



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

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Friday, April 27.

The President had me in at 7:55 this morning before our staff meeting. And wanted to raise the question of what was the meeting with Ehrlichman, Dean, and Haldeman on the 20th that was reported in the *Post* this morning. And wanted me to discuss Ruckelshaus with Ehrlichman, thinks it's important to move on Gray, and we shouldn't go with Felt.

At the staff meeting, I tried to turn the thing to constructive approaches on the non-Watergate base, but Henry went into how the President has to give a speech on Watergate, and that turned everybody into that, and I couldn't turn it off. And it was generally agreed that we have to set the Watergate thing, make the point of here's how it's being handled. And then turn to how to handle the ongoing government, either short-term or by changing the way of doing business. Then in that context, you call the staff together and lay out what to do. He shouldn't imply that, because of Watergate, we have to change the way of working, but there does have to be laid out a way of working internally and it must be clear, not just ooze out. So our initial effort there didn't work very well.

Then on the plane to Mississippi, he had me up, said he had talked to Ehrlichman about Ruckelshaus, and that temporary isn't the answer, we've just got to lay it to Ruckelshaus that he's got to take the job on a permanent basis. Then he said we've got to come down on the leave business, like today. Wants me to talk to Ehrlichman in very direct terms, say there are no good options, but we can't wait until next week and let Congressional problems develop. The leave buys time through the grand jury. Ehrlichman and Haldeman move without telling Dean, which would force his hand. The basis would be a letter saying that we've been asked to appear before the US Attorneys and the grand jury, and the Ervin Committee after that, not just on a legal basis, but must have a higher standard of conduct. Purpose would be because of the stories and leaks and so on, we can't effectively serve the President and the country, so we feel the President should go forward, recommend he fill the positions, anticipate how the government would run, and so on. Then when the grand jury's over, we bite that bullet, but it's obvious the President



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expects us to leave. And so there's no hiatus, we believe the positions should be filled, and we have a desire to serve in some other position in the future. In asking for a leave, we say it's important there be no hiatus in the work of the government, make the leave effective not immediately, say three or four day transition period working with our successor. That we'd be glad to serve in any capacity in the future, but we would not want to return until we're fully cleared. Question of toughing it out until the grand jury acts.

What really brought it home to him was last night on Ehrlichman and the FBI stuff, and the question of who would put out the news story. He feels he has a different judgment on the Congressional liability than Timmons does. He had said that he was afraid they'd pass a resolution. I checked with Timmons and he said there was no chance of that. President was kind of angry at the contrary suggestion. Said he needs guidance today, when he goes out publicly, and he wants me to have Price do a 15 minute speech for him on Watergate.

Then he had me up again, said he had checked with Ziegler about whether he should mention the Watergate in the Mississippi speech, and Ron agrees he should not, which I had also recommended. Feels that he should not do the Chamber of Commerce on Monday, it's the wrong thing to do, cosmetic. The VP should do it. Also gave Ziegler his own thoughts in Florida about a leave, and Buchanan took some down. The President feels he had some good language, and I should get it from Buchanan. Also the possible Presidential statement. He told Ziegler to turn it over to Price.

He says we have to start with the situation that we confronted in his speech that says in the action taken, that we resorted to the wrong means. Buchanan should get going and get him his data on the incidents and so on, and then cite what happened. And that we'll have nobody on staff or in government that did anything wrong. Then fold in the command decision re: the leaves. The President's point is that it's very important, good for us to move, forces Dean. President has a problem regarding Dean, there are no good choices. He can't get Dean into the prosecutor, so he feels we have to take the high ground, and we ask for the leave. The problem for the President is,



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why is he keeping Dean on? Ehrlichman and Haldeman are not separable now, I can't go without Ehrlichman going. The President has no way to deal with Dean, except to call him in and fire him, and then he'll be even more irresponsible. So Ehrlichman and Haldeman should move now on the high ground, then Dean will have to move pretty quickly after that.

He definitely doesn't want to go the resignation route, but must consider a leave, but we should put our case on the high ground now. It's essential for our public image and the President's that we not wait for indictments. We need to make our high-ground statement now. If we wait until later, we'll just be defendants.

He had me up again later and said he wanted to meet with us on the plane coming back, and wanted Ehrlichman to have the facts on what John did in the national security area, anything on taps and all. Then he wants him to do some thinking on that on his project. Also wants to know how Dean found out. Dean says he has documents to prove Haldeman and Ehrlichman involvement with him, what would that be? And I just don't know.

He had a chat with Stennis, and Stennis' talk was rather alarming to the President. He feels time is running out. Made the point that down their way, they have a saying that the rain falls on both the just and the unjust, and if the rain falls on people, they've got to go, whether they're just or not. He feels-- he wants Ehrlichman to tell the President whatever Hunt did, especially any taps. He's got to figure Dean knows, and he wants to know all that stuff apart from what he already knows. If he did have any, there has to be a legal justification. John and I spent some time on the plane then, reviewing options, leave or staying on duty, and how to approach that.

Then the President had us up on the way back from Mississippi, with John in, too. Wanted to know how to handle the question of why we didn't fire Gray on the fifteenth, and John had the answer to that. In the meantime, while we were down there, I got word from Larry that Gray wanted to resign today, and we approved that. Decided to put Ruckelshaus in as Acting Director, and I set up an appointment for Ruckelshaus at 4:00, for the President to sell him on that, which he later did.



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We had a discussion of how the President should handle-- how they should handle the Pentagon Papers story, make it on national security, that there was a national security investigation as a result of serious leaks of highly sensitive national security secrets that this was an aspect of that, and we can't discuss it beyond that, except to say this act was never authorized. Then it was agreed that we couldn't say that the act was never authorized. President makes the point that we've got to be forthcoming. Ehrlichman makes the point that Petersen has known about this for a long time.

Then we talked about the leave question again. President arguing that we move now, taking the high ground, because we want the President to carry on, so we want a leave of our duties. Physically, we would stay in our offices, use our files, and so on, remain to work with our successor, etcetera. Say we and the President looked at this and took action. If we wait-- we could wait until the grand jury finds some technical illegality, but then it's not our decision, we got caught. Or we could wait until our blow-ups, which hang us publicly and the clamor is so great that we have to go under fire. Then the problem is if we take the leave and the grand jury doesn't indict, what do we do? We have the problem of the Committee, and maybe so much stuff out then that it becomes a close call as to whether we can survive. After the grand jury, we can say I've been cleared, but there should be a new team and step out. It's obvious he's still thinking that we've got to go out and that this is just a temporary measure in that process.

The President's view is that toughing it through is a very slim possibility, and that we shouldn't try to bank on that. We may be so badly cut up that we won't want to stay, he says, but that overlooks the possibility that we may not. Raised the question of the President's speech, and we agreed it should be an interim talk, not the final one which has to come after the grand jury, but this will be to the people, probably on Monday, or announce it Monday, for Wednesday. Bite the bullet on Dean, that's a question. President started clearing his calendar, dropped the meeting with the Troika for tomorrow. Said isn't it better for us to take leaves on the basis of the President-- on the basis that the President suggests, of a letter to the President, not the President going out to announce it. Say until this is cleared up, we've asked for a leave to continue our



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work. The President's staff will pick up our duties for the time being. Dean question is unresolved. He's still trying-- they're still trying to work a deal with his lawyers, and they're concerned that anything we do might make him worse, if possible.

At this point, Ehrlichman lobbed in that we're meeting with the US Attorneys at 9:00 Thursday, which I hadn't known. He says he told me yesterday, but I missed the message if he did. Then after we got back to the White House, President had me in after he had talked with Petersen on the phone and he said you were-- oh, on the plane I had said to the President, I will bet you five dollars Petersen won't give you the paper regarding the case he has against us. President said, oh yeah he will, because I asked him to. I said yes, and you've asked him a lot of other things he hasn't done. Sure enough, when we get back to the office, the President calls Petersen then calls me in and says, well, Petersen can't give me the paper, but he's got a good reason, because it involves grand jury testimony, which is a lot of baloney. He also says Petersen says he can't make a deal with Dean, so he cannot any longer ask the President to wait on taking action on him. Problem now is how mad the President makes Dean, and he has to take a hard look at that.

In the late afternoon, I talked with Strickler about the leave thing. He's concerned about what the press will think of the idea of the leave, but our continuing to work there. He doesn't think the leave is a wise decision. He thinks we should try to get the President to take a letter saying to relieve us from our normal duties, and he wants to review any letters that we send in. The problem is what the press will do with it. It's clear that we're under fire, although we have no criminal activity, but the public will jump to the conclusion that there's something wrong. Once this happens, we've lost our further usefulness to the President. He doesn't feel there's any real jeopardy to the case, although it might tilt the prosecutor to go forward, when if we were still in the White House, he would be less inclined to. He's concerned about the question of timing, thinks we should get maximum protection during the sensitive time of this week. Hoped we'd have the mantle of the White House, because it is a deterrent, and we need it. He doesn't think we're close enough to being indicted to be hurt by this, however. We have to keep our backs firm. Can't Dean be put on some other status, no access to the White House or something?



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They've set up a meeting for us with Dash of the Senate committee at 1:30 Thursday, so we have the DA in the morning and they think this is a good program. Ehrlichman suggested we take a vacation instead of a leave, which they thought at first was a great idea, but it isn't really.

Strickler thought it was worth another run at the President, which I decided to do. I came up with the idea of taking a thirty day leave, and they thought that was a good idea, too.

Then I talked-- Ehrlichman and I talked to Wilson on the phone. He asked some questions about the one-month leave, and whether this determination of the President was "hypoed" by something or what. Then he said on the dates, Dash had pushed for Wednesday, but he told them we were going to Justice Thursday morning, and we couldn't see him until after that. He's concerned about this program and the Justice and the DA or, Justice and the committee, in the face of the leave, and thinks we should have a cover through these two meetings.

Psychologically, this could be interpreted as a real break, and that we're thrown to the dogs. So it's unfortunate to occur this Saturday rather than next. He says if we take a leave on a plausible basis to confer with counsel, the press won't accept it, and they'll regard it as a preliminary shove-out. If Dean sits here, or takes a leave with us, it puts him in better or equal position publicly. If he's ready to fire Dean and we take a leave, the appearance is much better. It's not good to put us in parallel with Dean, taking advantage of two friends willing to be docile. This is wrong, and we'll get hurt. I used this line directly with the President later. He says he should fire Dean tomorrow or Monday, and then hold us through next week. If we keep the DA meeting, then they call us to the grand jury, the question of how that's interpreted in terms of the leave. He doesn't see the leave as a result of the Senate and DA being too bad. There's some merit to leaving before these meetings, though, he agrees. He gets back to Dean and says that's a real problem, we must take-- the President must take Dean's resignation, he must make a distinction between Dean and us, he can't sweep Dean under the rug. If we go now, what will the press think? It gives Dean the fair-haired boy aspects, because he's the one who made the revelations. These are the hard questions. The main decision is regarding Dean. He's not sure about the leave



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point, or whether it's better before we have our meetings Thursday or after, but Dean is the pivot, and we can't give him any mileage.

After that, I went in to meet with the President again. By then it was 6:45, and I spent about an hour and a half in there. He wanted to clarify one point on the critical conversation of the 21st. He wanted-- he questioned me again on whether Dean had any basis to feel that he was instructed by the President to go out and get the money and I said no, and that wasn't the case.

The President had a long meeting with Petersen. He didn't report much of it to me, but he said O'Brien is scared and is the key to the whole payoff scheme. They think they're going to break him. President feels the 30 day idea won't operate, it's too gimmicky, it should just be a leave, couched in the right words. A leave gives a good opportunity to handle the problem. He will handle Dean differently.

The President has decided on his own thing, that he will go to Camp David tomorrow morning, work Saturday and Sunday, and try to be ready Monday night, and try to get it all out. Then he went through a long moaning process about how he has no one to help him and all. He feels we've got to take the leave, and he says he'll take care of Dean. Why not accept the voluntary leave for Dean? Who can tell Dean this? I told him I didn't know. He came up with Garment, which is probably the best bet, although not very good. What the President would prefer is that Haldeman and Ehrlichman take the high road, we leave because of the situation and we're asking for the leave. The President then gets Dean in, and under these circumstances, asks him to take a leave. And he says if that's too prejudicial, that's too bad. Meaning if it's too prejudicial to us, to follow that route, then it's too bad. In other words, he's made up his mind. Then he says I have to help him on the Dean deal, not to make his lying against the President infinitely worse. Dean's lawyers said they're going to tie in the President on other matters than Watergate. Hersh, of the *Times*, apparently has from O'Brien the point that the President is involved in other than Watergate.



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Then he got into the question of the timing of his speech, then got the idea maybe we get our statements out Saturday for Sunday papers, then announce Saturday that the President is going on TV Monday, or put out for Monday evening news the President on TV and my top two people leave and I've also accepted leave for Dean. I then came up with the idea, that we prepare our leave and the President's statement/reaction. We submit it, and he accepts it on Sunday, for Monday papers. Then on Monday, Garment goes to Dean and tells him he's on leave. That, of course, if he doesn't volunteer first, which he might do if he's smart enough. And I suggested that the President have Garment assume the duties of counsel in the interim. I don't think the President saw the significance of that, but I think he may try to do it, which would be good.

He raised again the question of what Dean's documentary evidence can be. Then the problem if the President fires Dean, and then Dean blasts Ehrlichman and Haldeman, it puts us in a bad spot in having to resign under Dean's blast. That's the President's argument again for our getting out first. So his idea is a memo to Dean from the President, delivered by Garment in person, where he says, as you've noted, Haldeman and Ehrlichman have requested leaves of absence. In view of this action and other developments in the Watergate matter, I am putting you on a leave of absence and asking Len Garment to assume the duties of counsel in the interim until this matter is cleared up, or whatever wording we decide to use. We do parallel memos, one to Garment and one to Dean. He liked this idea, and I think that's the best ground we're going to get out of this. He then started pushing for having us go on Saturday, though, to get more separation, and thinks that's better. Based on that, I had a talk with our lawyer Wilson tonight. He says that he thinks we're better off to go on Sunday, that Saturday gives Dean too much time. He thinks our deal is not too good, but it's better than some of the other options. He's convinced, though, that this is going to mean to the public that this is the first move towards getting rid of us. It's not a legal problem so much as political. And he needs to know whether this precludes Ehrlichman's trip on Monday.

End of April 27.





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Incidentally, the trip to Mississippi was a great success. Stennis gave a sensational speech boosting the President. I'm sure it won't get any play, but if it did, it would be enormously helpful.

[End of April 27.]