



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

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Tuesday, April 24.

This was another Watergate day. The President in Key Biscayne returning tonight. Ehrlichman and I spent the day working on various Watergate matters. Ziegler called this morning. Said the decision still hasn't been made. That he talked to Rogers and that the President is going to talk to Rogers again today.

John and I met with the attorneys at 10:30 and they felt, on this matter of the President getting jumpy, that first he should ask Petersen what the evidence is on us. There's no impropriety on this and they would like a memorandum from Petersen or the US Attorney's office outlining the evidence. Two, the idea of stringing this out is affecting the national image. The prosecutors' design is to let it get more volcanic and that ignores the interest of the Office of the President. There's a very bad press situation. The President's injured by the uncertainty, and they feel the President should ask Petersen what is the reason for the delay. It's hurting the government of the United States. Regarding the press curiosity of why Ehrlichman is in on this, they feel third, that the President is categorizing both of us together. That's a problem, and if there's a real distinction they should spell it out. Fourth, the move now of resigning would put Ehrlichman and Haldeman in the same class with Dean. We don't deserve it, it's very bad timing and it would be unwise to jump the gun. Fifth, our move lets Petersen hit us without any cover of the White House anymore, and he gets no-- the President gets no good from it. They feel he's in a panic now, and this is dangerous as hell. Sixth, they feel he's not playing his best card with Petersen. He's just listening. Wilson would welcome the opportunity to meet with the President. He needs to exert superiority over Petersen and put him on the spot, Wilson feels.

We discussed other problems on the question of the money to the families. They feel that if there's any actual evidence from any source that this was used to hush up, then there's a real problem. If the defendants were out on bail at the time the dollars were dispersed, why was it having anything to do with taking care of the families. They could do that. So it makes that a fiction, and he feels, in summary, that if the funds were used for fees and families, that's okay.



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But if someone says that there was a plan to hush up, then everyone in the stream is in trouble circumstantially. This is the heart of our problem and the key weakness. If there was a payment to the men for that purpose, then there was obstruction.

Talked to Ziegler during our meeting with the lawyers. He said that the President called Rogers, and also Ziegler talked to Rogers and Connally. Both Connally and Rogers recommend the action as described. And said he had covered my points with the President, and the question of Dean resigning, he said it would be at the same time but on different tones. That he has nothing from Petersen, or at least the President hasn't told Ron about it, and he says that you should understand the general direction is, there's no shift. They're spending the time now going over how, rather than whether. He doesn't have any stuff on text from Buchanan.

Then this afternoon Ron called again and said, in answer to some of our questions, the grounds are that we're leaving because of the news swirl and the suggestions that are raised, and we've drawn the conclusion that we cannot, in this environment, contribute to the Presidency. That the White House must get on with the movement of the Presidency. The cloud of doubt is there and we want to remove it. He recognizes that this won't solve the problem, but it will give him the opportunity to concentrate. And because of the focus of attention, our viability and the question of whether or not we can survive is bothering him. He feels there's no legal liability in either case. Then why resign? Because of the complexity of this issue and my suggested involvement and the concentration of attention in the White House. Sooner or later, this-- we argued, this becomes seen as a diversionary maneuver and does the President no good. Ron then said he's assessed our vulnerability, but he can't give us any reading on that assessment.

I talked to Rogers to see if he'd be willing to meet with Ehrlichman and me, and he said that he keeps saying to Ron and the President that the President has to decide this. He feels my case will be especially tough. The problem is how can we do our jobs in the meantime. I suggested one way would be that I could take a leave of absence until it's cleared up. Rogers said this is the direction in which he leans. He said he doesn't know anything about John, but the President



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keeps mentioning wiretapping and leaks and so on. But Rogers keeps coming back to where he was, which is probably a leave of absence. He said he thinks the President is going to talk to us and if after that, we then feel a need to talk to Rogers, that it might be okay. He doesn't want to be in a position of making the decision and if it appears that it's coming out wrong from the Presidency standpoint, then he would talk with us and perhaps intervene.

Ziegler called later to say that he had covered the various questions we'd raised and the President was considering them, but I got the clear impression that Ron doesn't feel there's any change in direction at this point. Henry came in and had a long talk with John and me this afternoon. And his view is strongly that if it's inevitable we're going to fall eventually, then we should get out as soon as we know it's inevitable, but definitely not before. Which is different than the way the President expresses Henry's view. Henry went through some of what he feels are the problems if we do go. He came up with the very sound idea for me that, if I go, I should not make a full statement trying to explain my role. I should go above the battle and say that I'll clear my name in the courts and the other processes and at the appropriate point after the dust has settled, I'll make a full public disclosure of my position in total. But it would serve no useful purpose to do so now. I think this might be a very good move.

John and I both have come down gradually, as the day rolls on, on the basis that we're going to confront the President pretty strongly tomorrow with the challenge that if he has something that is going to come out on us, he must tell us about it and we'll act on that basis. If he doesn't, then there isn't a case to be made for our going, at least at this point. We'll just have to see how that works out. The lawyers ought to soften him up some ahead of time on that.

End of April 24.