



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

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Tuesday, February 23.

After the leadership meeting, we got into quite a discussion on the problem of discipline in the Cabinet. The President is particularly concerned with Weidenbaum's reported story today that we were willing to make concessions on revenue sharing, in other words throwing in the sponge in advance. He wants Connally to move in some way with the Cabinet officers just to see if we can't find a way to get more discipline. To tell the Cabinet officers that on three counts, first, following the Administration line; second, preventing leaks; and third, stopping back-biting both internally and intramurally must be stopped. He wants Connally to cover this at the VP Cabinet dinner when they get into their discussion. He feels strongly that we've got to get the Cabinet officers to step up and take this responsibility.

The Rogers-Kissinger battle got a big boost today with a story in the *Post* reporting that State had succeeded in forcing Kissinger to remove the SALT talk background section of the State of the World report. Henry, of course, was furious. Rogers came back with an instant defense that Henry had started the problem to begin with, by putting a story out last week that there was going to be a major background section on SALT at a time when it was still under discussion as to whether such a section should be in. The State establishment felt that this was a power move on Henry's part to try to lock them in to including it, and they all rose up and created a big flap. If Henry hadn't done this, no one would have known there was any discussion, and it would have gotten through okay. This whole issue went back and forth two or three times between Henry, me, Rogers, and the President, never really getting anywhere, but it did lead to the President spending most of his available time between events today calling me in and musing over the question of what to do about it. He feels that it's a very tough situation. He wanted to get the leak tracked down and something done about it, but of course, Rogers' defense pretty much prohibited that.

He did, however, spend a lot of time thinking about how to handle the whole problem. He feels that we definitely have got to develop a new approach. He's about ready, I think, to face up to the



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probable necessity of having one or the other go, a suggestion that Henry keeps roaring into my office with each new problem and threatening. I think that for the long haul that probably is what's going to have to happen. For the short haul, we may be able to do more than just the temporizing we've been doing to keep the thing on the track, and I'm going to try to work something out after the State of the World with Henry, and then with Rogers, to see if we can't get them both to face up to the larger necessity of doing what's right.

The President spoke to the Governors Conference this afternoon, insisting that they meet in a private, Governors only session, so that he wouldn't have to do up a thing for television. He gave a darn good 20 minute charged-up talk, which certainly could not have failed to convince them that he was in complete seriousness about pushing his program for revenue sharing and reorganization. That was the principle point of his going, and he achieved it admirably. He also had the Governors for a black tie dinner tonight with Bob Hope and Up With People as entertainment. The show pretty much flopped, and the dinner wasn't so hot either; although for the guests, I think it worked out extremely well, and I think he scored the points that he wanted to with the Governors.

As the afternoon went on and he had a certain amount of spare time, he called Dent in for a general discussion of his operations and role, and I think they did a lot of good in clarifying what Harry's supposed to be doing, but also in just building up his morale a little. The President made it clear that he considers him still the top, and now sole, political guy in the operating staff.

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One, two.

Tuesday February 23, continued. After the Dent meeting, Finch came in and went through a similar review of his current activities with the President.

The President gave him a charge on getting things going in the youth, women's, and Mexican areas particularly. Not much else of substance was covered. Earlier today we had a substantial stir as the President tried to finish up his final draft of a proclamation repealing the Davis-Bacon Act, regarding construction workers' salaries. This was a much lesser move than was expected, because the rumors all had it that he was going to put on temporary wage and price controls in the construction industry, and it created something of a surprise. He had not intended to do that for several days, however; so it was no internal surprise to those who had been involved. He was anxious that the statement be worded precisely right so as to get the maximum mileage we could out of it, and do the least damage to the unions.

End of February 23.