

Date: July 1, 1971

Time: 8:45 –9:52

Participants: Richard M. Nixon, H. R. “Bob” Haldeman

Location: Oval Office

Tape: 534-002

SCROLLER TITLE: “I Want the Brookings Institute Safe Cleaned Out”

SCENE SETTER: Fearing that the release of the Pentagon Papers presaged a leak of his own secrets, President Nixon created the Plumbers, a White House investigative unit, to stop that leak and to spring new ones on his perceived enemies. His intent was criminal—to leak grand jury information and to burglarize the Brookings Institution, where Nixon mistakenly believed a safe held classified documents about the Vietnam peace talks that he had maneuvered to thwart before the 1968 election.

President Nixon: —get to [John D.] Ehrlichman. Now, will you please get—

H. R. “Bob” Haldeman: Yeah, we did that.

President Nixon: I want you to find me a man by noon—I won’t be ready till one [o’clock]—till 12:30. A recommendation of the man to work directly with me on this whole situation. You know what I mean? I’ve got to have—I have got to have one. I mean, I can’t have a high-minded lawyer like John Ehrlichman or, you know, [John W.] Dean [III] or somebody like that.

I want a son of a bitch. I want somebody that’s just as tough as I am for a change, just as tough as I *was*, I would say, in the [Alger] Hiss case, where we won the case in the press. These goddamn lawyers, you know, all whining around about, you know . . .

I’ll never forget that they were all so worried about the [Charles] Manson case. I knew exactly what we were doing on the Manson. You got to win some things in the press. These guys don’t understand. They have no understanding of politics. They have no understanding of public relations.

John [N.] Mitchell’s that way. John [*pounding on the desk*] is always worried about, “Is this technically correct?” Do you think, for Christ sakes, the *New York Times* is worrying about all the legal niceties? Those sons of bitches are killing them!

They’re [*unclear*] by leaking to the press. This is what we’ve got to get right—I want you to shake these [*unclear*] up around here. Now, you do it. Shake them up! Get them off their goddamn dead asses and say, “Now, this is what you should talk about. We’re up against an enemy, a conspiracy. They’re using any means. [*banging desk for emphasis*] We are going to use any means.” Is that clear? [*Haldeman acknowledges.*] Did they get the Brookings Institute raided last night? No?

Haldeman: No, sir, they didn’t.

President Nixon: Get it done! I want it done! [*banging desk for emphasis*] I want the Brookings Institute safe cleaned out, and have it cleaned out in a way that it makes somebody else [*unclear*].

End of excerpt.

CITATION: “Richard M. Nixon and H. R. “Bob” Haldeman on 1 July 1971,” Conversation 534-002, Draft Transcript, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.