



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

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Monday, March 8.

The day of our big Senior Staff Dinner with John Connally. The President started out by calling me in first thing this morning, so I missed the staff meeting, to discuss some of the guidelines that he wants me to cover in making the points at the dinner tonight. Turns out he had also dictated three tapes full of memos regarding his ideas. The whole point being to emphasize the personal themes, make the point that no one remembers any of our programs nor do they remember any other President's. Our problem is we don't even have a name or a focus for ours. He had written out by hand two pages of notes that he reviewed with me verbally and then gave to me in addition to the memos. He's obviously very much involved in his own mind in this. As a matter of fact, he just called while I was dictating this, to find out how the meeting had gone and review more or less point-by-point the items that had been covered, etcetera. He seemed to be generally pleased with my report on it.

The other item of interesting of the day was the plan for the meeting with the ladies of the press on Mrs. Nixon and women's roles, generally. We finally agreed to try to make a deal with Barbara Walters to do an exclusive interview for the *Today* show of ten to twenty minutes, and then have a press conference with the writing press gals in addition to that, so that we can cover both bases.

He decided to send the letter we had recommended to the Vice President regarding the Gridiron, but expanded on the original letter. I haven't seen what he sent, but he said it was fairly tough, making the point that the Vice President would have to do some of these things, and indirectly making the point that instructions from the staff do represent the President's views and requests.

Henry came in late this afternoon, following up on an earlier visit by Haig regarding the problem of the State Department meeting on the Middle East. The question now is what to do about Rogers' attempt to get around the NSC system? Originally, Rogers had scheduled the meeting for today in preparation for the NSC meeting on Wednesday. Today's meeting was to discuss one segment of the situation regarding the Suez Canal. Then today he canceled that meeting, which



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Henry was not going to attend but was going to send Kissinger ins-- send Haig instead. Rogers canceled that meeting and set another meeting formally for tomorrow to discuss the entire Middle East settlement situation, prior to the NSC meeting on Wednesday with the President. Henry feels that he can't possibly attend such a meeting, because if he ends up in agreement with Rogers' position, then he and Rogers will confront the President with a lack of options, and he'll have to go along even if he has a different view. Whereas if he disagrees with Rogers, he'll then be in a position of having to force the President, or try to, to his position. Henry's standard rule always is not to take a position and to force all the options out before making a recommendation, then do it just with the President after all of the discussion has been covered. This maneuver of Rogers' makes that impossible. Henry's view, in light of that, is that he has no option but to confirm to the President that he's going to leave in December. The President can then back him all the way, knowing in his own mind, although it would not be publicly known, that the thing will come to an end at a time certain. I don't exactly understand Henry's reasoning on this, but that's the point he takes.

After the dinner tonight, he called Ehrlichman aside and covered the same ground with him, so he apparently is serious about it. He told John that he was going to meet with the President tomorrow and tell him. He didn't indicate the December date to John so may now be thinking of something more precipitous. I advised him not to take that step, as did John, but rather to confront the President with the problem, using the meeting this week as a specific example. There were a half a dozen others last week, which Henry let go by, but he could go back and recite, I'm sure, at the drop of a hat. I think, given this point, he and the President could work something satisfactory out, but apparently, Henry doesn't see it that way.

End of March 8.