

DRAFT

Conversation No. 450-10

Date: February 16, 1971

Time: 10:28 am - 10:49 am

Location: Oval Office

Participants: Richard M. Nixon, Alexander P. Butterfield, H.R. Haldeman

In one of the first recordings made in the Oval Office of a conversation between President Nixon, Assistant to the President Alexander P. Butterfield, and Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, Nixon notes that the purpose of the newly installed taping system was that there would be a record of every conversation "to be put in the file."

This new system of recording meetings and phone calls was to replace the old practice of having a note-taker sit in on every meeting and prepare a memorandum for the president's files. Nixon considered this former practice too distracting, and now that he had the capability of surreptitiously recording every meeting, Nixon said "I'm for it" ... "...let's just...forget the note taker business." Haldeman added "just don't tell anybody you've got it."

[A special thanks to Ken Hughes and the Miller Center of Public Affairs for alerting us to this conversation and providing a draft transcript]

[Transcript has been edited to remove stuttering and improve readability]

[Previous unrelated conversation omitted]

Butterfield: You don't have any questions on this other business that you might want me to answer now? This voice, I explained to the president that the secretary can't—

Nixon: No. Mums the whole word. I will not be transcribed.

Butterfield: Correct.

Nixon: This is totally for, basically, to be put in the file, in my file. I don't want it in your file or Bob's or anybody else's. My file.

Haldeman: Right.

Nixon: And my [unclear] today. The whole purpose, basically, is [unclear-overlapping voices] so there may be a day when we have to have this for purposes of, maybe we want to put out something that's positive, maybe we need something just to be sure that we can correct the record. But we're going to [unclear] that's all. And also, though, because I won't have to have people in the room when I see people—

Haldeman: That's right.

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Nixon: Which is much better. I can have my personal conversations, which I want to have, and don't have the people there, you know, uh, which I'd much rather do anyway, unless I feel that I need them there to carry out something or as buffers. Then I'll have them, of course. So I think it'll work fine. It's a good system.

Haldeman: Just don't tell anybody you've got it and don't try to hide anything [*unclear*]—

Nixon: [*Unclear*]

Haldeman: Any time that anything gets used from it, it's on the basis of “your notes” or “the president's notes”—

Nixon: That's right.

Haldeman: Or “my notes” or—

Nixon: [*Unclear*] For example, you've got nothing to use from this today. Just forget it. File it. Everything today will be filed.

Haldeman: Yes.

Nixon: Fair enough?

Butterfield: I think it's gonna be a very fine system.

Nixon: And I think, incidentally, on those, uh, I don't know, these open office hours, shall we just, let's just use that and forget the note taker business.

Haldeman: Well—

Butterfield: [*Unclear*] someone should cover it.

[*Unclear-overlapping voices*]

Haldeman: I'd still use that. We've got—

Butterfield: We aren't getting—

Haldeman: Look at this from McCracken. Look at this stuff and, and we're getting—

Nixon: Well—

Haldeman: To take these things and look at what, what comes out of them. This [*Unclear*]—

Nixon: Okay. Good. I'm for it.

[Following unrelated conversation omitted]