



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

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Thursday, April 23.

Leaders meeting first thing, regarding new Draft Reform Bill. Then he had me in for most of the rest of the morning, while waiting for Kissinger to finish a meeting regarding Cambodia and come up to report on it. Had some thoughts on "Evenings at the White House," State Dinners, etc. Wants to cut down on them now, until the fall season. Good idea. Then he went over to EOB for lunch and nap - back for appointment with Lyn Holton about trying to get Senator Byrd into GOP. Then a long afternoon with Kissinger, about Cambodia primarily. Will move ahead on putting South Vietnamese troops in on Saturday - with United States tactical air support and blockade of Sihanoukville, if Lon Nol government collapses - which it will if North Vietnam takes Phnom Penh.

Decided this afternoon to cancel California trip, because feels he can't be away that long. Then worked out detailed plan of weekends in Florida and Camp David.

He's very much absorbed in Cambodia - and realizes he's treading on the brink of major problems as he escalates the war there. Will have to do a masterful job of explanation to keep the people with him. And there'll be a monumental squawk from the Hill. Before he left the office tonight he was standing looking out the window and said, "Damn Johnson, if he'd just done the right thing we wouldn't be in this mess now." This refers especially to the bombing halt - which President regards as great mistake, because we could have closed the whole thing down if we'd stayed with it in 1968. He still feels he can get it wound up this year, if we keep enough pressure on, and don't crumble at home. Kissinger agrees.

Not much interest in domestic affairs as the whole focus is on the war. He finds it much more absorbing at any time - and especially when things are tight and he has to make major decisions, going against the bureaucracy.

He left early for the house - called me over for quick schedule review with Pat Nixon.