



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

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Sunday, April 15.

The President asked me yesterday to talk to Rogers and get his reading on how to handle the question of staff appearances at the Committee and whether we should go ahead and agree to go on television. Rogers felt it depends on what the grand jury does. That the judicial proceeding with prominent people and their indictment and a Congressional investigation on the subject at the same time is improper. The feeling in the public has been that nothing is being done. The grand jury thing will change that and reduce, at least, the necessity of staff appearances at the Senate hearings. He feels if we can work out some safeguards that Congress would live up to, that it wouldn't be a capitulation. He's not worried about that. He agrees people do want things cleaned up, but that the problem is orchestrating this with the US Attorney and the judge. He feels the Committee is handling itself poorly. It's a tough question to answer, not doing the whole story, but if we can get the key people on and off with the safeguards we should do it. Although, if the grand jury is going to come out with something soon, he would vote the other way and stay in executive session.

I talked to the President at 3:30 this afternoon on the phone. He said that Kleindienst and Petersen had met with him. That Kleindienst feels it's going to take four or five years for Mitchell to run the full legal course on trial and so forth. He still feels we should have a special prosecutor and the President also has come to that conclusion. Not for this case, but to look at the indictments and review them to be sure that we cover all the people. Even Sneed is compromised on this. So we'd have to use someone like Wright from Texas. He referred to Strachan's telling Ehrlichman about Magruder, that two weeks ago Magruder tried to get Strachan to concoct a story, and he feels that Magruder's defense is that he was under pressure from higher-ups. The problem is that Magruder doesn't know the truth. He feels Rogers may have a point. That if we get a big fish that takes a lot of the fire out of the case.

Kleindienst has the idea that the President has to go out and make a new Checkers speech, which he feels he won't do. He feels the idea of a special prosecutor does help get someone in between



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the President and the case. He told me to talk to Ehrlichman, because he thinks the Rogers' thing makes sense. Then he said, also, they told him that, on Ehrlichman, there was some connection in the conversation regarding the contents of Hunt's safe, and on Haldeman, there was some connection with the \$350,000 and that those were the only leads they had to us. Kleindienst recommends that Ehrlichman and Haldeman take a leave of absence on this. The President said you ought to come up with a better recommendation, and he's going to tell them in his meeting later in the afternoon that he wants them to find out what this is all about and come back with a concrete recommendation.

Talked to Rogers again at dinner time. He said he was still thinking about it and still doesn't like the idea of giving in. You can't make rules that stick such as hearsay. He thinks there's a valid point on the basis that prosecution is underway and that there shouldn't be a circus by the Senate. This issue has never been presented squarely in history, that is, a grand jury on the same subject matter as a Senate hearing. The problem is to work out how the President handles it. First, to preserve the office and second, to tell the whole story and punish those responsible. You have to transfer the responsibility to someone else, and he suggests someone like Erwin Griswold who was originally appointed by the Democrats. The President would say that in order to assure the proper function of the grand jury we'll have Griswold work with me and the court. This would be good because he wouldn't be an embarrassment to Kleindienst, because he's in the Department and he hasn't been political.

The President would say I want complete disclosure of all of my people and the hearings should be done properly. And on the idea of suspending staff people who are named, he feels he shouldn't suspend anyone that no one should step aside until a charge is brought. If he's indicted he should take a voluntary leave of absence, if he admits to a crime he shouldn't submit his resignation. We should say take a leave and would expect to testify. When I do I'll resign effective then.



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Then we get to the question of the Magruder type situation, or now Dean, where he feels that he should submit his resignation to become effective at a future date, meantime, take a leave of absence because he expects to testify and doesn't want publicity on resignation before that point.

Going back to the Griswold idea he feels it's good because he's not in the chain of command, his judgment would be respected, and he could push for no Congressional hearing and all that. He feels that the President has to make an important statement on it, saying that there are a lot of problems and this is the solution to preserve separation, rights and so on. I found out later from Ehrlichman that Griswold isn't acceptable, because he's resigning under pressure and is not happy about it. So better find someone else.

At about 7:00 the White House switchboard called and said the President wanted Ehrlichman and me to meet him in the EOB office at 7:30. I got to the White House at 7:30. The President wasn't back from dinner and boat ride he had taken with Bebe. At 7:45 he arrived at the EOB, and Ehrlichman and I went over. And the President was very cheery about what a beautiful day it was and all, and then sat down and said, well, he had his second talk with Kleindienst and Petersen, and that Dean had been in an all-day meeting with the US Attorney and that Petersen will report to the President tomorrow at noon on the full details of that. But that the President will call him, while we're there, to get an updating on anything new he's got this evening. He's now ordered Kleindienst out of the entire operation and is dealing directly with Petersen. He's instructed Petersen that he is to report directly to the President.

He says that Petersen says now that the combination of Dean's and Magruder's testimony means that Ehrlichman and Haldeman will have to be called to the grand jury. They told Dean that they'd do the best they can for him, offer him their good offices if he cooperated. The President's not sure what that means. He was obviously very awkward in getting into all this and is hedging around, not knowing quite how to get to the point. He said Dean talked to the US Attorney all afternoon in Maryland and they want him to testify, to corroborate the Magruder thing. The plan, now, is to get Magruder to plead tomorrow and then immediately put out a statement that



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involves himself and others, certainly Mitchell. They're moving fast to avoid being forced into this by Ervin. They want to be sure that they get the credit, rather than appearing that the Ervin stuff forced them into taking action. Their plan is to take Magruder in the morning and Strachan in the afternoon, and they're going to be very rough on Strachan, going for corroboration and trying to tie in bigger fish.

Petersen thinks Dean lied to him and to us. He says Dean hits Ehrlichman regarding the line that they should deep-six the material in Hunt's safe and get Hunt out of the country and about the documents that Gray has. On Haldeman, there's a conflict between Magruder and Strachan involving three or four things: the \$350,000, the document furnished to Strachan that I supposedly approved which was the budget for the bugging; and the point that I had papers indicating Liddy was in the eavesdropping business. This is totally different than what Magruder told Ehrlichman he had said, so we have an interesting point there.

Kleindienst says that Liddy has not talked, that they don't have anything on Colson. The problem is what will LaRue say that he got the \$350,000 for, that there is a problem there they feel. The President was troubled, because they said they don't want Haldeman and Ehrlichman until they hear the others. He said to them, if they have anything on Haldeman and Ehrlichman, they should call them immediately and clear it up. Petersen said no, he didn't want to do that until he heard all the others and got the case built. He feels Petersen is crusading on this. That they'll give Strachan a very hard time. One point they want to hit him on is that logs of the bugging were given to Strachan, they claim. Magruder says he won't lie for Ehrlichman that he might lie for the President.

After-- some discrepancy arose on the question that on June 17, after a meeting in Washington, Kleindienst and Dean were supposed to come out and report to the President and then there was a call saying that only Dean is to come, which apparently bothered Kleindienst. The question is where we were June 17. I thought we were in Florida, but the President has it as San Clemente. Petersen said to the President, Dean did not serve us well.



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Now Petersen's set up to report only to the President, not to Kleindienst. They say the Magruder deal may break tomorrow. Mitchell will be accused and there will probably be a tangential reference to Haldeman. Dean makes a prima facie case against both Haldeman and Ehrlichman on obstruction of justice. The President will tell Dean he owes it to him to come into the President and tell him what he's doing.

The President thinks Magruder is lying to reduce his penalty. He has a lot of loose stuff, like the question of Gray's documents from Hunt. Ehrlichman says LaRue told Moore today that he's going to testify and that he's inclined to open up completely, and the President came back to the deep-six and Hunt leaving the country question again, saying that troubled him.

At 8:15 the President called Petersen and he said he had nothing further. He said Liddy wants a signal to come clean, that Liddy talked to Mitchell today and is waiting for a signal from Mitchell, but Petersen says the President should give Liddy some sign, and Liddy, apparently, told Mitchell he would tell everything if he got a signal from Mitchell, and now Petersen says the signal from the President will do it.

The President hung up on that and was trying to figure out what to do, when I got a call from Larry, and he said that Dean had called him to say that he wanted to deliver a message through me to the President, that he did not want to talk with me, and his message was: number one, I hope you understand that the actions that I'm taking are motivated totally out of loyalty to you (Haldeman) and the President, and if that's not clear now it will become clear; second, Ehrlichman requested to meet tonight, but I feel it is inappropriate at this time; third, I'm ready and willing to meet with the President at any time to discuss these matters; fourth, the President should take his counsel from Henry Petersen, who I assure you does not want the Presidency hurt.

Right after that, the President called Petersen back and said to tell Liddy the President wants everybody to tell everything they know and he told him to do it tonight. The President then decided he should get Dean in to talk to him and so had me call the operator and tell Dean to be



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in his office at 9:00. We discussed it somewhat further and at 9:00, Ehrlichman and I left the office and went over to Ehrlichman's office. At 9:20, Ehrlichman arrived at the President's office.

In the meantime, Ehrlichman and I talked to Ziegler to discuss the PR plan. Ron makes the point that with the information now, the President must relieve Dean of his Watergate assignment, at least. The President should receive assurances from any other staff that have been implicated, that what we've told them is correct and then we'll have an opportunity to cover it with the grand jury. The President should announce a special prosecutor who is not an Administration man. And on Magruder, the information he has says that he has to ask Magruder to resign.

At 10:15, the President called us back over to the EOB and had finished with his meeting with Dean, and he was obviously quite disturbed, or seemed to be, or he was probably also tired. He said Dean will either testify or be subpoenaed, he's not sure which. He's told his lawyers and apparently he told the US Attorney that none of us at the White House, especially Haldeman and Ehrlichman, had any knowledge of the bugging; but on obstruction he feels both Haldeman and Ehrlichman are involved. Whether or not they intended to obstruct and whether or not they knew what they were doing. They have conspiracy by circumstance.

He doesn't think that Kalmbach knew the reason for the money he was raising. Dean says the \$40,000 that went over first, out of the \$350,000, was pre-election, which doesn't check with Strachan. LaRue says there was no question what it was for, that Dean knew and that Mitchell knew. The question is whether any of us knew, and I still argue that we knew it was for defendants, but not in any sense for obstruction of justice.

Dean made the point that he had briefed Ehrlichman and me every inch of the way. On Petersen, he said that was just a daily report on the grand jury and that there was nothing improper. We had made the point to the President that Petersen was supplying Dean with all kinds of information out of the grand jury and Dean's trying to put a cover-up on that. Regarding clemency, he says there was a meeting of Colson, Ehrlichman and Dean, and Ehrlichman at that meeting said to make no commitments for clemency. On the contents of Hunt's safe, Colson was



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the one who was worried. The bogus wire, there was apparently a bogus wire implicating Kennedy in Vietnam, and so on, Dean thinks Gray may have destroyed it. Hunt told Colson to get the stuff out of the safe. Dean believes that he's the most vulnerable on obstruction, and that Haldeman and Ehrlichman are less vulnerable, and Dean thinks he has a good chance to beat any rap on it, but in the meantime the evidence is so overwhelming that it will probably require Haldeman and Ehrlichman to take leaves. Dean had something on the bug on Kraft and other newsmen that he lobbed in, but doesn't intend to use it.

At 10:45, Ehrlichman got Gray at home about the envelope. Gray said that he was going to say he knew nothing about it, and he told Ehrlichman he had destroyed it. At 11:05, John called him back and said he's got to tell the truth. He should state the facts and not get crosswise on this. Gray says he didn't know where the papers came from, he didn't open the envelope, he simply destroyed it, but that Dean had told him they were politically sensitive papers, although not what the source of them was.

With this, the evening pretty well came to an end. The President made a semi-valiant attempt to buck us up to say that we're going to beat this and that it's an unfair thing, that we're being had, and that we just have to deal with it as we go along.

End of April 15.

The President called about 12:30, after I got home and wanted to review some of the situation again. He had the feeling that on the public side of it, maybe we should work out some plan for Moore and Ziegler to leak the fact that the President's on top of the case and is working on it, that's he talked with Petersen, talked to Dean, that there's been a break in the case. He feels that we need- that the Justice Department is trying to get out ahead of the Ervin Committee, understandably, but also the President should be out ahead of the Justice Department, such as his pushing Liddy to testify and that sort of thing. He also raised the question of who LaRue had talked to and whether someone couldn't confer with him on what he's going to cover before he testifies on the purpose of the \$350,000.



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He said that he had talked to Petersen again tonight, after we left, to report on his meeting with Dean, and they talked about the question of legal obstruction of justice, and Petersen admitted it's a very tough case to prove; that it's not so much the legal case as it is the appearances and the moral situation. He makes the point that Ehrlichman and Haldeman are only involved, not as actors, but just exposed to it, and that's the problem that they have. He says this is the point where you need a lawyer and you should go ahead and talk to Rogers. The President said maybe you ought to get Edward Bennett Williams, but then he said, no, as long as there's no indictment, there's no point in doing that, and I feel sure there won't be an indictment. The problem dealing with a Williams would come afterwards. I didn't like that idea, because of the publicity it would create.

He says he's really confounded by Mitchell, who must be in a dream world on this, but when you boil it down, he's taking the only route he can if he doesn't accept taking the rap and going to jail. The President said he had been sitting there making some notes and thinking about the whole thing. He obviously wanted to talk on and on about it, but I didn't encourage that. He said Petersen had indicated they would not get to Ehrlichman and me until next week. They won't take us this week, because they want to build all the rest of the case. So the President basically is in a position of just trying to sort it all out and having trouble in doing so.

End of April 15.