



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

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Wednesday, April 18.

The President had me in at 8:00 this morning. Said that if this thing goes the way it might, and I have to leave, he wants me to take all the office material from his machinery there and hold it for the library.

Reviewed some of the items; wants to figure out when the meeting was with Dean. Make the point that the President had no knowledge until he got into this, which is, of course, true, but we have to be objective on Dean, don't get carried away with our attitude on him. At that point, he had Ziegler in to discuss Dean's threat to Ziegler. Ziegler should tell Dean that no one's hitting him. The President is obviously very concerned about how he handles Dean. Not to appear to be hitting him. Dean said to Ziegler, I can't take this rap. I'll have to call in some friendly reporters and so on. Wanted Ehrlichman to fill the President in on the circumstances regarding putting him on the case. Ziegler kept coming back to the point, you don't need to worry about Dean because he's completely lost his credibility, which was missing the President's point. He doesn't want Ron to hit Dean on his loss of credibility or confidence in him. The President told Ziegler to say, today, to Dean, that the President said specifically no one is to be thrown off on the basis of hearsay. We're not throwing anyone to the wolves. The "full of holes" line in the paper regarding the Dean report did not come from the White House. We're not going to characterize anything from here. And he sent Ziegler out to call Dean, then made the point that where Dean has the gun to our head is on the pre-Watergate stuff on national security, and on the Hunt blackmail report, which is also national security.

Ehrlichman and I have to figure out how to handle the Dean thing. Ziegler came back in, said Dean said, the President is out front in this. Ziegler reassured him there was no focus on any individual and he seemed to be in pretty good shape. Dean said he understood, but you have to keep in mind the Dean report also involved the 21st discussion with the President. The President said, don't leave the impression that the Dean report was false. Told Ron that. And Dean said, I



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understand the position you're in. The important thing is we now have the President out in front on this. The President wants to get Dean in with Ziegler, but I think we talked him out of that.

Then at noon we talked about what Ron should say and decided that he should take the position of no comment, now, because he's been advised by the legal authorities that any comment on this case could prejudice the prosecution or the rights of defendants. Therefore, he will make no further comment, period.

The President had Ehrlichman and me come up to Camp David with him for dinner and to spend the night tonight. Talked about it in general terms on the way up, and then while we were waiting for dinner, Ziegler called. Said that Henry Petersen had called him to say Carl Bernstein from the *Post* had called him and talked to Burke, his assistant, and told him to tell Petersen that they have the whole story. The Magruder aspects and the O'Brien/Bittman aspects, they said. And Petersen thinks this refers to the McCord statement and on the thing that Hunt's lawyer presented demands to the White House, which were met to keep Hunt's silence. Petersen said to Ziegler that he has held this up, the fact they have it, for ten days now trying to pursue it through the process of the grand jury. Ziegler asked him what it meant by the O'Brien aspects, what names were involved, and Petersen said we didn't ask the *Post*, because we didn't want to have to respond. But he would assume it would be Mitchell, LaRue, Dean, and principal White House people. Ziegler said, what principal White House people? And Petersen said, it pains me to refer to it and didn't give him the names. Petersen told him to let the President know, and he said he'll know what we're talking about. Ziegler then also talked to Dick Burke on a callback, and he said Petersen was talking to Bernstein again at that time. Ziegler told him to call back.

Petersen called him back, said that Bernstein said he had information from three sources that he was going to run tomorrow, naming Mitchell and Dean, with no reference to anyone else. Saying they were involved in large amounts of cash payments to keep the defendants silent. Thus, it's likely that this will involve Mitchell, Dean, O' Brien, Bittman. He doesn't know if they have Haldeman and Ehrlichman. Bernstein was calling various people at the White House also to get



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comment. Says he's running the story and wants to check it before it's played, so we told Ziegler to talk to him, and he did.

Petersen referred to the fact that O'Brien and Bittman are lawyers and they're terribly distressed. He said we'd hoped to beat the press on this. I went over to Aspen for dinner with the President and reported this to him. He had already had the same report from Petersen, who he had called to raise Cain with him, on ordering him not to get into the testimony on what Hunt was involved in with national security. Petersen told the President Dean had already told him about the Hunt break-in in California.

Ziegler then called and said they're also going to say that Magruder has been before the U.S. Attorney and will testify at the grand jury tomorrow. That he will directly implicate Mitchell and Dean in the pre-planning and directly implicate them in the payments to the defendants after the fact.

Garment talked to Bernstein to see what he could get out, and he says basically the same thing. That Magruder on Saturday, over the weekend, gave a full statement and so on, and also that an attorney came out to California on April 3 and discussed the whole thing with Ehrlichman, this was not in a negative way. This would relate to post-payment activities. Bernstein volunteered that the story will say that the President had no knowledge, that indictments are expected, shortly, on Dean and Mitchell. Didn't mention a Magruder indictment.

The dinner was rather painful, because the President got into the whole problem of whether John and I should go. He said the points to consider are: one, whether we're nailed in open court by Magruder, which we can't let happen; or two, if we leave, will it buy them off on the indictment; and third, by constant nibbling as we stay here, we can be destroyed. We don't want to be destroyed, therefore, we have to move. We have to figure out another strategy. Get out and then fight like hell. We have to deal in two dimensions. First, the court, and second, the Ervin Committee. The President will not allow Weicker and Scott to force him to move on us. We should move ahead of them and fight it.



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The President keeps saying during this that he hasn't decided. But he went through quite a thing in an emotional way about how Ehrlichman and I would always have the use of Camp David regardless of what happens, for the next three and a half years, and that he wasn't emotional, but he really is, and that this was a terribly painful thing and so on and so on. I think it really was, and it is, hard for him, but it's also counterproductive for us spending the time going around and around on the same ground with him, when we should be developing our own case for our interest and his. It was clear, though, that his feeling was that there was no real way out, except for us to pull out and fight, rather than trying to stay.

[End of April 18.]