



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

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Thursday, January 25.

I had quite a discussion this morning at the staff meeting and then later with the President on whether the President should do his Sunday TV speech on the budget. Shultz thinks that the speech that's drafted now is not good enough for Sunday night on television, and Ash agrees it's no good. It needs to be broader, and so on. Ash feels that we ought to use the transition from the war to domestic issues and the budget, as the basis for it. The President had argued that this was not the time to go on TV on budget because people are concerned with Vietnam which is our issue, and we want to keep them on it rather than diverting them to their issue, which is the other. Colson argues that we should wait two or three weeks, until after Vietnam soaks in. And Shultz agreed then, that we should let the war set in, too, and wait a couple of weeks, but Ash was concerned that we would lose the initiative on the budget if we do that. Ehrlichman disagrees with the "either/or" concept and says we should not lay the budget out and then step back and let them kick it around. That all our successes are flat, in terms of response, because of the lack of second level advocacy, and the Congressional struggle for this year will be lost in the next couple of weeks if the President doesn't take the initiative at the beginning. We should link the President's peace victory with the budget, and do it now, because the lobbyists are already underway and we need our initiative. It boils down to a question of timing. Everybody agreed on the need for a Presidential speech. The question is when to do it?

Ash made the point that all the early attacks on the budget will be on micro-issues, not on the main issues, so the President can wait and step in later on the overall basis. Ehrlichman argues that look at the Cabinet meeting yesterday, everybody is going to fight on the micro-issues, and if the President waits, he'll be speaking on the defensive instead of leading the charge. The debate pretty much ended on that point in the staff meeting.

I then went over to see the President before leaving for the Johnson funeral, and he said that his feeling was that he definitely would not go on TV. That he'd make a radio speech now, hard-hitting and strong, that he had reworked the speech with that in mind. He said, "First, the speech



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is lousy. Not just lousy, but incredibly lousy. It doesn't make the issue," and he just feels that now is the time to make a radio talk. Also he's concerned because he has a touch of the flu and doesn't feel he ought to plan to go on television. He argues that it's better to affect the Congress now, which the radio will do, and then hit the people later on TV when they're ready to listen to the budget, which isn't now. He suggested maybe doing a one minute TV spot on the no-tax budget to go with the radio spot, but nobody felt that was too good an idea, so they went ahead and worked the speech up on a radio basis, and he gave it late this afternoon.

This whole issue raised a big Ehrlichman problem. And he wrote me a longhand written note making the point that he hadn't been allowed to see the President since long before the Inaugural and that he was being "end-run" by Colson. And that he couldn't take the responsibility for these things and carry it out if he's going to be "end-run". He either has to have a chance to consult, or his judgment has to be ridden on. I had a long talk with John, working out some of this, and also covered it with the President and made the point that he does have this problem. And the President said that he would talk with John, but that it's got to be understood -- on scheduling matters and the use of the President's time -- no one should hit the President except me. That he can never discuss schedule with Kissinger or Colson or Ehrlichman, because Ehrlichman's judgment and none of the others' judgment is good on schedule. That John should understand that on domestic substance that he's the boss, and that no one takes any side shots on that, but on scheduling John feels the President should be out too much and has too much of a crisis atmosphere, and he doesn't want to do that. Then he suggested that John work up some ideas on bringing some people in and make sure that John understands that whenever he wants to see the President on major substance, he can always do so.

He had Ehrlichman in at 5:00 until almost 7:00. He made the point that John's got to be the end man at meetings, the moderator, to put the troops through their paces. That led to the Vice President's problem. He called Kissinger in on that. Then he got back to Ehrlichman's thing after Henry went out and discussed the problem of a number of items that John raised, including the question of confirmation of Presidential Assistants. The President's inclined to hold the line as



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Ehrlichman recommends. Then he made the side comment that it seems as if, in the Congressional arena, we're doomed to constant battle with second-rate people. He made the point to John that the governors need us now, we don't need them. It's vice versa with the Congress. We should spend our time working on Congress, not governors. He feels that we will fight the confirmation battle -- and that we should -- but that we will get rolled. On the second level advocacy thing, he wants to make up a list of people that he will send letters to periodically, to maintain contact with some key people in the country.

This morning, he got into the question of the Secret Service problem again. He has the impression that the Secret Service guys are unhappy -- Duncan and Taylor. He wants to be sure this is ironed out, that they're moved up and that on departure they get something nice from the President by way of a memento and a letter, and that we should make the point to them, especially to Duncan, that the President wants him to head the Secret Service. In the meantime, he wants him to move to a job where he gets some administrative experience, which is the point of this operation.

He had a session with Colson and me on the Vietnam attack. He wants to be sure now that the battle is joined. He wants to get out the content of some of the telegrams that are coming in on the positive side. Colson recommended that I should do an interview to give the story on how the decision was made, talking about the man, not the process, the color story on the courage of the President and so on. For instance, I was with the President when the Saxbe statement broke or when the *Newsweek* specter of defeat came out and how much of a problem that created.

The President feels we need an accurate story that goes beyond that he just tries to do the right thing and works hard. That we need the feel of it, and the only two in the White House that have ever done this are Moynihan and Connally and they're gone. The point is to create a broader picture -- plus the strength, hard-working and efficiency, and so on. We'll have to try to work something on that.



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Henry told us about the problem with the VP, who is apparently demanding in his Vietnam trip he be given some negotiating to do. He wants to have something substantive to come home with that he accomplished. Henry tried to make the point that the negotiations are already done and signed, but he didn't understand that and so it's apparently going to be a running battle. Henry says also that the VP complains that Ehrlichman has done him in by taking away his intergovernmental relations responsibility, that Ziegler and I stabbed him by not telling him on Tuesday that the President was going on TV that night, before he went up to speak at the Senate Conference. The problem there being, of course, that we didn't know that he was speaking at the Senate Conference.

The President then got into a thing with John and me after Henry left about how the VEEP cannot be his successor and that the only two possibilities are Rockefeller and Connally, and Connally only if he moves over within the next couple of months. Ehrlichman argues that Connally is not qualified either, because he doesn't pick good people. But the President still feels strongly he would be the best one and that we've got to try to work something out and get a good Sherman Adams type to manage things for him. He was horrified at the VP's performance at the Cabinet meeting yesterday on the budget and feels that he just doesn't have what it takes.

End of January 25.