



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

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[June 16, 1971]

*New York Times* reaction again dominated the day today, starting with the staff meeting, where we got into a discussion in the 8:00 meeting, with Shultz making the point that there are three main issues: the question of whether this should have been classified or declassified to begin with; the point that top secret material is published every day, and the question of why this is any different from others; and the concern about how devious Defense and Foreign Affairs intelligence are. They're always playing a cat and mouse game, never a straight statement. Then we got into the general staff meeting and pointed out the problem is that the President now is being positioned as opposed to the public's right to know, and MacGregor, among others, raised the question of why don't we condemn the massive deception of the previous Administration. There'll be a thrust in Congress now to limit the war powers and especially to demand knowledge of what the President's doing. Two separate issues are being mixed: first, *The Times* is violating the law; second, the content of the documents. An idea that was raised was to give the documents to Congress, leaving them classified, but letting them have them, which would prove that we're not trying to cover anything up, but would still preserve the aspect of secret classification.

There's a real problem here of Johnson's pure deceit, for instance at his press conference where he said he was not doing exactly what he was doing. Another idea was that we should declassify all of the material that can be declassified and announce now that we're going to do so. Do enough of a release so that we can't be accused of suppression. That, though, creates the problem of declassifying other documents or releasing them to the Senate on the basis of their being leaked or on any other basis.

The President got into this on and off all during the day, wanted to be sure that we're making an all out effort on editorials. Felt that we should have someone analyze the Kennedy stuff and then get it leaked out somehow. Decided we probably should give Ehrlichman the responsibility as the one man on top of the whole thing, since there is nobody running it now and it's an ideal



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thing for Ehrlichman. His view is that we're trying to protect the integrity of government and the ability to conduct government, and that does require some classification of materials. For instance, many of the discussions going on now on SALT, Berlin, et cetera, have to be classified. He comes back again and again with the view that nothing else that we do in the rest of this Administration will give him more pleasure than to carry out the directive now with regard to *The New York Times*: they're never to be in the office, never on the pool, never on the plane, et cetera, and no one is to raise this with the President.

He feels we do have to make the issue that the press is massively endangering our security, paint them as lawbreakers, disloyal, et cetera. That there's no question of right to know or how we got into Vietnam, but we must maintain the integrity of government.

As we were talking at midday today, he heard some kids shouting out on the South Lawn and realized that the 1,000 Rural Electrification Administration youth group were gathering to be addressed by Cliff Hardin and then take a White House tour. After pondering the whole thing on and off for a while, he decided that he should go out and greet them, which he then did on a completely spontaneous and unannounced basis, and it was a big success. Now he feels he wants to do more of that kind of thing, which indeed he should.

He came up with some schedule changes, regarding California particularly, because he's not going to Midway now, and -- some ideas on shifting the press conference plans around, etcetera. We were supposed to be making a big drug speech, possibly on preemptive network TV tomorrow, and were waiting for it to come in. When it finally did, it was completely the wrong thing, and that wasn't until late this afternoon; so we're getting a kind of stir on that, because our whole speech preparation deal is pretty screwed up, and this was a good example of it. Instead of doing a speech now, he's going to do a one or one and a half minute opening to the briefing and let the briefers carry the story, rather than the President trying to do it.

End of June 16th.