



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

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Tuesday, March 20.

The President had the Republican leadership meeting this morning and had me in right afterwards saying once again that Timmons just won't do as the Congressional liaison, wanting me to get moving on making a change. Feels that I should talk to MacGregor first. Ask him what we ought to do. See if he would consider coming in to take this on. The President thought he might be tired of his outside job by now. He also says maybe the only answer is just to give the responsibility to Ehrlichman and have him handle it. The problem was that Ziegler and Timmons provide no guidance regarding what the leader should say. There's no one in charge who says here's the PR plan and that should be determined before the meeting. Timmons just doesn't add or contribute on this. The leadership needs to be briefed on Watergate also, and maybe we should also include the Republican members of the Ervin Committee. But the key thing is that we have to develop the point that we want to get across and then feed Scott and don't leave it up to them to decide what points to peddle.

He then got into a long discussion about a lot of Ehrlichman concerns. He said that for example, Ziegler was in yesterday to get guidance on how to handle the SEC-IT&T matter. And the President told him "no comment", where Ehrlichman should have briefed him ahead of time about the opportunity we have there, since the revelation also covered a whole bunch of Democrats as well as the Republicans. And we should have turned it to that side of the story, but we missed that. Also in the morning meeting he thinks Ehrlichman should take a look at how we turn Ziegler to a positive basis and to our attack, and make better use of Ehrlichman than just determining whether the Forestry Service gets \$2 million or \$8 million. He also mentioned he had talked to Ehrlichman about the *Time* magazine seminar on energy, and the President told him no one should go from the Administration. That we should send out no new signals and wants me to enforce it that no one's to go. He also wanted me to get the date, and the President will have his Camp David energy talks at that time and supersede it. He feels that we need the Cabinet out making news to reduce the drop-- or reverse the drop in consumer confidence. We need to get some of the news making away from the White House. We can't put the whole load



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on Ehrlichman. Have to get Weinberger, Lynn, Butz, Brennan, Morton out. Also on foreign policy we should use Rogers, Scali, and Richardson, not just Kissinger and the President. For example, the need for a statement every Saturday for Sunday papers. We should have outclassed Hughes last week and we didn't. He also wants to be sure Colson gets the outside stuff going and thinks the next best is Bush. The last resort is the White House. He raised another point on John, that when he was talking with Teddy White the question of withholding came up, and the President made the point to Teddy that LBJ withheld twice as much as we have and White was astonished. So maybe we have to attack the press regarding the fact that they never say anything about LBJ impounding two times as much as we do. Maybe Agnew should take up the cudgel on this.

I ran into a problem with the freshman Republicans at breakfast this morning on the question of the answer for day care centers which Ehrlichman's got to cover with them. The President feels he should-- John should push Lynn as a fighter. Put him out front, use him to prod and sort of lead the others. Also wanted Ehrlichman to take a look at the counselor's meeting. The question of whether there's any point in meeting with the counselors and whether instead it shouldn't be the whole Cabinet, which would be a better use of Presidential time and would stir up more people. He talked later today with Ehrlichman about this, and they went through various things but he ended up convincing Ehrlichman that we should have a full Cabinet meeting, but with one counselor as the lead guy for that particular meeting. In general, he feels that unless a meeting is for a specific purpose with one or two people that we should have everyone in—might as well fill the room up.

On other PR things he made the point that we need an analysis now of where we are to decide on our schedule and so on. That we should definitely not be hand-holding the business community. We should do Congress a lot. The easy thing, though, is for all our people to analyze the problems. The hard thing is to figure how to turn them to our advantage. What should we concentrate on? That's the thing the President adds to the press conference briefing book when he goes over. His feeling regarding a line or two or direction that we want to get across. And the



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same way every day Ziegler should make one of our points, not just play their game of keeping us on the defensive.

He then got into quite a discussion of Kissinger, which rose out of the point that he's trying to make right now the question-- the decision regarding the questions of bombing the Laos panhandle. He feels that it's rather odd that Kissinger isn't here at a time we have to make this decision, and says that Haig intimated the same thing. The question is how much of a risk there is with the POW's if we go ahead with it, and he has to make the decision in the next couple of days. He wanted me to call Kissinger tomorrow and raise the questions with him. If there is any risk to the POW's, then we shouldn't take it. Why can't we wait and do it after they're out? He told me to stay positive on it. The President mentioned this possibility of the bombing, and I raised the point that if there's any risk we should delay. The President makes the point that this is the only possible retaliation move we've got. We can't go back to bombing the North as Henry has suggested. So we've really got retaliation move we've got. We can't go back to bombing the North as Henry has suggested. So we've really got to give this careful consideration. In this discussion, it develops the President didn't know that Henry was taking off to Mexico for a week's vacation, and he was obviously very miffed that Henry pulled this. I thought, of course, that it had been worked out between the two of them, but the President claims he knew nothing about it and thought Henry was taking his vacation at the end of our California trip by staying out there.

He then got into a long thing with me on Watergate, raising the various possibilities. He feels strongly that we've got to say something to get ourselves away from looking like we're completely on the defensive and on a cover-up basis. He makes-- out of the discussion developed the point that if we, who are protected by executive privilege, are going to volunteer to send written statements, which in effect we have, or the President has for us, that we might as well do the statements now and get them publicized and get our answers out. The problem is that Dean feels this runs too many leads out, but the answer to that is it's going to happen anyway. Also the leads that run out don't really come from the testimony of those of us who have immunity, so we



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ought to take the initiative and get our stories out ahead of time. At least I think so, and that was the President's feeling. He wanted me to explore that some with Dean and Moore. He's spent hours with them and is obviously very concerned about the impact of the Watergate thing now, and this is really the first time he has been. I think maybe Dean's gotten through to him that there could be some White House staff involvement and therefore, problems in this whole thing.

End of March 20.