

Nixon: That's right.

Haldeman: And it could be a problem from the television viewpoint. On the other hand—

Nixon: Who knows?

Haldeman: There's some—Well, you don't—it isn't a crowd thing. You can't get cheers.

Nixon: No. So you don't have to fight that, and the beauty of it...

Haldeman: The beauty of Arlington is—

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: —is great. The ceremonial possibilities there are a hell of a lot better than in a church.

Nixon: That's the point. The church is impossible to cover from a ceremonial standpoint.

Haldeman: You can't—Well, you can't do anything in a church, except—

Nixon: I like the Arlington idea.

Haldeman: Arlington you could have—you could have, you know, maybe all the police chiefs of the country will come in their uniforms and do a—do a guard of honor kind of thing or a—

Nixon: Um-hmmm.

Haldeman: And of course you have military pomp of many kinds there. You could do an airplane fly-over, or—

Nixon: Um-hmmm.

Haldeman: —the band of taps—

Nixon: Let's put the best—Put the best damn person you can have on the stage, On this thing. Okay?

Haldeman: Yeah.

[Pause, 13 seconds]

Nixon: Well, Henry got nothing out of them over there as he expected. I expected it. You have to understand he's terribly disappointed.

Haldeman: I'm not surprised. I didn't think—

Nixon: Why the hell would he?

Haldeman: That's—I think poor old Henry's—I think he really thought he was gonna get something.

Nixon: He thought he might. He insisted that they'd come to the summit, the Soviets this and that. I'm gonna have a talk with Haig this afternoon. He's quite *[unclear]*, but...

Haldeman: They really did do nothing?

Nixon: He said it's the most unproductive of all the meetings he's had. *[Unclear]* demanded the overthrow of Thieu.

Haldeman: Didn't even serve warm tea?

Nixon: No. But the point is, Bob, we've got to realize that on this whole business of negotiating with North Vietnam, Henry has never been right. Now, I just can't help it. I just have to say that, just a straight out of the black conclusion.

Haldeman: Well, Al never thought he was going to get anything, though.

Nixon: No.

Haldeman: I didn't either. Al told me before Henry left—you know—he said, "It's probably a good exercise, but I don't think he's gonna do it—"

Nixon: And he's not going to put it out this time. Connally, he sees—naturally he's not gonna because it would raise hopes that things were going on. We don't want to raise any hopes. You know that's the line, as I said, that the PR types around here. Thank God I talked to Al about it, but I didn't take that line in Dallas because—I mean in San Antonio—

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: —because we have to take the hard line now. We've got to—we've got to keep our guys flying out there. It's all we can do. We have no other choice. And if you start indicating anything about ceasefire or coalition government or anything like that we're not gonna dominate the course. Good God Almighty, you realize what happens to your negotiating position; the Peaceniks and all the rest are gonna—it'll be hard enough anyway. We'll just keep cracking in there, keep him...

Haldeman: So you go ahead with your big ones now?

Nixon: We have to, 'cause, what the hell else do you do?

Haldeman: Has he got this?

Nixon: What the hell else do you do? You've got to do it for American public opinion. You got to do it for the South Vietnamese to keep their morale from dropping, and you've got to do it in order to get some bargaining position with the enemy. And also, right, the thing that I'm afraid to reference, I feel strongly about it, I think we better

cancel the Russian summit. Now this is the one that just breaks Henry's heart, because—

Haldeman: What about postponing it?

Nixon: No, then they'd cancel.

Haldeman: Yeah. You could make it look like you were. If you postpone indefinitely, just announce you will not go to the summit under these conditions.

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: Don't say, "I'm canceling."

Nixon: That's right.

Haldeman: Don't say, "I'll never go," but say—

Nixon: Yeah

Haldeman: —“Under the present conditions I will not go, and therefore I have cancelled my plans for the May 22nd departure or whatever it is—May 20th departure.” And, “What becomes of the summit depends on what happens in other places.” Then they can come back and say we cancelled the summit. You've still taken the initiative.

Nixon: No I haven't. You see all this is very painful to me. I know all of our people around here, it's especially painful to Henry because he sees basically our goal for everything in great jeopardy; I mean all of our schemes and this and that. But on the other hand we've got to look at what else you can do, and what else do you do—is to, you know, continue to just whack 'em out there [*and*] have the Russians cancel the summit. That's the worst of both worlds.

Haldeman: Um-hmmm. If you cancel the summit you gain something from it. If they cancel it, it hurts you.

Nixon: If they cancel it, it looks like we—peace has suffered a great blow because of our

failure in Vietnam, the President's stubbornness and all that sort of thing. If, on the other hand, I say I will not go to the summit so long as there's any, so long as we have a massive offensive being supported by the Soviet Union.

[Pause, 10 seconds]

Haldeman: That's right, and the Shah and all those other folks, too.

Nixon: Well, we still stop to see them.

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: Now, Henry has a point that—and Al thinks there's something to this point, at least more to it than I do, that—and maybe he's right—to a certain extent we keep the critics off balance as long as they think that we're, we may be up to something on the negotiating front.

Haldeman: Right.

Nixon: Indeed you're right.

Haldeman: Well, I think that's right, but I don't—It keeps that narrow fringe of critics off balance, and it's important—

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: —to keep them off balance.

Nixon: Um-hmmm.

Haldeman: But that doesn't buy you public support. Your general—

Nixon: I don't think so either.

Haldeman: —your general public support is still—Of course the public wants peace, but then they see them—That's one problem you got with canceling the summit—

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: —is that they—

Nixon: Is that they want the Soviet summit.

Haldeman: —because they think that's a piece of—not just Vietnam—

Nixon: On the other hand they don't want to lose. They want that—they're mixed.

They're all very ambivalent about it. They want peace on the one hand—

Haldeman: That's why—that's why postponing it rather than canceling it might put you in a better posture, too. If they cancel it, it's they who've destroyed the thing, as part of the peace thing. But you've taken a strong position of saying, "I won't sit down with them under present conditions." [*Pause, 30 seconds*] Well, the other side of that is what happens on the military side.

Nixon: Well, I don't know. [*unclear*] I mean, it is as usual. It's not—it is—it's hairy, but not nearly as frightening as the press indicates it. You know you get the whole thing everywhere else. Al says it's a great nuisance to us. It's all there. There's some units not doing so well, but others are standing and the enemy's taking a hell of a cut—clobbering. He says, "Just keep it up." That's all. Just who's going to stand there? You see the point of the military thing is this, if you're—what the hell else do you do? Get out? [*Chuckles; brief pause*] Overthrow Thieu? Jesus Christ we can't do that.

[*Pause, 10 seconds*]

Haldeman: We can. He can't.

Nixon: Oh yes, if it's part of the South. But you know if he just runs off now, suppose he goes out and says, "I resign." Christ, the whole thing collapses and your men are under great, great danger to the remaining Americans. No we just—just hold tight. Don't get panicky. Don't let them. You know what I mean?

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: Our people normally shouldn't be anywhere near this. These are the ways wars are. You go up and down. You think it's tough, but they just stand there. You can't make good news when it isn't good. On the other hand...

[Pause, 12 seconds]

But I—there's one thing I'm sure of: We need that strike on Hanoi-Haiphong area. I think that just adds up on all scores. They thought—They don't negotiate now, Christ, how the hell are you going to improve your negotiating position? How are you gonna get the...?

[Pause, 15 seconds]

So, we'll work on it.

Haldeman: We're willing right now.

Nixon: Well, willing like hell. But look, we have to face it that—I mean I guess that his judgment has not been good on this. His judgment has been terrific on most things. He thought, Bob, that he was gonna get something out of the Russians when he went over. You know that.

Haldeman: And he didn't get a drop.

Nixon: Remember? And I kept—that's why I sent those goddamned cables. I knew he wasn't getting anything. I said, "For Christ's sakes don't give 'em what they want unless you get something we want." Well, it was alright.

Haldeman: Um-hmmm

Nixon: So—Second point, these—And I told Al this morning, I said "Al, aren't you glad

I didn't make that SALT announcement?" He said, "I sure am. I never wanted you to anyway, making the SALT announcement."

Haldeman: Did Henry want you to make—was he the one that was—

Nixon: Oh yes.

Haldeman: —wanted you to go on?

Nixon: I just, finally—he finally agreed yesterday morning to disable them. Oh yes, yes.

[*Unclear*] on the ground and—

Haldeman: Keep it away from Gerry Smith.

Nixon: And also—Yeah. I think here he was very personally involved because he wants to be sure the White House gets the credit and so forth, but my point is, Bob, I don't think there's a hell of a lot of credit in it. I don't think people give much of a shit about SALT.

Do you?

Haldeman: Oh, it's a plus, but it isn't a—

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: —it isn't a—

Nixon: It didn't get any play last night.

Haldeman: Ron calls it a [*unclear*] and nobody's gonna—

Nixon: Yeah. They're not conscious of it—

Haldeman: —change their votes because of it.

Nixon: —particularly when the enemy is knocking around over there.

[*Pause, 7 seconds*]

No, the press, the big deal here, I said to Haig, they're just trying to—the usual thing to build—divide the President with this, you know, hard-line/soft-line. And also

they're trying in other lines to build Henry as a peacemaker if we get it. See?

Haldeman: Um-hmmm.

Nixon: They won't work, I mean, if we get it. And anyway it isn't going to come. And the reason they're selecting Henry to beat Bill now is they have given up on Rogers. That's what it really gets down to. They know that they can't go with him. They know he isn't going to be able to accomplish anything—

Haldeman: [*Unclear*]

Nixon: They know Henry's potent, so they're—that is why, I mean, and Henry's—

Haldeman: And they're just invisible about this.

Nixon: —Henry's got to be able understand this that when he was—when he was—he didn't—I must say, to his credit, he didn't talk to the rest of society. When the rest of the society praise Kissinger the purpose is not to help us, it's to screw us. Right?

Haldeman: Absolutely.

Nixon: I'd keep Scali going with the other line, I mean, "The President's in charge."

[*Pause, 14 seconds*]

Are your other things going alright? Are you hitting it? I want to see Ehrlichman later.

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: Later this afternoon. He'll help me out with some things. You've got all your offensives in ink? The press offensive, [*unclear*] the enemy? I mean, taking after the press—

Haldeman: We're trying to get the leak to hit the press thing today.

Nixon: Well...

Haldeman: He's [Spiro Agnew] at the governor's thing, but he wants to hit the secrecy thing. Understandably and rightfully he's mad about the Pulitzer Prize going to the *New York Times*.

Nixon: Oh yeah, I don't believe it.

Haldeman: Which—but there's no point in just going out and getting upset about it. I mean it just isn't going to—

Nixon: Maybe I'll pinch it to them.

Haldeman: —so they got it and that's a disgrace and typical.

Nixon: What'd you expect?

Haldeman: [*Unclear*] that, and what he needs to be doing is hitting the other attack button press rather than the secrecy thing.

Nixon: That sort of thing, well?

Haldeman: I think [*unclear*]

[*Unclear exchange*]

Haldeman: Yeah

Nixon: There's still open grounds.

Haldeman: We're gonna have to have housekeeping [*unclear*] sort of posted on some lines to use and all that. We gotta keep doing that because they—Understandably their concern, as political animals, about getting out in front and getting cut off.

Nixon: If they did, they're beating me—

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: —with the military situation.

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: Sure.

Haldeman: And...

Nixon: That's a tough one. That's a tough one right now. Well, I wouldn't have them try to get out in front. I think they ought to play the line, by God, that particularly that's naturally the only reason we're gonna have the Haiphong strike.

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: We've got to have something positive—

Haldeman: Sure.

Nixon: —to talk about.

Haldeman: If you—the worst thing you can do now is try to oversell.

Nixon: I couldn't agree more.

Haldeman: It doesn't really accomplish anything anyway, in a...

Nixon: That's right. Well then maybe—what I, I'm—

Haldeman: That's what you should—

Nixon: —talking about the attack on the press.

Haldeman: Well it's interesting. The critics have laid low. There isn't really very much on the—Doug [?] said now we've got the votes starting to come up.

Nixon: Yeah

Haldeman: And the Democratic Caucus meets tomorrow.

Nixon: Um-hmmm.

Haldeman: And that will probably...

Nixon: Well, you understand that if they do this...

Haldeman: It gives you a good scapegoat.

Nixon: So we may not press them too much. So you agree with it?

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: We may not want to do it, but, I mean, we're certainly gonna have it hanging out there.

[Pause, 18 seconds]

The eulogy should be about a thousand words, twelve hundred words—not a bit over that, so it isn't a bit over ten minutes.

Haldeman: Ok. Over the next few days, you should say that kind of thing Thursday.

Alright.

[Tapping noises on the desk]

Nixon: Well, at least that would be to leave at a high moment. Could we get Moore out of there?

Haldeman: Yep.

Nixon: Oh, he died at the right time, didn't he? Goddamn it'd have killed him to get—to lose that office. It would have killed him.

Haldeman: Damn if he'd survived—Actually, he would have been better off to have died a couple of years ago, and we would have been better off to have gotten a new director in there.

Nixon: I know.

Haldeman: And we could have done it—

Nixon: On the other hand—

Haldeman: —a few years ago

Nixon: —Bob, and thank God we didn't go on that ploy late last year pushing him out.

You know what I mean?

Haldeman: Yeah. It wouldn't have...

Nixon: It wouldn't work. Well...

Haldeman: Well, it would have worked if he had wanted to do it.

Nixon: All right. [*Unclear*] have a look, you know, and we tried with modern medicine and stuck with it.

[*Pause, 12 seconds*]

You see the stock market's kind of reacting to that problem, anyhow. I'm still worried about that. I'm not—I'm not concerned about that. The general economic news still continues to be good.

Haldeman: That's very good. Never would—I don't know what the—We have the Wholesale Price Index [*WPI*] on Thursday.

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: And employment on Friday, so we'll have other economic news.

Nixon: Well, the W—Wholesale Price Index doesn't mean much. It's unemployment, doesn't mean much right now, so people are getting a little bit adjusted to that, you know. Unless it soars, and I don't see how it can soar...

Haldeman: It can't really, unless the base goes way up to the end.

Nixon: [*Unclear*]

Haldeman: That's the only thing that hurts us is the employment base.

Nixon: You see, I can't see us—I just can't see—it's just been hard for me to get this through to Henry—I just can't see myself being in Moscow, toasting to goddamned Brezhnev, signing a SALT treaty in the Hall of Great St. Peter when Vietnam is under

serious attack. Do you agree with that?

Haldeman: I think I do. I—my basic—I’ve already told you that it—

Nixon: Why don’t you discuss this?

Haldeman: —I’m just trying to raise the other side of this. I don’t know how you argue the other side. I don’t see how you can argue—

Nixon: Why don’t you compose the question in, for a quick 500-word—500 sample—that we can run with immediately? You can do that, can’t you?

Haldeman: Yeah.

Nixon: What I’d like to do is to say, “In the view of the continued communist invasion of South Vietnam, which is supported by massive Soviet aid and military equipment, some”—I’m thinking how to word it—“some”—“it has been”—or, “Do you believe that he, the President should—As you know, the President is scheduled to go to the Soviet Union for a summit meeting, and so”—You get that?—“But should he postpone his meeting with the Soviet leaders until after the offensive, unless the offensive is discontinued?” In other words, “Try to get in the way—unless this offensive is discontinued. There are some say, that unless the offensive is discontinued, the President should refuse, should cancel”—don’t say postpone, don’t give ‘em several, don’t give them eighteen questions; in other words, make it one [*and*] address it to the Soviet Union—“or should not go forward, should delay, should postpone his visit to the Soviet Union until the—until the summit is...”

You’re gonna be wording those things. Would you try to get some wording out like that?

Haldeman: Um-hmmm.

Nixon: Let's just get a feeling of what kind of public opinion we're faced with on that. See? I have a feeling myself that despite their great interest in building, having the summit, the people still don't want the President to go there when we're under a hell of an assault from Soviet guns and tanks. You see my point?

Haldeman: Yep.

[*Pause, 5 seconds*]

Nixon: You just put it very simply: "Do you think the President should cancel this—is postpone this meeting with the Soviets—cancel it until the..."

Haldeman: That's it. "Cancel it until the offensive"—

Nixon: "And cancel it"—"Cancel it until the offensive is discontinued. [*Pause, 8 seconds*] A meeting—a summit meeting with the Soviet leaders until the offensive in Vietnam is stopped or discontinued," or something like that. Or, "Or do you believe he should go forward with this meeting with the Soviet leaders, regardless of the fact that even if this offensive in Vietnam continues?" We're going to be in a position, my view—this is the 2nd, we leave on—we don't get there until the 22nd; in other words, we've got three weeks. We're gonna be in a position then when the offensive will have, frankly, run its course and they will not have succeeded. I still think that's the case, though. When I say not succeeded they will have succeeded in the public mind anyways, ok? Hardest hit is—

Haldeman: [*Unclear*]

Nixon: —the Second Corps, but the—And any person who knows a goddamn thing about the country knows all that matters in Vietnam are Third and Fourth Corps. That's where all the people are. Anyway. So we lose. You did get your poll out, didn't you—the poll

up to the Congress and so forth?

Haldeman: Yes, sir. I sure did, and with a lot of—

Nixon: Good.

Haldeman: —background.

Nixon: That's the stuff.

Haldeman: I didn't see any public rec[ognition] on that . We got it out yesterday. I did that—

Nixon: [Unclear] public rec. The purpose of this is to really affect our own people's morale and so forth. You see? I'd certainly like to have some public rec, but I don't think they're going to give it. But everybody—Colson's group knows the importance of it. Now that is something that should be played, you understand? That's not Pollyannaish.

Haldeman: That's right. The whole public opinion, that's what people think—

Nixon: No, no that's right. You see that—Putting out the polls, not taking the Pollyannaish line, it's, "Should—should we kick these bastards or not?"

Haldeman: That's right.

Nixon: So that's a pretty good one. Do you have something else there, even though?

Haldeman: No. This is just—I've asked about the Arlington thing, and...

Nixon: They can't do it. Well, I know they would do it.

Haldeman: Yeah, they can. He doesn't qualify for Arlington burial. You'd have to make a waiver, but that's no problem at all.

Nixon: No problem, no—

Haldeman: We've got an early start on it. The amphitheater, it seats forty five hundred. I thought it was a little teeny place, but it's not at all.

Nixon: That's right.

Haldeman: So that's right.

Nixon: That's a very good venue. Your idea is excellent.

Haldeman: It's interesting because nobody knows there's an amphitheater there, so it's kind of a—

Nixon: Magnificent setting.

Haldeman: It's takes a really unique place.

Nixon: The, uh [*unclear*]—

Haldeman: Most beautiful. There's the big white columns coming up. It's all white marble, and it's a hell of a nice place. You get the Marine Band there play—

Nixon: Um-hmmm.

Haldeman: —appropriate music—

Nixon: Um-hmmm.

Haldeman: —you know, and...

Nixon: You must have Taps, All of Them Soldiers, and all that. You're goddamned right. Dulles—Dulles didn't qualify to be in Arlington, in my opinion.

Haldeman: If he—if he had had any military service he did. He probably did. He had probably been in World War I. I don't know, maybe John [*Foster Dulles*]...

Nixon: Foster Dulles did not. No. Hell, he went to the peace conference with his uncle [*Secretary of State Robert Lansing*].

Haldeman: If you're a level two with prior military service you automatically qualify. Hoover is a level two, but without prior military service.

Nixon: I don't care, just—

Haldeman: But that doesn't matter, you can do a presidential waiver, and I—Nobody's gonna question the waiver. Well, sure, it's not going to [*unclear*] some of them. Another advantage—

Nixon: Why do I have to have a controversy about it?

Haldeman: —Another advantage to Arlington is that you got a crowd control situation there where you don't have demonstrators screwing you up, which you might have at a church on the arrival and all that.

Nixon: That's right.

Haldeman: Demonstrators at Arlington would have to be outside the gates.

Nixon: That's right. [*Pause, 8 seconds*]

Haldeman: 'Cause there are some anti-Hoover folk who—

Nixon: Oh Heaven.

Haldeman: I can't imagine—Oh yes I can. They're the kind—

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: Those are the type who would want to desecrate a funeral.

Nixon: Well, that wouldn't be too bad either if we handled it right.

Haldeman: Sorry?

Nixon: If you handled it [*unclear*]. At least I think you agree with the—that it was the right thing for me to go out and make that announcement, rather than having Ron read it to the State.

Haldeman: Absolutely.

Nixon: I mean our people don't understand, that having Kleindienst do it, that's no way to do it—

Haldeman: Oh no, the only question they had was whether you should announce it then. They were concerned because of the time delay and everything, that it would look like you had held it up to make an announcement or something. This way it just rolls through, because Justice then handles the—which is normal anyway. When someone dies the hospital or somebody else normally announces it.

[*Pause, 10 seconds*]

Nixon: Ok, [*unclear*] points are certain.

Haldeman: Oh, while we've got the radio speech.

Bull: No, you can't do that. I think you want to get into that with [*he?*] or me.

Nixon: Which—which one's it on?

Haldeman: It's a, sort of a broad scale outcome of our troubles, [*unclear*] problems.

Nixon: I don't think it's quite time to do it.

Haldeman: Let the American people, who've always have had problems.

Nixon: We have a—See if Haig can have a visit, and...

Haldeman: Radio's very strong and it's not.

Nixon: Not the right time.

Haldeman: He's gonna, but he says...

Nixon: I think we should wait until after the Vietnam thing now.

Haldeman: He doesn't think we should do 'em at all now.

Nixon: None at all?

Haldeman: None. He says with the primary season that everything political and quiet philosophical discussion would have worked last year won't work now.

Nixon: We'll see. Maybe when we return from Moscow would be a good time. Submit

it to me then, ok? I'm sure he's right, right now. That can't be—it's not right during this war, that's why it isn't right, incidentally, I mean I'm gonna have to speak to him. John probably wants me to go out and, why, designate a supermarket or something today, but we're not gonna have any trips right now. You tell everybody that. I don't mean we're backing down here. I'm going over there to the Naval Academy.

Haldeman: Now that's—

Nixon: Huh?

Haldeman: That's—that—The guys, the Ehrlichman argument, on getting out at the Naval Academy goes really counter to rather than for it.

Nixon: He doesn't believe we should do it?

Haldeman: No, I think he thinks he should.

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: But I think I—but not because it meets the—

Nixon: Um-hmmm.

Haldeman: —thing of getting on...

Nixon: What the hell does he think Texas was? That was certainly getting out, wasn't it?

Haldeman: No, that was—

Nixon: Four thousand people.

Haldeman: No, because that would—he didn't count that. He counts the... The focus on that was on the County Ranch [?], with two hundred millionaires, foreign people.

Nixon: Oh, I thought it wasn't. There were still quite a few folks, an effective speaker—

Haldeman: There was—

Nixon: —at the airport.

Haldeman: —TV at the airport.

Nixon: [*Unclear*] At least we weren't [*unclear*] but we aren't, you know...

Haldeman: And you took open questions in front the press and made it the thing where you were [*unclear*].

Nixon: We weren't back down at the White House, that's right. Don't you think the Naval Academy's a good thing to do?

Haldeman: I think it's a great big thing to do, and I think John does, too. But he and Colson both have a strong feeling that you need more—**Well**, they make an argument that we don't want Vietnam always to be the headline story and that only—you don't want only to be associated with Vietnam. And the way not to be is to be associated with something else.

Nixon: Do they think there is some way we—

Haldeman: And, uh—

Nixon: —can make it happen?

Haldeman: Oh no—you can't—you aren't gonna stop that. But their point is: get another headline up there, too. The economy headline was good for that reason; it ran another story. J. Edgar Hoover will be another story soon. And, uh—that's a good one.

Nixon: You get law enforcement.

Haldeman: And, uh—so then you get—

Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: —their point is, like Ehrlichman thinks you oughta really move on unemployment. He's got a, and so does Chuck, where you—where you really do

something about it.

Nixon: Like what?

Haldeman: Well, there isn't anything you can do. That's the trouble. That's where their, their whole policy falls apart. Like he says, you should show concern with the food prices, which is just dandy, They argue that food prices are coming down, therefore visible identification of you with food price problems is a good thing to do now because then when the hamburger comes down next week—

Nixon: We go to the supermarket? Jesus Christ!

Haldeman: Yeah, that's Chuck's idea, and the uh—and look at—Have Marina Whitman take you to the supermarket is his idea, because she's been—she's our 'lower the prices' lady. And so when she says, "Look at this," and you say "My God, a pound of hamburger is eight-seven cents"—or whatever it is—"When I was in the grocery store with [*unclear*]. We've gotta do something about that." And then you shake your finger at Marina Whitman. And then next month hamburger will go down, so then people will say, "Geez, Nixon brought hamburger prices down." I just—I don't think the—

Nixon: [*Unclear*]

Haldeman: [*Unclear*] Johnson's [?] thing, because he wants you to go to Buffalo, somewhere in a steel-producing area, and go to an unemployment line and say, "I'm terribly concerned and we're getting unemployment down, but it's not down enough." Talk to the guys in the unemployment line, and he does a briefing before, and then he talks about afterwards that we're willing to bring unemployment down, on the period it's [*unclear*]. Their point is we're doing all we can to get it down. We aren't—

Nixon: Publicizing it.

Haldeman: —personally identifying you. We're publicizing what we're doing, but it isn't personally identifying you with things. And that's—that's the area.

Nixon: One thing is—

Haldeman: Plus—

Nixon: —get this into the memo.

Haldeman: —Plus, avoiding the—any question of you're hiding, hiding because of Vietnam, which I don't think we're getting any—

Nixon: [*Unclear*]

Haldeman: —I know we're getting any—

Nixon: They can't say that.

Haldeman: —play on that yet, but I think their concern is that at some point you may.

Nixon: Ok. Thank you.

[*Haldeman left at 12:42pm*]

[**End of Conversation 717-19**]

[**Conversation 717-20 begins immediately**]