



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

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Wednesday, March 29th. Shultz reported to me this morning that the reason I'd been having a problem in setting up the Laird meeting on government purchases that the President told me to do, is that Laird is determined not to come to it. He told Ken Rush that he would refuse to go. That Rush can go if he wants to, but that Laird won't be bound by anything that's said here.

So I started calling Laird, took most of the day back and forth before I got through to him and I really jumped on him on the basis that the President had ordered the meeting and I couldn't understand on what basis he was refusing to attend. He backed off then, said he'd be glad to come to the meeting we've set up for tomorrow afternoon.

Dick Walters met yesterday with Perot, at our request, to avoid Perot meeting with the President. Apparently, he's got a deal where the North Vietnamese will release 30 sick and wounded prisoners in return for a million dollars from us. Henry's concerned that we work out some way of handling the ransom so that we get credit for it rather than Perot. And we've apparently had feelers on the same thing from other sources also.

The President raised the question of getting Connally out, as was sort of discussed yesterday in the meeting with him, to really hit the Democrats. Connally obviously would like to do this and wants to take them on by name and attack them on their tax reforms and all. The President thinks this is a good tactic to divide them, and I think he's basically right.

Kissinger was in talking about the Russian trip and the problems of whether we stay at the Kremlin or not, how many days we stay in Russia, and all that sort of thing.



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He's still arguing against going to Poland. The President told him that he definitely wants to and he wants Henry to find a way to work it out. And he'll stay another day in Russia if that'll buy them off on it.

The President also raised the thought of whether he ought to speak to the Russian people on television as Eisenhower did, or was going to do, and as Nixon actually did. Also he wants to see if we can get a Walters type translator with some enthusiasm instead of Akolevsky who is pretty low key.

The big thing today again is ITT. Colson and MacGregor and I had a meeting. They feel that we've got some problems in that Mitchell undercut us yesterday and got Eastland to renege on his promise to bring the hearings to a close on a vote today, because Mitchell wants to keep them open to get a couple of other witnesses on. However, he saw the light this morning when Wally Johnson told him that one of the witnesses he wants on is going to testify that has Mitchell perjured himself when he said that he had not met with Reinecke in the springtime. Then Mitchell ordered Mardian to go up and get Eastland and turn him off, but Eastland wouldn't do it, but apparently he did agree not to call the other witnesses, and then agreed to turn the hearings off next Thursday when the Senators come back. He'll hear no more witnesses after Geneen, who's on today.



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The Republicans are starting to fold a little bit, at least Scott and Mathias. Scott was pushing to sever the issue of Kleindienst versus the hearings. Guerney was very upset with that as was MacGregor and they think they have it turned off. Some of them want to get the Life charges back on the record and answered. And MacGregor concludes that the Republican Senators are looking for a way to get off the hook, although they deny this. And, he thinks this is our problem. Colson thinks that Kleindienst can't withdraw now but that maybe we could force a floor vote or something like that to develop a provocation, and he can resign on the basis of that. He argues still that he throw a gauntlet down either with or without the ultimatum in order to get some positive action on our side instead of just equivocating.

I reported that to the President this afternoon. He--, his view is that this is a political investigation and therefore it's better for Mitchell to handle the calls, and so on, rather than the White House, MacGregor, and Colson. He feels that Eastland wouldn't break his word to Mitchell as he did to MacGregor yesterday. He feels that we've got to keep Scott off the severing idea and that we've got to get the hearings closed somehow. Then he raises the question: isn't Kleindienst a tarnished symbol? And the problem is, on the political side. The Democrats are going to run against the fact that we have an Attorney General who can't even be confirmed by the Senate and they'll keep the issue alive all through the campaign. In other words, Kleindienst can't stay as acting Attorney General forever, which is what MacGregor and Colson think Mitchell's present ploy is. We have to get him out of the campaign today. He's too heavy a load to carry, and we can't use the ultimatum device because that's too phony as Connally said yesterday.



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We talked about this for about an hour and then the President had me call Kleindienst over and we met over at the library, had the waiter light a fire and brought some coffee down. Kleindienst came, scared to death, made the point that there will be an executive session next Thursday, and they'll close the hearings, and he's convinced that Eastland is able to do that. Has only three votes against him in the committee on it, whereas MacGregor and Colson seem to think he'll have a problem on a close vote in the committee to close the hearings. He says then it'll go to a filibuster on the Senate floor after a delay for filing minority reports, etcetera, and that the filibuster will die after a while, and that we have ample votes to confirm Kleindienst. He says Eastland has a commitment from Mansfield to put a vote on the calendar. That we don't have the votes for cloture, so we can't kill the filibuster, but it'll ride through to the end of May or early June, and then they'll vote and it'll pass. We went round and round on that, Kleindienst made the point that he doesn't want MacGregor dealing with Eastland, and we agreed to leave Eastland to Kleindienst to handle. We agreed that Kleindienst also would have Fannin handle the Ervin issue, which our guys say is gonna be impossible to deal with.

The President called me later at home, and before I got home, when I returned the call, he asked me to wait just a minute, that he had just gotten out of the shower, and went out to get a bathrobe. Then he felt the Kleindienst meeting had gone well and been productive. He has changed his view that we should dump Kleindienst, thinks that we should ride him out as he recommends. Said we've got to remember that we shouldn't get so close to these things that we panic, which I must say, he was closer to doing than most of the rest of us. Kleindienst sees no chance of losing the vote in the committee, where our people thought it was going to be a close vote. The President would say based on this, that we should have Kleindienst nail Eastland on the vote tomorrow. Then, go to the next point, we'll have to ride through the period of three weeks, but sometime Mansfield has to bring it up. The President feels he did get across to Kleindienst the problem that if they don't confirm, we can't get ahead past the convention with him as acting AG, so the deadline now is about June 1st.



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He was impressed by Kleindienst's feeling that we should get the White House out of the San Diego Convention riot planning and all. He told me to get that done. He wants to look into the possibility of moving the convention, maybe to Miami, but he thinks it's probably too far along to do that. He wants to get the details on ITT contributions to the Democrats. He feels Kleindienst is correct about dealing with Eastland that MacGregor should stay out of it. He thinks Mitchell's got to get directly into the play, and not work at odds with other people. He wants me to stay close to Kleindienst, minimal contact with him. He feels the Democrats may now have a problem if we can keep up a drumbeat for a vote, with a group on the floor every day, that they'll have trouble defending it after a while.

End of March 29th.