



H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection, January 18, 1969 – April 30, 1973

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Wednesday, April 12th. The President, had Ehrlichman and me in for a couple of hours this morning, rambling through a lot of odds and ends, things on Ehrlichman's new role and the follow-up on it. He wants to have John circulate Connally's talk on tax loopholes to our Congressmen and Senators, and have them take the offensive on loopholes. He wants to be sure to keep us on the side of fighting high prices, fighting busing. Get the Southerners to attack the Libs, and so on. I raised the problem Connally had called me about where Justice has filed a suit against the State of Texas on fishing rights that has to do with the Tidelands Oil cases going way back. The President was furious about that and wants the thing dropped. Then he got into sort of curious blast at the speech writers. He had written a long memo last night to Kissinger, Ehrlichman, and me about the problems of our speech writers. And he asked me for my copy of it, read most of it to Ehrlichman and me, and went into quite a blast on the whole speech writing problem: the fact that Hebner didn't get the point on using the Nixon-Guildhall speech, that the President had to change the Canadian Parliament speech in the sixth draft, that there weren't any examples, and so on. It was the usual tirade.

Kissinger came in to report on Vietnam and said the Russians are really falling all over us. That they had a glowing meeting with Butz, and gone into great praise to the President and so forth. Henry says there is...

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...one problem, our B-52s bombing charts have turned out to be one kilometer off, so we're hitting the wrong targets. But fortunately the errors compensated for themselves, and as a result, we knocked out the railroad.

This comedy of errors is sort of typical of what's been going on there.

We went back to the Kleindienst question with a the long staff meeting this morning on the subject to try to figure out what to do since Ervin now is not going to let the hearings in until he's gotten Flanigan and the other White House aides up there. So we reviewed the various options and pretty much came down that the President's got to withdraw Kleindienst, or rather Kleindienst should withdraw. So Ehrlichman and I got into a discussion on that. The President said we have to drop him. The question is what happens then with the ITT hearings? And in any event we can't wield Kleindienst from a PR standpoint, for example during the Democratic convention. The President thinks we should do it fast while Vietnam covers it up and before the Russian Summit. After reviewing other possibilities, including the suggestion that we move Elliot Richardson in there and shift Weinberger or Rumsfeld into HEW, or something of that sort, the President agreed that our best candidate was Weinberger, and that I should sell Mitchell on that: the line being, that we can control him, he can be confirmed, and he'll step out of the job later. Also he'll be good for the Jewish vote, good with Reagan, and good in Northern California. He feels we should play it with Kleindienst as an innocent victim. He should make a harder statement, go on television, lash out at the committee, buildup the Colson speech. They dropped it for him earlier, make a busing point, and so on.



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Later, the President and I talked to Mitchell, and at that meeting the President got back into Vietnam first and told Mitchell what our status was. Feels we now have Teddy and Hubert out on a limb on it that Dole, and all of those should attack them for undercutting the Commander in Chief and risking our men. We should make sure that people know they're out on that side. We should go all out now to win in the North—that's the President's strategy—while we have the public opinion at least somewhat toned down. He says the Russians are now really shaky, and we're making some real headway if we can keep it up for a while.

On Kleindienst he felt he should not do it lying down. He should go on television, use the opportunity to say this is a clear case of partisan pol--, that partisan politics, that because of partisan politics, he can't be confirmed. The Senate, especially the Judiciary, is not going ahead with their business. For example, the busing moratorium is sitting there while their attention is being diverted, and he's going to withdraw so the Senate can do its work and the Justice can do its work. The business of the Justice Department can't be carried out in this limbo. Then we have to send another man out. Weinberger would be the one. He can be confirmed; he'll do what he's told. He's a total captive for us on all issues, and he'd give up the job when it's necessary too. Mitchell raised the problem of the Southern conservatives and felt that there might be something in Cap's track record that would be a problem. And the President said we can use Ronald Reagan to sell Weinberger to the conservatives. Mitchell then raised the question of Bill Smith as a possible candidate. The President said the problem there is his clients. Mitchell said Kleindienst won't stay as deputy, so you'll have to take him out all together, and we talked about things that he could do. The President wants to keep him active in the campaign if at all possible.

The President left after the Mitchell meeting for Camp David to spend the night working on his preparation for the Canadian trip.



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End of April 12th.