Transcript of Nixon's Question and Answer Session With A.P. Managing Editors

Following is a transcript of President Nixon's news conference with the Associated Press Managing Editors Association in Orlando, Fla., last night, broadcast by The New York Times:

President Quinlan and ladies and gentlemen, when Jack Horner, who has been a correspondent in Washington since the world retired after 40 years, he once told me that if I thought that the White House press corps asked tough questions, he should hear the kind of questions that the managing editors asked. Consequently, I welcome the opportunity to meet with the managing editors of the nation's newspapers. I will not have an opening statement, because I know with some certainty that you will be far too busy to get through all the questions that you have, and I know the president has the prerogative of asking the questions tonight, Mr. Quinn.

MR. QUINN: Mr. President, this morning Governor Askey of New Jersey spoke to the state's Manufacturers Association and recalled the words of Benjamin Franklin.

In his first inaugural address, he said: "If I could speak to you, Sir, a monarch or a republic?" Franklin answered: "A republic, Sir, or you can keep it." Mr. President, in the prevailing pessimism of our time, I think getting the state of Watergate, can we keep that Republic?

A. Well, Mr. Quinn, I would certainly not be standing here answering your questions, unless I had a firm belief that we could keep it. I would be determined to keep it, not only for ourselves, but for those who come after us. I would do the size that because of mistakes that were made, and I must take responsibility for those mistakes, whether in the campaign or any other place, that there are those who won't be able to survive. But I also know that the hopes of the whole world for peace, not only now but in the years of the rest of the United States of America.

"It's a Big Job"

And I can assure you that as long as I am physically able to handle the position to which I was elected and the responsibilities thereon, I am going to work for the cause of peace in the world, the cause of prosperity without war and without inflation at home, and also to work for the restoration of confidence in the White House and in the ability of this government to handle the problems of this country and all over the world, but I think it can be done and I intend to do it.

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As you tell us your personal recollection of the Watergate re-action—and within that word I mean your credibility with the courts and the public for your reaction to the discovery that the Dean and Mitchell tapes did not exist.

A. Well, my personal reaction was one of very great surprise, because I had not wanted the evidence out, and I knew that when there was no evidence that something didn't exist. Immediately there would be the impression that I was lying. I, as President or, more likely perhaps, special prosecutor, would not have known, the staff knew there was something on those tapes that it wouldn't be in the file.

But let me point out again, while I was disappointed, let me say I was not lot more disappointed if the tapes that had been considered important by both Mr. Cox, the special prosecutor, and Ervin and Ervin's committee, if any one of those had been missing, because I should be able to point out that if, when, as you recall it has been, I recall that I was first informed the tape was cover-up, that, of course, is there.

The tape of March 13, where it has been testified, as I recall it, I was informed, as you testified to the Louisville Courier Journal, the tape, where it has been testified, that I had testified that I had formed part of the demands for the tapes and the black bag mail—that is available. And the tape of March 21, where it has been testified to by great detail, as well as three other tapes, Mr. Dean participated, three conversations, are all available.

The important thing is, these two tapes are concerned, even though they were not considered by the special committee to be an indispensable part of the investigation, the fact that there were not was a great disappointment in the White House, and I just wish we had a better system. I frankly wish we hadn't had there. It was a system I wouldn't have to answer this question.

Q. Mr. President, did you tell Mr. Cox to stay out of the Watergate? Did you ask Mr. Cox if he knew why he, if you did, why? And do you think that the new special prosecutor was not a good idea?

A. I have never spoken to Mr. Cox at all. As a matter of fact, I have told the Watergate matter. That national security matters are not to be investigated by the Senate. The Ervin committee should not have said the same thing. Mr. Cox, as I recall it, was investigating the Watergate matter. That national security matters are not to be investigated by the Senate, and even the Senator Ervin and Senator Bacon—Baldrey—Baldrey—had decided at one point out we didn't delve further into them.

I don't mean by that that we have no cloak of national security over something because we've never told the American people what it is. I simply mean to say that the national security committee or the Senate would not have had the knowledge to know about this. The President has told me I'm to investigate it and I'm going to do so.

Q. Paul Fossum from the New York Times: Are you personally satisfied, sir, that the investigation of the Watergate matter be continued? Are you satisfied, and if so, could you tell us what your plans are to tell the American people about the case in, with regard, to your credibility on this matter?

A. Well, first with regard to whether the investigation of the Watergate is complete. As I know, there is now a new special prosecutor, Mr. Ervin. He is a Democrat. He has already supported the Democratic ticket, a highly respected lawyer, a former president of the Senate. Before the first of the year 1971, I may have met him. I have never talked to personal papers since Mr. Nixon left his Administration. I have never talked to him about this matter. I refuse to have anything to do with it. It should be completely independent.

He cannot be removed unless there is a consensus of the top leadership of both the House and the Senate. And if the public service, the public interest, and the service of the American people warrant me to do it, I will do it. But I hope for a free, open, and fair election that there will not be a new special prosecutor. And I have not been informed that I have to do it.

Q. Yes, at the time—this is Ed Hines from the Des Moines Register and Tribune—I have a question. As you know, at the time you gave Eul Krouth approval for the reconstructed town of Des Moines, you did not approve any discussion of legality or illegality in that situation.

A. I don't think Mr. Krouth has ever made an assumption that Mr. Krouth and others have not engaged in any illegal activity. I'm not saying that critically, I don't think Mr. Krouth has ever made an assumption that what the evidence is. I don't think Mr. Krouth has said, or Mr. Ehrlichman, that I so far, I don't think. And I'm not saying that I don't think it is illegal. I'm not saying that it is, but I think it is a great thing to bring a town and an illegal to do.

And, third, I should also note the other reason that is, that there was an act of the Plumber's operation, was because of our concern at that time about the concern about the President and the Government—the Pentagon Papers—the question of whether what Ehrlichman was all about, as well as others, was really dangerous to the national security, including one that I have pointed out that was so serious that even Senator Ervin
1982, on President Eisenhower's heart attack, on Presiden-
ty's immediate reaction, on my visit to Caracas when I had a few problems in 1968, and on the 1975 Watergate affair with Richard Nixon— all of those papers, I have them all, many believe conservatively, at that amount.

And an active person who prepared it, prepared it for that event that took place and then took that as a decision to be made by the President. My statement has been raised by the Internal Revenue Service about it, but if they do, let me tell you this, I'll be glad to have the papers and the tax, because I think they're worth more than that.

And I don't think that we did what we were told was the right thing to do and the President should have done that, but I don't think it was wrong because he had done exactly what the law required.

Since 1959, of course, I should point out, President Nixon can't claim that I'm stuck with a lot of papers now that he can't give away or otherwise my heirs will have a terrible time trying to give away or otherwise my heirs will have a terrible time trying to get voted in a piece of property in Florida— three houses, one which I primarily use as an office and the other as a vacation home and also an investment in what was my mother's home—not a very nice house but I don't own it—those three pieces of property.

I want to state first, that's all I have. I am the first President who hasn't owned any stocks since I've been President, and I know, as President, I have not had a blind trust since Harry Truman.

Now this law does not prove that those who owned stocks or had bad stock transactions or isn't worth. I was not the first time that I'm mentioned in connection with the President's personal finances.

And I would real estate was the best place to put it.

Questioned By Writers

But then the question was raised by many of the writers, and I wanted to respond to it. I'm sure that some of you might have read such an embarrassing question. You want to know that President you earned $50,000 when you were President?

Obviously, you couldn't have had that money, but in the other hand, you couldn't have had half of that money, and it's a question that has been commented upon before; it will be a question that will be asked, and I will not go beyond that. They limited the number of questions, and my brother was aware of it.

And may I say, too, to my friend from The Washington Post, if you like my sport page.

Q: Thank you, Mr. President. I wonder if that's all you think is your re-election or authorization to tap the telephone of your conspirators. Is this true, sir, and if so, how much do you think is the fact of the surveillance?

A: In fact, I was on the White House, in the White House, and I was told about it. I was not informed by anyone. He knew why it was necessary.
Q. Mr. President, will you, before you leave, say a word about the subject which we have been discussing?

Mr. President: Yes, I will.

Q. Mr. President, in the last few days, the administration has said that it was going to step up production in order to bring down prices. Is this true, and if so, when will we begin to see the effects?

Mr. President: That is correct. The production of goods and services is being increased in order to bring down prices. The effects may not be immediate, but they will become evident in the coming months.

Q. Mr. President, the United States is facing a severe economic crisis. What steps is the government taking to address this situation?

Mr. President: The government is taking a number of steps to address the economic crisis. These include increasing government spending, reducing taxes, and implementing monetary policies to stimulate the economy.

Q. Mr. President, the situation in the Middle East is very tense. What is the administration's policy in this regard?

Mr. President: The administration is committed to maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East. We are working with all parties to find a solution to the conflict.

Q. Mr. President, the United States is facing a severe drought. What is the administration doing to address this issue?

Mr. President: The administration is taking steps to address the drought, including increasing water supply, implementing conservation measures, and providing financial assistance to affected areas.

Q. Mr. President, the United States is facing a severe budget crisis. What steps is the government taking to address this issue?

Mr. President: The government is taking steps to address the budget crisis, including increasing revenue through taxation and decreasing government spending.

Q. Mr. President, the United States is facing a severe epidemic. What steps is the government taking to address this issue?

Mr. President: The government is taking steps to address the epidemic, including implementing quarantine measures, providing medical assistance, and developing vaccines.

Q. Mr. President, the United States is facing a severe political crisis. What steps is the government taking to address this issue?

Mr. President: The government is taking steps to address the political crisis, including promoting unity, fostering dialogue, and implementing constitutional reforms.

Q. Mr. President, the United States is facing a severe environmental crisis. What steps is the government taking to address this issue?

Mr. President: The government is taking steps to address the environmental crisis, including implementing environmental policies, promoting sustainable development, and addressing climate change.
Not because of the Mid-East or the Alaska pipeline and the rest, but 'cause this world will go all of its problems is that we're short of oil and gas. And the mean; there aren't a lot of hungry people in, not only in America, too many here, but in the whole world. There are a lot of people, go to India or go to some of the countries in Latin America or upper Brazil. And yet as the world gets richer, there is more air-conditioning. There is more need for power and therefore, for energy. And that's why I sent the message two years ago, and I pointed out that the Congress consider a program so that the United States would become self-sufficient in energy.

I right, all right, that up to April, I've made a clean break in April where we even knew there might be a Mid-East crisis, which made a serious problem a serious crisis. And there is legislation of pieces of legislation to deal with energy. One has realized that the Alaska pipeline. I signed it. The other six I hope they act on next week, next day, go home for Christmas.

Mr. President, I don't say the Congress is to blame, the President should have done a lot more to warn me about it and the Congress did not act, even then we went through it, too. The President warned in May. The Congress did not act.

And now it's time for the Congress to move with some of these other dilemmas, if they have time, and get through this Mid-East crisis.

Interest in Rationing

Let me just—since that question has come up, I would like to tell you that we should react, because the question of rationing is going to be very important. I think it needs to be done right; too; because remember how we all went through it. The reader should not read this thing. A few of you appear old enough to remember a car, a Pepsi, Coca-Cola, in Washington—you couldn't get one. Then you couldn't get to happen to happen in Venezuela, you could. This is the mind of one, remember? We don't want that.

But if we look at this energy crisis as simply the crisis of this year, we could not really get through it. It'd be like there'd never been a Mid-East, and we would not have gotten an energy crisis eventually.

That is why we have set as a goal for this country to have and the Congress, and they could change their minds under the government, and they could have one Congress. I don't think, but that's very serious.

What about Canada, our great friends to the north? We are more fortunate here. But I can tell you that the Mexican Minister of the Interior or the Interior Minister is in charge of oil, he's a tough guy, he has a tough hard bargain, and I guess we would too if we were Canadians.

In the United States of America, as the greatest industrial power of the world, a quarter of the world's people and using a third of the world's energy, shouldn't have to depend on any other country for our oil and transportation, and our light and our heat. We can become self-sufficient.

This is a great project and I'm going to pursue it. And I guess we would, too, if we were Canadians. My God, even the United States of America, as the greatest industrial power in the world, with 7 per cent of the world's people, and using 30 per cent of the world's power, shouldn't have to depend on any other country for our jobs and our transportation and our light and our heat. We can become self-sufficient. This is a great push and I'm going to pursue it.

Q. Mr. President, I'm John

Chaniol: of the Kansas City Times. Not being a member of the Washington press corps, I'm not going to ask

that, but I'm going to ask you when you're going to re-

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your White House, what do you plan to do about it?

A. I think it depends on

when I leave. No, seriously, I think I don't need to ask very good questions and very appropriate ones. I was hoping to get you to talk about the milk. Would you mind asking me about the milk?

You will? Fine. I'll answer

this, and I'll go to the milk in the back.

As far as retirement, at that time that I really do not know that I would be 63 years of age. And I'm relatively healthy at the present time, so I'd think

healthier I'll be then. Among the things that I would not do is to talk about retirement, I will not practice law, I won't

go on any board of directors.

I'll tell you, Mr. President, you never want to sit at any other end of the table. And when I'm sitting on the board of directors—being on the board of directors, it pays well, but it's rather important. I'm not sure what it is. Well, I'm not sure what I found when I was Vice President. I'm not sure what's any of you. I'm sure if it's just the fact board of di-

centers of directors, or directors of something. I think for former Presidents.

Writing, Not Speaking

What I probably will do is to do a little writing and I do not do any speaking, I've made enough speeches in a year to last me for a lifetime, particularly my audiences.

and so under the circum-

stances, what I probably will do is to do a little writing and perhaps contrib-

ute to the bettering the political process. And to write what I think. Neither party is without fault in the political life of America. Quite a bit of violence and the other side. I never spoke any place in Arizona except in Arizona and in Arizona. I'm a pretty good working over.

Neither party was without fault with regard to the fi-

ancing. They raised $36 mil-

lion, and some of that, like the mistakes of the corporate sources and was legal because expenditures have been charged and apparent-

ly people didn't know it, and as far as the Republican Senators are concerned, they'll all say that they were all in favor with the new laws and so forth, there ought to be some

suggestion. I think that if we can get the Congress to act on the proposal that the proposition was that, some months ago, to provide a comprehensive set of rules for campaign contribu-

tions limiting them, new rules for campaign contributions, and then after I leave office I'm going to work for that, be-

cause I was always considered as the man who might happen to be the peace for the first time in my life, who opened to China, who opened to Russia, who opened to the whole world. The war was in the beginning, maybe if we can continue it, get un-

employment down to 5 per cent in first time in 18 years, for the first time in 18 years, it's down at 4.5 per cent. It was never at that level, in the twenties, in the twenties.

Well, it's been a very

vague plan I have called it, and that's why it was done. And that's the truth.