



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

Tuesday, April 17.

Today was another major Watergate day. This time super-major. We decided this morning that there was a need for action. The President called me in at 9:45 and said that he wanted to meet with Ehrlichman, Rogers, and me at 3:00. And I pointed out that Ehrlichman had talked with Shultz-- excuse me with Colson this morning and that Chuck, as well as Ziegler and others, had made the point that there are a lot of things breaking, and that it probably is going to be important for the President to make some public move today, and if so, we should meet earlier than 3:00 in order to decide what direction to take. So we agreed to meet at 1:00 after his meeting with Andreotti.

He made the point that he agreed we'd probably have to move today. He said there's a real problem of Ehrlichman and Haldeman being nibbled to death over a period of time if we don't move out ahead of this, with big new blips coming in every day. He mentioned that he was concerned about the Dean problem that he'd raised on the question of Liddy's conversation with him, which he says he reported to Ehrlichman, and Ehrlichman failed to do anything about. He's concerned about the problem of money, especially the last bite for Hunt, and what did Kalmbach say regarding the purpose of the money that he moved over. He says LaRue talked very freely. He says there's the destruction of evidence problem on the stuff from Hunt's safe. He feels we need to develop a positive story on the money. We need to think about a positive move at 3:00 today which was then changed-- well, that we'll make the move at 3:00 and think about it earlier.

He then said you and John should be thinking in terms, not just of the Presidency and all that crap, which I know you think about all the time, but also think in terms of yourselves and the question of this dragging out bit by bit and whether it's not better to cut it off. He said the incentive with the US Attorney and everybody else in this case is to nail the highest people they can get. The prosecution is very clever, but this had to come out and it's just as well that it's coming this way. Dean is the one who surprises, and to some extent, disappoints him. I found the



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

latter rather shocking, considering the fact that Dean has turned total traitor, and he shouldn't be surprised and disappointed. He should be shocked and furious.

Then in discussing this during the morning with Ziegler, I spun out a theory that I think has proven to be correct. Which is that the President's concerned about additional knowledge Dean has and threats that Dean is making to reveal that, or that perhaps Dean has already revealed it to Petersen, and the two of them are working together in threatening, in order to try and nail us.

These suspicions were confirmed when Ehrlichman and I met with the President at 12:30, right after Andreotti left, and Ehrlichman reported on his meeting with Colson who says Dean must be dealt with summarily. The key is that Dean must not get immunity, and the President, Colson feels, has total control over that. Colson told Ehrlichman he must see the President to pass this thinking on to him. The President said he didn't want Colson to come in and didn't want to see him, and that John should tell him that the President has his message, and there's no need for him to come in to cover it. Then the President said the problem here in dealing with that, is we have to look at what Dean has. He has threats on other things in government. If he gets immunity, he will pay the lowest price he can. In other words, if they give him immunity, he will give them the least amount of information he can and still get the immunity. That's what he tells the President, obviously, but the key to that is that it has to reach all of us. That is, Ehrlichman and me, as well as Dean. The President talked to Dean about his resignation, and Dean made the point that Haldeman and Ehrlichman would have to resign if he was going to.

Petersen told the President that his view is that it's all going to come out. So Haldeman and Ehrlichman should resign, not because there's any legal exposure, but because they'll be eaten alive. So they should get a leave now and get away from the White House. The President says there will be a big hassle in this on who is lying. Also the problem of what Dean said to the President regarding the need for the \$120,000, and the problem continuing down the road along that apparent blackmail route which would, in Dean's estimate, cost a million dollars.



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

The President discussed that conversation, although I reminded him that I was in it, which I think startled him some. He says we have to figure that Dean could put out that story to someone else. For example, the press. He then said to John and me, you are the two most valuable members of my staff and that's why they're trying to reach you. You're also the two most loyal and the two most honest. I don't want a public clamor, as there was with Sherman Adams, where the ultimate result is that he had to be asked to leave. So we have to figure what kind of blackmail Dean has. Dean says he'll go on leave, if Ehrlichman and Haldeman will. Ehrlichman made a strong point that the President should get rid of Dean, as Colson said, and the President said the only way I can do that is if you and Haldeman go.

Petersen has told the President that because of the evidence he has against Haldeman and Ehrlichman they should take a leave. Ehrlichman says if he does that, the first thing he'll do is sink Petersen on the basis of his having given information to Dean about the grand jury transactions, which Dean passed on to the other witnesses and defendants at 1701 [CRP]. And the reason that Ehrlichman will sink Petersen is because he's convinced Petersen will indict Ehrlichman if he doesn't.

The President says that if the President doesn't suspend Haldeman and Ehrlichman, Petersen won't give Dean immunity, and he has to have Dean to make his case against Haldeman and Ehrlichman. The President says that, regarding Colson, you should tell him the President's got his message on the Dean immunity point.

Dean apparently rewrote his resignation the President gave him yesterday on the basis that if Haldeman and Ehrlichman resign, I will. The President said I think I'm trapped, because I told Dean that Haldeman and Ehrlichman are willing to go if that's needed. Also Dean has an ally in the US Attorney and the Assistant Attorney General. He then said, and I'm quoting, "The problem I've got is that I think maybe I've trapped myself." The President says he told Petersen that letting Dean off is an incentive to him to lie. Petersen said, that's what you do, Mr. President, in criminal cases. He said that they have to have corroborating testimony on the value of Dean's



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

evidence. And that's why he's calling Strachan, Colson, Kalmbach, and so on. The point they make is that the White House staff kept Dean's highly sensitive information from the President. That's another lie. They say that Strachan had reports that were clearly identified as wiretap material and also that he had plans regarding the wiretaps.

Then we discussed what the President's position ought to be on a statement, if he put it out today, that the charges by McCord and so on caused the President to order a full press investigation. Then the President said, "What was Dean's line on that before he deserted", which is kind of an interesting quote.

Garment met with the President and he suggests that he should suspend everybody who is involved. Anyone refusing cooperation should be dismissed, anyone indicted would be granted leave. Strachan-- the President said to tell Strachan not to try to hedge anything before the grand jury.

Then we got back to the problem of Hunt's materials and reworked that ground. The President said in both Colson and Dean, I think he meant Magruder and Dean, we have clever liars that we're dealing with. He then said in going back and agonizing over all this that there's no sense in aggravating Dean. This was in the question of suspending or canning him. He'll do anything to save his own ass. He's pissing as high as he can get now. We can't let him piss higher, which would be on the President.

Then we get into the question of the date of Hunt's threat and when the Dean-Haldeman meeting with the President was, where that came up. Then the President says how do I handle the problem of the Assistant Attorney General telling me that he has charges against Haldeman and Ehrlichman and says that he must-- that they're of such a nature that he must put them on leave? So why doesn't he do it? The answer is that he can say, when you tell me you're going to file charges or indict them, then I'll suspend them. Until then, I have no basis for it. He said the real problem is what if we end up in the gray area, with no charges filed, just implications, such as knowledge in advance and so on. Then how do we-- what action do we take? The President



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

raised the question of why can't we just leave Dean in his office, but tell everybody not to have any further dealings with him.

Ehrlichman urged a special prosecutor to take over from Petersen and made his case again on what a bad guy Petersen was, and the need for the President to get special counsel, but the President didn't buy it, I don't think.

Later I got a report from Strachan. He'd had a conference with Silbert and Glanzer and his lawyer and they convinced him that they have enough on Dean on all kinds of things that they can indict him on perjury on two counts. One, on the discrepancy on the amount of cash. The \$350,000 versus \$328,000, and second on Liddy's activities. His knowledge of Liddy's activities and spying and so on. The question then is whether he continues his present lines and gets indicted or takes the Fifth and goes to jail. This is the way the message came through, which doesn't make sense. He said they won't let him correct his statement regarding the \$350,000 and that they have information regarding another expenditure from the fund which Strachan doesn't know about. He said to check the seven points he covered with Ehrlichman, that that's where the things are vulnerable, and the deal they are trying to make with him is that if he goes through all those points that he covered with Ehrlichman Sunday, the seven items, and everything else he knows, including some of which they say they already have, so this would just be to corroborate, then he'll have a chance of getting out, which means he'll become a witness and not a defendant. But they do not guarantee immunity. He says, obviously, they're trying to make a deal with him and they're not really offering him very much. The problem is that Strachan bared his soul to Dean, and so now it's all coming back to haunt him.

At 4:00, after the President had a long meeting with Petersen, he called Ehrlichman and me back in and said he went the rounds with Petersen again. That Petersen agrees on Dean, that he ought to be dismissed and has argued that point with the US Attorneys. But they say that they suppose that's the only way, that Dean's the only way to get at Ehrlichman and Haldeman, and they can't jeopardize that.



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

The new elements are, first, the President told him that immunity was out. In other words, he would not tolerate immunity for Dean, and he told him that he had discussed this with Bill Rogers, who said it was totally wrong to give Dean immunity. Second, regarding the leaks by Petersen from the grand jury, he said Mitchell was aware that Dean had leaked this material and so on. Petersen said that it didn't get very far and was no problem. Third, Petersen's talked to Gray, and Gray says he destroyed the material and that he's going to have to bring that out. Gray was told there was no Watergate material, just political, but there's still the problem of destruction of evidence on Gray's part.

The President says the situation on Ehrlichman and Haldeman finally comes out. First, they don't have the Magruder deal, but they will give the President twelve hours notice when they make it. They will say that they're hauling him into court to plead guilty, and then put out a statement which would be both as broad and as narrow as possible. They'll say he's named certain people, and that other people are nonindicted co-conspirators that will be named as a group. This will include Dean, but Petersen says it will not include Ehrlichman and Haldeman if they take a leave. The President said, are you saying that if Haldeman and Ehrlichman take a leave you won't prosecute them? And he said no, it just means they aren't on the list. They'll still appear at the grand jury and I'll have to make their case there.

He says it'll appear bad if Haldeman and Ehrlichman are left off-- no we agreed no-- correction Petersen said that it would appear bad if Haldeman and Ehrlichman are left off the list and were not suspended prior to that, and that Sirica will hit them on that, and it will appear that the Justice Department is covering up for the two top White House people. The President said he was concerned about our vulnerability, he doesn't think they can make a case against us. Petersen's really saying that we'll be on the list unless we decide to take a leave. Dean's lawyers said that Dean will try this Administration if they don't give him immunity. In other words, he's going to nail the President, supposedly.



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

Ehrlichman and I then took a break for an hour to meet with our new attorney, Mr. Wilson. This was a very satisfactory meeting just to give him the preliminaries. I think he's going to work out very well. We regrouped at 6:00 in the EOB with Rogers and the President, and went back over the point that Kleindienst and Petersen are pushing the President that Ehrlichman and Haldeman should resign. But the conclusion is that we should not go on a leave or resign or anything at this point, until there's some reason for it in terms of action. Rogers then left.

The President says we were right in not following Garment's course of dumping you guys. It would have made the prosecution case for Dean's immunity, and that we don't want. Regarding Dean, they'll either make a deal or not, and when it's done he has to be dismissed. The President raised the question of whether he should see Dean again and felt he should not.

He said we should consider libel suits; especially I should, that I should get the most vicious libel lawyer in the country and sue right down the line, including Weicker, and depose him fast. The President then was obviously extremely awkward and upset during this conversation. He made the point that I'm not emotional, as you know, and I won't be now, but you guys have been through hell and we've got to fight this rap all the way. He said there's a real problem if in the area that you may beat the rap, but may not be able to come back to government. If that's the case, I want the two of you to take over the Foundation and get that set up if you have to leave. Then we said we appreciated that thought. Ehrlichman said if he gets indicted, whether or not he's convicted, he feels he's through as far as any career is concerned, as well as in government, and that he'd be through as a lawyer. The President said, well, you can be my partner. John said, yes, and then we can try traffic cases out in San Clemente.

He talked over ideas for a new counsel to the President and some ideas on Attorney General, referring to Kleindienst as a bowl of jelly. The President also told us that he had available some contributed gift funds that could be made available to us for legal fees. This would be via Bebe and could be up to a maximum of \$250,000. He does not want us to have to take care of our own fees.



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

He then looked at me and said, if all this takes place, how do I replace Haldeman? Then I suggested that he shouldn't try to, that he would just have to set up a new structure and work without a replacement for me would just work in a different way. Which I honestly believe he can do. My position at this point is that we've just got to ride this out. Take whatever comes, however it comes, and handle it as best we can at the time. It's very hard to tell what that'll be, but there's every reason to believe that at some point the right result will develop and that we can have confidence in that. In the meantime, we have to contend with whatever comes along.

End of April 17.

Continuation on April 17. The President called me at midnight after the Italian dinner and said, well, I just wanted to say keep the faith. I kind of laughed and said, how was the dinner? He said it was fine, then he said, as a matter of fact, it was one of the worst I've ever had, because of what's on my mind. He said, John and you and I should meet again tomorrow morning to go over what's coming, look at the names that are involved and be prepared for it. There's a question of whether someone should talk to Dean. Maybe the President should. Obviously, Dean's trying to save himself, and the President thinks the US Attorney will give him immunity. If he tells the truth, that doesn't bother him. If it's an incentive to lie, that's another problem. We have to get some kind of line regarding the defendants on their fees and support, because we don't make our case clearly enough on that. He says we should think over and talk with Moore about the one thing that troubles him about Dean when he came in with the information from Bittman, because the argument is that the President should have turned it over to the US Attorney. Which is a real problem that we should give hard thought to. Of course, it isn't really a problem. He says if Dean has immunity, he'll go with that.

The problem is the President talked freely with him on the blackmail point and all of that, because he was trying to draw him out. He then said he wished there were a way to separate Ehrlichman out, because the vulnerability of a lawyer in this kind of thing is enormous. He said let's see now, they've got clear cases apparently on LaRue, Mitchell, Mardian, Magruder,



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

O'Brien, and Parkinson. It's important to know what Ehrlichman's investigation was that triggered it. We have to figure how we can save what there is left of the Presidency. The White House is involved apart from Ehrlichman and Haldeman. There would be Strachan, possibly Colson, Fielding. Then he asked, it doesn't touch Higby, does it? They haven't subpoenaed him, have they? And I said no. Said the real tragedy is Mitchell, why doesn't he step up? He's going to get it without any question. We don't think he can stall it out. He should assume the responsibility, which is, of course, what we said all along.

End of April 17.