all. I had made an excuse, and I'm looking through this stuff, reading this letter and *I'm saying, "Look, what's on John McCain's mind is, 'Were you talking to the White House,'" and the answer straight up was no. And I moved past this Eckstein stuff awful quickly because it had no relevance in my mind.*

Q. Given that Senator McCain had specifically said in two places in his letter to you that, "These events are troubling to me and, at a minimum, contribute to an appearance of impropriety," wouldn't you - would you agree with me that further disclosures at this time about your invocation of Harold Ickes' name might lend credence to his claim of an appearance of troubling impropriety?

A. *No, I don't think so. In retrospect, I should have been more forthcoming about all of this.* At the time, I don't - I can't recreate what was on my mind when I signed this letter. But to the extent that you're asking me to do so, *I would say this, to me, is an extraneous issue and it's not worth, you know, sort of elaborating on and, you know, working this all out by way of explanation.*

(Babbitt Grand Jury Test. at 220:3-221:21 (emphasis added).)

Q. So when you had to respond to the Thompson committee inquiry in September 1997 you knew that the issue had come back to haunt you, didn't you?

A. Yes.

Q. And that this time you needed to be more forthcoming, as you said earlier, with the committee than you had been with Senator McCain; is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. And so I am I [sic] correct that you knew that you could not testify that Eckstein was a liar who had fabricated the entire account about the July 14 meeting, right?

A. Absolutely.

Q. You knew, did you not, that such an allegation wasn't true, and no [sic] incidently would only heighten the committee concern about the underlying Hudson decision; is that correct? If you walked in there and you accused Mr. Eckstein of fabricating the whole account, then, especially given his reputation in the community -

A. Oh, I would never dream of doing that. That's my bottom line.

Q. And apart from not dreaming of doing it, you had to know too what the impact of such a thing would be.

A. Yeah. Again, I'm not sure that was exactly on my mind, but sure, I had to know. Yeah.

Q. All right. And you also knew, however, didn't you, that if the committee concluded that you, Mr. Babbitt, had lied to or deliberately misled Senator McCain, it would lend credence to the argument that you were trying to conceal something truly awful about the Hudson decision.

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. Accordingly, Mr. Secretary, in September 1997 and later in January of 1998, when you appeared before these two committees, you struggled, did you not, for a way to reconcile your McCain and Thompson letters so that it would not appear that you had