



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

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Tuesday, November 14.

The President had Ehrlichman and me over at 10:00 this morning for a long session at Aspen. We went over the whole basic plan of how we're going to set things up, and the President bought the concept. We discussed the Vice President, wanted me to talk to him, explain that we have a tough thing to do here. That he must cut-- that we must cut all the way across including his staff. He feels that we need to keep our leverage over him, so we shouldn't break it off with him now, but we do not further his interests politically for '76. We don't want him to have the appearance of being the heir apparent; but we also don't want to appear to push him down. We should pitch the Bicentennial for him as a great opportunity. The summary then is that Agnew is not the ideal choice, but he may be the best of a bad lot. He wants Ziegler to ignore the fact of McGovern's existence in any answer to post-election attacks. Wants me to check with Mitchell on Kleindienst and some others-- the idea of using Butz as the head of the Department of Natural Resources instead of the Interior Secretary, this being much more suitable politically. Wants to work out PR on the Vietnam wrap up and also PR on the reorganization with a brief crisp paper that has good strong prose.

He's determined to cut the White House staff down substantially in order to take the lead in forcing other cuts. He talked to Scoop Jackson on the phone, and told him he'd see him when he gets back from Israel. Then after he hung up, said we should consider him as Secretary of Defense, Ehrlichman's to make the call on that. For Undersecretary of State he's now thinking of Bill Casey or Pat Gray, and now he's looking for other recommendations, including Henry's. Wants me to talk to Rogers, make the point that the President is closest to him, but feels that anyone who's been in for four years should go like Romney, Volpe and Laird. It would be bad if you stayed and they didn't. It's best for you to finish in a blaze of glory with the Vietnam peace signing, and then you take the lead and move out. That we'd have problems with Romney and Volpe and we need your lead to do this.



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He went through some odds and ends on meetings for tomorrow, and then at 3:30 we had a long session with Ash, Malek and Ehrlichman and Aspen, again reviewing the reorganization plan. The President made the point that the more we isolate the big man, the more we lose the real genius in the Departments because people just won't work if they don't have the access. So we have to get across the point of the satisfaction of getting the job done, and settle for the perquisites and so on. Ash said that they had a motto at Litton that it's okay to be a prima donna, providing that you can sing.

I had an insight from this discussion-- that the President doesn't really want to work with just a few people as we've assumed, but rather he wants better people, that he can work with. We need to provide honor and stuff for the people who need it. We need to get people who want to do something, rather than who want to be somebody. He raised the question whether this kind of system that we're laying out will work for another President, or whether it's just designed to fit him, and he's concerned whether we're building for posterity. The decision was made to withhold the reorganization plan from Congress for a year, saying we want to try it out first. And that will preclude their turning it down and our flying it in their face.

Again, the President called me back after the meeting, went back over the need for an Italian, a Catholic, an Italian, Irishman and four Catholics on the Cabinet. Wants Bush as Under Secretary to Treasury, because he would be good with Congress. And hits Interior, Commerce, Labor, HUD and so on where we can put the Catholics in, and Defense, if we don't get Scoop Jackson. He's now got Richardson back at HEW, and Weinberger at HUD. He also thinks we ought to try for a Catholic Republican at the National Committee. We raised the point that we wanted to move Ash as head of OMB, and the President didn't know exactly how to handle it because I lobbied it in indirectly, but we've got that set. Ash obviously wants the job, so that works out fine.

End of November 14.