

NIXON'S OVAL OFFICE TAPE TRANSCRIPTS

(Marihuana and War on Drug excerpts)

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RPS: "--we don't --"

RN: "That I [unintelligible] all the information we can get. But my, make it clear that my personal conviction is solid. I, uh, now don't --"

RPS: "I'm not going to, I'm not going to say, look, he has his personal conviction and he's entitled to that."

RN: [unintelligible]. Ok. All right."

RPS: "Thanks a lot."

May 18, 1971, 12:16 pm - 12:35 pm -- Oval Office Conversation No. 500-17 -- The President met with Arthur G. (Art) Linkletter and DeVan L. Shumway; Oliver F. ("Ollie") Atkins was present at the beginning of the meeting.

AL: "And then of course, uh, um, I bear down mostly on marijuana because that's the puberty rite today, and I really give them a lecture on marijuana. And you see, the big problem with marijuana--"

RN: "I was asked about marijuana --"

AL: "You should know this --"

RN: "-- two weeks ago in, uh, California, the, what do you say about this, I said well, we're going to have a commission report, I said, [unintelligible] can be very clear, whatever it says, I'm against legalizing."

AL: "Absolutely."

RN: "I said, now, as far as penalties are concerned, that's something else, they should of course be uniform but we, I'm against legalizing, period. I think you've got to draw the line on the damn thing because--"

AL: "That's right. That's right."

RN: "-- they say, well, it's the same with booze. Well, maybe booze is bad, but the point is that, uh, you can, uh, uh, maybe booze can lead to marijuana, can lead to, speed, or uh, or LSD, can lead to heroin, so forth. But, basically, I mean, uh, I know, uh, another way to look at it is this, if I may say so, with regard to, if you get to a, a little more sophisticated

audience who really care about destiny, and if you uh, [unintelligible] history, has ever been destroyed by alcohol. An awful lot of nations have been destroyed by drugs."

AL: "That's right."

RN: "Now, this doesn't, this is no advocacy for alcoholics, good God, it's a horrible problem--"

AL: "Terrible."

RN: "And, uh, you and I and many mutual friends, and we can have, we um there but for the grace of God go I, all of us, you know. But, believe me, it is true, the thing about the drug, once people cross that line from the, from [unintelligible] straight society to the, the drug society, it's uh, it's a very great possibility they're going to go further, it's [unintelligible] --"

AL: "That's right."

RN: "I don't know, I, I say don't give up."

AL: "There's a great difference between alcohol and marijuana."

RN: "What is it?"

AL: "The worst that you can have when you're in with other alcoholics is more to drink, so you'll throw up more and get sicker and be drunker."

RN: "And that also is a great, great incentive, uh--"

AL: "But when you are with druggers, the, you can go from marijuana to say heroin. Big difference."

RN: "I see."

AL: "If, if, if you're with a guy who suggests you have three more drinks than you should have, you're just going to get sicker. But if you're with a guy who you're already high and he suggests you try, this instead of this, you can go much further. Now, let me tell you one thing about marijuana you should know, that all of, the word marijuana should never be used until you say, what kind of marijuana."

RN: "Oh."

AL: "There is every grade. Now they say legalize marijuana or it isn't bad. What marijuana isn't bad? The mild stuff we grow in Wisconsin, or the stuff from Morocco? The twigs and the leaves, or the rosin? The kind of person who uses it, is he psychotically sound or unsound, is he [unintelligible]? All these things make a difference. So when you say marijuana, you're saying [from one to twenty ?]. And you can never say marijuana, you've got to say: marijuana Acapulco, or marijuana from Mexico, or marijuana from Illinois. Three different things. And, what kind of a person is getting it, what kind of people is he with? I think that marijuana [unintelligible] all people with [unintelligible]."

RN: "[unintelligible]"

AL: Yes. There's a man, named Dr. Harvey House (?). Dr. House (?) is the chief clinical psychiatrist at the University of California in Berkeley. Five years ago, they asked him for the paper what he thought of marijuana, and he said, it's a light hallucinogen, probably wouldn't cause any harm to anybody. And this was played up. And he was worried because it was so played up. He spent five years studying. About two months ago he released his new story, and it can all be put in five words: pot smokers can't think straight. Pot smokers can't think straight. If you are a regular head and use it regularly, you are not using your priorities correctly. You are not judging what is most important. You have a kind of a will-less way of thinking. And he described it, [unintelligible], as guys walking along a meadow, and have the same appearance, but some parts were boggy and quicksandy and some were firm, and that's the kind of thinking that pot smokers have, they, they, and, and when people like that say these things you can't tell me that this guy Brown, from your NIMH who was quoted this morning as saying that, uh, marijuana is really nothing and perhaps should be, uh, should be given the same penalty as a parking ticket. Good night!"

RN: "Now did you see this statement by Brown, the National Institute of Mental Health this morning? Uh, he should be out. I mean, today, today. If he's a presidential appointee [unintelligible] do is fire the son of a bitch, and I mean today! Get the son of a bitch out of here. Don't know whether he's, probably just a [unintelligible] but he's going to be out."

AL: "Good. That's a terrible thing for a guy in his position to say. A parking ticket would be the equivalent, he was quoted as

saying. Because, uh, because, uh, marijuana is insidious. It can be harmless, and nothing, and it can be terrible."

RN: "I know. Well, you know I suppose they could say that, alcoholics don't think straight too, can't they?"

AL: "Yes. [unintelligible] Really. But, but another big difference between marijuana and alcohol is that when people s-smoke marijuana, they smoke it to get high. In every case, when most people drink, they drink to be sociable. You don't see people --"

RN: "That's right, that's right."

AL: "They sit down with a marijuana cigarette to get high --"

RN: "A person does not drink to get drunk."

AL: "That's right."

RN: "A person drinks to have fun."

AL: "I'd say smoke marijuana, you smoke marijuana to get high."

RN: "Smoke marijuana, er, uh, you want to get a charge --"

AL: "Right now --"

RN: "-- of some sort, you want to get a charge, and float, and this and that and the other thing."

[34 second portion withdrawn as personal]

RN: "See dodeine basically, is a, isn't that a derivative of the same --"

AL: "Sure, it's opium. Opium. It's an opiate."

RN: "Yeah. But you take, uh, Alice Longworth was telling me once, she loves, I mean, she's of course, the gal's great [unintelligible], or something like that, or [unintelligible] or something, she had, cancer operation two years ago, a year ago, and she --"

[portion withdrawn as personal]

AL: "Just takes the pain and everything, and you smooth it away,

just like an iron on the wrinkles. It's a lovely thing when you're sick. It was called, it was called the soldiers' drug you know, after the Civil War."

RN: "Yeah, mm-hmm."

AL: "It was invented in the Civil War, and they invented the hypodermic in the Civil War."

RN: "I have seen systems, I have seen the countries of Asia and the Middle East, portions of Latin America, and I have seen what drugs have done to those countries. Uh, everybody knows what it's done to the Chinese, the Indians are hopeless anyway, the Burmese. They have different forms of drugs --"

AL: "That's right."

RN: "[unintelligible] China and the rest of them, they've all gone down. The, countries, the north countries for the example - why the hell are those Communists so hard on drugs? Well why they're so hard on drugs is because, uh, they love to booze. I mean, the Russians, they drink pretty good."

AL: "That's right."

RN: "But they don't allow any drugs. Like that. And look at the north countries. The Swedes drink too much, the Finns drink too much, the British have always been heavy boozers and all the rest, but uh, and the Irish of course the most, uh, but uh, on the other hand, they survive as strong races. There's another, it's a very significant difference."

AL: "That's right."

RN: "And your drug societies, uh, are, are, inevitably come apart. They--"

AL: "They lose motivation."

RN: "--mind"

AL: "No discipline."

RN: "Yeah."

AL: "You know I did a show--"

RN: "At least with liquor, I don't lose motivation [unintelligible]"

AL: "I just finished doing an hour film with a former gang leader of the Mau-Maus, in, in Brooklyn. Puerto Rican gang, two hundred boys and a hundred and seventy five girls who go out with zip guns and switchblades and tire chains, and this is ten years ago. And this guy was converted by Billy Wilkerson, of the Cross and Switchblade, he's now a preacher."

RN: "Yeah."

AL: "Puerto Rican gang. But we went back into his territory, they called it their turf, in Brooklyn, I just finished--"

RN: "Their turf. Yeah ok. Yeah."

AL: "And I talked to a number of his ex-buddies, all heroin addicts."

RN: "Yeah."

AL: "There are no more kid gangs in Brooklyn or the east side of New York, none of these Angels and, Mau-Maus and the rest of them because they're all addicts and the minute you become an addict, you can't be a gang. You can't have a gang because you can't have discipline, you can't meet, you can't have a leader, you don't care. It's all split up into fractional muggers, all of them trying to make their own way. But that's an example of what drugs did to gangs. Breaks them. And gave us the seven hundred thousand individual kids all having to hustle three to four hundred dollars worth of goods a day to get a fifty to a hundred dollars worth of heroin."

RN: "The [unintelligible] to these, uh, these, uh, more radical demonstrators that were here the last, oh, two weeks ago. [unintelligible] They're all on drugs. Oh yeah, horrible, it's just a -- when I say all, virtually all. And uh, uh, just raising hell, and, uh."

AL: "That's right. And of course one of the reasons you can beat them is that so many of them are on drugs. The police are organized and did a great job. You know [unintelligible] I was here in town, [unintelligible]."

RN: "Yeah, I, I [unintelligible] I got a hold, I got a hold of Mitchell on, uh, Saturday night, I said, bust them. And"

[unintelligible], and don't hurt anybody, I said don't hurt anybody, I don't want anything like Chicago, but I says, arrest the whole damn lot, if they don't clear the streets. And they arrested them, and the police chief did a hell of a job."

AL: "He did, yes. And I think you get a lot of credit across the country for that, and he does too, but I mean the whole situation, when I mentioned in my talks that I was here, there's applause. Voluntary applause, because the people want to have that kind of stuff put down. And you did just right. Just right."

[snip]

March 24, 1972, 3:02 pm - 3:39 pm -- Oval Office Conversation No.
693-1 -- press conference

[snip]

Unknown reporter: "Mr. President, uh, do you have a comment sir on the, uh, recommendation of your commission on drugs that the use of marijuana in the home be, uh, no longer, uh, considered a crime?"

RN: "Um, I met with Mr. Shafer, uh, I've read the report, uh, eh, it is a report that deserves consideration and will receive it. However, as to one aspect of the report I am in disagreement. I was before I read it and reading it did not change my mind. Uh, I, uh, oppose the legalization of marijuana, and that includes the sale, its possession, and its use. I do not believe you can have effective criminal justice, uh, based on the philosophy, uh that something is half legal and half illegal. That is my position, despite what the commission has recommended."

April 21, 1971, 4:18 pm - 6:13 pm -- Oval Office Conversation No. 485-4 -- The President met with H.R. ("Bob") Haldeman and John N. Mitchell at 4:18 pm -- The discussion ranged over policy, scandals, and appointments. The transcribed segment below deals with the Shafer's appointment to the federal bench.

[snip]

JM: "Do you who's going on the board, or was, until the, got this, appointment to the bench? Ray Shafer."

RN: "Who? Did we appoint him to the bench?"

JM: "Didn't you know that?"

RN: "[unintelligible] God no."

JM: "Yeah."

RN: "I'd, I thought everybody was against appointing him to anything."

JM: "That uh,--"

RN: "I just sign those appointments [unintelligible]"

JM: "Well he hasn't, he hasn't gone up yet but this is--"

RN: "District court?"

JM: "No, it's a circuit court. This is Scott and Schweiker's, and, a lot of other [unintelligible]."

RN: "Whatever you want. Everybody else told me never give Shafer a damn thing, all Shafer [unintelligible] in Pennsylvania, but you want him, fine."

JM: "Hell I don't want him, but, hell I thought he was great on the marijuana commission, but uh,--"

RN: "That's where we had him, thought that was that."

JM: "Well, starting, you know, bring, bring back some unity in that --"

RN: "Well let me say this: he ain't going any further. That's pretty [unintelligible]."

JM: "Uh, Shafer has a pretty good, uh--"

RN: "He does have a good legal background. I believe -- oh yes, he was a prosecuting attorney, and all this. He uh, and incidentally had a damn good record. He's a good lawyer. He'd be good judge, as good as anybody."

JM: "Well, now my, you know, my answer's, that's what I would say, it's a hell of a good place to get him out of the way where he can't, cause any problems, [unintelligible] good court. Uh--"

RN: "He's qualified, that's the point. Here it is--"

[2 minute 25 second item withdrawn for personal reasons]

March 21, 1972, 1:00 pm - 2:15 pm -- Oval Office Conversation
No. 690-11 -- in this segment, the President is meeting with H.
R. ("Bob") Haldeman.

RN: "I saw, for example, [unintelligible] on a pamphlet they're giving out on drugs. And, uh, presentation, [unintelligible], shows, which of course I would, [unintelligible], but where, uh, [unintelligible], they, they put in as a quote from the President on the front of the pamphlet with a picture, and a good strong picture and the rest, that said that, that the problem of drugs is our number one and must be dealt with in a variety of ways."

HRH: "Eh."

RN: "When I saw variety of ways I god damned near puked. And I thought, for pity's sake, we need, and I use the word all out war, or all fronts, or, uh, uh, despicable, or, this in a variety of ways just pissed off [unintelligible]. It's typical, Bob, of what we get out of that shop over there."

HRH: "Even if you want to make that overall [unintelligible]--"

RN: "You can't say that--"

HRH: "You've got to, you've got to attack it, attack from every direction."

RN: "--have to attack on all fronts."

HRH: "On all fronts, yeah."

RN: "Yeah."

HRH: "You've got to attack the problem of the addict, the problem of the pusher, the problem of the, [unintelligible], victim. Yeah, boy you can sure, uh, water it down and then it --"

RN: "Variety of ways. Well now [unintelligible], except that, there are several ways."

HRH: "Well what that means though is that we can't really handle

it."

RN: "That's right."

HRH: "And that's a, that's a brush-off --"

RN: "It's a cop out."

HRH: "-- it's not like appointing a commission."

RN: "A cop-out."

HRH: "But handle it in a variety of ways really says we don't know how to handle it. Which may be the truth. But it sure as hell isn't the thing to say."

RN: "Well. Here's the thing to say, there's ways to handle it, just, just kick the hell out of it. We enforce the law--"

HRH: "The way to talk, the thing to talk about, [unintelligible] all the Jaffe crap is not the stuff to talk about. I mean-- "

RN: "That's what they hit me with [unintelligible]. Remember what I said."

HRH: "I know."

RN: "You got to kick [unintelligible] when I got out there and I didn't do it. I, but what gets, who cares about the Jaffe stuff, the treating of the addicts."

HRH: "The mothers don't, because their kids aren't addicts. And they're, eh, you just don't worry about that, what you worry about is this son of a bitch that's going to come up --"

RN: "That's right."

HRH: "-- and try to slip a packet of marijuana to your kid."

RN: "Or, heroin."

HRH: "Or heroin."

RN: "Give them a fix. Or LSD, or something--"

HRH: "Or LSD, or slip something in his Coca-Cola."

RN: "Yeah. Right."

HRH: "That's what you worry about, you're not worried about addicts. Nobody knows an addict, but everybody knows a kid who's been smoking marijuana."

RN: "Bob, the truth's, people are not concerned about anybody but themselves."

HRH: "Exactly."

RN: "They're not concerned about the other kids whose, uh--"

HRH: "Well kids aren't addicts anyway, I mean nobody, there aren't enough addicts, addicted kids, to matter."

RN: "[unintelligible]. This is a typical thing, it's like the, a black kid, [unintelligible], uh, everybody used, uh, you know it's like old Jim Rhodes, he said, of course he's a typical [unintelligible], I mean, 1960s something like, [unintelligible], he said, you know he says all these people you know, [unintelligible], they come down here, these people, three or four hundred of them, they're picketing around, they're talking to legislators and to press, he, he said [unintelligible] he said, eh, mental health centers and all the other, [unintelligible], he says, I didn't take the money, [unintelligible] I just turned it down, and they gave the money to the niggers."

HRH: "He's right, there's a hell of a lot more niggers than you can buy them off."

RN: "He is [unintelligible, both RN and HRH speak at same time]."

HRH: "Jobs, get them off the streets so they aren't killing people."

RN: "Now we all know that mental institutions are a horrible thing, I mean, we see, you know, people in them, I visited them, just tears your heart."

HRH: "Oh there's no question."

RN: "But god damn it, why do we have a bunch of psychiatrists sitting around, making people who are not mental cases, mental cases? You know, psychiatry is a God damned racket."

HRH: "Yeah."

RN: "In my opinion, there are some that are important and necessary, but most, most people would do a hell of a lot better with a preacher than a psychiatrist."

HRH: "Pretty weird, some of them."

RN: "Oh sure."

HRH: "Uh, there's just, there's no question on the drug side that, that stopping the supply is important because people know if there isn't any, then nobody can buy it."

RN: "They like this stuff about the Turks."

HRH: "And that's good. And the other thing is getting the God damned pushers."

RN: "Oh they want --"

HRH: "--and they'd like to frankly hang them. And then education, educating the kids, they talk about that, but that, that's a tough one to peddle, you know. You can educate the hell out of them but it just--"

RN: "Educate them, shit."

HRH: "--doesn't get anywhere."

RN: "That's right. Enforce the law, you've got to scare them. [unintelligible]."

HRH: "That's exactly it."

RN: "Right."

HRH: "But mostly the pushers. Let's get the guy that's peddling it rather than the children, [unintelligible] the kid that, that's got [unintelligible]. Because kids will try anything that comes their way."

RN: "Yeah. Drug use, [unintelligible] our best, but let's think about, about just doing a, the next speech on the damn thing. I believe [unintelligible]. You know. But it's like why am I against legalizing marijuana."

HRH: "Was talking about it last night, John was saying I wonder

what would happen if we did a drug thing every week, and I said I thought that's what you were supposed to have been doing a year and a half or two years ago, that's, that was our plan--"

RN: "Yeah."

HRH: "--just do a drug thing every week. Hit something hard every week on, on something that we're doing on drugs. That doesn't mean the President going out and selling, it's marijuana--"

RN: "[unintelligible] won't pay attention unless I do it."

HRH: "Oh I'm not so sure."

RN: "I, I had a very good line that I, you know, I of course can't use the talking points [unintelligible] had this gobbledygook about drug addiction and the rest in here [unintelligible]. They get progressively dumber, and he does great. You know what I said? I said I [unintelligible] when he came into this there were nine federal agencies working on this. After he'd been in the job for eight months I asked him how many did he find that really are, he said there are thirteen. He says I was four short, people working on this. I said, now this doesn't, it's necessarily bad. [unintelligible]. But also we have to realize there's a lot of petty bureaucrats competing with each other, empire-building, and more interested in building their bureaucracies than they are in dealing with the problem. I said I told him to stop this, I told him to knock heads together, and I said I told him to knock heads together and either they cooperate or the heads will roll. That's the words I used. Now, heads roll."

HRH: "[unintelligible] Yeah.

RN: "Kind of thing that people--"

HRH: "Yeah."

RN: "Yet some of our guys come up with some of that, that's presidential. Heads will roll is presidential."

HRH: "It is when you're dealing with something like that, what you're talking about somewhere people will want heads to roll."

RN: "Well what did you think [unintelligible]. But it's

ridiculous, these damn little things that keep farting around, fighting with each other and competing with each other, and, huh."

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