

Date: 1971-12-23

Time: 13:40-14:40

Participants: Richard M. Nixon, Charles W. Colson

Location: Executive Office Building

Tape: 310-017

SCROLLER TITLE: "Finance a Little Kennedy Write-In"

SCENE SETTER: Seeking to face off against the weakest Democratic candidate in the November 1972 presidential election, President Nixon decided to meddle in the New Hampshire primary. To siphon off votes from front-runner Sen. Edmund S. Muskie [D–Maine], Nixon suggested to White House special counsel Charles W. "Chuck" Colson a secretly financed write-in campaign for Sen. Edward M. "Teddy" Kennedy [D–Massachusetts], who was not a presidential candidate that year.

Charles W. "Chuck" Colson: The Poles have a strong influence in that [*unclear*].

President Nixon: Mm-hmm.

Colson: [*Unclear*.]

President Nixon: Yeah.

Colson: So that may help us in Wisconsin.

President Nixon: Is there—Should something be done to finance one of the Democratic candidates [*unclear*] not sure this would work [*unclear*] [Edmund S.] Muskie [D–Maine] on the ticket.

Colson: Oh, I don't think [*unclear*].

President Nixon: [*Unclear*.]

Colson: No, I think, oddly enough, that there'll be some scattered write-ins. There'll be some [Edward M. "Teddy"] Kennedy [D–Massachusetts] write-ins.

President Nixon: Why not—why not at least . . .

Colson: Finance a little Kennedy write-in?

President Nixon: Yeah. Put this down. I would say a postcard mailing to all Democrats in New Hampshire: "Write in Ted Kennedy, the man you can elect." [*tape whip*] This way you get . . . hit—get every Democrat in the state with it. Now, that doesn't cost too much.

Colson: No.

President Nixon: See? Just an open postcard.

Colson: We're probably talking just a few thousand dollars.

President Nixon: Hmm?

Colson: You're just talking a few thousand.

President Nixon: That's right. That's right. And we go to [H. R. "Bob"] Haldeman regarding the money. OK?

Colson: Yes, sir.

President Nixon: [*Unclear.*]

End of excerpt.

CITATION: "Richard M. Nixon and Charles W. Colson on 23 December 1971," Conversation 310-017, Draft Transcript, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.