



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

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Wednesday, April 25.

VP called this morning and said he was going out in public today, which I said was his first mistake, and he laughed and agreed. Said there is a question of how to handle the Watergate thing. Says he'll say he has full confidence the President will handle it properly, and he feels that we're going to have to stiff-arm them from there on. That this thing is driving the same lousy people to say things, like Brooke, etcetera. He feels the President has to make clear that the rights of people involved can be jeopardized, and more so by the President than anybody, if he speaks out improperly. He also said if he can be of any assistance, to let him know.

Ehrlichman and I met with Ziegler at 9:30 to get a fill from him before we got into the Watergate round for the day. Ron said we should be prepared to work on the basis that the President feels we should leave, and thinks that we should, in order to permit this matter to be ironed out outside the White House. And the problem is how to assess the situation from the standpoint of the Presidency and the serious impact against the Presidency. It requires a shift of atmosphere and a shift of tone to move it away from the Presidency. And it's assumed from the press that the force will continue against the White House and specifically against Haldeman and Ehrlichman. So we were in positions that, if we were not aware of the legal impropriety, at least we could have stepped in and stopped it all. If we remain, it's virtually impossible for the President to do what he must do, which is to disengage himself to the degree that he can and move on with the business of the Presidency. The work of the Presidency can't go on now in this atmosphere. Everyone realizes Haldeman and Ehrlichman didn't do anything. Because of the weight of public opinion, a voluntary departure is necessary. Based on our presence in these circumstances, it is hindering the President's need to get on with the work and focus right and all. The real question is, can the Administration function in the future with the presence of two advisors who fall under the cloud? And we do fall under this cloud. And so he made basically the pitch that what the argument is for resigning, which we basically don't and can't buy, because it just doesn't add up.



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We met briefly with our lawyers to go over their plans for meeting with the President, and then met again with them after they had an hour and a half with the President. They said that they made the point that an amputation isn't going to get the gangrene out of the White House, and the President agreed, but said that if the patient survives, then maybe it's still worthwhile. They pushed him hard on Petersen to clamp down, get the charges, get him moving fast and all that. Told him they cannot time the removal of Dean with Haldeman and Ehrlichman, and the President agreed with this. Said timing was extremely important. They didn't support the idea of a leave of absence. And they said the President's position was there's no real distinction between a leave and a resignation. Said the President was very apprehensive. They have no doubt that the President feels resignations are in order, but he's unresolved as to timing. And the lawyers argued that indictment is the only real excuse for a resignation. They felt they made some progress with him.

Ehrlichman and I then went over and met with him for a couple of hours at the EOB. I reviewed the Connally and Rogers views, as expressed to me last night, and the President said now we need to look at the facts. First, the legal vulnerability. Then he got off the facts. Said everybody agrees that we must do something, that we need an overt act, both for our own sakes and for the Presidency. Otherwise the crescendo keeps beating at us. We need to say that we want to be heard and cleared and that we're innocent. We can't just sit and wait until the grand jury goes through the whole process. The prosecution now has a maximum incentive to hit pay dirt, especially since they're being criticized for the grand jury leaks and all that stuff.

The President says he will push Petersen hard to wind up the hearings, to hear Haldeman and Ehrlichman soon, examine them and report to the President, and to put down for the President what is the case against Haldeman and Ehrlichman, and against Dean.

Then he said let's turn to the Dean problem. That's damn tough at the moment. Ehrlichman said Dean is obviously trying to manipulate the President. The President said, he sure is. Ehrlichman said this is the key, Dean's threat to the President. Ehrlichman then says let me spin out a far-out



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point. It's conceivable that if Dean is out of control and not handled adroitly, he could lead us to the resolution of impeachment on the ground that the President committed a crime and there's no other legal process available. So we have to consider that. What is the crime, how serious is Dean a threat, what do we do about it? He feels that what Dean has in terms of evidence is short of a crime, but we don't know. But he may be building corroboration on it. The only solution is to listen to the tapes. If it didn't come out of those meetings, then it's manageable. If it did, we'd better know what Dean's hole card is. Ehrlichman's not afraid of Dean himself, he says; and doesn't feel Haldeman should be. The President told me to get the conversations and listen to them. The President says he thinks he remembers, especially regarding the Bittman conversation, regarding blackmail, million dollars, and all that.

The President asked Petersen if he should talk to Dean before he pleads, but feels he should not. Ehrlichman says we have to deal with the President's ultimate problem. The question of whether he's involved. The President says Dean could have described the payoffs using the Cancer-- during his "Cancer on the Presidency" speech. Ehrlichman said, then you have to decide how to decide on Dean. The President said we can't run the risk of Dean saying something regarding the President. If immunity is the price we have to pay it. I made the point that's the one thing you can't do, is pay any price to Dean and let him hold the permanent level of blackmail over the President. You've got to destroy Dean. The President said, how? And Ehrlichman said, well, you could call Petersen in tell him that Dean talked to Liddy and that I talked to Dean, and I have no concrete evidence of blackmail, but that is a distinct impression. This President is not subject to blackmail. You must turn this on Dean and trap him and drop the full weight of the law on him. We have to assume that Dean is also blackmailing Petersen, or trying to. We had considerable discussion of this and obviously concerned the President greatly. He kept coming back to it.

Then he said get back to subject "A". A lot hinges on the Dean problem. We can't put Dean, Haldeman and Ehrlichman in one bag. It would be wrong from an individual standpoint. And from what we know, Dean is culpable without question. Dean claims that Haldeman and Ehrlichman knew all the way. Dean makes the point that the \$40,000 was paid before the



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election, which has to be checked out. Petersen told the President, and he said we must not tell anybody this, that they gave Strachan and Magruder lie detector tests. That Strachan didn't pass and Magruder did, regarding the information, according to Strachan, regarding the budget and the output of the Watergate.

Regarding us, the President made the point that we could consider a leave, coupled with a statement by the attorney to the President. That was one of the ideas the attorneys came up with, is that they'd give the President a letter saying that they saw no criminal liability on our part. So we consider a leave. The President makes a statement, or we put out the statement by the attorney to the President, saying that we'd asked to go to the grand jury. We need to prepare for that, and the essential business of the government must go forward. Therefore, it's imperative, until cleared up, that we step out, because we feel our ability to carry on our duties is impaired. This poses a problem down the road, but buys time keeps the option open and we're able to see what does come out. Then the President can say he's not going to judge the case or anyone in it until it runs the process. The President would probably have to include Dean at this point, he feels.

Ehrlichman has a different approach. He says we really have three situations. Number one, you have Dean, that type, who will be indicted or given immunity. And the President, in that case, can say he's advised that Dean has indicated sufficient involvement that he must ask for his resignation. The second category are people in the White House openly charged, such as me, but without determination by the judicial process. So we ask them to take a leave until cleared. The third, is the group that's not publicly charged but has some direct or indirect involvement. I know and they know who they are, but I'm going to leave them in place for the time being with the expectation that the facts will become available. Ehrlichman said you should treat Dean differently than Haldeman, and Haldeman differently than Ehrlichman. So fire Dean; Haldeman take leave; Ehrlichman stays, but ready to go if anything comes up. John also points out this also divides him PR-wise from Dean and Haldeman which is to his interest. He feels there's a real practical problem with the resignation, which is, how can he live?



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The President said, the more I think about the resignation, which is the option everyone comes down on, Harlow comes down on that too, the less I think it works. The difficulty is, at this point, it condemns us and doesn't clean up the problem, and so Haldeman and Ehrlichman leave. We were cleaning house, we put in a new team. Rush replaces Haldeman, Cole replaces Ehrlichman, Garment replaces Dean. But the President can't go through the whole White House and fire everybody. So he feels we should not move this week in any event. We can't do us before we do Dean.

Then I left to review the tapes. Did that and went back over and went over what's on the tapes, which had the President again very concerned, because of the implications that are in there. The actual facts work out pretty well, because he did a superb job of getting the information out of Dean, which is what he was after. But he's concerned that Dean may have had a tape recorder on him and would use the tape itself, which could be made to appear more damaging than the facts would actually justify.

He then met with Petersen for quite a long time. Called me at home afterwards, said the prosecutor, now, is not about to give Dean immunity. That he's too much involved as a principal. He told Petersen about the need to expedite. Told him about the paper he wants from him regarding Ehrlichman and Haldeman, which he says he'll have by Friday afternoon. Said he wants Haldeman and Ehrlichman at the earliest opportunity to meet with the prosecutor, and he said they'll have counsel request it. Told the grand jury-- he said he wanted us to go to the grand jury now, and he said he may have us twice. Then the President said, okay but go fast on it. Then he gave me a paper regarding a note they had sent to the prosecutor in the Ellsberg case, making that the point of the break-in at Ellsberg's psychiatrist by the Watergate people. And Petersen says I was blackmailed by Dean on them and they had to send it out to avoid cover-up in the Ellsberg thing, although it will not blow the Ellsberg case because it wasn't used.

The President says he leveled with Petersen regarding our conversation and told him he will not be blackmailed on it, and that was the interview in which I started my investigation. And the



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President wants me to hold that conversation to the President and me, not discuss it with Ehrlichman. Petersen said Dean always indicated that he won't lie for Ehrlichman, but he will never hurt the President, which would imply that he's trying to set up a semi-blackmail of the President. The President feels there's no choice, but to fight him. He agrees that you can't temporize with Dean to try and keep him from putting out any public stuff.

He learned from Petersen that Dean's likely to be called in the Vesco grand jury because he made a phone call to quash an indictment on Vesco. They're trying to make Dean's lawyers come to them, and that's what they're waiting for. There can't be any move on Haldeman or Ehrlichman until Dean is resolved, and he told Petersen this. The President gave him the impression that he wasn't going to act on us anyway, but wants to see his paper on us. The belief now is to stand firm through the weekend.

Petersen doesn't know when he'll meet with Dean to get his big threat. The President had learned from Kleindienst apparently this afternoon that Dean had some big threat he was going to deliver to Petersen when he met with him. There's no way to stay with Dean on this, but we have to try to keep him from becoming a total enemy, so we treat him decently.

When Ehrlichman talks about impeachment, I don't see that based on the word of Dean. The President's worried that he may have made a tape recording, as I mentioned. The President then said, well, this is April 25. Put this down as the day we start up. He agrees with the lawyers that the resignation just won't work. The leave of absence question really doesn't buy us anything.

Then he got into the point that Steve Bull thought he could get out of the finance dinner because tickets are not selling well. The President could give a pre-dinner reception at the White House, instead, which would be better than having to give a political speech, which is a problem without mentioning Watergate. He asked if I was still for his going to Mississippi on Friday, and I said, yes. He said when you stop to think, the line of everybody regarding the resignation is attractive for a couple of days, but then what happens? So we should, instead, say the grand jury will hear it and we'll see it through. The problem is the grand jury is cleaning house instead of the



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President, but that shows confidence in the institution and so forth, which maybe is better. Called a little later to see whether I thought there was a way I could find out if Dean had had a tape recorder on him, and I explained there was no way. Wanted me to listen to the rest of the tape. Ziegler informed me later that Dash called Len Garment and said the Senate committee wants to see Ehrlichman and me next week in their private discovery process, apparently. So that poses a new bit of excitement.

End of April 25.