



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

Thursday, December 17th. This was Heath day with the usual arrival ceremonies, and private meeting all morning, and State Dinner tonight. The afternoon was pretty much occupied with a visit to the Department of Agriculture operation in Beltsville, Maryland, and the session with Scranton.

The big flap of the day was the Army domestic intelligence activity, which has been blown up by the TV and the press as a result of a letter of some former Army sergeant sent to Senator Ervin. The whole episode poses a major problem for us, first in the area of repression, which our enemies are trying to build up in that this implies we're using the Army to spy on political people. Then, specifically named were Stevenson, and a Congressman, and Judge Kerner. But also credibility, because anything we do to deny it is subject to backfire. After a lot of go-rounds today, we ended up on the basis that most of the charges are not basically true, and we can prove this in at least some of the cases. Also, whatever activity had been going on was stopped last June, and the files destroyed. Our key thing here is to get the White House out of this, so we've covered it thoroughly with Laird and instructed him to handle the entire thing in Defense. We've told Ziegler to stay off of it here.

The President...

DECLASSIFIED - E.O. 13526, Sect. 3.4: by MS, NARA, June 12, 2013
Audio Cassette 2, Side A, Withdrawn Item Number 6 [AC-2(A) Sel 3]
Duration: 24 seconds

...commented on Heath while Kissinger was in the office talking about what a great guy he is, comparing him to Wilson who doesn't begin to reach his stature, also saying that Heath has grown substantially himself since he's taken office. He has, in effect, stepped up to the job.



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In the late afternoon, got into a long discussion re: the question of whether our press secretary setup is adequate. And mainly, the President got to the point that he feels Klein is totally inadequate and that neither Herb nor Ron is in a league with Haggerty, and that we've got to have somebody who is strong enough really to get over our story effectively and consistently in the way that Haggerty did for Eisenhower.

A bit of a blow today on the new Gallup poll, which showed the President at an all-time low of 52. He didn't react very much to it but did get into a few questions to me on it at midday. He is very much concerned in this regard with the whole PR thing still, feeling that our people and facilities are not adequate, and he's undoubtedly right.

End of December 17.