



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

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Thursday, March 29.

The President spent the whole day working on preparation for his television speech tonight. I spent virtually the whole day on various Watergate matters, and did have to hit the President on a couple of points during the day, which he seemed to want to do.

Timmons talked with Branson, Baker's AA, last night regarding the recommendation by George Webster to Branson that Murray Chotiner be the White House contact. Branson had thought that was a bad idea, too, and he had done nothing about it. So Timmons suggested George Webster for the job and Branson said he would discuss this with Howard Baker.

He called Ed Gurney last night, to see if he would be willing to provide us with input as to what was going on at the committee so we'd have some reading of what we were up against. Gurney said the committee spent a great deal of time over secrecy and that he would play by the rules and expected others to also, which is a little absurd since the whole thing leaked in all the papers today. Bill tried a different approach by asking his views of Dean testifying and so on. He volunteered that things looked pretty bad for the White House, and that the President should take some kind of initiative on the issue, and Dean's appearance would be one way. Bill suspects that Gurney would be more open in person rather than talking over the phone, and he's going to try to get to him directly.

He also was going to watch the brown package switch business at the Senate newsstand today. He's disturbed, though, because the delivery service, the man on the Senate Judiciary Committee, is a hard line anticommunist, so he's afraid maybe the FBI's the final beneficiary of the material.

The Vice President called and said that Baker had asked him to tell the President that he had a firm conviction that the stand on executive privilege is unwise, that time is of the essence, the President should waive the privilege and let some of the people come up. Veep's also worried that Weicker's going on a press conference today, where he's going to hit heavy on the histrionics and really blast things. The VP understands that McCord did mention the names of Colson and



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Mitchell in his testimony, but it was all via hearsay. He did identify two people who had direct knowledge, Hunt and Liddy, and the Senate's going to call them. The VP is concerned that this is going to put us in a bad position all the way around. He thinks that the President should say that if the grand jury wants Dean, we'll waive privilege and so forth, that this will disarm the Senate and that the President doesn't have to do anything with the Senate. He does want to see the President take some action to take the ball away and do something forthcoming. He felt that especially with the President going on TV tonight, he should do the point of Dean going to the grand jury ahead of time, so it would be known.

I met with the President at 1:00 with Ehrlichman and reported those things, and we evolved a plan that we should put out today a statement saying that what is involved here are charges of criminal conduct, and the proper place for such charges is the grand jury. Therefore, I'm sending Dean to the grand jury and I'll waive the executive privilege regarding any personal involvement in the Watergate crime. Told me to check this out with Mitchell, Dean, Colson, Ziegler, and so on, and then get back to him. He feels that-- or we talked about the fact that the sticky problem here still is going to be the Mitchell-Magruder position regarding the meetings. He also-- I also pointed out to him that we have a problem that George Bush had called, wanted to see him, because he was concerned, too, about the reaction that's building. He said he would see Bush Friday, if it was necessary.

I talked to Mitchell, and he said that it-- the question of making such a release of Dean to the grand jury depends on how it's phrased, that we shouldn't get into privilege. Mitchell's main concern was that he thinks Ziegler should have hit the Senators for their attack on Mitchell today.

We met again at 2:30, because the idea was to get Ziegler to put this out at 3:00. We had Ziegler in, too. He was very much opposed to putting it out today, and we worked with Ehrlichman, Ziegler, and the President on a statement that we then decided not to put out today, but rather wait until tomorrow. Then, a little later, Dean called to say that you can't put it out at all because



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the lawyers say that it would be wrong for him to offer to go to the grand jury, or for the President to offer him when they haven't called him.

I talked to Bush on the phone, instead of his meeting with the President. He said that he'd talked with Baker, and he feels that we need a shift in policy regarding appearance and that if there was a vote in the whole Senate, the entire Republican Party would vote to subpoena. Bush thinks he can help, but he thinks we have a mounting political problem, that the issue in the country isn't executive privilege, it's the question of what is the White House hiding? He wants the President to take the initiative, defuse the political issue. He thinks it's really developing as a concern this week. There's a unanimous political feeling that we need to take the offensive. He feels that whatever course it is, the President needs to appear to defuse the political issue.

The President told me later in the afternoon to be sure to get ready to emphasize the three big points tonight, then he named four. First, a shot across the bow at North Vietnam, and a jab on amnesty. Second, the ceiling on meat. Third, the need to support the President on the vetoes, and fourth, don't cut the Defense budget.

Later in the afternoon, Mitchell called on the phone again regarding Dean going to the grand jury. He says it's a timing question. O'Brien feels it's a mistake to move now. It's better to get the charges out first, and structure the thing so we have an understanding that he goes after the other witnesses. He says Hunt is through with the grand jury and had no problems regarding the White House, post-June, or anything. F. Lee Bailey called. Was very pleased with his treatment at the White House by Tad Hullin. Says that Bailey and Alch are staying on top of the McCord thing. They'll blow the lid on Fenstermacher [Fensterwald] if he creates any problem. He and Alch examined McCord totally and what he said so far is all he knows. They told him not to make such statements, that he'd make a fool of himself. Alch will stay with McCord at the sentencing tomorrow, etcetera.

Bittman told O'Brien that an *L.A. Times* reporter is getting information from the Committee. He says that he has the story that the meeting in February was attended also by Colson and Hunt,



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and in his meetings with Dash, he told him about other break-ins, including a New York doctor's apartment and some other things like that. Liddy's counsel refuses to allow him to testify. Everyone says Dean is uptight. He's not making proper judgment. Mitchell strongly suggests that I make sure he doesn't go off the reservation without my reviewing it. I'm the only one he'll trust. His opinion of Ehrlichman is incredible and frightening, so I should establish contact with Dean and maintain it. He says Weicker came on with a big espionage plan in the White House. The rumor is that he's going to hit Ehrlichman, not Colson. He then probably has some of the earlier activities, that's what he's after.

The President's speech went very well tonight. Talked to him several times after the speech, he felt it had gone well and that the writers should try to understand the approach he takes on these, and do the speeches the way he does them. Concerned that we get all the various support mechanisms moving on an all-out basis to back-up his strong defense position and his position on taxes and prices we've got in the budget.

End of March 29.