



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

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Tuesday, May 18.

SALT was the big activity today, as our original plans for the Rogers, Laird, and Gerry Smith meetings were one by one dropped and shifted, because Henry didn't have the final okay from Dobrynin on the wording of the agreement and the final decision to confirm announcement on Thursday. As the day went on, Henry became more and more nervous, as did the President, because it looked as if maybe there was a snag we weren't going to get through. That all proved to be unfounded, as at 3:45, Henry burst into a meeting the President and I were having with Colson, to say that everything was all set. We talked in some double-talk so Colson wouldn't understand what we were saying for a while, and then finally Chuck left and we went into the plans for how to handle it. We'll go ahead with briefings tomorrow of Rogers, etcetera. The President is still extremely worried about how to tell Rogers and went back and forth on that, frequently, on and off during the rest of the afternoon, but we locked him in for a 9:00 appointment in the morning, and he's going to have to face up to it now.

There was, of course, considerable discussion as the day went on of looking back on how the whole thing had come together, of the tremendous role Henry's played in this, implementing the President's decisions in his many secret meetings with Dobrynin, which have finally brought us to the point of something that we can actually take to the people. This puts us in a marvelous position because of the general feeling on the part of many of the doves in Congress that SALT had broken down and Muskie's plan to start holding hearings, etcetera. This, of course, shoots all the ground out from under them. The problem now is how to handle the announcement and follow-up on it in such a way as to tread the very fine line between making sure that the enormous significance of the step is clearly understood, but that we don't oversell it or appear to have arrived at any final decision.

There was a lot of back and forth discussion between Henry and the President as to who deserved the credit, etcetera, Henry making very clear the point that it was the President's courage in the decisions that had made it all possible, but obviously Henry feels he played a



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monumental role also, and I guess he really did. As we discussed planning on the announcement, the President overruled the original decision to notify the Congressional leaders at 3:00 this afternoon-- 3:00 Wednesday afternoon—that there would be a leaders' meeting on Thursday morning—the idea being to get them on guard before the Mansfield amendment votes at 5:00. The President felt that would be a cheap shot and it would be better from our viewpoint to let the vote go on whatever grounds it does, and then notify the leaders right afterwards of the Thursday morning meeting. This is one that someday we've got to be sure it gets out because he deserves a lot of credit, since it now appears that we'll probably lose on one of the amendments to the Mansfield amendment. We can defeat Mansfield, but we can't defeat all of the other options, or at least probably not.

As the afternoon went on, the President became more and more pleased about the whole thing falling together, the more he thought about it. He decided to have Henry and me join him on the *Sequoia* for dinner. At the last minute, he also added Ehrlichman and Colson, so we had a pretty good group and there was a lot of basically light conversation, and the President, as we sat up on the upper deck before dinner, had Henry read the announcement to the group. Ehrlichman and Colson were astonished by the scope, because nobody on the inside thought we had any possibility of getting the thing this far down the road. The President was in very good spirits and very jovial through dinner, making a lot of wisecracks, having some fun with Henry, discussing some of the plans for announcement, etcetera.

Ehrlichman reported that the SST revival was dead, since Boeing had decided to fold their hand and not attempt to go for renewal, on the basis that they can't win in the negotiation of-- renegotiation of the contract. This came as something of a blow to the President. He's especially concerned because it's obviously a slur on us, in that the House revived the thing and we weren't able to carry it through with the supplier. He's furious with Boeing and has made it clear they'll get nothing more from this Administration as long as he is in office.



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He also got into quite a long thing on the lack of leadership in the Congress, particularly in the Senate, making the point that Gerry Ford really is the only leader we've got on either side in either house. And that led into some reminiscing about the old time greats in the Congress.

Ehrlichman reported that in his meeting with the president of Boeing, T. Wilson, this afternoon, Wilson got into a pitch on their new hydrofoil and John cut him off, saying that he really didn't think this Administration was going to be very interested in a new contract with the Boeing Company, at least at this time, at which Wilson got up hastily and departed.

We had a little flap with the Director of the National Institutes of Mental Health, who apparently said the other day that he thought marijuana offenses should be handled like traffic violations. This sent the President right up the wall, and he's told Ehrlichman to get the guy fired, which it turns out we're glad to do because he's been causing some other problems and shows some clear disloyalty. So John's moving ahead on that.

End of May 18.