



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

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Wednesday, March 28.

Another Watergate day. The President had his schedule cleared to work on his speech, but spent a fair amount of time with me on the Watergate. I had John Mitchell in at 8:15 and started with him. The President called me over for about 15 minutes at 8:45 to the EOB. He said, with Mitchell we need to know what he thinks about the grand jury appearance and his view regarding Colson's idea of holding all the privileges because of our concern regarding obstruction of justice, and so on, and get his legal views on obstruction. We need to decide what to do if events overrun us. The President would like a deal that would show that we're cooperating. Offer an informal session of the whole committee and take sworn testimony. Wants Ehrlichman to move ahead on the India-Pakistan leak. Wants to develop an offensive on things. Get the 10 year declassification project going. Try to cut a deal with Ervin to undercut the bad rap on cover-up.

I spent a long time with Mitchell. He feels it's vital that we know what the grand jury and the Committee are doing and that we've got to get our sources set up to provide that. He reported on his meeting with Jeb yesterday. Says that Jeb's view is the following: that the plan was hatched at the White House by Hunt, Liddy, and Colson. Colson called Jeb twice to tell him to get going on this thing, specifically, the Larry O'Brien information regarding the Florida dealings. Liddy told Magruder later that he was in Colson's office when Colson called. Gordon Strachan probably had a lot of direct dealings with Liddy. He knows he had some. A copy of the output came here, to either Strachan or Colson. Strachan told them I had approved the plan and he feels that there are four people in the White House had full knowledge of the Watergate: Colson, because of the phone calls; Howard, because of conversations he had with him; Strachan, because he had copies of what Liddy passed out; and Haldeman because Strachan told Magruder that I had approved the plan. He says the procedure was that Baldwin made notes on the tap reports, gave them to McCord. McCord gave them to Liddy, Liddy made two copies, sent one to Magruder and one to the White House, either to Strachan or to Colson.



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Mitchell further said on his own knowledge that he believes Dean agreed with Magruder, in Mitchell's office prior to the testimony, about the purpose of the meetings at the Attorney General's that they were to deal with corrupt practices and so on. Not intelligence. Mitchell also says that Magruder told him that Porter talked to Dean regarding his testimony about the accounting for the purposes of the money that was given to Liddy, and that Porter was happy to so testify. Magruder and Porter also talked to Mitchell and to their lawyers.

Regarding the Senate, the view is that the President should reserve judgment regarding sending White House witnesses to the Senate because of the apparent political circus, but we will ask them all to cooperate with the grand jury. That's Mitchell's view. On the post-June activities, there's a question of who Dean talked to. There's a question of the significance of Caulfield's meetings with McCord. What was Caulfield's purpose, and so on? At that point, we had discussed the whole thing in general and we asked Magruder to come in.

Jeb says that, to Mitchell and me, that Liddy was ordered to prepare a plan by someone. The question is who started him? Also, there's a question as to whether Gordon Strachan told Magruder to rehire Liddy after he fired him in April. Magruder then went into his problem of the cash disbursements made by Porter, which will have to be revealed. Says Howard is adamant that he's got to cover-up one of \$8,000 given to him prior to April 7, which Jeb said was for some purpose that would be very embarrassing. I pushed him on what it was, and he said they used it to buy books, and I'm sure that's to buy the Efron book, which, of course, wouldn't be embarrassing at all. There were a lot of cash payments to Colson in that period for ads, primarily. These were legal, but maybe peculiar. Also, for a Kennedy mailing in New Hampshire, which Colson said, according to Magruder, was ordered by the President. Liddy wasn't the Committee's operative during January, February, and March, while he was working there, but was doing things at other people's direction. Jeb doesn't know whose.

In an agreement that was reached at the meeting in Mitchell's office with Dean, Magruder said he had only one meeting with Mitchell and Liddy, and this was after Liddy was hired, and was to



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discuss his role. This was Dean's idea. Also, Dean told Magruder to destroy his diary. Mitchell says there's no question regarding the meeting which was in Arthur Becker's office re: how to testify on the meetings. Magruder has testified that there never was a meeting with Liddy, and so forth, regarding intelligence. I made a note at that point that this could be the little thing that does it. The typewriter or pumpkin of this case. That is, the discrepancy on these meetings. Jeb says he could have said that he did have a meeting on intelligence, but he didn't, because Dean told him not to. So Dean cannot now say that there was such a meeting. Magruder feels that McCord may name Strachan because of his contact with Liddy.

The President called on the phone. Wanted a report on all this, but said while I was talking with Mitchell to go down the checklist of his views on whether we can work out an accommodation with Ervin. Second, whether we should maintain privilege before the grand jury. Third, what is our problems with the grand jury in New York. And fourth, what do we do regarding Dean. On the New York thing, Mitchell said they're looking primarily at Vesco. Our only problem is Don Nixon and Cerni, and Ed Nixon, who was set up. They won't get into campaign expenditures. Justice will handle those down here.

I went over and gave the President a report on this, went over about 1:00, and then came back to the office. Spent a little time with Mitchell and Dick Moore before Mitchell went over to meet with Dean and Magruder.

President called me at home this evening to say that he has decided to read his speech tomorrow night after all rather than standing up for it. He wanted to talk about that a little. I told him I thought that sounded fine and he seemed pleased that I agreed with it. Raised the question of whether he should praise those that stood with us on Vietnam against the flak from the people who didn't; I agreed that he should. Wants to be sure that I fill Colson in tomorrow on Magruder's charges and his line. Wants me to give him a report if I get anything from Dean. Says he's been thinking a lot about working for Republican candidates in '74 and thinks he'll really hit the stump on that.



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Talked to Dean on the phone to get a progress report this evening. He says Hunt spent four hours with immunity and created no problems for us. That Sirica's changed his mind; is not going to hear McCord in court. He's going to have him go direct to the grand jury, probably on Friday. George Webster called Dean to say that Baker's AA, Branson, had asked to see him and that he wants a link to the White House. They're not happy with the Kleindienst arrangement, so Webster told them to use Murray Chotiner, which is rather a horrifying development. I talked to the President about that later and we agreed that Webster should be the link, and I talked to Timmons to set that up.

Dean said O'Brien had a long conversation with LaRue today, which evolved into a discussion about Mitchell. And LaRue said he thinks Mitchell is on the verge of breaking, by which he means suicide. Dean told Mitchell and Magruder that on the Porter matter, he didn't remember Porter talking to him. He said O'Brien talked to Porter today, and Porter said he talked to no one prior to his testimony.

Dean says he can't do what Mitchell and Magruder told him to do. The more he looks at it, the post-June activity, the more he thinks we can work that out. Mitchell and Magruder both told him that they had both signed off on the project, which Mitchell told me also. The question of whether Dean can avoid the point, that is, the only way he can do it is, the point being the discrepancy on the meetings, the only way he can see is if he isn't called. A narrow waiver that restricts it won't work. He feels it's imperative that we get a criminal lawyer and suggests maybe he should hire one. Then he could consult with him on the whole thing, which is a good idea.

I discussed that with the President later on the phone, and he agreed. He feels the real problem is what Dean tells Magruder as to why he can't use privilege and not talk about the Mitchell-Magruder meetings, and so on. Says it's difficult in Dean's case, and that we have to figure out how to use his privilege to avoid the conflict in the testimony. Wants me again to call Colson tomorrow and fill him in.



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Then I talked to Timmons to get him going on Branson and on getting the word from Gurney as to what went on today. He says he's got a tip, that apparently there's some guy who's on the staff of the Judiciary Committee, who leaves a package at the Senate newsstand every day at 12:00 and someone comes at 4:00 and picks it up. The girl at the stand opened it by accident today and found it full of Watergate stuff, so Timmons is going to stake that out and see if he can get any lead out of that.

End of March 28.