



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

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Wednesday, February 28.

The President had me in today, and had obviously giving a lot of thought to schedule. Says that the problem now is that we don't have a plan. The best thing is to have meetings that are regular, otherwise the people that he has to see take more of his time. That would apply to Cabinet, White House staff and Congressional types. So he diddled around on which days to do what. Decided to use Tuesday mornings and Friday mornings. He wants to be clear from Friday noon on, so he can take off for the weekend if he wants to. Wants to keep Thursday available generally for press conferences when he has them. So he decided, on the Cabinet, he wants to be sure he sees every member of the Cabinet at least once every two weeks. To do that he'll have an NSC a month, a Domestic Council meeting a month, and a Cabinet meeting a month, spaced so there is not a long wait between meetings for any individual. Then he'll meet with the counselors every other week for an hour at the EOB on Tuesday afternoons at 5:00 (which he later changed to 4:00), and the Shake group of the White House staff on Thursday afternoons at 5:00 which he later changed to 4:00. And he'll maybe add a meeting so there are two a week from time to time. Then he feels he should meet with the larger White House staff group, on the same basis as he does the leaders, when he gets into a briefing on some subject. So when he has a subject to cover, he wants to do that also with the White House staff. With Congress he wants to meet on a three week cycle. One week the full Republican leaders, then the small group of leaders, then the bipartisan leaders. And in those meetings have enough wildcards to fill the table. Bring the new leadership group into that as quickly as we can. All of this was to get the things that he has to do out of the way, so we can deal with the basic Congressional problem that he thinks Ehrlichman raised with him yesterday, and that he called me about last night, on the need to spend time in therapy with Congressmen. For that he determined that he needs to take groups of 20 at the Cabinet table and let them come in and bitch. The question is in my mind—and I raised with him—is whether doing more such as that does any good. And he says, well, that's true and I need more thinking time. The question is what's the better use of my time? About the only Democrats we have are the Vietnam groups who are really just talking about the Republicans, and the question is what



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can we talk about with such a group, energy, trade are examples. Says there's no use in the President sitting there to hear Ehrlichman brief on energy though. So we should maybe do it on the basis of the committees, although they're too obsessed with their subjects, or on the basis of their counselor areas, where they're all the candidates. Question is, can you mix Senators and Congressmen. Maybe we should go on subjects. For trade, for example, we wouldn't get the loyalists in; we can get Javits and Percy and those people. Use a Presidential meeting with Timmons' new leadership group, keep the leadership small and spread out the group.

He then got to the subject of the book *Kennedy's 13 Mistakes*, which he's read and found fascinating. Made the point that Kennedy blew practically everything and still got credit for it. The line we talked about before.

Late this afternoon he had the weekly meeting with Shultz, Ash, Ehrlichman, and me. The first half-hour of which was consumed with the discussion of the Governor's meeting today, and our guys reporting on how the briefing went A lot of the discussion of the Governor's attitudes, and the President's comments on how to deal with them, and considerable discussion in that context of the budget, revenue sharing, the need to keep selling that, the problems on impoundment and so forth. He then got into his general philosophic discussion, said that the problem is that we're good managers and we do things because they're right, so we appear to be cold and efficient. And people measure compassion by passion for spending, and we don't have it. So we have to do like Bobby Kennedy, say you care about the poor folk, say we want to do these things. As a subtheme to making our substantive case, we've got to make the case for the compassionate approach. The question is not cutting; it's a question of how much we increase. Symbolism is the area where we're weak. You can't get it across, because we're not comfortable as demagogues.

Then he got into his subject of the poison in the upper classes the loss of faith in the country. They hate the country. The country is corrupt and prejudiced. The whole McGovern argument thing. He says we're now seeing just the beginning with the establishment press trying to make the POW's a phony deal. It'll fail though because of television, and that's the only thing that's



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saved us all along, is the live TV. He then starting questioning, particularly Shultz and Ash, baiting them on whether the whole battle with the Congress and all is worth it that we're getting into a bloody battle. And if you do that, you must have the assurance that first, you're right, and secondly, that if you weren't fighting the battle on this ground, it would be on something else, which was Ash's answer to it. That this kept the battle on a good ground for us, and it was, therefore, worthwhile even if it wasn't solid substantively, which it is. He was trying to get them to waver, but I think both of them held their ground pretty well. Satisfied him that they do feel that we're on the right track.

I think he is concerned, as he has been, about whether we are doing the right thing, and does keep questioning it for that reason. But they seemed quite solid on it. I think he felt better as a result of the meeting. He did drag it on for quite a while, this whole area of discussion and his soliloquies on his favorite subjects, before he took off for the barber shop and then the Governor's dinner tonight.

End of February 28.