



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

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Monday, July 31.

We left first thing this morning for Louisiana for Ellender's funeral. The trip went very well. The President got a great reception. Lots of crowds on the streets. Governor met him and said he was for him. Senator Eastland told him that he'd carry every county in Mississippi. The Sheriff said that he'd clean up in Louisiana, as did the police chief, etcetera. He had plenty of time on the plane to chat with the Louisiana Congressional delegation and pick up some political points there. He had quite a discussion with me on general political and Convention plans. He's concerned about California, where he thinks we have our major problems. First, the economy; second, Reagan; third, the fact that it's youth-oriented; but all wrapped up mainly into the fact that of the failure on our part to launch a Democrat Independent campaign there. That ours is a Goldwater-type organization instead of what it should be. He emphasizes that California is the most important state for Connally to work in.

Got into some problems of who goes to the Convention, especially regarding the Pat Nixon staff. Also, the family's obviously pressuring him to get out and shake hands with the delegates and all. He wants to look for something, after the acceptance speech, along that line. He wants some work done on Ed Cox's schedule to use him with the suburbanite elites, upper-class colleges. Use his arrogance, not put him into middle America. He wonders if he ought to go to Wilkes-Barre to look at the flood damage and express some more concern. He was following up with me on whether the men got over to photograph the Ft. Wayne stuff. This comes out of a report that Clawson gives me from an FBI contact of his, indicating that McGovern has an illegitimate daughter who he fathered while he was in high school or college, with the records all very specific in Ft Wayne. We're trying to get pictures of it to have on file, although we have no intention of using it.

He felt he should not go on this press conference if Eagleton is taken off of the ticket; is anxious to get MacGregor's staff meetings and so on started and get people fired up.



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Bobby Griffin raised the point with him that, in our canvassing, we need to locate Wallace people and pick them up, as well as Nixon people. Also that we ought to hit the auto manufacturers, to get them to hire people now. They're making enormous profits out of enormous sales, but instead of hiring new people they're running a lot of overtime, which doesn't help us on unemployment.

When we got back, we had an economic political meeting with Shultz, Stein, Weinberger, Ehrlichman, and Colson to discuss the basic economic issues on the basis that the experts know we're in good shape but the people don't. The problems are on inflation, particularly food prices, tax reform, unemployment, and the general area of expansion of the economy. On food prices, the consumers blame the processors and the middle men, so a month before the election we should look for some way to impose a freeze on that segment of the food business. We can't do it earlier because it won't work and we don't want people to find that out. We need to make an all-out assault on the spending ceiling on the basis that it assures against a tax increase. The President feels two fronts need a political play: prices, of food only, to show concern; and taxes, to indicate that we have a tax program. He urged that Weinberger or someone take all of McGovern's votes while he was in the Senate, add up what they would have added to the budget. Say this would have meant so much in increased taxes. That he's the biggest spender in Congress, that he voted against price controls.

Instead of just defending us, we have to kick the hell out of McGovern. We have to find something we can do on the control side of the processor. The problem of bragging on what we have done shows that we're for the status quo, and this may not be salable. We need to force the debate to be on McGovern's economic program, not on our record. This shows the need though, to talk about our issue, foreign policy, instead of getting people talking about the economy. The best we can do is to avoid the negative as much as possible.

The President met after that with Connally alone for quite a while, then called me in. Connally made the point that it's vital, until McGovern and Eagleton make their final decision and



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McGovern gets a new candidate if he throws Eagleton off, that we make no news whatever. For instance, there should be no announcement of Connally's committee, no news from MacGregor, etcetera. Wallace's announcement on Saturday, for instance, made no ripples, because McGovern and Eagleton were dominating the news.

Then, this evening, McGovern and Eagleton had their meeting. Came out of it and, at about 9:45, had a press conference that was carried on CBS radio. McGovern announced that, while he was fully satisfied that Eagleton's health was great and he consistently supported Eagleton, that they had made a joint decision. That health was not a factor, but the public debate of it was diverting attention again from the national issues and that the paramount need for the Democrats is unity and a full discussion of the issues. That the debate regarding Eagleton will divide, so the best course is for Eagleton to step aside. With nothing but best wishes, he's agreed to campaign, and I welcome his help, etcetera. Eagleton said that he was jointly in agreement that he should withdraw, that it wasn't an easy decision, that thousands of people had phoned, written, and so forth, but that he will not divide the Democratic Party, which already has too many divisions. His personal feelings are secondary to the need to unify the Democratic Party and elect McGovern president. "My conscience is clear, my spirit is high, this is definitely not my last press conference. Tom Eagleton will be around for a long, long time, and I will be working for McGovern in the meantime." Then he said no one could have been finer, more considerate, more generous in his concern than George McGovern, and so on. McGovern then said that he will consider the Vice President choice very carefully, has no one in mind at this point. He won't discuss the VP tomorrow night. He's requested free time on all three networks at 9:00 tomorrow night. He says he'll discuss the campaign to date at that time, which should be an impossibility. At that point, I called the President to report to him, and missed a good chunk of the press conference. The rest of it just babbled on on how heartrending a decision it was, and explaining away various factors. Nothing of any importance.

End of July 31.