



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

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Saturday, April 28.

The President phoned first thing this morning from Camp David. Was really upset about the Vesco story on Ehrlichman, which is a really lousy shot. Then said what time would John and I be up there today, he wants to move today on our leave of absence because he's got to get to working on his speech. I explained to him that we had gone into this in considerable detail with the lawyers and all last night, and felt strongly that we wanted to do it tomorrow, instead, and explained to him why, and he agreed to that. Told me to get the statements written in the best possible way. Says he isn't going to mention our names in his TV talk Monday night. He thinks it will be a pretty good talk, and he's convinced now this is the right time. He thinks it's good that we didn't move earlier, that it's best to hit after they've thrown a big chunk of their wad.

He obviously has a cold, and was coughing into the telephone, and saying he was pretty run-down, and going through the "feeling sorry for himself" bit. Said to keep this all in context, you have to look back at the Truman deal. It's kind of interesting that he appointed Newbold Morris as the Special Investigator, and then fired him and got McGrath, and then fired McGrath, so other Presidents have had problems in these lines, too. He feels that the big fish in this one are the FBI Director and the former Attorney General and that they're not going to hit us. He raised the question on leaves, of whether Strachan should ask for a leave, and whether Dick Moore should. Figures that they probably should wait, and that anyone should wait until he's targeted before he moves on a leave.

On Dean, he says he has a very tough plan on him, that it will be handled properly, that he's got it all worked out, it will be very peremptory, he won't see him, so on. That he's going to tell Garment that the Assistant Attorney General said that the President should not see Dean and that Garment must ignore any threats that he makes and be very firm with him. He says it's interesting that no one ran the story about Dean's implicating the President, although the President is confident that they do have the story, which I am too, since we've picked it up from a number of sources. On the decision, he said we do have to go forward. The decisions made, I



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want to talk to Rogers today, because I'm going to move on trying to get him to take the Attorney Generalship. And then I'm going to go to work on the speech on that basis.

So as of 9:00 this morning, he said now, if I can understand that the decision is made, I'm going to go ahead and write on that assumption, and it's okay to put this off until tomorrow, and I said the decision is made, we will take a leave, and so on. Then I talked to Ziegler on the phone and outlined my idea for the President's speech, making the point that he should move now, and put Rogers into Justice, make that change, and then make the point that the President's moving off of the Watergate case, and away from it, and that someone else will be handling it from here on, and so on.

We had a long meeting with our lawyers, mainly going over the leave of absence statements. They feel the ideal result out of this would be for Dean to be hauled in and to take the Fifth, which would then set us up right. He wouldn't testify, but he would be implicated and have to be tried. Thinks Garment ought to call Dean in and say the *Post* says you're going to spring something on the President, and confront him with it and see what happens. Wilson feels very strongly that Dean isn't nearly as dangerous as we think he is. I agree with that, it's the President who thinks he's dangerous. Thinks the President should say in his speech, "I've been badly served by people in whom I had confidence, in fact one of them even threatened blackmail on me". That would then set him up so that Dean would have a tough time making his threat. He feels we've put Dean in the driver's seat and are letting him call the shots, and that's a serious mistake.

Regarding the question of our dealings with press, the thought was we might say, on advice of counsel, we're not making any public statements. Both John and I felt that wasn't a good idea, but rather that we should say something like "I'm not going to add to the public debate, I'll work within the system, so I have no comment." But our position in any event should be no comment to the press, that the whole matter is under official groups, and I'm cooperating fully, they're getting to the truth, and so on. And then there was hours of going back and forth on the letters



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themselves, working out all the details. We finally ironed that out and closed down for the day. I came home, went to an early dinner and a movie with Jo.

When I got back, Ziegler called and covered a few things on the President's mood, which he said was very bad, he was feeling sorry for himself, and so on. Then he said, would you like me to tell you what I really think at this point on a personal basis, and I said sure, and he said I think you're making a very major mistake, that you should resign rather than taking a leave, that if you take a leave you're simply setting yourself up as a supertarget for the press, and they're going to bore in on you mercilessly, and force you to resign anyway, and then you'll have to do it under pressure, and under much worse circumstances than you're doing it now. He made this argument quite strongly, fairly effectively, and over and over, to the point where I felt there was some merit to it.

Called Wilson, made the points to him. He said nothing that I've said appeals to him, that he doesn't think this will appeal to Ehrlichman either, and that Ehrlichman would probably still take a leave, even if I decided to resign. He makes the point that you can always resign, and if you do it under exterior pressure, this is not the President doing it, so it can't be interpreted as the President's knowledge of guilt. He says a public clamor for resignation doesn't convict you, because the public doesn't know the facts, but a Presidential acceptance of a resignation is much worse. Also he feels that Ehrlichman, Dean, and Haldeman would go out together, it all happens at once, the day apart idea is a fiction, and that hurts us. His point is that you don't amputate if there's any chance for anything else. He feels the resignation may be better for the President, but not for me. If and when you go back, it will be a different world, but still, for now the leave of absence is better. If this is prompted by the fiction of payroll problems and all that, then go without pay on a leave. The hue and cry for a resignation that the press will raise will be at the President, not at you, so that isn't a problem either. His theory really boils down to the fact that a leave implies that the President has confidence in you, where the acceptance of a resignation shows no confidence and implies that he knows things that make this necessary.



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He then comes back to the Dean problem, asks what would the President do, would he demand his resignation? He raises the point that I've got to consider whether I'm willing to do this if Ehrlichman doesn't. Wilson concludes that he doesn't agree with Ziegler, but he won't say he's wrong. Then I talked to Ehrlichman, who said Ron does have an argument, but it gives up valuable high ground versus the prosecutors. The strongest argument of all is that the leave is under circumstances where the President does not make an adverse judgment, and this weighs on the prosecutor. Also the leave retains the question of possible reinstatement, which has to weigh on the prosecutor. All in all, the resignation doesn't appeal to him, the Dean equation is the important factor-- is an important factor. He said these, admittedly, are tactical points versus Henry's strategic view that if we're eventually going to resign we're better off to do it early than late, and that now it appears pretty certain that eventually we will have to resign.

I got back to Wilson, gave him Ehrlichman's view, and he said the resignation does throw you to the wolves, and in a less favorable position than if you take a leave of absence. He had talked to Strickler, and he can't see it at all. He said to ask Ziegler what his answer is to the Dean package, that is, the bad image that it produces of putting us in a bundle with Dean. Also he feels that this whole program could lead to our political destruction that we shouldn't jump, we should take it by degrees, they can't say that I'll be indicted, and maybe I won't have to resign.

Then we're up to about 10:30 and Gerry Warren calls, saying the *Post* has a story referring to two White House officials, saying that Dean was under the direction of Haldeman and-Ehrlichman on the cover-up thing, has been reporting to us, and has knowledge of other illegal acts, including wiretapping. That this is all being delayed because officials in the White House are trying to mount a counterattack against Dean. He and Gerry both wanted us to answer that, but we declined to do so. Ehrlichman felt Ziegler ought to handle it, because it goes beyond us. Says the only blessing in that is that it may persuade the President about Dean. And he thinks he and I have to consider going for a TV play next week. So we went full cycle tonight and ended up back where we were. We'll go tomorrow for the leave of absence.



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End of April 28.