



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

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Wednesday, March 21.

The President had his usual Wednesday clear except for a few ceremonial items at midday. And spent most of the day on Watergate, which he's becoming more and more involved in, and I guess concerned about, as time goes on. He had a long session with Ehrlichman first thing this morning, then had John Dean at 10:00 for a couple of hours and had Dean give him a complete rundown on all the facts, which he had told him last night he wanted him to be prepared to do. And I told John to do exactly that, cover all the facts in considerable detail, so the President would actually know precisely what the situation was.

Then he called me in at the end of the Dean meeting. We had some general discussion about options and alternatives. Ehrlichman's intrigued with the possibility, which he raised yesterday, of convening a grand jury and having all of us go up there and file our statements under oath and getting that done. The President also became somewhat interested in that, especially after talking with Dean, but has some concerns about it. Felt that the time had come that Dean and Ehrlichman and I should all sit down with Mitchell, and that Dean should give us the same total fill on the facts as he had given the President today, and we should then try to come to some conclusions. He called me back in at 3:00 and went over some of his thoughts again before Dean, Ehrlichman and I met at 3:30. At that point, the President felt that we needed basically to determine, first of all, what to do right now about the Hunt threat. He's asking for money, and says he'll blow the Ehrlichman story and Bud Krogh thing if we don't pay him off now, or if they don't. And the question is to evaluate the whole thing and determine a course of action. That we now have a different situation than we did during the election. We've got to figure all the problems and possibilities. For example, the Krogh problem on where he is. Maybe it can be solved by national security considerations or we can get him immunity, and there's a question of Sullivan's memo and whether to use it.

He thinks, on thinking it over, that the grand jury is appealing, at least at first blush, because it's an opportunity for all the White House to be questioned on a sworn basis with no cover-up. We'd



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precede it by a general statement that would be based-- or take off from the statement by the judge at the sentencing on Friday. Then we're following up now, that the court has proceeded and then have Dean put out a general disclaimer. He feels we need something, and unless it's necessary to tough it through, we shouldn't. However, if it involves criminal prosecution of the top people, then that would be worse than having to tough it out. But if we do tough it out, it means living with it, which is going to be very tough, very difficult. He feels that the critical thing is regarding Ehrlichman and Krogh versus Hunt. The question is, can we let Hunt go. Also he thinks I ought to talk to Colson and see what would happen, as far as he's concerned, if Hunt blows. He suggested also that if we do the grand jury we should invite the press to testify, not subpoena them, but they should be invited. Not on their sources or their files, but on any facts that they have. The advantages of this, of course, are that the grand jury approach covers all the ground under oath, provides the answer about going to the Senate. How else can we show that the President is trying to get the facts and avoid anything falling on us? That becomes the basic problem, and the question is whether to go one way or the other, or just ride it through on the containment theory that Dean's been pursuing up to now. Generally you come out that the latter is really the only actually possible course, but it's not a very good one.

The President then had Ehrlichman, Dean and me in at 5:15 for another hour or so and reviewed our afternoon discussion which comes down that Ehrlichman doesn't think the Dean approach to the grand jury is satisfactory, because Dean bases it on going for immunity before the people testify, which John doesn't think is a salable approach. So we talked for quite a while and came out about the same as we went in. We'll meet with Mitchell tomorrow morning and see if we can advance it there. Dean, after the meeting, made one point that maybe we should just draw the wagons up around the White House and let things fall where they may outside; which, of course, is the tempting choice, since there is no complicity within the White House, and we'd come out in good shape on that. But the problem is what happens to Mitchell, Magruder, etcetera, on the outside.

End of March 21.