



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

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Tuesday, March 23.

The President had a pretty heavy schedule through the day with the leadership meeting this morning, a number of groups through the day and a small dinner tonight with Heathrington on the Voluntary Action project. At midday, while Henry and I were in, he did get into a general review of Laos. As Henry wrapped it up, it comes out as clearly not a success, but still a worthwhile operation. As Henry summed it up, he-- if he knew before it started that it was going to come out exactly the way it did, he would still have gone ahead with it, even though it didn't meet the expectations he had hoped for. Both he and the President feel that they've were misled by Abrams on the original evaluation of what might be accomplished and that Abrams went ahead with his plan once the operation was underway, even though it was clear that it wasn't working. Henry feels strongly that they should have followed Westmoreland's advice and gone south to cut off the Ho Chi Minh Trail, instead of going in to capture Chapone, which was a visible objective but turned out to be basically a disaster. The President got to talking about World War II generals and the problem that Abrams was one of them, and it was too long since World War II. They concluded that they should pull Abrams out, but then the President made the point that this is the end of the military operations anyway, so what difference does it make.

The President started to get into the SST activity today, as he realized that the final Senate vote comes tomorrow, and he wants to be sure he does anything that will be helpful in locking up any votes that we can get at the last minute. The Congressional guys seem to think we have an almost even chance of winning it, and so the President is anxious to do whatever he can on it. He also got into the point of our necessity of developing a group of our own protagonists and loyalists in the House and Senate, and start cultivating them more, people that will speak up for Nixon. We need the same thing, of course, in the business community and amongst Governors, and so forth, as well. He wanted to be sure that we had full Congressional follow-up on the program last night, with statements, letters, all of the normal activities. Unfortunately, we didn't really have these underway.



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He apparently had a good meeting with the mayors, and as a result, swung most of the key big-city Democratic mayors behind him on revenue sharing. Muskie had made a speech to them earlier in the day that was purely political, and they reacted unfavorably to that, and all the more favorably, by contrast, to the President's proposal. He also had a good meeting with the dairy men and has decided to go to the 85 percent of parity for milk products, instead of the 78 or whatever it was we had originally planned to do. Each of these groups does pretty well at getting its own way, if they once get in to see the President.

End of March 23.