



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

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Tuesday, February 2.

In DC. The day started with a Prayer Breakfast, which he regards as total torture at best. This one went pretty well except that the Chief Justice, who was supposed to be the main speaker and go for only ten minutes, took twenty-five minutes to explain word for word and over and over the true meaning of the 23rd Psalm. The President did a superb job with a very brief five minute piece on having an open heart, and it went over extremely well.

The Cabinet met for a brief session that was supposed to have been a pep talk on State of the Union follow-up. It was pretty badly done, as it was turned over to Rumsfeld and he then turned it over to MacGregor, neither of whom showed any enthusiasm or steam. And consequently, the whole purpose of the thing was pretty much lost. The meeting really came through as an obviously unprepared, make-do type of deal with no enthusiasm, no apparent plan as to what's to be accomplished and not enough time allowed for Cabinet officers to talk. Those that were primed, did talk, however. Stans, Hodgson, and Harden did reasonably well. This sort of primed the pump, and some of the others also spoke up on what they're doing within their Departments, and that part of it came out reasonably well.

Rogers, then, just at the point of adjournment, jumped in hard on foreign policy, making some very good remarks on the attacking the point that some in Congress are trying to imply that we've violated the spirit of the law in our Laotian buildup. Rogers made the point that there is no such thing as spirit of the law, the question is the word of the law. And if the words are not clear, so that one cannot tell precisely what the law means, then you look to the intent. In this case, Cooper-Church, the words and the intent are clear. The prohibition on use of air power was specifically removed from Cooper-Church before it was passed, and it is absolutely clear that the intent of Congress, as well as the word of the law, the letter of the law, is that there is no limitation on the use of air power. The President then hit the same point, saying that we are candid, we are honest, and we are within the law.



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The whole Cabinet then walked over to the East Room for a Sub-Cabinet meeting. The President gave his pitch to the sub-Cabinet group, and then left while the meeting shifted to briefings.

He had a fairly intensive open-door hour session, and quite a few reactions afterwards, mainly that we hadn't time to write because we only allowed five minutes for some sections that obviously would require more than that. He got all hung up on the fact that Don Kendall wants him to come to his 50th birthday party, which is the same night as Pat Nixon's birthday. Fortunately, that's our Irish "Evening at the White House", so the President can't go and has a darn good excuse.

He's also disturbed about the need to follow up on Mexicans. Sandoval convinced him that we're not exploiting what we are doing and Len Garment reacts the wrong way because his principal concern is with the blacks. He was impressed with a group of young people who came in, and now wants to do more seeing of groups of young people who are leaning our way, rather than those like the student editors he saw last week who are going the other way.

He wants some analysis of the Gallup poll regarding Hatfield-McGovern, because he thinks the support that Gallup reports is really falsely based due to the fact of the way they word their question.

The latter part of the afternoon was consumed with a long session with the War Action Group, getting final plans laid for the next move. Apparently, enough is involved that he feels now that he cannot have a press conference this week and probably also not next week. In any event, the one for this week has been put off because the President doesn't want to be in a position of having to deny anything that later we will be doing. He's pretty well girded up for the effects of any major move. I actually don't think there are going to be any great problems, because I think the thing has already been discounted by the heavy press anticipation and that the people are pretty well prepared for whatever steps we do take. There certainly doesn't seem to be any likelihood of a Cambodia level reaction, although I guess anything can happen.



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End of February 2.