



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

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Thursday, December 24.

We got back into some confusion today on the TV conversation, because Ehrlichman raised a question of grave doubts regarding whether this was the best approach. He thinks a fireside chat would be better and that got the President thinking about it again. The debate went on all day and he ended up back at the four network interview setup that we had originally scheduled. But he's still concerned about John's point that the country needs a sense of confidence in the issues, and that this kind of thing or a press conference will not accomplish that. John feels we've got to make the point that the country's being brought together, that we are ending the war, we are solving the economy problem, etcetera, that things are going well now and they look better for the future.

The President also came up with an interesting conclusion as he was thinking through the whole youth problem. And he's decided there is a reverse reaction of the teenagers on their parents, which results in making the parents doubt their own values. In the past, parents stood firm; the kids were always screwed up. Now, the kids are still screwed up but, instead of standing firm, the parents follow them-- follow their lead. He thinks this is a problem within our own staff, because many of them have kids with serious problems. And it is very hard for our guys to keep their balance because they're beat on by their kids, by the press, by the people they meet socially, etcetera. He's concluded, therefore, that the major effect of the youth revolution is its effect on parents and their guilt complexes.

A lot of talk today about Klein. Still trying to figure out what ought to be done there. He's convinced he's got to go and went through a lot of different ways of going about convincing him of it. He finally concluded that the thing I had suggested was the only way to do it, which is to hit him frontally. He thinks I should just open up with him, saying we'd like him to accept the Ambassadorship to Mexico. If he says no, say: we're going to dismantle the Communications Operation and we don't want you out; but we do want you where you'll be most effective and it



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isn't as Director of Communications; however, if you do want to stay here we'll leave you in that role, but remove all of the operating responsibility from under it.

He got back on the need to get out something good every day to build the staff up, to give them a lift and to counteract the constant hammering they get from press and Congress, etcetera. Made the point regarding his meeting with Owings, who Whitaker has sneered at in his briefing paper for being spiritual in his approach to the redoing of downtown Washington and his use of federal land. The President's point is, this is just what we need and that we don't get it from Whitaker, Ruckelshaus, or Train; but we need poetry, excitement, and spiritual quality. We've got to find a way to get it. He then bet that all the year-end interviews would come out very pragmatic, low key and business-like, analyzing where we've failed or succeeded, rather than getting into the real value of the thing. He commented, while Ziegler was in the room, that Churchill's books regarding war are like Tolstoy's novels regarding war. They're great because they don't concern themselves with war, but rather with people. You end up knowing the men, the personalities, and the great forces that went behind the great wars, rather than just the technical details of the battle.

Finch called regarding the National Chairmanship, suggested to the President that it be Pat Hitt. He was absolutely stunned, although I had warned him this was coming, because he didn't think it was really serious. He's definitely of the view that we should not go to a woman Chairman. He agrees that we should take the position of the President staying out of the National Committee question, let the Committee make the recommendation to him. Behind the scenes we'll make sure that it works out to be Dole, and let Mitchell work with Dole to get his deal completely spelled out first.

As we speculated on a super-press guy to replace Klein and come in over Ziegler, he kept suggesting Dick Wilson. I then raised Stuart Alsop, and he's very much intrigued with that as a possibility and wants to figure out some way to explore it.

He-- the President visited the Home for the Incurables today, at our suggestion, to wish them a Merry Christmas. He refused to take any press, or even let them know he was there until after he



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had gotten back, which drove Ziegler up the wall, but made the visit work out extremely well. He took Dick Moore along to get the anecdotal background and then peddle it to the press upon return and we'll see whether that accomplished our objectives. He was obviously very much impressed. I watched him for a while as he went through, and he did a superb job of dealing with the spastic-type kids as he would-- or older people, as he would hold on to an arm to keep it from waving around and then shake the hand. He talked with them in a normal conversational way, even though they couldn't talk back. And when he came out, he made the comment as he got in the car, "Boy, we think we've got troubles." It's just amazing to watch him in one of this-- in this kind of situation because he handled it so well.

He got back to the office, and sat and chatted for a little while, then finally gave up for the day and went home for Christmas Eve. We had some suggestions in through Julie that they go to a Christmas Eve service tonight and to the Children's Hospital on Saturday. I don't know whether he'll do that or not.

End of December 24.