



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

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Monday, February 15.

At Key Biscayne. This was by far the best day of the weekend and, unfortunately, as soon as I got out on the beach, the President called and had me come over; and I was stuck inside the house for almost four hours going over his long list of odds and ends. He was somewhat concerned by the new Harris poll, which I reviewed with him, giving a comparison of Presidential personality standings at present versus 1968. It showed he had declined in the rating of strength and decisiveness, the two basic characteristics he feels are most important for us to get over. He's still high in both of these, but it's gone down over the last three years. This, again, indicates the job we've got to do in the personality side. He didn't get particularly concerned about the whole Harris thing, however, which was interesting.

He is concerned about the Florida barge canal cancellation. Thinks that it was handled badly and that, as a result, we've ended up getting the worst of both worlds. The whole situation is loused up; and we've made our business friends mad, but have not gotten any real credit with the environmental-type people. He makes the point that we have to watch the whole environment issue very carefully, or we'll get pushed into the wrong things and end up kicking all our friends in the teeth. He feels the ecology people are all left-wingers and against us, and that we must not go hog-wild for them and lose our own supporters. And at least, we've got to be sure to get credit for what we've done on things like the barge canal.

He got into quite a bit of re-review of the schedule, particularly the long-range planning on the use of television, which he, of course, keeps trying to analyze and figure out. The thinking now is maybe not to do the State of the World at prime time, especially if there isn't really something solid in it. Then he gets into the question of press conferences on TV, and not on TV, juggling other things around to work out the timing, etcetera. He is sticking with our idea of staying in Washington during Congressional recesses, and going away while Congress is in town.



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He got back on the problem of a producer for the "Evenings at the White House" and entertainments at the dinners, and feels, rightly, that we're making a real mistake in planning major events of this kind without having the very top professional assistance.

We got back on the question of a theme for the domestic program, and he feels probably "The New American Revolution" is the best we've got, but he's not very sure of that.

He made an interesting comment as he was reviewing the Cole versus Vice President flap, and also some of the telephone recommendations for him to make over the weekend. And he made the point that there's a tendency in all political systems for people to line up on each-- sides, choose sides, and to fight each other, and that we've got to be careful that this isn't done against the VP and others within our own operation.

During the late afternoon he had reviewed the first Safire draft of the suggested remarks for the dedication of the Woodrow Wilson Center and had basically rejected the whole thing. He reviewed it with me on the plane coming up, and made the point that Safire had tried to build the speech around half a dozen Wilson quotes, rather than using a single theme. He wants most of them cut out and to get down to an expansion of the "war to end wars" approach and make a very brief, eloquent statement on that subject. He was especially concerned about Safire's building-up the idea of peace without victory, which would be utter dynamite in our present situation, particularly in that it would destroy Thieu, which is the last thing we want to do at this point in time.

He spent most of the trip coming up just working on the material for the speeches for tomorrow and getting ready for the press conference on Wednesday. He seems to be pretty well relaxed—got a great tan—and I think the weekend was well worthwhile.

End of February 15.