



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

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Thursday, August 17.

He called on the phone at 9:00 this morning. Says he's going to avoid going down today, he won't do the Olympics after all, that he started one theme last night, worked on it for quite a long time, and it didn't work. Then he got into the need for some other judgment regarding the "how we should go after the Vietnam attack", hitting McGovern on his screwing up the peace. That he wanted me to have Ziegler, Connally, MacGregor, and Rogers' judgment on the idea of maybe having a Rogers speech. The President's general reaction is not to delay, he thinks it's best to shoot when the target is there, that we should hit him on seriously jeopardizing the peace negotiations. Question of whether we should wait until Henry gets back, or hit at the Convention, raises the question of maybe they're purposely trying to hit the thing to louse up our Convention and for that reason we should wait until afterwards.

Talked to Connally on it, and he said that he thinks somebody at this point should spell it out, but it should not be the President, not Rogers, not the Vice President, should be done without characterizing, but just to bring it into focus, maybe Gerry Ford or someone on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, not Reagan. Maybe Margaret Smith, or Aiken. Should be done with sadness and resignation, that it's unbelievable. Not mean, just to bring it into focus—set up the target now and hit it later—don't need it now, so don't hit it too hard. The war isn't hurting us. The only adverse thing is food prices, and we shouldn't move too fast on that. We should look at that if we didn't have the war, we wouldn't have them screwing up on these things, and we want to keep the issue focused on Vietnam, because it's to our benefit. So we should do it at the Convention, where we get maximum coverage. With a good governor or someone to plant it in people's minds. We should posture the indecisiveness, credibility, inability to deal with problems. Hit him on lack of understanding, indecision, naiveté. Connally then said maybe he should hit it at the VFW, but then he figured maybe he's probably not the best one.

President then got into quite a discussion on the speech, says that we've got to do something about the themes in the liberal press, that we always run a bad campaign and lose. That we



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shouldn't worry about this one; second, that our supporters are very thin, and we really do have solid support. He then outlined that he feels there's three points he can make: economics, law and order and justice—building on the courts, and crime and so on—and peace. Then wonders about one exception from his feeling that he should not go through a laundry list, which would be a pitch for young people. In the last four years, something significant regarding the young don't judge all American youth by the "shouters" and those engaged in violence. The majority are studying, working and working within the system. He feels we have to say the Democrats are unpatriotic, but we should wait till after the Convention to do it, except maybe Reagan hitting it at the Convention.

Going back to Connally, he reported that Tom Johnson is going to be leaving Lyndon Johnson and wants to come back to Washington, get into government, so I told him that we'd be happy to give him a position, we'd be delighted to have him in the government, he's exactly the kind of young guy we want.

On the attack on Vietnam, the President doesn't feel that it should be done in a partisan format, it's better to come from a Democrat, it will be a good shift and not a slashing attack, we should just talk about bipartisan foreign policy, pick up the President's speeches of the past and so on. He wants Connally to do it. He told me to have Bakshian do the Connally speech, making the point "Don't play partisan politics," with peace. He should congratulate the VFW, who are mostly Democrats, as the President did, for backing the national foreign policy. Wants to be sure Ziegler and Klein and all don't hit McGovern on this, wants Colson to hit them on their dirty low road campaign. Slander, smear, and fear, so on. In his American Legion speech, he wants to use the Truman quote regarding the need for keeping politics out of foreign policy. Regarding the Legion, making the point that the Legion always puts country above party.

Then he got into some ideas that when there are serious negotiations, of great seriousness and importance, for an individual outside the government to intervene is a terrible thing. Without raising false hopes, you know that serious talks have been taking place—Paris and Saigon—but



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because the enemy might misinterpret, we have a problem here. Then he got down to, because discussions are going on at the highest levels, this intervention by an outsider could seriously jeopardize the possibility of peace and all. These ideas were for Ziegler to say something, hitting this so that we don't downplay the McGovern thing too much. That is the Ramsey Clark deal. Colson agreed that Connally was the perfect guy to hit the deal on McGovern. He thinks we have a very serious problem in the need for a Ziegler line and was pushing hard for that.

Had a long talk with Billy Graham who reported on his weekend with Lyndon Johnson. Billy says he helped Johnson modify his endorsement to make it as cool as possible, he says that he's selling his TV station, Johnson is, to the *LA. Times* later this week. Secondly, he's giving his home and all to the Park System. Third, he advises the President to ignore McGovern. He says he should go out and identify with people unannounced, to ball games, factories, and so on. He thinks the McGovern people will defeat themselves. He feels very strongly anti-McGovern. Says the President should not do too much campaigning, stay above it, as Johnson did with Goldwater. He's very grateful regarding the treatment by Nixon for him, especially of his two daughters. He doesn't think Marvin Watson should come out for the President because Nixon will win Texas 60/40 anyway, and Watson's the only Democrat left in Texas who can take over and run for Governor in the Democratic Party.

Graham is a little concerned about Vietnam and about the bugging thing. He doesn't think bugging is going to hurt us. Lyndon Johnson laughed about it, said it won't hurt a bit. Graham says the evangelical wing of the church is pro-Jewish, so the Jewish shift helps to solidify the evangelical types, too. Regarding the acceptance speech, Billy feels that it should not be like four years ago, because he's now President. He doesn't need the flamboyance of a challenger. What will appeal is a high road, innumerate the accomplishments, look to the future, what can be done. Have a foundation to build a new world, and a new America, and we're just now able to do it. He says that the President must talk to the workers of the campaign. Get into the issue but never mention McGovern by name. Hit the socialistic welfare state versus America, where you can start at the bottom and work to the top. The only way the McGovern plan would work is under a



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dictatorship. Says the speech should not be long, and it should always be as President of the US. He feels McGovern's getting more desperate and contradictory every day, that we should let him stew in his own problems, he can't reconcile his people in the party. California's the one exception. It will be most difficult, and that's why Billy's out there, doing press conferences and so on. He went into the question of Shriver having asked him to pray at his acceptance. Billy said he had no problem turning it down. He will not be used by Shriver, but he will be used by Nixon, wherever we want him to be. He's going to be California for a month doing press conferences and that kind of thing. He had Askew at his home for lunch, Askew said we'll carry Florida without campaigning, he thinks McGovern's a total loss.

I talked to Ehlichman at the President's direction regarding the speech. John likes the "new coalition" idea, rather than "new majority". He thinks "majority" sounds like winning an election. Thinks it's a new coming together of common interests, like a new federation or a union, or something. He likes reciting accomplishments and the things to be done. Doesn't like the negative view of comparing Nixon's position versus McGovern's. He thinks that that makes the new coalition for the purpose of defeating McGovern, instead of accomplishing what our goals are. That there should be uplift, not attack, and then talk about how to do it. We should start on a strongly affirmative basis, with the goals we seek. Also, he thinks that McGovern's tactics are an attack on the institution of this country, not on the Administration. The issue is not the incumbent versus the challenger, but the view of the nation and its institutions. One is an uncharted sea with an unknown navigator, so the conflict is between McGovern and all we hold dear, not between two men contending for the Presidency. McGovern's done this to himself, so we should cement him in, force him to stay on an assault against the institutions. In this form, the President should talk about what he's done and what's left to do, the past is prologue.

In approach, he should divide the speech in half, first, make the point that we're in the midpoint of the course between '69 and '76, the direction is clear, it leads us to a point where we want to be, and then he should define it. Second, we now are met with a challenge from an alien ideology that says that those should not be the points we want to end up at. So this is an election about



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goals. I believe this. We've come a long ways toward this. My opponent believes that, and I disagree. We need the flavor of "just on the threshold of great stuff that McGovern will throw away", but most important is to say what we've accomplished. We should give a feel of the whole canvas and the interrelationship, show a grasp of the complexity. He thinks it's a great opportunity to spike the secret plan to end the war, by contrasting the President's conduct as an out versus the conduct of the opponents now. Say I wouldn't discuss it as a campaign issue, so it was only a secret plan during the campaign. He thinks this would lay this one out cold. President had asked me to review this whole thing with John, and that was the reaction John came up with. The President's sort of reaching out now, trying to get various people's ideas on this. One big question still is just the very basic approach.

He gave me a bunch of questions to follow-up on, regarding primarily economic stuff, some statistics that he wants to use to make the point that the regarding the economic-- present economic situation and the tax question. Had a stir today on the Jewish situation, because the Russians are going to charge duty to Jews leaving Russia, and that's created a big flap in this country. Bill Rogers all stirred up about it; and I'm supposed to keep Rogers from seeing Dobrynin on it tomorrow, which I think I've successfully done.

End of August 17.